

a symbolic value, however attenuated. On the bare Elizabethan stage costumes were particularly important - companies were willing to pay more for a good costume than for a good play - and that importance in turn reflected the culture's fetishistic obsession with **clothes** as a mark of status and degree. And if for the theater the acquisition of clerical garments was a significant appropriation of symbolic power, why would the church part with that power? Because for the Anglican polemicists, as for a long tradition of moralists in the West, the theater signifies the unscrupulous manipulation for profit of popular faith; the cynical use of setting and props to generate unthinking consent; the external and trivialized staging of what should be deeply inward; the tawdry triumph of spectacle over reason; the evacuation of the divine presence from religious mystery,

Clothes as symbolic power

*performed [representees], there are others no less necessary which relate directly to the stage and to the persons who perform [representants]; and it is to them that the previously mentioned Genevans attribute the taste for luxury, adornment, and dissipation, whose introduction among us they rightly fear."*⁷ Immorality, then, attaches, to the very status of the representer (performer). Vice is his natural bent. It is normal that he who has taken up representation as a profession should have a taste for external and artificial signifiers, and for the perverse use of signs. Luxury, fine **clothes**, and dissipation are not signifiers incidentally coming about here and there, they are the crimes of the signifier or the representer itself.

Clothes as fraudulent from a deconstructionist point of view as a false signifier "Of Grammatology"

the Ethics of Psychoanalysis, distances himself from the liberating gesture of saying finally that "the emperor has no clothes." The point is, as Lacan puts it, that the emperor is naked only beneath his clothes, so if there is an unmasking gesture of psychoanalysis, it is closer to Alphonse Allais's well-known joke, quoted by Lacan: somebody points at a woman and utters a horrified cry, "Look at her, what a shame, under her **clothes**, she is totally naked."

But all this is already well known: it is the classic concept of ideology as "false consciousness," misrecognition of the social reality which is part of this reality itself. Our

It is shameful that all of us wear clothes, and have ideological underpinnings.

themselves, they are not commodities. The different kinds of labor, such as tillage, cattle, tending, spinning, weaving, and making **clothes**, which result in the various products, are in themselves, and such as they are, direct social functions, because functions of the family, which, just as much as a society based on the production of commodities,

Clothes as social functions, ethnographic

And so life is reckoned as nothing. Habitualization devours work, clothes, furniture, one's wife, and the fear of war. "If the whole complex lives of many people go on unconsciously, then such lives are as if they had never been." And art exists that one may recover the sensation of life; it exists to make one feel things, to make the stone *stony*. The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known. The technique of art is to make objects "unfamiliar," to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged. *Art is a way of experiencing the artfulness of an object: the object is not important...*

Art as Technique, weird clothes break free from habituation of what is not normal.

John Fiske's book, *Television Culture* (1990), studies the way television is constructed using codes of representation that are invisible to viewers but that shape everything they see. A code is a term from linguistics and semiology that roughly means a "dictionary of meanings or effects." Each element of television, according to Fiske, is governed and generated by codes that lend meaning to everything from the kinds of actors, to the clothes they wear, to the way they speak, to the kinds of camera shots used to depict them.

The punks would certainly seem to bear out this thesis. The subculture was nothing if not consistent. There was a homological relation between the trashy cut-up clothes and spiky hair, the pogo and amphetamines, the spitting, the vomiting, the format of the fanzines, the insurrectionary poses and the "soulless," frantically driven music. The punks wore clothes which were the sartorial equivalent of swear words, and they swore as they dressed - with calculated effect, lacing obscenities into record notes and publicity releases, interviews and love songs. Clothed in chaos, they