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"A JOURNEY
THROUGH SEX,
VIA FASHION AND
FETISHISM".

by

NIAMH PAWLE

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Fashion Department

N.C.A.D.

Tutor- Paul O'Brien

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INTRODUCTION.

Fashion and fetishism both involve the whats, whys, hows and wheres of wearing clothes. Humans, unlike animals, have to wear protective clothing, which is not automatically provided by nature. This is one of the major distinctions between humans and animals. Another difference crops up in their sex lives and patterns of attraction. Sex between animals is a non-discriminatory genital attraction, and (I imagine) the result of a subconscious desire to continue the species. Sex between humans is different in that one person would have to be attracted to the other person, not just for their genitals, but for their overall appearance and personality, in order to have a close sexual relationship.

This is where both fashion and eroticism come in. Fashion is a system designed to keep us in a continuous motion of changing our ways of dressing, whereby styles and trends are predicted, manufacturers produce the goods, the consumer buys, and so the trends come and go. People can follow fashions dictations to-a-T, they can ignore

them, or they can slot somewhere in between. Most people fit into the latter group. The way a person dresses and projects an image says a lot about their personality. It is this image and projected personality which is used to attract prospective partners.

Eroticism is the next step. Eye-to-eye contact, a casual touch, or scent, all these can make the heart pound, the knees tremble and the stomach flutter. Why? It is the power of attraction, a sensual step-by-step game which may eventually lead to a physical relationship of some sort. The stimulation of the senses in a manner which increases sexuality is considered to be erotic. Fetishism is similar, in that it involves a particular sensual experience, or experiences. The difference is that fetish is a stimulus other than the naked body. A third party is involved, not a person, but an object or material which heightens the sensuality and triggers sexual arousal. Most people will have a fetish, or will fantasize about one, but do not realize it. When animals have sex, they do not worry about the surface they are on, the smells in the air, their surroundings. These things do not affect animal sexuality. Many times I have heard women complaining that they would love silk

sheets (but could never afford them). Why? Because they know that silk is a sensuous material when it is next to the skin, and where better to luxuriate in the sensual pleasure, than in bed, preferably with their partner? In this sense, most people have a fetish, but few consciously use their fetish during their sexual activities. Even fewer still are serious fetishists, who cannot achieve sexual satisfaction without their stimulus, or fetish.

In the following chapters, I propose to examine the parallels between fashion and fetishism, how fashion designers use fetishism and how fetishists use fashion. First though, I will start with what we know about the history of sexuality.

Chapter I

THE HISTORY OF SEXUALITY

Human sexuality is the result of an intricate social and biological natural element of ones' D.N.A. inheritance. (ref. p.98 Body Styles) Freud found that 'normal' sexuality itself only came into being, at the end of a long and tortuous journey. Even then, its precarious establishment is not definite (ref. p.17 Psychoanalysis and Feminism).

'Even in normal sexuality there will be a residue of perverse impulses which can also find expression in various ways, as 'minor perversions' within the normal sexuality, or if repressed and inadequately so, as neurotic symptoms, or, reacted against as disgust, shame, morality, its energies can be re-directed into 'higher' spheres'. (ref. p.29 Psychoanalysis and Feminism)

One idea, from the theory of 'The Fall' (ref. p.15 The Unfashionable Human Body) is that when man was formed, the sexual appendages were awarded to us like badges of sin, preventing us from forming an unbiased view of the human body. As a result, there has been and always will be a battle of the



*a saucy bikini for the
apple of your eye! 3.98*

The child's outfit illustrates, as it were, a quaint version of the Fall according to which the halves of the fateful apple, or apples, were grafted on to the sinners in the form of breasts and testicles. In antiquity the apple symbolized love; offering an apple to one's inamorata—a gesture familiar to us from the Judgment of Paris—equaled a declaration of love. Later, the apple became a symbol of seduction and mischief, perhaps because in Latin *malum* means both, apple and evil.
(Courtesy, Arnold Constable)

sexes, which uses dress and accessories to enhance or hide these 'badges of sin'. (You could call them the offensive weapons.). Fig 1.

Freud's theory is that the baby is born into a full 'unisexual' sexuality. It then passes through three roughly sequential stages, where one erotogenic zone after another first dominates and then becomes dormant. (1) The oral stage. This is where the baby discovers the sensuality of his mouth when breast feeding - 'sensual sucking'. (2) The anal stage. This is where the baby finds that he can do something independently of his mother - he experiences contentment after the tension of bowel movements. (3) The phallic stage. Until this, the mouth was a receptacle, awaiting the presentation of the nipple. The anus was an exit for the faeces, but with the penis or clitoris, both of which can be hard or soft like the nipple or faeces, where does it go? What is it for? A boy baby will learn to cup his hand, and a girl baby will learn to push the lips of the vagina together to create a 'pocket' for the clitoris. This is the stage where babies discover their sexuality, and the final stage (4) is latency, innocence. The baby has

discovered its sexuality so now there is nothing more to do, so to speak. (ref. p. 22 and 23

Psychoanalysis and Feminism)

The skin is the erotogenic zone par excellence. Clothing, the act of wearing fabric, is intimately linked to the skin, and the body, to our tactile senses. Some regions of the body's surface are more responsive to touch than others. The mouth, nipples, armpits and on a different sensory level, fingertips and toes, elbows and knees, even the palms of the hands and the soles of the feet are all particularly sensitive. Individuals also have their own particularly sensitive zone, e.g. the ears, back of the neck, side of the waist, navel, wrists and spine. When these sensitive areas are stimulated, exquisite sensations can be provoked, particularly sexual ones. They are not necessarily caused by person-to-person contact, but may ignite from the touch of inanimate objects, such as garments and ornaments. The wearing of certain articles of clothing can be intoxicating on a level as powerful as that induced by a drug. The tactile sensations derived from dress, the undulations of pain and pleasure are mostly forgotten or unsuspected by modern man. Psychologists who have an invested interest in the subject, speak of skin-and-muscle

eroticism, both of which apply to the clothed body as much as the naked one. However, only so-called wholesome aspects are discussed as a rule: the effects of heat and cold, of water and wind on muscles and skin - stimulants which are considered legitimate.

Another form of physical contact is called 'double contact'. This is indirect touching, holding an object and using it to touch someone or something. This would relate to the feel of the body through garments or fabrics. This is supposed to produce sensations of heightened self-awareness. Similar to this is the act of swapping clothes, or borrowing/stealing items of clothing purely because of the physical associations with the owner. The custom of lovers exchanging their garments goes back to antiquity and exists to this day, not only in the privacy of the home, but also in some public marriage ceremonies, for example, on some Asian islands they retain the custom where the bridegroom puts on the garments which the bride has taken off. (ref. p.169, The Unfashionable Human Body)

Returning to the erotic possibilities of the human

skin, clothing can act as the stimulator to the wearer. the feel of a particular fabric or type of garment can arouse the wearer, in a sensual and sexual manner. Often, although totally subconsciously, this can be the deciding factor for many people when buying and wearing particular fabrics or garments. A silk dress or a cashmere coat are luxuries people afford themselves, because they enjoy wearing the fabric, it feels wonderful and as a result they become hyper-sensitive to the feel of that fabric. Not only that, but the fact that they are enjoying wearing their clothes improves their self-confidence. Someone who is happy and confident about their appearance will automatically look happier and more confident, and therefore more attractive.

For a lot of people, the most enjoyable part of a relationship is the initial stages of attraction. When trying to assess a persons' attractiveness, using visual communication only, it takes less than ten seconds to form an impression. This done, the next step is to work out if the attraction is mutual. If there is mutual approval, each party has to try to catch the other one looking at them. This is

eye-to-eye contact, which usually brings on an embarrassed flutter of excitement (and fear of rejection) in the heart or stomach. Once this fluttering has begun, you know that the adrenaline is flowing. This can eventually lead to sexual excitement, even before one has spoken to the other person. By the time you get to talk to the person you may already feel nervous and apprehensive. This attraction can be very enjoyable, if mildly frightening and uncomfortable, and can be all-consuming.

Humans use dress to enhance their bodies to make them more 'beautiful' but the beauty of any human body is, of course, highly debatable, depending on nothing more substantial than general agreement. There are many differences between tribes, generations, cultures and societies when it comes to the 'ideal body'. Primitive man sets an unvarying ideal and sticks to it. Industrial man, on the other hand, has no clear idea of what he wants; opinions change by whim.

Although most people assume that the main task of clothes is to hide, and make us forget the sexual parts, they often do precisely the opposite. An item of clothing intended to cover the intimate parts, sooner or later is likely to become the

*"The cutout gives a certain deliciousness to the small of the back," says Vogue.
Detail, jumpsuit by Ungaro. (Copyright © 1967 by The Condé Nast Publications*





centre of attraction.

Throughout the world and throughout human history, clothing and adornment have been used in many different ways to amplify, define and in some cases create erotic experience. Each culture develops fashions of appearance and sets of symbols of agreed meaning. Where appearance differs from all other areas of N. V. C. (Non Verbal Communication) is that fashion keeps changing, and the same lements of appearance have very different significance at different times and in different places.

The first function, as such, is to conceal the body , and act as an enticing gift-wrapping. This makes the body more intriguing and exciting, and the decorations and embelishments add to the thrill.

Fig 2 and 2B.

Secondly, Concealing the body enhances the erotic potential and is highlighted by the act of un-dressing. The voyeuristic climax of the moment of disrobing is unique to humans, and as such is rightly celebrated in art, photography and literature.

Thirdly, the intimate parts of the body can be highlighted by sexual flags; clothes and

embellishments which draw attention. Dress can be used to form impressions which may or may not be true to the performer. There are various motives for doing this - it may be in the other's interest (e.g. the sterile image worn by doctors and undertakers) maybe for immediate material gain (e.g. a job interview), to make friends, or to strengthen ones' self image by persuading others of ones' desirable qualities.

Verbal methods of self-presentation are seen to be easily falsified, so are usually unsuccessful. But non verbal messages are usually taken at face-value. Sexual attractiveness depends partly on clothes, partly on hair, grooming, skin and physique. In this sense most people, some of the time, use their appearance to send information to others.

Fourthly, the way we dress and the differences in styles are most important and effective means available to us for signalling and emphasising gender differences. As well as the straight-forward identification of the sexes, clothes provide us with a symbolic reminder of a societys' definitions of masculinity and femininity, and point the way

towards 'normal' sexual roles and relationships. These rules can of course be broken, and by doing so ,gender identification can become ambiguous, and one can indicate to potential partners that one is (or wishes to be) out of step with society's presumptions.

Fifthly, body decoration and clothing can signal interest. Periodically veils have been clutched and fans fluttered as a 'come-on', and indication of availability. Of course, these examples are particularly blatant. Specific colours, styles of draping, lengths of garment and types of fabrics have signalled availability.

The playing and moulding of personal appearance has one basic root: Desire. The desire to attract attention and sexual interest is a common human trait. Desire is theorized as the retrospective functioning of a lack, whilst the activity of desire - creative energy or 'desiring - production' - is defused , dematerialised. (ref. p.100 Body Invaders) Desire is like need, which stems from fantasies and imaginings.

'The pleasure of imagining is reduced to the pressure of need, which has no object, but only an aim of gratification - or in other words, obedience, blankness.' (ref. p.110, Body Invaders)

Fantasy is basically anything which is not fact, but tumbles around the mind in a series of images similar to factual occurrences. Sometimes, due to poor recollection (not poor memory), we confuse fact with fiction, or fantasy, but when the fantasy is oddly proportioned and seems warped in comparison to that which we know is fact, then it is easily identified. The activity of sensory experience cannot be analytically extracted from the basic levels of fantasy (ref. p112, Body Invaders), after all, what proof is there that we have heard, felt, smelt, seen or tasted anything apart than other human "witnesses"?

Fashion is all about fantasy, desire, and attraction. We use fashion (as fashion uses us) to project a particular image and a set of information about ourselves (usually mildly fantastic) to the viewing public, and thus we find our position in society.

Chapter II

SEXUALITY OF FASHION

Fashion, as I have mentioned briefly, is a system. Through this system we are continuously shown images and all those involved in the business have to do their utmost, to subtly persuade us that we want to be a part of this image, to make available to us the means to carry out this fantasy, and then, to start all over again with a new image.

The trend of fashion is to design something functional, then to keep exaggerating it and embellishing it until it is so 'over the top' that it is completely abandoned and something else is picked up on.

The fact that we are usually quite willing to go along with this system indicates that we desire an identity. We need to fit on the costume of our latest desired persona, which is (we would like to think) individual and special, and yet fits in with some sector of the fashion system, one of the 'In' crowds. Very few people wear the same style of

clothes all of their adult lives. Whether we realise it or not, when we buy clothes, we are going for a specific image. This image can just as easily be the 'slobby' jeans and jumper as the tailored suit look. We do not get absolutely any old 'slobby' jumper, or any neat tailored suit. We make a choice, and that choice indicates we are following a certain direction of image.

Clothing is used, according, to one definition.

'On the one hand, as a means of displaying our attractions, on the other hand, as a means of hiding our scheme. Clothes, in fact, as articles devised for the satisfaction of human needs, are essentially in the nature of a compromise; they are an ingenious device for the establishment of some degree of harmony between conflicting interests.'

So says Caroline Evans and Minna Thornton in their book Women and Fashion (ref. p.94)

The function of dress to define the body and to bring it into language is deliberately foregrounded in contemporary fashion.

Dressing up allows the possibility of narcissistic speculation, curiosity and vanity, dressing up in Paris, comparing, contrasting and generally having

a laugh. The exploration of personal fantasies is not so much to find a 'true self' but more to look at the relationship between being and appearing, seeing and being seen.

The ways in which images can be perceived depend on the onlooker, and what they associate with each element of the image. In order to clarify the identity, a coded system of signs and symbols is employed. In some cultures and countries, this system is quite uncomplicated, not so in others. For instance, in ancient Hawaii, the way in which women wore flowers in their hair indicated their marital position. (ref. p. Body Styles) In western society, our signals system is more subtle, and far more confusing. Adornment and clothing signals which in one context might carry (or be perceived as carrying) a message of sexual interest or availability, may in another context mean something entirely different (e.g. the paraphernalia which goes with the punk image can be layered over sexy feminine clothes, giving a tough but sexy look. This may be confused with the image prostitutes have.)

