FOUCAULT STUDIES

© Adam Geczy & Vicki Karaminas
ISSN: 1832-5203
DOI: https://doi.org/10.22439/fs.i36.7230
Foucault Studies, No. 36, 201-226, September 2024

Article reuse guidelines:
https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/

ARTICLE

Power + Fashion

ADAM GECZY & VICKI KARAMINAS
University of Sydney, Australia & Massey University, Aotearoa-New Zealand

ABSTRACT. "Power dressing," itself a women's dress reform movement, as it came to be called in the 1970s, used to distinguish typical feminine dress styles and was seen as a necessary strategy for a more subdued image on par with the masculine, serious, and formal professional dress, namely the ubiquitous suit and tie. This new 'career' woman became visible by her appearance and choice of dress codes that reinforced her position as a businesswoman who was seriously committed to her work. But from the perspective of the first decades of the new millennium, power dressing and power and fashion have far wider meanings and ramifications. For Michel Foucault, power is a regulatory principle that is used to control social interactions and to impose structures that inform the ways in which we act and appear. In line with Foucault's analysis, to dress is already to respond to tacit frameworks of power, and because it involves already accepted codes of visualisation and behaviour, to "power dress" is not simply to wield or enact power voluntarily but to succumb to it as well. Further, as this paper will reveal, power dressing can also be understood according to Foucault's "technologies of self", which sees the historical subject as both subject and object of a network of discursive forces that are considered normative as opposed to constructed. Power dressing still exists today but according to a more nuanced and multivalent configuration. It can also be thought of as a particular form of renunciation that facilitates an embodiment of power much as religious asceticism and privation is (purportedly) constitutive of a more authentic self.

Keywords: power, fashion, dress, subject-position, fashion semiology

I. INTRODUCTION

"Power dressing," itself a women's fashion movement, as it came to be called in the 1970s, was a response to the sizeable rise in the presence of college educated women in the corporate workplace due to the women's liberation movement, birth control medication, the demand for equal pay, and blue- and white-collar labour, among other factors. It was a term that was used to distinguish typical feminine dress styles typified

in the post-war era by Christian Dior's "New Look" and seen as a necessary strategy for a more subdued image on par with the masculine, serious, and formal professional dress, namely the ubiquitous suit and tie. This new "career" woman became visible by her appearance and choice of dress codes that reinforced her position as a woman who was seriously committed to her work. Pantyhose replaced garters and girdles and flat shoes or "pumps" were an option instead of high heels. Knee-length pencil skirts and tailored suits with padded shoulders created an A-line silhouette that communicated confidence and authority. It was about this time that Yves St Laurent translated the discourse of power dressing into the iconic *Le Smoking* suit that came to define women's liberation. The plaid accented black satin suit was worn with a chiffon or silk *lavallière* blouse (known as a "pussybow") and has become a garment imbued with power and defiance for feminists. In the 80s, the *lavallière* became a staple of conservative British prime minister Margaret Thatcher, who gained the epithet "iron lady" because of her tough leadership style and whose wardrobe became associated with women's power dressing (Fig.1). "It gave women working in a man's world a soft power version of the suit and tie. It was an iron fist in a velvet glove."[1]

Fig.1. Dennis Thatcher alongside Margaret Thatcher wearing a *lavalliere* blouse on a visit to Northern Ireland. 22 December 1982. United Kingdom National Archives. Public Domain.

[1] Fleur Britton, "Take a Bow: Kate Moss Outfit Sends Subversive Message at Depp Libel Trial," *The Guardian*, 27 May, 2022. https://www.theguardian.com/film/2022/may/27/kate-moss-outfit-johnny-depp-amber-heard-trial (accessed December 23, 2023).

But from the perspective of the first decades of the new millennium, power dressing, and power and fashion, have far wider meanings and ramifications. For Michel Foucault, power is a regulatory principle that is used to control social interactions and to impose structures that inform the ways in which we act and appear. Power for Foucault is not confined to a person or things but to how systems interrelate and achieve hierarchies and order. In line with Foucault's analysis, to dress is already to respond to tacit frameworks of power, and because it involves already accepted codes of visualisation and behaviour, to "power dress" is not simply to wield or enact power voluntarily but to succumb to it as well. By these standards, power dressing can exist across a scale of varying degrees of awareness of this dynamic. At one pole, dress is a form of armour, of mutually recognised symbols of protection and resistance, on the other, such resistance is more nuanced, deploying or subverting signifiers of appearance as they relate to codes of both clothing and context. In short, the only one wearing a hoodie in the boardroom is the CEO herself.