We are perfectly capable of evolving a simple straight forward yes/no language of sexual

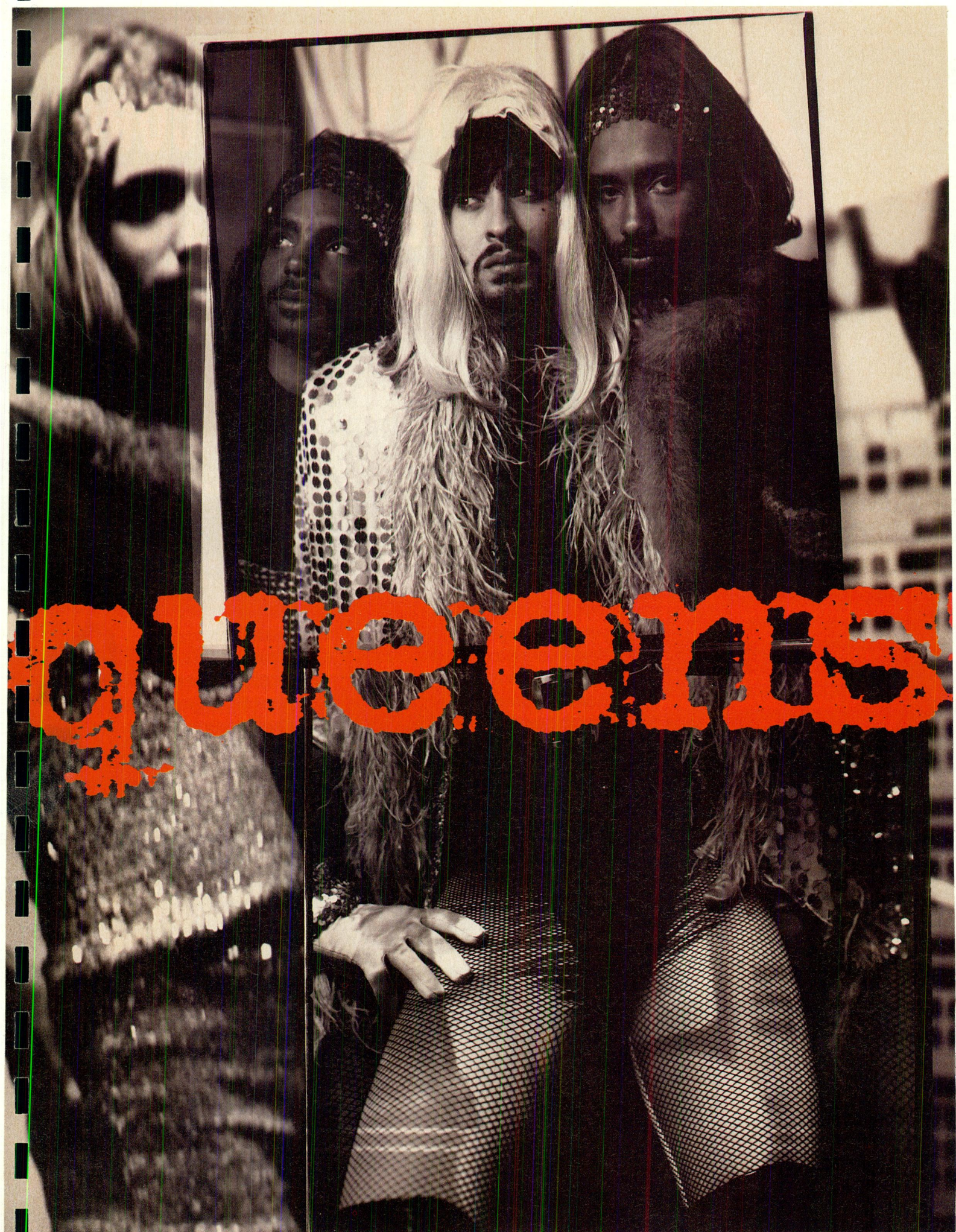


Women in the King's Road, 1976. Photograph by Colin Jones



interest such as the Hawaiian one mentioned, but we generally choose not to, simply because we do not really want a direct answer to this particular question. The intrigue and mystery of flirtation and the lack of definite availability are far more exciting than simple availability. Some western sub-groups have evolved 'secret languages' similar to the Hawaiian flower system discussed, such as keys hanging from the belt. This is one of the many codes used amongst the gay society, in San Francisco in particular. These signs or codes can be used in combination, to indicate that one set of information is only relevant to a particular sub-group, i.e. the highly made-up but also 'trashy' appearance of many female punks indicates that their sexual interest (indicated by make-up etc...) is only applicable to members of their own sub-group (indicated by a 'trashy' punk image). Fig 3 This kind of unspoken signal-system is necessary in our confusing society.

The clothes we wear play a very important role in how we are perceived, and likewise we can use clothes to play out very specific roles. We have already discussed the use of dress to portray specific images, to benefit us in a 'normal' sense.



However, the subject of transvestitism is a sensitive one. In 'normal' everyday Western-style life, cross-dressing is looked on with either suspicion or a sense of humour. Indeed, men have been dealt a poor hand in this context; women can wear virtually anything from the male wardrobe if they wish, without attracting much attention (including underwear, shoes, etc..), whereas a man wearing a skirt in the street invites trouble, and possibly arrest. He can wear fancy dress or a folk costume and still be acceptable, as he is not attempting role-playing. Fig 4

In 'Dressing Up: The History of an Obsession', Peter Ackroyd distinguishes two types of transvestitism: the fetishistic and the anarchic. Fetishistic cross-dressing is historically a later form, particularly reinforced in the 19th century when transvestitism became exclusively associated with sexual perversion and secrecy. In contrast, the anarchic possibilities of cross-dressing were explored in the classical festivals such as Saturnalia. Medieval Christianity criticized the Feast of Fools in which both laymen and clergy dressed as woman; in the 16th century the Feast of Fools was secularised in the festivities associated with the election of the Lord of Misrule in which

women as well as men dressed as the opposite sex.

(ref. p.38 Women and Fashion)

I believe that there are three types of transvestitism, the first being the fetishistic, obsessional kind. The second is the anarchic, expressive 'Peacocking', which resurged and went through a very fashionable period in the 'Blitz' culture of the 1980's, which we shall discuss again later. The third is the most honest and truthful, the desire to actually look like a real woman because of the belief of having been placed into the wrong body. In this case, the individual feels that he is a woman in the person, but has been given the wrong body. There is scientific research to back up this theory. (Brain Sex by David Jess) Seemingly, at conception, the physical sex and personal sexuality of the baby are decided at different times and in different ways. The physical sex is determined at conception, by the genes contributed by the male's sperm. The woman's egg is entirely female, and the male's sperm is either female or half male and half female. Thus, the male sexuality is dependant upon 1/4 of the genes. The rest of the incubation period determines the personal

sexuality of the baby. Usually the biological sex and the psychological sexuality match quite well, but occasionally, there is a noticeable gap. In this situation, the person feels uncomfortable with their own body. This problem can be solved with a sex-change, but this is a very dramatic, traumatic and indeed expensive operation. The next best thing is to dress as the 'psychological' sex, and hope nobody realises.

When a man tries to actually emulate a woman because he wants to be a woman, fears (of a hugely out-of-proportion level) rise up in the general public, especially in other men. They seem to find it a very real threat, stemming from their fears of gay sexuality, and of accidentally 'chatting up' a 'woman' only to find that 'she' is a 'he'. these fears are buried in their masculinity and their male pride. In all other instances and eras, cross dressing has not been considered to be unnatural or sinful, rather it has been looked upon as part of amatory play or popular amusement.

In Donegal, in the west of Ireland, there is a guest house (of a sort) which is run in the Victorian style. The women who live there (some in the biological



8. Man and woman in Elizabethan dress at the Blitz 'Dress for the Future' night, 1980. Photograph by Polhemus

NEIL MATTHEWS



sense, some in the psychological sense) live the Victorian era, dress the part, and indulge in the past-times popular of the period, e.g. writing, reading poetry, reciting etc... They have maids, in the old fashioned sense, who wait on them hand and foot. This household is the successful materialisation of a fantasy, the playing of roles. This guest house holds 'holliday weekends', where people can come together (male and female), and dress in period costumes - Victorian, Edwardian or early 1920's/1930's, and behave like governesses, maidservants, or ladies of the manor. This involves a combination of transvestitism, sado-masochism (submissive and dominant role playing), and fantasy role-playing.(ref. Kinky Hollidays article in I-D no. 90, March 1991)

In the 20th century, the power of transvestitism to shock lies precisely in its association with private perversion. In the 1980's, women (and men) raided the image bank for signifiers of femininity, so that femininity itself came to be seen as an infinite number of appearances, divorced from biological sex. Fig 5. This fashion was labelled the 'Blitz', in terms of the decade. The fashion itself was termed 'new-romantic'. In the 20th century, the use of

sensuous fabrics in mens clothing has been associated with a rebellious stance. In the 1960's men wore satin, floral prints and bright colours. In the new-romantic 1980's, men wore frilly shirts, silk, brocade, satins, 'feminine' cut clothes (waisted jackets, baggy high-waisted trousers etc...), effeminate hairstyles and make-up, etc.. This image was a backlash aimed at the aggressive image of the 1970's punk era.

To take a step backwards, the punk era was one of the most significant stages in fashion history, particularly in the 20th century. The traditional trappings of prostitution, signifying availability, were combined with the paraphernalia of S+M bondage - the belts, straps and chains were dragged out of the bedroom, closet and porn film. To many feminists these items were inevitably associated with the sophisticated subculture of punk, these accoutrements worked together effectively , speaking the contradictions of femininity as vehemently and as articulately as feminist debate. The pornographic regulation of female sexuality was undermined, and the system of definition was scrambled. The barriers were ripped down and

PUNKS



Against the white wall,
Kings Rd straight ups
circa '87. Photographs
Steve Johnson.

relying on clean and colourful separates from Boy and John Crancher.

Sounds: Early punk bootlegs from Camden and Portobello markets, predominantly early Clash and Siouxsie with the Vibrators, UK Subs and old Discharge tunes close behind. Although – like many youth cults – nostalgia is strong, relatively recent bands like PIL, Big Audio Dynamite and The Smiths are all big favourites.

Crossovers

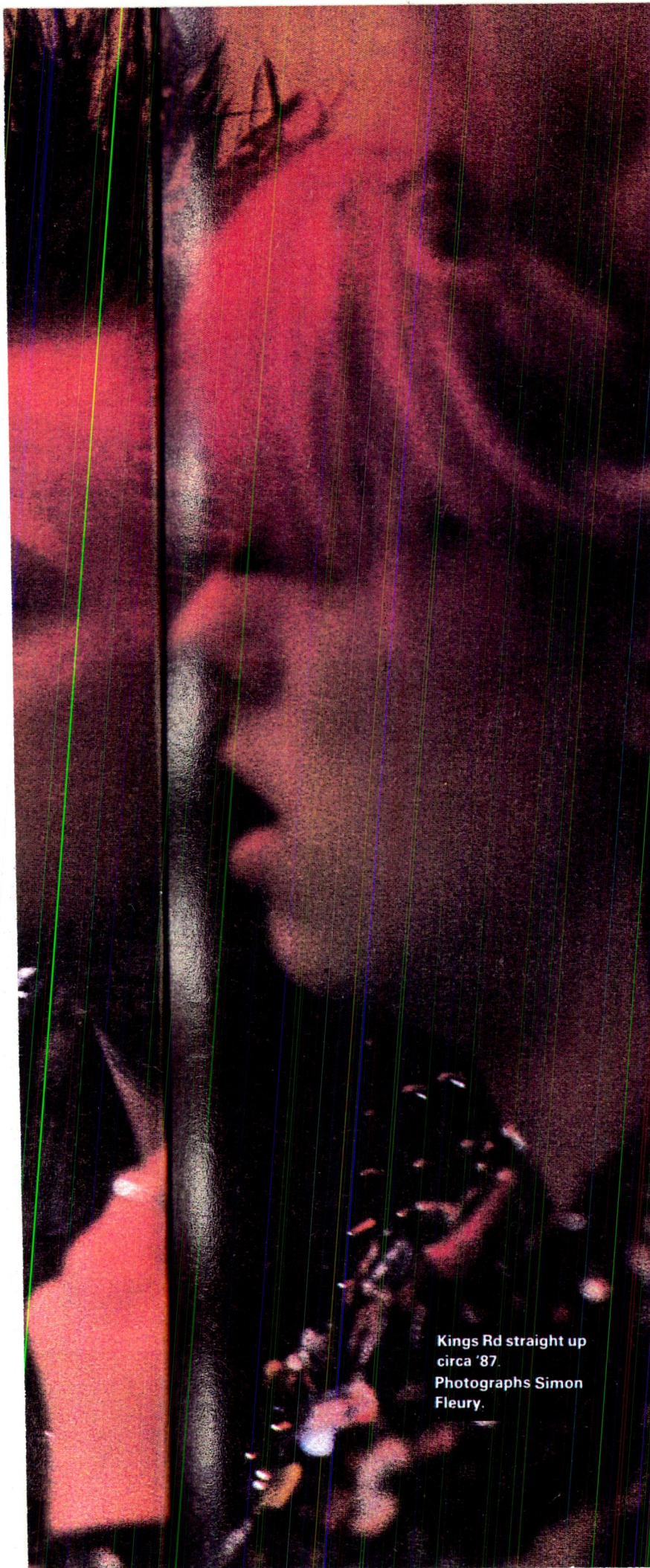
Warrior/Punks: Mad Max clones.

Grebo/Punks: Less colourful, into army fatigues and looking tatty.

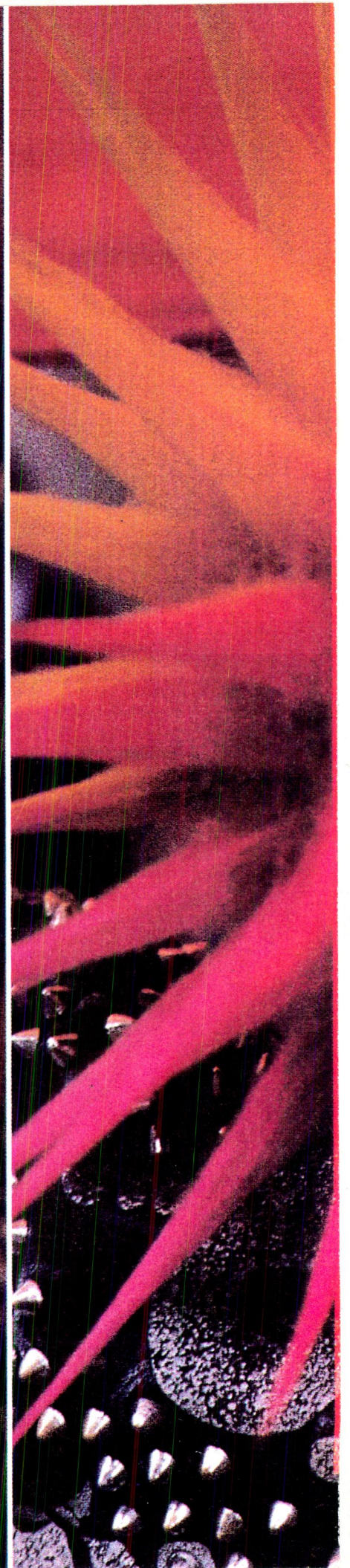
Shops

Boy main branch 153 Kings Rd SW3 (439 0592).
John Crancher Unit G61 Ground floor Kensington
Market Kensington High St W8.
Modzart 192-220 Villiers Rd NW2 (451 1824).
Camden Market Electric Ballroom Camden High
St NW1.
Shelly's main branch 159 Oxford St W1 (437 5842).
Holts 5 Kentish Town Rd NW1 (485 8505).
Kensington Market Kensington High St W8.
Lewis Leathers 122 Gt Portland St W1 (636 4314).
For original Seditionaries clothes, check the small
ads in the music press.





Kings Rd straight up
circa '87.
Photographs Simon
Fleury.



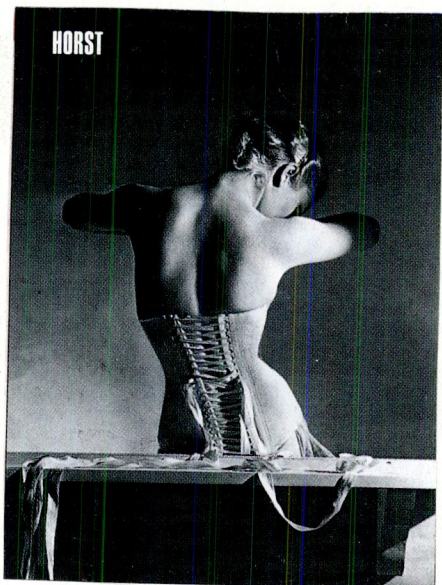
left in a jumble. This was the most shocking visual assault the twentieth century fashion world could possibly experience. Every single taboo'd element of dress and sexuality was chewed up, and spat back out.

Punk opened up the doors to a whole new world of dressing. Never before had people tried so hard to look androgenous, male/female couples were often indecipherable. The violent assault on the visual senses resulted in an unshockable society, or at least it broadened peoples previously narrow conceptions about image and sexuality. Fig 6

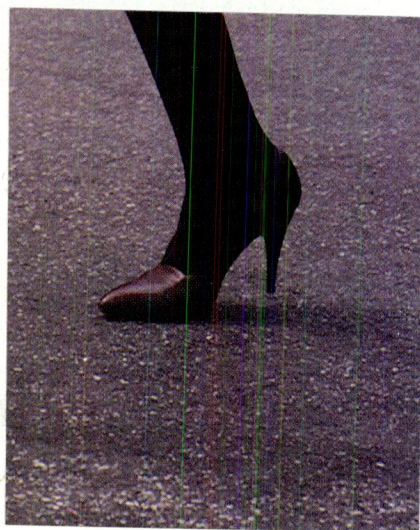
Fashions and trends will always draw attention, but I do not think anything will ever have the initial shock value of punk. Having explored the visual elements of punk myself, I often wondered what the reaction would be if I was dumped in the nineteenth century (or indeed any pre-punk era for that matter), in the full regalia of tartan bondage trousers, ripped, zipped obscene T-shirt, doctor martin boots, 'Statue of Liberty' spiked pink and green hair, and a multitude of chains, studs and safety pins, not forgetting full facial war paint. Would my pre-punk viewers even think I was human? Probably not. Fig 7.



Detail: Head and
shoulders, circa '87.
Photograph Monica
Curtin.



9



10

The above garments typify the punk image. There will always be certain garments which represent the trends which popularised them. However, some garments have immortal status and fashion value. These garments also have high fetish values, because of their timelessness (despite having appeared in their 'classic' form in more recent years). The black leather jacket is a timeless item, easily fitting in to many roles, such as wild ones, e.g. Marlon Brando et al, the biker, the punk, the fashion victim, the fetishist, and many more. It is a unisex status symbol, an initiation garment for the youth of today. It is also very practical in many ways. Fig 8.

The corset symbolises a plethora of boudoir secrets, the bondage of female sexuality. Fig 9. Its visual values have been explored over and over again, each time with new significance. It is renewed for its visual appeal more than as an actual wearable garment. It is highly fetishised, and as an icon of fetishism it is only surpassed by the stiletto. This item only appeared, in its present state, in the 1950's but nevertheless, it represents everything that female footwear has ever said about femininity. Fig 10.

Chapter III

FETISHISM

The Oxford English Dictionary gives the definition of a fetish as:

An inanimate object worshipped by primitive peoples for its supposed inherent magical powers, or as being inhabited by a spirit; principle etc, irrationally revered; (psych.) abnormal stimulus, or object of sexual desire.

A fetishist is someone who employs the fetish, and fetishism is the employment of the fetish. The reasons for having a fetish and for the choice of fetish have been explored and theorised; likewise the reason for the fetish having an effect.

Firstly, lets look at the reasons for having a fetish. Freuds' theory was that men refuse (subconsciously) to believe that women do not have penises, as this belief, and the acceptance of it, would prove that they themselves could be castrated. They latch onto something or some part

of the body which they can use to serve as a symbolic substitute for the missing penis.

'The fetish saves the fetishist from becoming a homosexual by endowing woman with a characteristic which makes them tolerable as sexual objects' (vol. 21: p.154, ref p.100 Body Styles)

However, it has only recently been accepted that women too can have fetishes; this does not fit with Freuds theory, and leaves a lot of questions unanswered. In psychoanalytic theory, fetishism is defined as a practice in which some inappropriate part of the body, or an object, usually of clothing, is chosen as the object of sexual desire. The fetish object is always a symbol of the phallus. For both sexes, the having or not having of the penis is a matter for anxiety which the fetish is chosen to reassure (ref. p.144 Women and Fashion). I believe that this theory, while probably true of the more severe cases of obsessive fetishism, is not necessarily true of 'normal' fetishism. Another theory held by Nancy Friday in her book 'My Secret Garden' is as follows:

'That since women were traditionally put into the passive role sexually, they never have had to have doubts about

their ability. Inhibited or frigid, perhaps - but there is no word in the immense English vocabulary which is the exact female equivalent of Impotent. On the other hand, the - sexual distortions of society often force man to see every erotic encounter as a contest, at least physically, with all the womens' previous lovers and those still to come - to say nothing of the imagined demands he may feel she herself is putting on him; perhaps it is to avoid these pressures that the fetishist sighs with relief when he can substitute the symbol for the substance" ^

I think one of the main problems with fetishism is the lack of consistency between the definitions in the dictionary (and from psychoanalytic theory), and the agreed meaning of the term amongst fetishists. If we were to go by the official definitions, then most people who consider themselves to be fetishists, according to my interviews (ref.Appendix), enjoy and use their fetishes to add to their sex life, but are not solely dependant on the fetish to achieve sexual satisfaction. The presence of their fetish merely adds spice and excitement to their sex life, which would otherwise be lacking. Another set of



ZEITGEIST



RUBBERWEAR

LEATHERWEAR

BABYWEAR

RESTRAINTS

misconceptions surround the area of sado-masochism, and its close links with fetishism. I will deal with this later on in the chapter, so lets go back to fetishism, and the choice of fetish. Freuds theory was that the fetish is the last object seen before man discovers the penis-less woman. Another theory is that the character of the fetish is derived from the relationship with objects of infancy, e.g, teddy bear=fur; rubber soother/bottle teat=rubber, etc. Another theory was held by Alfred Binet, who in 1888 proposed that the choice of fetish was a 'learned response brought about by conditioning' (ref. p.102, "Body Styles"). To test this theory, some experiments were conducted by Stanley Rachman and Ray Hodgson who showed male hetrosexuals pictures of various kinds of boots immediately before showing them pictures of 'arousing nude females'. As a result, the subjects experienced increased sexual arousal at the sight of boots. This arousal would have been 'by association'. This would probably be why such items as the corset, the stiletto and stockings are icons of fetishism, they all suggest mother. Fig - 11+2 . However, the fetishists I interviewed, believed that the choice of fetish, at least where

fabric was concerned, had nothing to do with their childhood, and that it was all down to simple tactile qualities, and personal opinions, e.g. 'He likes the feel of leather, but I like the feel of rubber, no other reason'.

The sensations derived from particular fetishes vary from person to person. I will attempt to work out why some people experience certain sensations from their fetishes. I have already spoken of the simple tactile element which people enjoy, though most do not recognise as being fetishistic. Just as our housewife longed for the feel of silk sheets (introduction), because she knew that they would feel sensuous and exciting, so too do others love the feel of P.V.C. of leather or rubber. One element of most garments made in these fabrics is their restrictive qualities.

Restrictive clothing is popular in eroticism and fetishism, and there are many theories about why restriction is enjoyable. Items which regularly re-appear on the fashion scene, such as narrow waistbands, belts and bodices tap the sensations of skin and muscle. These instruments of self-torture, at one time or another, were essential parts of our wardrobe. The pressure





13 Strangle belt, photo by Trevor Watson - p28-9; Skin
Two No. 10 1990

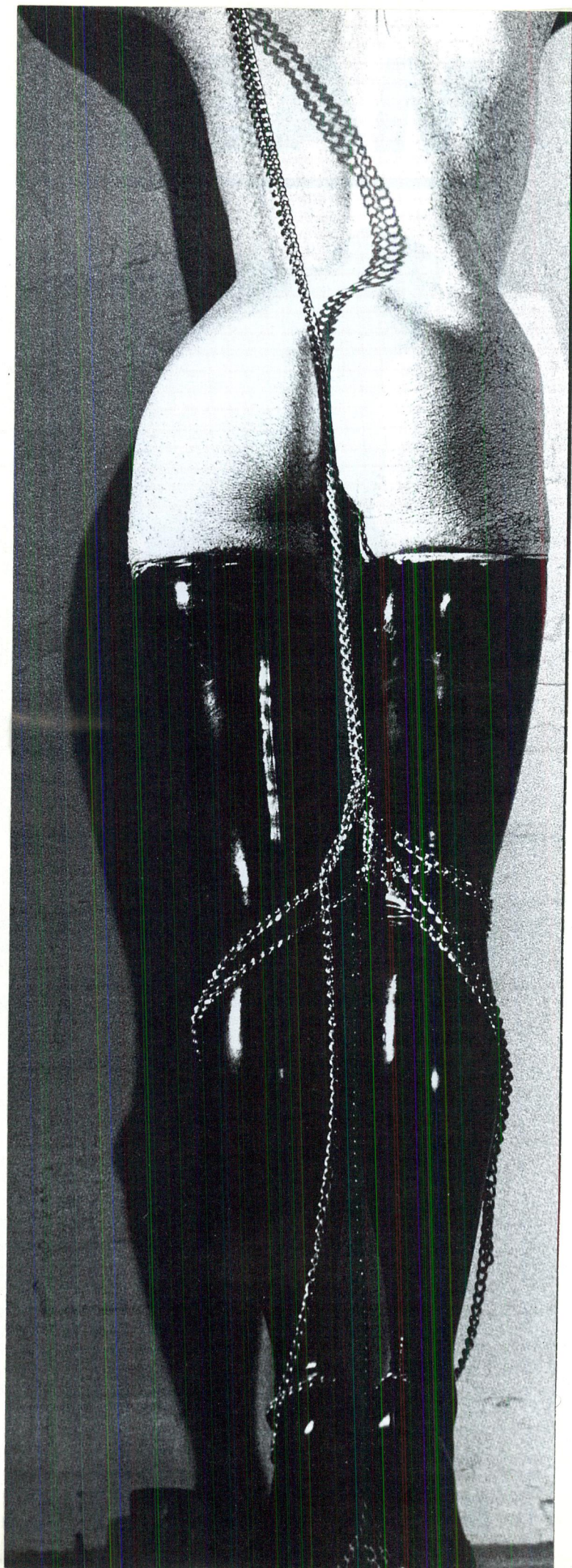
they exert on the body is a hindrance to breathing, which alone would seem to justify their popularity. A theory held by Havelock Ellis is that any restraint upon muscular and emotional activity generally tends to heighten the state of sexual excitement.

'Respiratory excitement has always been a conspicuous part of the whole process of tumescence and detumescence, of the struggles of courtship and of its climax' (note 94, p220 The Unfashionable Human Body)

For example, the tightening of ones belt to the limit of endurance induces fantasies of being strangled, one of the more extreme, not to say conclusive stages of love-making. Fig 13. Another theory is that restriction and the enjoyment of it goes back to infancy.

Ever since the erotic life of the infant was brought to light, we have been seeking explanations for the causes of an adults' aberrations in his earliest years. Thus, masochistic inclinations have been traced to the baby's unsuccessful efforts to break the ties of his swaddling clothes' (p.220 and 221. The Unfashionable Human Body).