Most evidently, power in fashion derives from corporations and fashion houses, celebrities, magazines, and blogs and related "influencers". This is well known, but to limit the examination of power to these factors is superficial not least because it limits itself to a simplistic causal relation of cause and effect. That is not to say that these dimensions are monolithic and devoid of nuance but rather that they warrant a much larger study. The other aspect of power is closer to what we want to discuss here, which is that of *panache* or *sprezzatura*, the ineffable qualities of aplomb and self-appointed authority that bind fashion to character in a way that make them indescribably seductive, charismatic, and vexingly hard to emulate. What we want to trace here is the passage of power dressing—that is, dress as it applies to places where power is most visibly transacted, such as the corporate, political, and judicial sphere—since the 1970s into the present day, especially in the way it assumes and moulds discourses of power through an active disengagement of normative codes. If the first examples of power dressing could arguably be seen as an abrogation of womanhood in subservience to masculinist dress codes, it has certainly given rise to two less conventionalised practices. Both are strategies of denormalization. The first involves the rejection of sartorial norms irrespective of gender, exhibiting knowledge of the norms and finding alternative modes of self-empowerment. The other is the assertion of power through establishing a clear yet unspoken demarcation of professional hierarchies. While the former concept of power dressing was undoubtedly masculinizing, the latter is more feminizing, albeit according to different criteria. In both cases, however, they expose the kinds of regnant discourses of power and dress in places where power is most visibly exercised.

II. FASHION AND FOUCAULT

Power is implied in the semantics of fashion itself because what is in fashion disempowers what is out of fashion. To address power and fashion together would at first seem an altogether redundant exercise given that fashion, as opposed to clothing and dress, is by definition imbued with power, given that it involves a choice in order for a signifying function, overt or covert, great or small, that places distinctiveness at a premium. If we accept the basic clothing-dress-fashion taxonomic triad, clothing is what generically covers the body, dress is what makes class and ethnic distinctions, and fashion involves a more intricate semiological web consisting of the commodity, consumption, subjectivity, and communication.

Before the inception of the fashion system in the eighteenth century, "fashion" centred largely around class difference and privilege and entailed a simple and definable power dynamic. Strict sumptuary laws and statutes imposed by sovereigns and governments stretching from Europe to China controlled the wearing of certain colours, fabrics and garments and were enacted for the assertion of privilege and discerning social status or profession. Louis XIV reputedly placed ongoing pressure on his court at Versailles to be optimally dressed not only for his own glorification (he always dressed even better) but because it was a way of distracting and disempowering them with details and of ensuring that all but the very richest were hobbled with extra expenses. Yet, industrialisation and the widening availability of commodities changed this rather abruptly. In the modern city of the mid-nineteenth century, as Charles Baudelaire famously observed, it was frequently difficult to tell a well-to-do lady from a courtesan from a distance, an ambiguity that becomes important to all classes. Nineteenth century realist literature is filled with interlopers and social dissemblers, parvenus, and poseurs (think only of Balzac's Lucien de Rubempré of *Lost Illusions*).[2] The nuanced aspect of power and fashion is the way it filters and manifests at different stages of history according to dynamics that are not necessarily reducible to clothes in themselves. For to parade expense in an ostentatious way can often denote the opposite as it spells a need that compensates for confidence.

In "Technologies of Self," a seminar delivered in 1982, two years before his death, Foucault draws a subtle but striking parallel between the way we understand ourselves and the prohibitionary structures woven around us:

> Max Weber posed the question: if one wants to adopt rational behavior and regulate one's action with true principles, what part of the self is to be renounced? What's asceticism's price for reason? To what type of asceticism must one submit? I, for my part, asked the opposite question: how did certain types of self-

[2] See Adam Geczy and Vicki Karaminas, *Libertine Fashion. Sexual Freedom, Rebellion and Style*, London: Bloomsbury (2020).

> knowledge become the price to pay for certain forms of prohibitions? What must one know of oneself in order to accept renunciation?[3]

The inversion that Foucault proposes places human self-knowledge together with the laws that legislate it. At first, we may presume that our interpellation, to use Louis Althusser's concept, as dutiful citizens to the polis is at the expense of a series of unspoken and irregularly acknowledged curtailments, whereas Foucault suggests that these curtailments are what allow ourselves to function as such. This means that we are not just the objects of power but are as much if not more subjects for whom certain regulations are necessary.

To situate this logic in the present terms of this article, we might say that power dressing can first be understood along the lines of narrowed social expectations and values of what is deemed decent and proper. This is the conventional view, and understandably so. Yet, we may then also superadd to this the claim that power dressing is not solely an active, positive choice but a form of renunciation that mobilizes a (rhetorically) superior subject-position. The active choice of a certain manner of sartorial renunciation—following in the lines mapped out by Foucault—is akin to religious penance that evinces a purer soul that, in its assumed rectitude, can exercise power more completely.

III. THE HISTORY OF POWER DRESSING

In the broadest sense, "power dressing," first coined in the late 1970s and circulated in the 1980s, is the term for women's clothing that maintained a level of authority on an equal footing with men. Associated with the political and educated elite hitherto the province of men, power dressing was the result of an influx of women into corporate professions following the women's movement. Freer access to a college education gave women entry into the corporate arena and began to bridge the gender divide as women battled for equal pay for equal work. The relaxing of social and legal expectations with respect to gender roles made it easier for women to enter formerly male professional environments, which is not to say that this was ever simple, as attitudes were varied and residual expectations prevailed. Dress was a key means of altering perceptions of capability and gender status, starting with finding modalities that deflected the older sexist stereotypes that linked women to precocity, frailty, delicacy, sexual availability, and other jaundiced narratives. These actively differentiated from the modern professional male's world of specialist knowledge (medicine, law, accounting, academe) and access to the levers of power in

[3] Michel Foucault, "Les techniques de soi" [1983], in *Dits et écrits*, ed. Daniel Defert and François Ewald (1994), 784.

finance and politics that were especially reserved for Caucasian heteronormative men. While it can be periodised as characteristic of 1980's capitalist ascendency, it is now more broadly understood as a style relating to professionalism and gender.