Pain itself may become an erotic symbol, under a



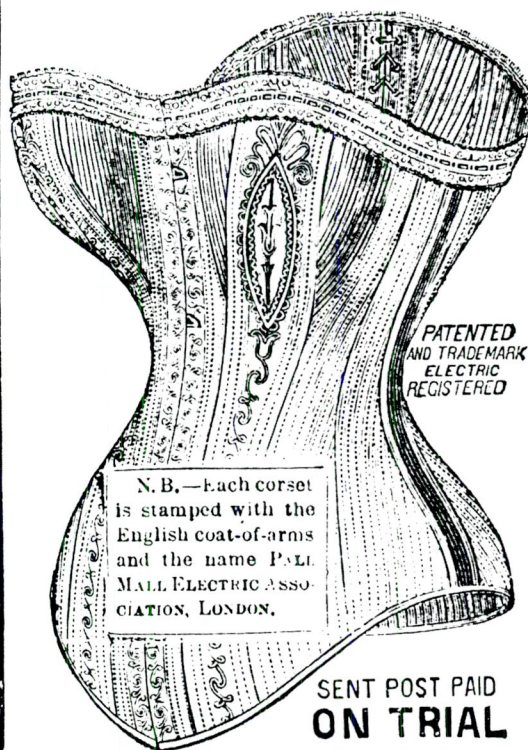


1883---New Prices!---1883.

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Owing to the unprecedented success attending the sale and use of our \$3 Electric Corset, and the constant demand for Electric Corsets of less price, but of the same therapeutic value, we have decided to place upon the market **A HANDSOME LINE OF ELECTRIC CORSETS**, ranging in price from \$1 to \$3, thus bringing them within the reach of all who desire them. They are equally charged with electro magnetism, the difference being only in the quality of material. The higher grades are made of extra fine English Satin, while those of lesser price are of correspondingly good quality.



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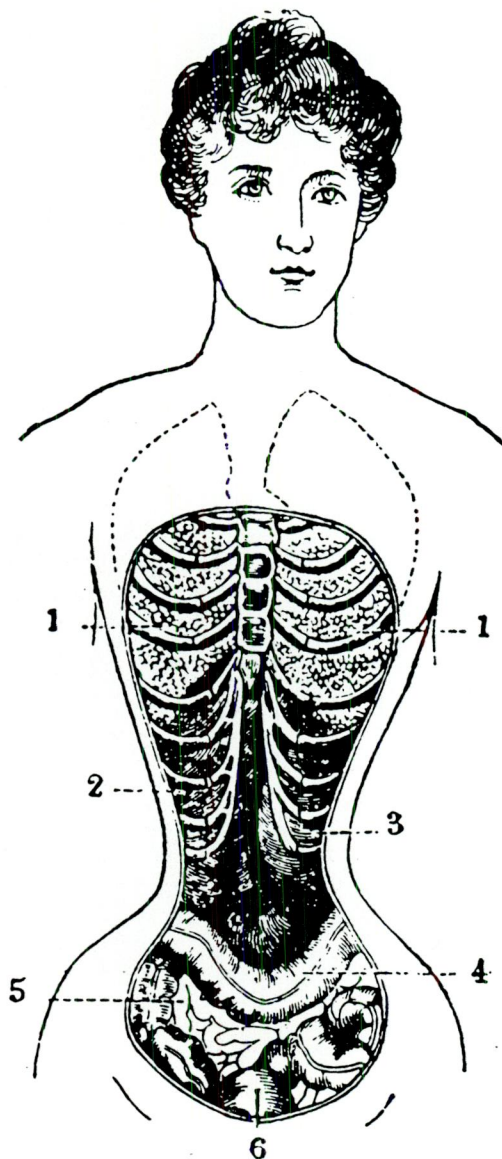
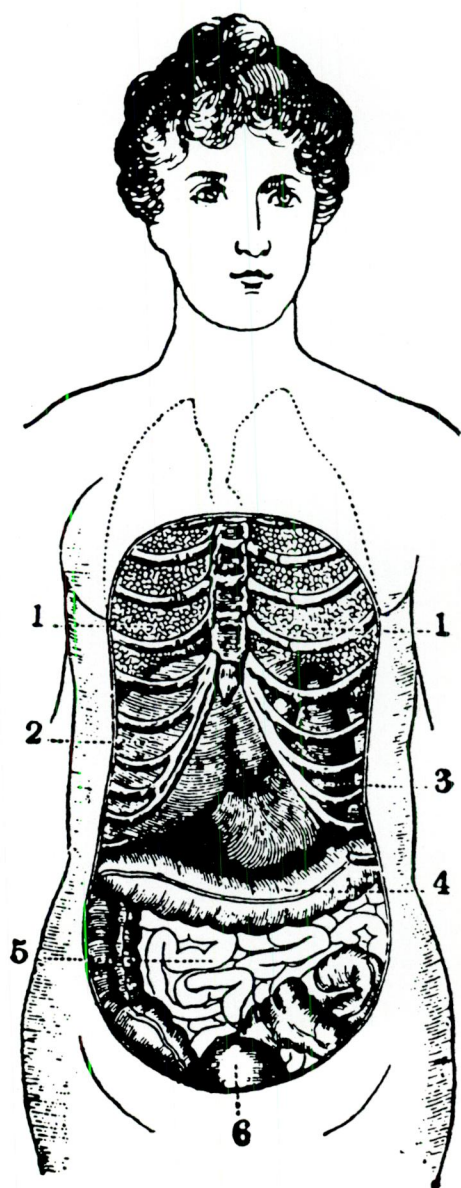
Ladies who have once tried them say they will wear no others. The prices are as follows: \$1, \$1.50, \$2, \$2.50 and \$3. The two latter kinds are made in Pink, Blue, White and Dove; the others in White and Dove only. Each Corset is sent out in a handsome box, accompanied by a silver-plated compass, by which the electro-magnetic influence of the Corsets can be tested. We will send either kind to any address, postpaid, on receipt of the price; also add 10 cents for registration, to insure safe delivery. Remit in P. O. Money Order, Draft, Check, or in Currency, by Registered Letter.

In ordering, kindly mention this publication, and state exact size of Corset usually worn; or, where the size is not known, take a tight measurement of the waist over the linen. This can be done with a piece of common string, which send with your order. Make all remittances payable to

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DR. SCOTT'S ELECTRIC HAIR BRUSH—new prices \$1, \$1.50, \$2, \$2.50 and \$3—sent postpaid on receipt of price.

The Electric Corset, an improvement over "those ordinarily sold," was a panacea against any number of diseases; it miraculously cured paralysis, dyspepsia, liver and kidney troubles. But only careful reading of the advertisement will disclose all its merits. From Harper's Bazar, 1883.



Effects of lacing on the female body. (1 lungs, 2 liver, 3 stomach, 4 great-gut, 5 small intestine, 6 bladder). Nature, anticipating no doubt the invention of the corset, did not connect the lower five ribs to the breast bone. From Reform-Moden-Album, 1904.

great variety of special circumstances, and afford the same relief as the emotions normally accompanying the sexual act (note 110 - on Havelock Ellis - in The Unfashionable Human Body) Ceremonial dress has called on elements of bondage, the restrictions of body movement, hampering of the limbs or the bundling of the trunk. Fig 14 and 15. It was early recognised as an essential quality of ceremonial dress, as both intensify personal awareness. In turn, the nerve and muscular tension express itself in unnatural behaviour.

'We believe that there may be such a thing as an anal-sadistic type of clothing, which would be characterised by its tight fit, general stiffness and lack of comfort..'says Hilaire Hiler (p.222 and 224 The Unfashionable Human Body)

It has been proposed that the popularity of tight lacing among women in the 19th Century is

'attributable to its anti-material significance in an age that perscribed maternity. Fig 16 and 17. Controversially, the corset might then be understood as a liberation garment, signifying a self-determined sexuality, distinct from the demands of procreation.' (p2 Women and Fashion).

I believe that restrictive clothing, by its very nature, alerts the brain to the possibility of danger, thereby causing vague fear and the release of adrenalin. The adrenalin is released into the system, to give a boost of strength in order to take on, or escape from, whatever danger it is that is threatening. Of course we know that there is no danger, but the adrenalin is still there, and the sensations experienced are similar to sexual sensations, such as a faster heart rate, fluttering in the stomach and a heightened sensitivity of all the other senses, particularly the skin nerves. The 'Fear' experienced may bring back associations of frightening experiences in childhood, or even birth. What is discharged through sex is tension, yet the person is unaware of it. This release feels good as does any effective tension release; and it is this good feeling that is often confused with sex. The more tension, the more enjoyable the release. Many people feel that they missed out on something in childhood, whether it was love, attention, freedom or whatever. They repress the pain of this need. Repressed need directs sexual choice. The turn-on is automatic. Whatever the need is, (or a symbol of it), it becomes erotic, and so is a trigger to

sexual arousal. This 'need' has to be satisfied. This is where particular fetishes can occur (ref p.210 Prisoners of Pain)

There are those who need pain to get aroused. The greater the active level of pain, the greater the level of excitement. One reason for this is advance- punishment for pleasure -to -come. Instead of enjoying sexual pleasure first, feeling guilty and expecting some kind of punishment, they take the punishment first, which frees them to enjoy it. This is where S+M comes in, - Sado Masochism. This term is the joining of two different writers names, who were very specifically pain orientated in their writings. However, they differed a great deal. The Marquis de Sade wrote novels, all containing a similar framework of ideology. For Sade, only real cruelty, substantial harm, and usually death, can make 'those vital juices boil'. The characters in his stories could have an orgasm best when they were making somebody (even themselves) suffer substantially. Algolagnia, the pleasure that pain can be or bring, is the key concept of Sade's life and works (ref. p.41 - Cruelty). Leopold von Sacher-Masoch gave the name to masochism. His 'Venus in Furs' is the story



DEMASK

UNIQUE CLOTHING GALLERY



Jan Willem Steenmeyer



“MAID IN LATEX”

KIM WEST

Fig 20



Fig
21

of a man's active, aggressive desire to be
Victimised, to feel pain and humiliation, which
pleases him. Sadism is wanting to and enjoying
inflicting pain on others, masochism is wanting
and enjoying pain, being inflicted by others onto
ourselves (ref. p.48 and 49, Cruelty).

In sado-masochism, there are two main roles to be
played, the dominant and the submissive. The
dominant role is often played by a woman, the
captor, mistress or dominatrix. Fig 18 and 19.
The submissive role is usually played by a man,
the maid, slave, or servant, but the roles are
frequently reversed. Fig 20 and 21. The
submissive role is the masochistic and the
dominant the sadist. Although in most
sado-masochistic relationships, there is an
enormous amount of trust, and a very definite set
of rules are followed, and stop words are agreed
upon for safety's sake. It is quite easy to see how
masochism could trace back to childhood, and all
its repressions.

There are areas of fetishism and sado-masochism
which are closely linked, and indeed many people
are into both. The fetishism deals with the



sensuality of the garments, the sado-masochism deals with the physicality of the garments, and of pain.

I have spoken briefly about the fabrics of these garments before. The fabrics which tend to be associated with fetishism are leather, rubber, P.V.C, lace, silk, velvet and fishnet. The only fabrics commonly used to make fetish garments are the first three. Leather is very popular in general, it is a status fabric, just as fur used to be. Because of its popularity, it is generally regarded as 'normal', depending on the garments. The attraction of leather is its' look, its' smell, its' feel and the way it creaks. Also, because it is skin, it stretches and is comfortable to wear, although, once stretched, it does not regain its former shape. It is a practical fabric in that it looks good, even after many years of wear and tear, it keeps you warm and lets your skin breathe, it is durable and does not need to be cleaned very often. Fig 22.

Rubber seems to be the favourite fetish fabric according to my interviewees. It looks marvellous when it is polished and stretched on the body.



Trevor Watson

SKIN TWO

WAREHOUSE

Fig. 23. It feels very smooth, and unlike woven or knitted fabric it does not have a napp or a pile so its own particular 'feel' is the same in any direction. It has a very particular smell which for many is quite an attraction. It is very stretchy, and moulds to the body, holding in any wobbly bits. Whatever your actual body shape, shiny black rubber holds all the curves, and hides the bits which are embarrassing to some people, such as cellulite, hairy legs, blotchy skin etc. The only thing it won't hide is the actual body shape. As one of my interviewees said, when you see a gleaming curvaceous body in rubber, you just know that if you touch it, it will feel good. There is a silicone spray which is for rubber and makes it all slippery and wet, which adds to the look. There are quite strict rubber-care duties, and the fabric catches on things and tears easily. Also, the temperature conditions play a large role in the life of a rubber wearer. Rubber takes on the same temperature as the air around it, so if it is cold, it is very cold and if it is hot it is very hot and sweaty. Remember, rubber is not porous, so the skin can not breath and any sweat there is accumulates under the rubber. If a wearer is hot and sweaty and then moves into a colder climate, the sweat trapped under the rubber soon becomes



Against the white wall,
Kings Rd straight ups.
Original Punks circa '76
from the Pink Punk Book.
Photographs Steve
Johnson.



Amazing lacing, left. Black stretch PVC all-in-one catsuit (£250) to order by Pam Hogg. Very pointed black patent open heel high-heeled shoes (£110) by Elinor Lamond. Sterling silver cross and chain, just seen (from £133) by Jacqueline Rahim

very cold, and the result is not too pleasant. However, when the wearer is hot and sweaty, the rubber slides all over the place which according to Debbie Pickford, is an enjoyable sensation (ref. Interviews in Appendix).

I enquired as to whether there was an interest in textured rubber, on the inside of garments, as stimulation. I found that apart from stimulator pads which had been stuck onto the insides of underwear, in places such as the nipples and the crotch (and were considered to be pretty ineffectual), the only textures appearing on garments were on the outside, for decoration, and even these were rare indeed, e.g. the capes used in 'Batman' (the film) and jackets in 'Back to the Future 2' had a small pyramid texture on the fabric. P.V.C. is another popular fabric in manufactured fetish clothing. It was used in the punk era, and has been used a lot in fashion so , again, like leather it is not considered as 'pervy' as rubber. Fig 24. It doesn't have a particular smell, like leather or rubber. It is shinier and blacker than rubber (if that is understandable), but its shine has a different quality. Fig 25. It is very stretchy and has a fabric backing, so it is easy to sew, and is easier to take care of than

rubber; you can wash most kinds of P.V.C. in the washing machine. It is a warmer fabric than rubber; you won't freeze in the cold, but you will sweat a lot more in the heat. It seems that fetishists generally prefer rubber to P.V.C, but there are special P.V.C fetish clubs. In fact, there seems to be fetish clubs for almost everything, mackintoshes and wellingtons, suede, silk, woolly jumpers you name it, someone has the fetish.

Part of the excitement of wearing fetish underwear is that it is under normal clothes and there is a certain Frisson involved, when you know, but nobody else knows, what you're wearing underneath your jeans and sweatshirt. The thing about fetishists is, you can never pick them out on the street. They seem to be from all walks of life, and all age groups. Middle aged people, including a lot of couples, tend to be very keen on fetishism. Debbie Pickford suggest that there seems to be a male menopause, where men suddenly realise they want something new and exciting, and something triggers what it is they have been missing all this time. Some people have a huge guilt problem with fetishism and sado-masochism, and are terribly afraid of being ridiculed or reprimanded for

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showing an interest in something they have been brought up to think of as disgusting and perverted. This guilt and fear can be far more damaging, if repressed and harboured, then actually living out the fetishistic or sado-masochistic fantasies. The customers who seem to be most traumatised by their interests are transvestites. They find it very difficult to get up the courage to go into a shop, and not only ask for womens' clothes, but fetish womens' clothes at that. Fig 26. Being alien to the world of female dress, they need a lot of help, advice and encouragement. 'Karin' from Zeitgeist says that she has seen transvestites burst into tears and run out of the shop, because of their guilt or shame, or worse still a giggling tourist or leering lagerlout. Indeed I found the variety of customers who were in the shop while I conducted my interviews startling. A lot of fetishists are high flying business men and women, who are under a lot of pressure from their work, and seek release and freedom in the bedroom, (or wherever) which surpasses the level of pressure in their lives.



27



'Stinger' by Olivia ©1990

28

Chapter 4

FASHION AND FETISHISM; THE PUBLIC APPROACH.

As we have seen, fashion is a mechanism of perpetual style change which condemns this years look to next years dustbin. The Fashion world is constantly seeking some new inspiration, trying to come up with new ideas to titilate the Fashion conscious. In its hunger, it will devour ideas from any available source. Fetishistic clothing, like anything else, is fair game. The phenomenon of fashion drawing upon taboo fetishes is probably as old as fashion itself.

The 1950's gave us Fredericks of Hollywood, a lingerie mail order catalogue. ('For that movie star cleavage, these wonder workers feature stitched-in, push-up pads... up and out') (ref. ELLE oct.1990 p.103-9). Betty Page was an icon of the '50's', her face launched a thousand fantasies. She modelled and appeared in short films for Irving Klaw, a controversial artist of the period. Page is a cult heroine in the fetish and bondage scene. (ref. Skin Two no. 10 1990: p.19) Fig 27 and 28.





2. Vivienne Westwood in a Destroy T-shirt from Sex, 1976. Photograph by Norma Moriceau, courtesy of *i-D* magazine

In the 1960's, 'Kinky' leather clothes were brought into the fashion mainstream. The obsession with man-made fabrics saw a futuristic love affair with P.V.C, vinyl and 'wet look;'. Aggressive metal fastenings and high boots were all the rage. On the T.V. screen (also quite new) Honor Blackman and Diana Rigg - clad head-to-toe in black leather - thrashed and kicked their enemies into submission in The Avengers. Fig 29. Meanwhile, somewhere in space, Barbarella became the extra terrestrial heroine in boots and vinyl bustier.

In early 1970's Vivienne Westwood and Malcolm McLaren opened a shop on the Kings Rd., in London. By 1976 it had been re-named 'SEX' and sold 'bondage' clothes and obscene T-shirts, which among other things, inspired the whole punk movement. Sado-masochistic and fetishistic gear were the inspiration. The original garments' sexual implications were buried and then resurrected, and given a whole new life. Fig 30.

In the 1980s, fashion was hungry for another fetishitic fix. So designers, first in Britain (and later in Paris, New York and Tokyo) hit upon the idea of making garments in rubber - a material

which, unlike leather still retained connotations of freakish minority perversity. As with leather (and as with the corset, when it yo-yo'd in and out of fashion), rubber 'fetish fashions' were first greeted with derision, but rapidly achieved mainstream acceptability as magazines such as Vogue featured them.

In the 1990's, the tough look may well reflect the dangers of sex in the A.I.D.S. era. It is a sublimation of the sex act; more to do with display. It is also about auto eroticism. People are more aware of their bodies and take more care of themselves. The fit and healthy, well toned body is the goal of the '90's'. Also the 'correct' female body shape, as dictated by fashion is once again womanly and voluptuous. What better way to show it off than with body conscious, figure hugging clothes.

Designers have latched on to the idea of body conscious fabrics, and the catwalks of the early 1990's look a bit like queues for glamorous fetish clubs. The designer who brought fetishism and bondage clothes to the public in the 1970's (teamed with a new set of shock tactics), is

Vivienne Westwood. For her bondage collection in 1976, she examined the private world of fetishistic and masochistic dress:

'I had to ask myself, why this extreme form of dress? Not that I strapped myself up and had sex like that. But on the other hand I also didn't just want to liberally understand why people did it. It wanted to get hold of those extreme articles of clothing and feel what it was like to wear them' ^

The sado-masochistic meanings of the articles then began to shift in a way that made the original significance of bondage clothes almost reassuring, at least familiar. Westwoods approach then is explanatory:

'The bondage clothes were ostensibly restricting but when you put them on they gave you a feeling of freedom. They made you want to move your arms around '. (ref Westwood, quoted ZG no. 2 1980)

The bondage collection for men and women was predominantly in black, strapped, rubberised, slit and chained. There were zips everywhere, which made them gape in unusual places like the backs of the legs. The wearers accompanied the garments with a deathly-white pallor, spiked hair, safety pins (in the flesh as well as the clothes), and extra chains.



42. The Buffalo Gal: layers of bulky clothing worn with a satin bra on top. Westwood and McLaren's Buffalo collection of autumn/winter 1982-3. Photograph by Chris Woode

The wearing of underwear as outerwear was virtually pioneered by Westwood in the early 1980's. She produced brassieres to wear outside other clothing ,Fig .31, and many other designers followed suit. She has frequently used sex, sexuality and the perversions of it in clothing terms and expressions since her 'bondage days'. All her work pivots around the idea of a sexuality which is autonomous and subjectively defined. When she talks of what is 'sexy', the stress is on what will feel sexy to the wearer, so that the issue becomes one of the wearers' libido, rather than one of 'being attractive'. In 1990, she was voted British designer of the year, and voted one of the 8 most influential designers in the world. Her use of sexuality in fashion has influenced most, if not all of the designers I will speak about in the following pages.

Since her first collection, Psychedellic Jungle, in 1981, Pam Hogg's clothes have been bodyconscious. They are not for the faint-hearted. Using fabrics such as P.V.C , stretch Lycra, and silver and gold leather, Hogg-wear is sexy, clever and bold, not unlike its creator. Pam Hogg is not your average clothes designer, she cuts a striking figure wearing her own clothes, decked in jewellery and



Pam Hogg portrait by Kevin Davies



sporting peroxide-blond ringlets. Fig 32 and 33. Like Westwood, her background is in fine art, and printed textiles. She likes to be totally in control, from making the patterns herself (despite having no formal training) to picking models and painting scenery for her shows.

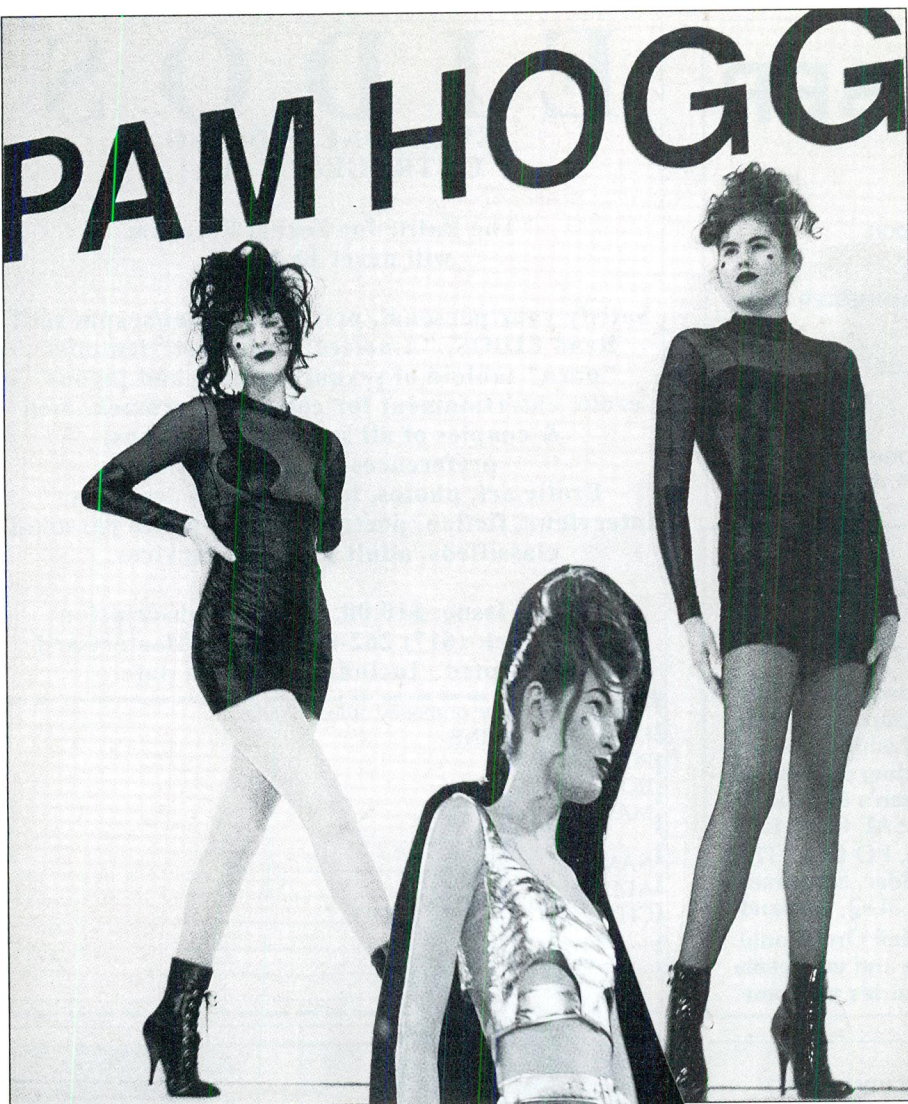
What makes Pam Hogg's clothes interesting is that they cross over somewhere between fashion and fetishism, without losing the impact of either. A Pam Hogg catsuit looks equally at home in Vogue or Skin Two (see fig 25) In chapter 3). She is particularly inspired by the fabrics she uses.

'Leather is beautiful! It's beautiful to wear and it looks fantastic. I love P.V.C. as well, especially stretch P.V.C., the tighter the better.' The feel of the fabrics is vital. Enjoying leather or latex on the skin is about self gratification, not satisfying a male audience.

'I like fetishistic clothing providing it's well made. There's nothing worse than tacky stuff. I don't make the things for any other reason than for a woman to feel great in it. I think you do feel great if you're in a pair of stilettos and slick skintight P.V.C.' (ref 'Warrior Queen on The Catwalk' - Skin Two No.10. 1990 p.61-3)

Hogg believes that all women should be proud of

PAM HOGG



Left: Pam's winter season 'Lust For Life' collection sees a new twist on the little black dress; above: lusty silver-legged leather boy flies in the face of caution; below: cheeky teddy girl comes out of the woods to play. There's something here for every Hoggglodite! (Catwalk photography by Ben French)



Ben French

Bound to strike: designer Pam Hogg's warrior queen



their beautiful bodies, they shouldn't be ashamed to show what they have by wearing tight clothing.

She uses models of different sizes and shapes, but says that it is vital for a woman (or man) to feel happy in her clothes, otherwise she will look ridiculous, no matter what she's wearing.

One problem Pam has found with working in fetish materials is that although the magazines love the clothes, customers are a bit reticent about buying them. When her P.V.C. clothes from the Brave New World collection were seen in the magazines, on the ramp and when worn by herself and her friends, everyone went wild for them, and press coverage was positive and plentiful, but no-one actually bought the clothes. She also had a bit of trouble persuading the models to wear her clothes, and to model them the way she wanted them to, however she succeeded brilliantly. Her clothes are never sleazy, they are strong, power-giving. These clothes are modern armour - tight leggings and a zip up jacket conceal, protect and defend. Its a look that is as threatening as it is alluring. Fig 34. The woman who wears these clothes does have to be sensible about when and where she wears them, not all lurking weirdos can tell the difference

between a prostitute and a glamorously-dressed, self confident woman.

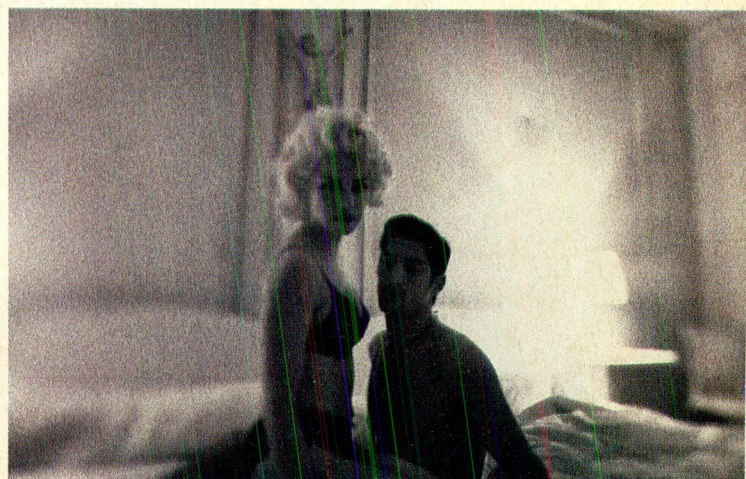
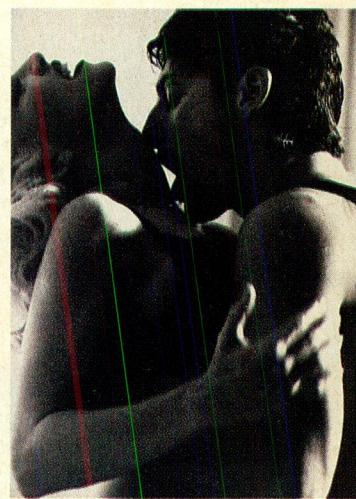
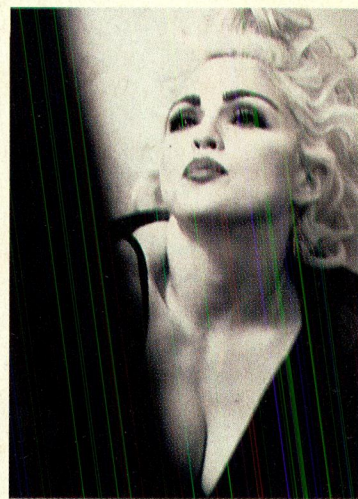
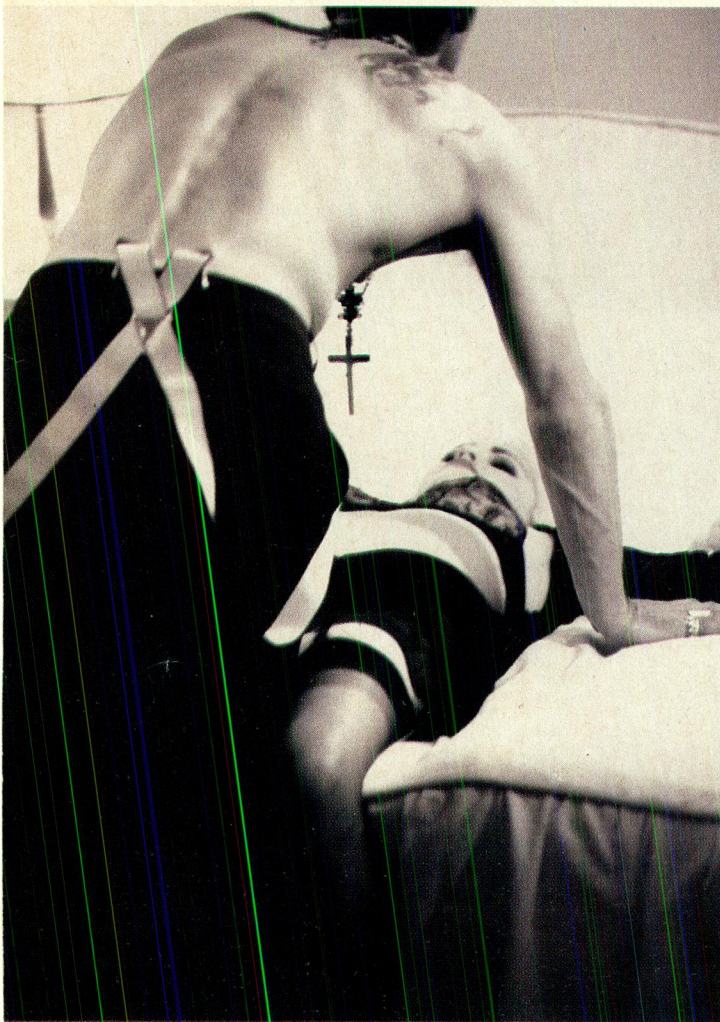
Pam dislikes the pretensions and unimaginative plagiarism that are part and parcel of the fashion world. She believes designing is purely about clothing, about dressing up.

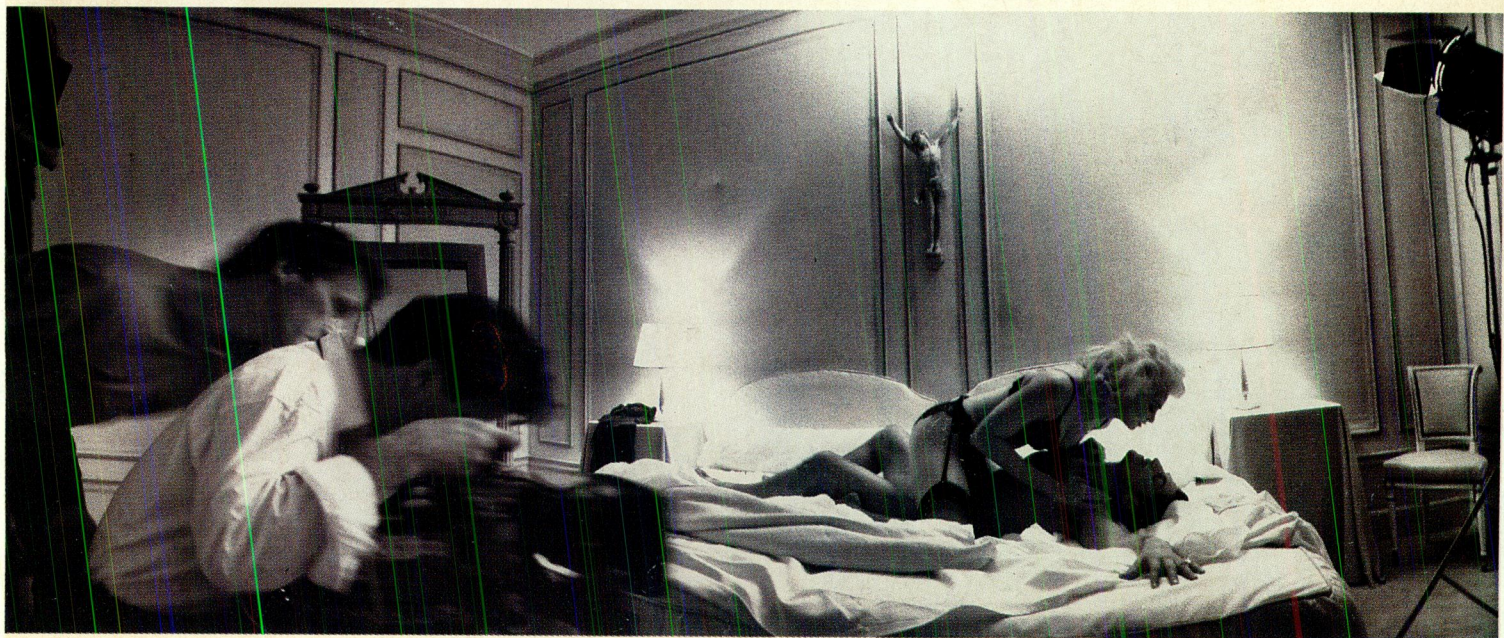
Women artists in surrealism developed a language of the erotic that /surrealism's device of displacement in specific ways. It was in terms of an oblique approach to their own sexuality and their own bodies that woman artists in surrealism explored feminine disguise and masquerade. Schiaparelli's approach to dress (in the 1920's and 1930's) centres around an understanding of how it acts simultaneously to repress the body and to bring it into the realm of language - the symbolic. This understanding informs the fetishistic play in her work, a play which involves the sense of touch as much as that of sight. Her work is imbued with an appreciation of the fetishistic function of dress. In the shoe hat ensemble, the associations of pocket/mouth/vagina play against those of hat/high heel/ phallus. The piece suggests the body



and its relation to clothes as an interface of multiple fetishistic possibilities. (ref Evans 1989 p.134-139). Fig 35

Jean Paul Gaultier is another French designer who scavenges the world for imagery which can be subverted into surreal jokes. As in Schiaparelli's work, symbolic objects and clothing fetishes become toys. In 1984, he produced the 'dervish bra', a strip-tease bra made from two tasselled fez hats. For some reason, Gaultier has been selected as the couture fantasy fashion designer, instead of merely receiving the same amount of recognition as other designers, such as Pam Hogg, who have done the same thing. He takes elements of fetishism and bondage and translates them into bizarre fashion clothing, mostly unwearable. His designs are very witty, but the clothes he actually sells are quite ordinary in comparison to those which earned him his reputation. Madonna, pop persona extraordinaire, wears his more bizarre outfits on stage. Having said this, she is using clothes designed by Kim West for the follow up single/video to 'Justify My Love', her current video release, a rather steamy, though over-hyped





ECTOMORPH

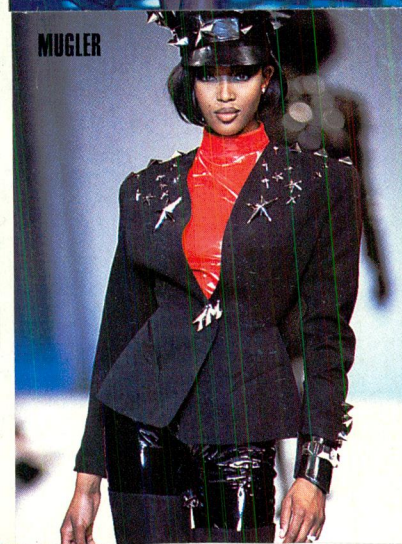
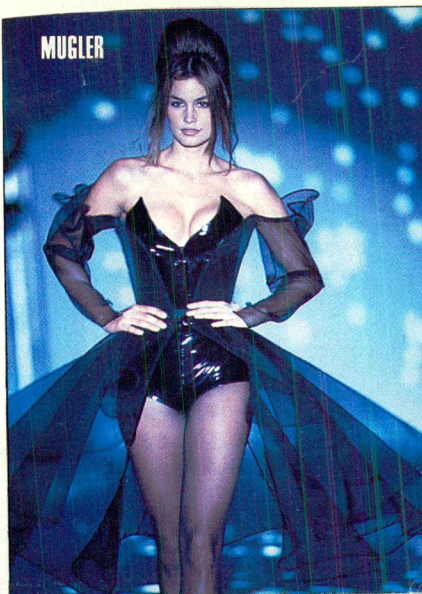


Bonni Bagalae

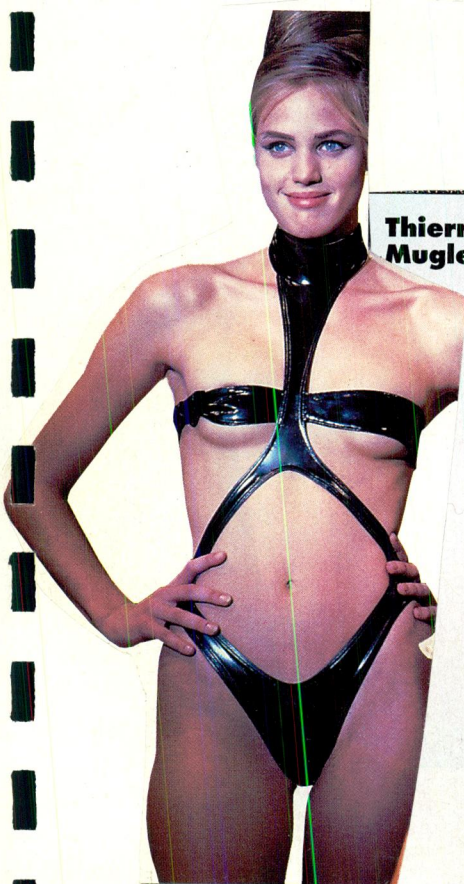
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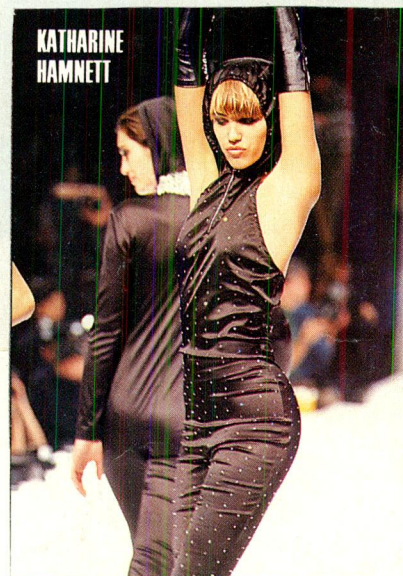
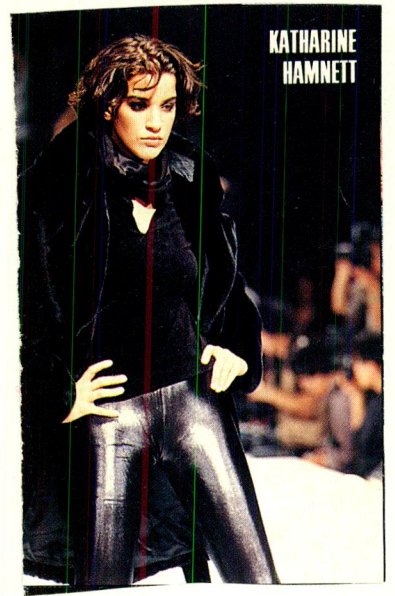


elle's August bondage fashion feature has Diane Brill sporting Mugler plastic



Thierry
Mugler

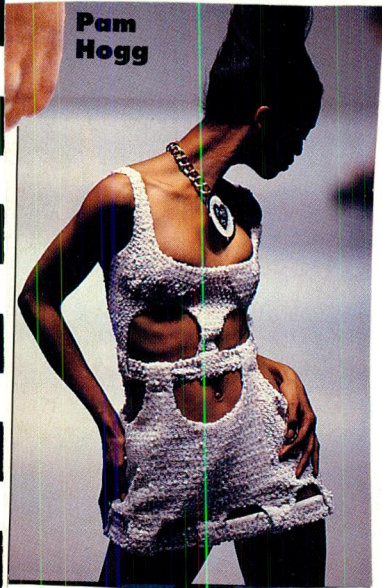




SECOND SKIN

Free spirit. right, in fake snakeskin belted jacket (from £350) by Helen Storey. Black and silver Lurex leggings (£19) by Pagan Metal. Black fake snakeskin ankle boots (£55) by Red or Dead.





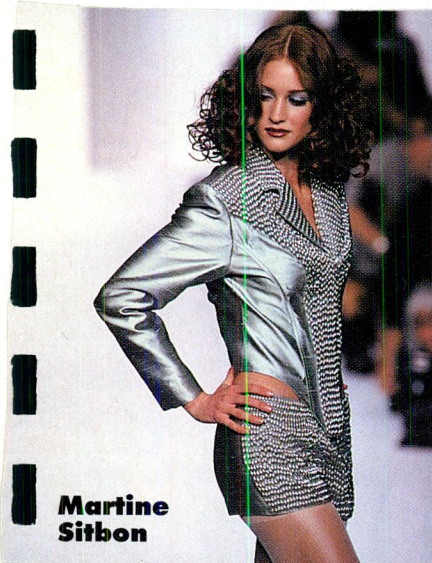
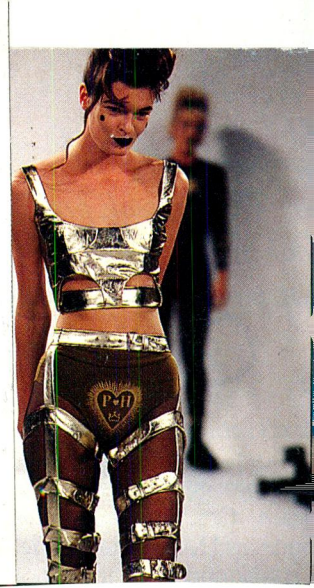
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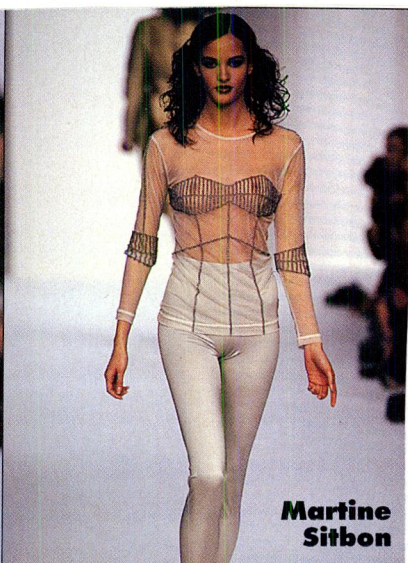
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PAM HOGG



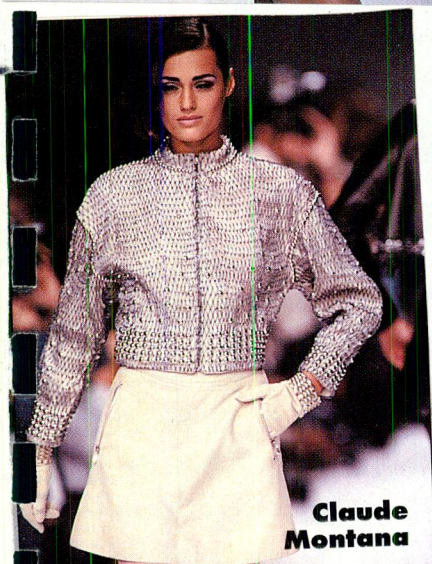
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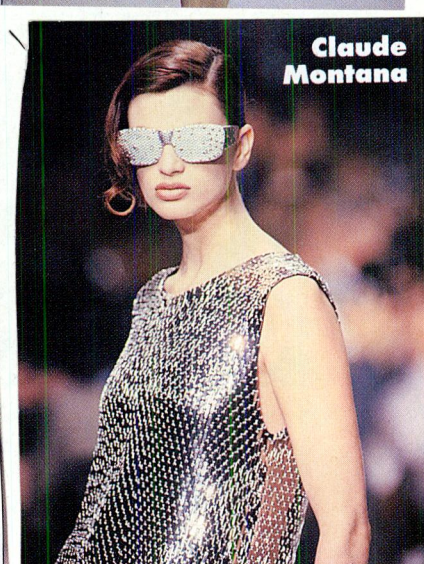
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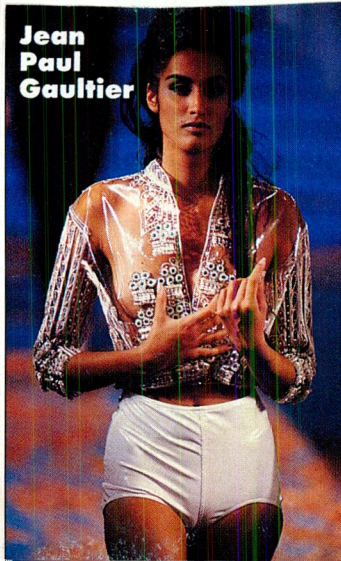
Martine Sitbon



Claude Montana



Claude Montana



Jean Paul Gaultier



WORKERS FOR FREEDOM



English corsetry with an irreverent spirit: peek-a-bow floral print corset, *this page*, at Vivienne Westwood. Glossy stretch Lycra pants, by Debut Dancewear, about £6, at Stage Door. Thigh-high silk satin boots, by Jean Paul Gaultier, £1,075, at A La Mode. Opaque tights, by Hudson, £3.99, at major stores.

production , which was banned for being 'overtly sexual'. Fig 36.

Kim West is an English designer, originally making well made fetish gear but now becoming more recognised as a real fashion (fetish) designer. Her designs are slick and sophisticated, just as good as any 'label' designer outfits. So too are the designs by Krystina Kitis of Ectomorph. Fig 37. She was the first rubber and latex wear designer to exhibit at Olympia during London Fashion Week, in 1986. Designing originally for the fetish market, her slippery designs eventually made it to the cover of Womens Wear Daily.

Many other designers have jumped on the band wagon, and are producing sexy clothes in combinations; fetish fabrics and designs with more conventional fashion fabrics and designs. Amongst these are Thierry Mugler, Katherine Hamnett, Helen Storey, Montana Martine Sitbon and Workers for Freedom. Fig 38. Bondage seems to be a common factor in all their 1991 collections. Why is this the case? Is it because fashion delights in being perverse, and the more serious the social conditions of the time, the more escapist and

fantastic the creative instincts will be? (as in post W.W.2 1940's, 'Fear of communism' in the 1960's (those Russian spys kept popping up everywhere!), Anti-everything 1970's, and now, Anti-Aids, Anti-war, Anti-poverty (1990's). Helen Storey says that the use of bondage in her collection is a symbol of freedom in these struggling political times. It's anti-repression and anti-compromise (ref Mower, 1991: p.15)

Elizabeth Wilson argued that the romanticism and nostalgia of the new look (Dior, 1940's) has its roots in the development of Paris fashion during the Nazi occupation, and goes so far as to describe it as 'morbid, if not fascist' (ref Wilson 1985 p.44) She writes of the stiffness, spikiness and sharpness of the new look as 'weirdly masculine'. Perhaps the spikiness of the new look may be understood in terms of fetishism. Certainly it revelled in its impracticality; perhaps the most 'feminine' thing about it was that it was restricting, requiring , especially in its couture form, a return to waspies and stiff petticoats . (ref : Evans 1989 p130)

Many other personalitites, other than Madonna are





CRAMPING OUR STYLE

Poison Ivy (left) and Lux Interior: songs about spanking, kinky boots and 'bad' women

Trevor Watson



Trevor Watson

Essential garb for today's image conscious popstars



Lux, Ivy with fellow Cramps Candy (L) and Nick (R)

using the strong fetishistic imagery of the current fashion trends. Kylie Minogue has changed vastly, from the bubble-gum and candyfloss little girl she used to be, into a sex kitten. 'What I'm trying to get with my new imagery at the moment is very much the "woman/child" thing, which I really like. It is sexual, but not overtly so, It is not imposing' (ref: James, 1991 p.12). 'Her new image has had the tabloids both rubbing their crotches in glee and sharpening their nails ready to have another dig'. ^ She is using this new image in the hope to appeal to a wider audience. Fig - 39

Another musical bunch who are into the fetishistic image is American Psycho-punk-a-billy rock 'n' rollers - The Cramps. They are keen collectors of fetish art, and their association with fetish clothing goes back a long way. In fact, most of their songs are tales of fetishistic, sado-masochistic adventurers. Lux Interior, the ghoulish lead singer, and Poison Ivy, the guitarist, stock up on shiny black gear while they are in London. Fig 40. Lux tells Skin Two the story of how he first became interested in tight black clothes. He speaks of the hoods, one of the two types of

people who lived in his home town of Akron, Ohio in the 1950's. The hoods wore tight black clothes, and so this is where Lux gets his inspiration. Ivy, on the other hand, picked up on the look from old magazines. Their live performances consist of a highly active, sexual display; Lux usually casting aside all garments, bar his briefs and stilettos, within minutes, and simulates various sexual acts with monitors and other stage paraphernalia. Poison Ivy gyrates, bumps and grinds her way through their exciting, raucous set. (ref. Skin Two, 1990; p.70)

While this most provocative theme seems offensive and out of the question in the early 1990's, its as well to remember that what shocks at first becomes commonplace in time.

Conclusion

And so I conclude that as public (fetishist) opinion agrees with me, there is not necessarily an answer as to why people are fetishists. The theories are probably all relevant in certain cases, but not in others. Also, almost all people have fetishes, or recognise the fetishistic qualities in the clothes they wear, whether they realise it or not. It *is* realised, recognised and used by 'fetishists', but subconsciously, everyone is a fetishist at heart.

It has been an interesting experience, studying this subject. Many questions are still left unanswered, except by theories and opinions. I do not know how they can ever be scientifically answered, or if they ever will be, but i'm sure that whoever tries will certainly have fun (after all, that is what fetishism is all about!).

THE END

Interview NO 1 - sales assistant from Zeitgeist given
'Karin' pseudonom.

- 1 Q What kind of customers do you tend to get?
A All kinds, young to old, rich to poor.
- 2 Q Any particular age group that is more prevalent?
A Middle age. The younger people tend to be into the fashion aspect.
- 3 Q What % of your customers are purely interested in the fashion aspect?
A About 40%. We are one of the more serious shops in soho. Our main sales are in bondage clothing.
- 4 Q What types of fabric are most popular, and why?
A Rubber is the most popular, mainly because it looks nice, and feels nice on. P.V.C looks very nice but it is very uncomfortable, and noisy when you walk.
- 5 Q Would you sweat more in P.V.C than in rubber?
A P.V.C is an insulating fabric. When the weather is cold it keeps you warm, but when the weather is warm, you sweat more than you would in rubber.
- 6 Q Are there any other popular fabrics?
A Leather. We do not stock any others [apart from P.V.C And rubber]. We do stockings and tights. Fishnet is very uncomfortable, it cuts into you. It looks great, but people who are real fetishists wear stuff that feels nice.

7 Q Which garments are most popular and why?

A Rubber underwear, mainly because people do not wear rubber outside unless they are going to a club. People like stuff for at home, which you would not really wear out on the street, like rubber suspender belts, knickers, bras, and masks. Its not practical for outdoors.

8 Q Is there much difference between the clothes bought by fetisishts and those bought by fashion wearers?

A Yes. Fashion wearers do not really go for the underwear and bondage, just the 'normal' garments, like dresses and jackets. People who are more seriously into it will buy the more bizzare things like peep-hole bras, crotchless knickers etc. It is for indoor use.

9 Q What attraction do these garments and fabrics hold?

A Its the feel and the look. With rubber, you get a very smooth looking body, curvaceous. It clings and smoothes away any bumps.

10 Q But what about other fabrics that do the same thing?

A They might have roughly the same effect, but nothing looks as good as shinny rubber. When you look at it, you know that if you touch it, it will feel good. See that up there? (points to silk bustier), you cannot say that looks better than rubber. Also, i suppose rubber is more bizzare for people to look at.

11 Q With tight P.V.C or rubber, can you wear underwear without it showing through?

A Yes, you can.

12 Q Do you cater for specific needs, i.e made-to-measure?

A It depends. Most of our stock is bought in, and a lot of it is moulded rubber, which we cannot make ourselves. We can do skirts, tops and catsuits for men, and transvestites.

13 Q Are many transvestites fetishists?

A If they are shopping in here, they are both. Ordinary transvestites wear ordinary womens clothes.

14 Q Do you yourself like to wear these fabrics and why?

A Yes, rubber when the weather is right, and leather nearly every day. I've got about 20 leather jackets. I prefer rubber though, if it was more comfortable i'd wear it every day.

15 Q Does wearing rubber make you cold?

A Yes, your skin cannot breathe, and if the weather is cold you get very cold.

16 Q Do you take all your customers seriously?

A For most of the customers, i'm here to help, more than sell. I only like to sell to people who are genuinely interested. Transvestites are my favourite customers. Most of them do not have a girlfriend, and need lots of help choosing, because they are very shy. It takes a lot of courage for them to come in and ask for a rubber skirt or something.

17 Q The dictionary explanation (psychological) for fetish is abnormal stimulus, or object of sexual desire. By abnormal, i take it they mean unnatural; not of the body. Thus, anyone who gains sexual pleasure from something other than the the body is a fetishist. Do you have any comments on this definition?

A Yes i think everyone has a fetish, everyone enjoys some man-made object. It may never be brought out in a person, but its there. I've had it for five years , but its only recently been brought out in me.

18 Q Why do you think there has been an upsurge of designer use of fetish-associated gear?

A I think they caught onto the fact that so many people are into the fetish scene, and so many club-goers were wearing the gear. They know there's a market, and sales for them. They probably appreciate the visual element as well. Its easier for the wearer to buy the look with a designer tag on it like Katherine Hamnett, it avoids the dirty, seedy sex shop visit.

19 Q Have you had any particularly unusual requests as regards clothes?

A We get anything and everything, but i'm not shockable any more.

20 Q When you see fetish-associated fabrics on the roll, do they still bring fetishism to mind?

A Yes, always. People can have a fetish for anything though some of which can be a bit odd, such as ordinary rain macs and rainhats, and wellies.

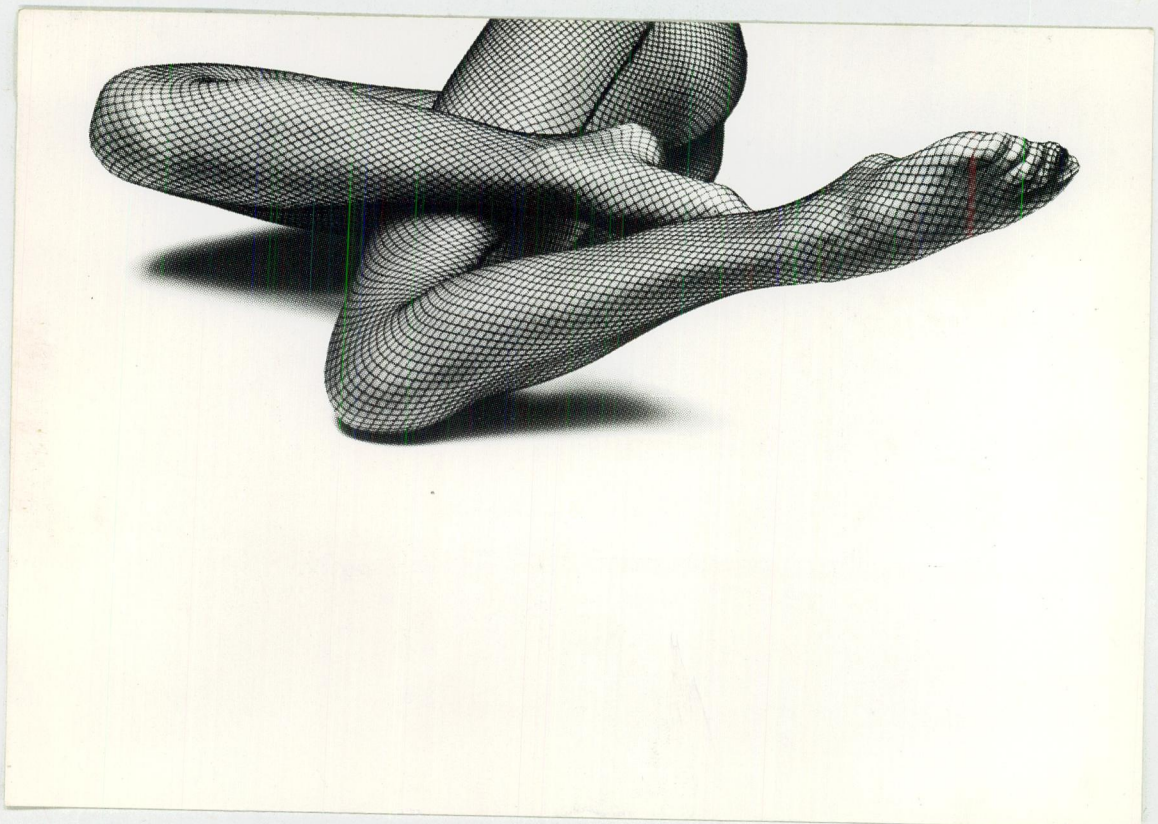
SHE COULDN'T CONTROL HER

LUST FOR SHOES



... BUT HER FEET WERE HAPPY

42



43

Interview No. 2 Debbie Pickford, Managing Director, Skin
Two (edited)

1 Q What kind of customers, and what age groups do you tend to get?

A People who come into shops like this [Skin Two] cover a wide range. We get lots of business men, because we are near the city, mainly middle aged. We get lots of couples too.

2 Q What % are only interested in the fashion aspect?

A About 30% I would imagine. We go specifically for the fashion end of the market. That's why we mainly stock jackets, trousers, dresses, skirts, rather than cat suits with zips over the nipples, things like that. A great deal of our customers are fetishists though. They feel they could wear our clothes to a dinner party or something, to be a bit daring. Fashion buyers prefer a fashionable designer label.

3 Q What types of fabrics are most popular and why?

A The majority of our stock is rubber. you can buy leather all over the place. We would stock leather underwear; basques and gloves etc...P.V.C. is very popular because its shiny, very tight fitting like rubber, and its a bit cheaper and more comfortable to wear. Rubber is a great fabric to wear, but when its cold, you get very cold, and when its hot, you sweat. It keeps to your body temperature. The sweat inside the rubber is very uncomfortable. Its like a second skin though if the temperature is right, it moulds to your body

4 Q The fact that it feels like you're wearing nothing, would that be a reason for people wearing it, or is it because its tight?

A Yes both. Its hot and sweaty, the rubber slides around, its quite an enjoyable sensation. I only dislike wearing it when its cold.

5 Q Do you sell garments which are textured on the inside, for stimulation (while sliding around inside your sweaty garment)?

A The rubber usually used has a smooth inside. You could stick a layer of textured rubber onto the garment. There is someone who is making textured rubber. He did the capes in 'Batman', and also did part of the jackets in 'Back to the future 2', which have lots of little pyramids on them. So you can get it, and its interesting to feel, but its normally on the outside of garments, for decoration. You can get moulded underwear which has stimulator pads inside, for various parts like the nipples etc. Its soft, and doesn't work particularly well, actually (laughs!) I must admit.

6 Q What about the care of these fabrics?

A Well PVC can be washed in the machine, most new kinds of PVC anyway. It just cant be tumble dried. Rubber needs a lot of care. Heat and sunlight can damage it, make it bloom. This is where the talc comes to the surface of the rubber. You've got to clean it very well and polish it with pervo-shine or something. You can spray it with silicone spray, which makes it all slippery and wet.

7 Q What are the most popular garments?

A Everybody has their starter kit which is long rubber gloves, stockings, suspender belt and corset, all moulded stuff. The little black dress, and miniskirt are very popular too. Men have less choice. The fetishist is more likely to go for something complete like a catsuit. When you've got a mask or all in one garment you've got the smell too, which is an attraction for some people. You wouldn't want to be claustrophobic.

8 Q What attraction do these garments and types of fabrics have?

A Fetishists tend to go for the all over feel. You've got to be very comfortable with the fabric to wear it like that. Catsuits are particularly difficult to get in to.

9 Q What attraction do these garments and types of fabrics have?

A A fetishist might like to see their partner wearing a garment, rather than wear it themselves. It's all down to personal preference. Tight clothes can be flattering, what you've got, it holds in place. Things that are black and shiny have always attracted people. There are certain birds that are attracted by things that sparkle. If you see something shiny, you will automatically look at it. I can't explain why. Leather isn't as shiny as rubber. Also it doesn't cling, it loses its shape after a while. Some PVC looks nearly as good as rubber, and it's tight and shiny. People who like the look of rubber, but

hate the feel or the smell of it, will go for PVC. It doesn't have its own particular smell. Its fabric backed and so takes on the smell of the wearer. Rubber is the favourite though, its just so smooth and shiny.

10 Q Would fashion designers be at all influential on fetish clothes designers?

A No. Fetish-wear designers have been doing it for a long time, and there isn't really a lot of designing involved as the styles stay the same. We've had Pam Hogg in here, to have a look around, and we've sent catalogues to Gaultier, I think fashion designers are just interested in trying something new and different. Its nice that I can wear rubber to go out now and then and it will look fashionable but then I've always worn it anyway.

11 Q What kinds of sensations are appealing about rubber?

A Loose rubber gives off static electricity when its moved over the skin, it makes all the hairs stand up, which can be pleasant. Getting into the bath with tight rubber on is fascinating, if its a catsuit, the water gradually goes up the sleeves down the neck and through the zip. Its great. It gives a very secure feeling.

12 Q Freuds theory is that a fetish is chosen by association with a childhood object. Do you agree?

A I cannot tell you why I have a fetish. I just like it. Do I have to have a reason? As far as I know it doesn't stem from my childhood. It has no dangerous connotations, and I don't have penis-envy. Most of us can enjoy normal sex as

well, we don't have to have our fetishes. We call each other pervs as a pet name, its a joke really because we don't believe we are perverts at all, thats rubbish.

13 Q Do you think that goes for most people who consider themselves fetishists?

A Yes, many people will only use their fetish on special occasions, they dont have to have it, but just like it.

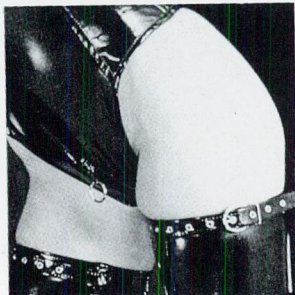
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of London

MISTRESS COSTUME



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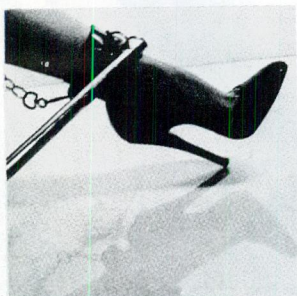
BOOTS-6"HEELS



RUBBER CLOTHES



LEG SPREADERS



CHAIN SETS



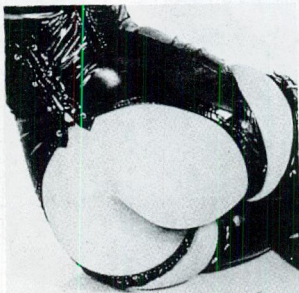
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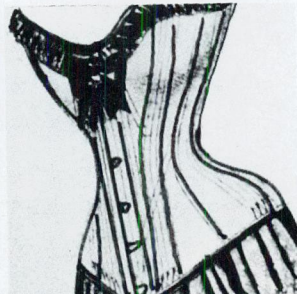
PLASTIC RESTRAINTS



GIRDLES



STEEL BONED CORSETS



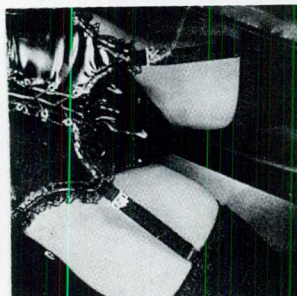
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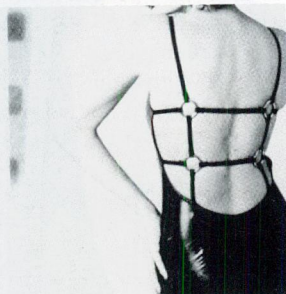
SHOES-6" HEELS



SUSPENDER SETS



STREET CLOTHES



COSTUME-POP OPEN



RUBBER COLLECTION



ALL READILY AVAILABLE - LOTS AND LOTS OF STOCK
 ——— THE BEST SHOP IN TOWN ———

Interview No 3 with Tim Woodward. Director of Skin
Two. (edited)

1 Q Why do you like to wear rubber?

A People are always asking us this, why don't we like cotton or something else?

I don't honestly believe that anyone knows the answer to that, i've asked lots of people, anthropologists such as my friend Ted Polhemous, analysts such as David Holtz who's a Jungian. John Sutcliffe who made the catsuits for Diana Rigg in the Avengers, none of these people have the remotest idea why some people like rubber or leather or whatever. Neither do i, and don't believe any one does. It's like saying why are you fond of curries or spaghetti or whatever, there is no answer to that. I don't think people should worry about it. It's appeal is that it changes your perception of yourself. If i put on my best Armani suit to go dinner or something, i would feel slightly different, i would behave and walk and think slightly different. Peter Rutgard's book "the black goddess and the sixth sense" has got a great phrase for it, its like your clothes are like the knobs and dials and switches on a plane or a car, in that you can't just adjust how you feel. It's your choice, fetishism is just an extension of that.

(me) You use your clothes, and the changing of them to divide your life. You associate certain clothes with practicality, and work, and being tired from your job. When you come home, if you change your clothes, it's dividing your day a bit more than if you never change your appearance.

(Tim) Yes, but people are quite happy with that of course. The fantasies are quite separate from reality, and you can explore them. Partnership bonds are forged by having a mutual hobby or interest.

2 Q Is the level of sexual release which is desired equal to the level of stress in your life, which you need to get rid of.

A Its not like drug addiction, you don't keep going further into it. You may occasionally make a step forward, but its not a regular, increasing thing. My hypothesis is that you can correlate liking to be submissive with having a lot of responsibility normally, although you can counteract that by saying the submissive is in charge.

3 Q Where would you draw the line in sado masochism?

A I think that i would draw the line, i don't think you should cause injury to anyone, the drawing of blood is a really bad idea. Most people are very responsible, it's a self-policing world.

4 Q Why do you think there has recently been an upsurge of the designers-use fetish associated gear?

A I'm not sure, there are only so many looks they can use, 200 or however many, but its finite, if you're a fashion designer, you've only got a certain range to pull from. As fashion and fetishism are so closely allied , they raid fetishistic imagery all the time. Every few years, all sorts of fetishistic ideas are re-used Clothes always have a sexual element The sensual element is very much part of your stock in trade in the

fashion business. Most creative people are aware of their sensuality and sexuality, and life is very mixed and mingled with the two.

5 Q Do you think that someone who likes wearing silk (but would never consider themselves a fetishist), is a fetishist?

A Well there is a huge gap between what people are and what they think they are. Anything which involves sensuality and appearance, anything that changes your opinion of someone, is fetishistic. Whether its asking your husband to wear his nice suit, or asking to be tied up, its the same thing. Each has its implications, its fantasies.

6 Q Does fetish clothing stem from any particular period, such as the Victorian era?

A It depends, it goes through trends. At the moment its trendy to like the 1950's, but it doesn't come from any particular period, apart from there being some icons of fetishism, which will always exist, like leather or stilettos or what ever.

7 Q Are the restrictions inherent in fetish clothes, apart from the obvious chosen restrictions; enjoyable?

A Probably, although it depends on the person. It would just make you irritable, it occupies your mind, but some people enjoy it.

8 Q What are your opinions on pop personalities and their use of fetish clothing?

A I don't like pop music and so I'm very cynical but I think with most groups its just a manufactured image. The Cramps were genuinely interested and very polite and American, old fashioned in

comparison to the British but they were very normal. We don't take much notice of pop people they tend to take more notice of us really. They need us more than we need them.

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