As Georg Simmel famously observed, fashion's dynamic is one of both belonging and difference, and power dressing is yet another example of this. Women's dress was still meant to signify gender differences while at the same time having signifiers that were in conformity with the codes of male formal attire. The sartorial syntax of a masculine idiom had already been introduced by Coco Chanel in the post-war years after 1918. It was at first a modest, austere style that suited the tastes and expectations of the still austere economic conditions of the time, while also responding to the growing trends in female mobility and activity in public spaces where efficiency of movement was increasingly valued. While of expedient origins, the Chanel boiled wool twinset is now a fashion classic in the most literal sense of the term as a sartorial convention, even more so in terms of branding connotations and price, and a staple of power dressing (Fig.2).

Fig.2. Classic Chanel suit in purple mohair tweed, c. 1965. Mabalu. Public domain.

With these origins in mind, power dressing, as it emerged as a mainstream style and strategy in the 1980s, was more than just an adaptation of the suit, as Chanel's suit was, and far more of a derivative or hybrid. Joanne Entwistle believes that power dressing made women visible in the public arena. "It was at this time," writes Entwistle, "that a distinction between the female secretary and the female executive was made largely through the difference of dress itself."[4] One significant touchstone for power dressing in its latter-twentieth century form were two books, or rather manuals, for dress by John T. Molloy: *Dress for Success* (1975) and *Women: Dress for Success Book* (1977). The latter was described by Eileen Prescott in a contemporary review as showing "women who want to play the game how to win it."[5] Both books laid out what was desirable for women to wear in male-dominated work environments. Molloy's manuals suggested a new kind of strategy for women in the professional workplace that played down an approach to dressing according to mood, in which an outfit or ensemble could vary from day to day, to a more uniform approach with minimal and only inflected variations.

Molloy took a social positivist position by asserting that the book, or manual, was not simply an arbitrary style guide based on taste alone but had the added authority of science: "This is the most important book ever written about women's clothes because it is based on scientific research, not on opinion."[6] It was based on what he saw as the inalienable premise that "to get ahead in business, women should imitate men's clothes."[7] The task of his manuals, particularly *The Woman's Dress for Success Book*, was to dispel a series of misconceptions that impede female workplace mobility. Molloy states:

> Most American women dress for *failure*. I have said that before about men, and research shows that it applies equally to women. Women dress for failure because they make three mistakes.
>
> 1. They let the fashion industry influence their choice of business clothes.
> 2. They often still view themselves as sex objects.
> 3. They let their socioeconomic background influence their choice of clothing.
>
> The only reasonable alternative is for women to let science help them choose their clothes.

[4] Joanne Entwistle, "'Power Dressing' and the Construction of the Career Woman," in *Fashion Theory. A Reader*, ed. Malcolm Barnard (2007), 211.
[5] Eileen Prescott. "Review: The Woman's Dress for Success Book," *Library Journal* 103:2 (1978), 159.
[6] John T. Molloy, *The Woman's Dress for Success Book* (1977), 15.
[7] Malloy, "The Women's Dress for Success Book,"27.

> The name of the science I practice is wardrobe engineering. The idea is to use research data to manipulate the dress of an individual to draw a favorable response from the people he or she meets.

The nature of the success is never explicitly laid out here because it is assumed to be universal: corporate mobility, financial betterment, and the capacity to wield power over others. While standards of dress like these had been set already in the nineteenth century, they had never been given such explicit shape or impetus, suggesting that only a certain kind of dress can integrate into the highest echelons of capitalist might. This meant above all observance to uniformity, as Molloy affirms: "There is one firm and dramatic step women can take toward professional equality with men. *They can adopt a business uniform*."[8] And mobility had to be dynamic and aspirational: "The rule for all businesswomen is to *dress for the job you want, not the job you have*. Polyester pantsuits, sweaters, slacks, skirts and blouse outfits, and dresses with large prints all announce that you have no ambition."[9] These were sumptuary laws of an altogether different kind.

Knee-length pencil skirts and tailored suits with padded shoulders created an A-line silhouette that communicated confidence and authority. The pads served several functions, not only to enhance shoulders that were naturally narrower than men but also to maintain a cut and silhouette that could hide or de-emphasise the breasts. At its most formal, the jacket bore only small differences from the male suit jacket and was based around narrower shoulders and cut to accommodate a bust. Small finishes, such as a bolero-like splay at the base of the jacket, could also come into play. Trousers would also become incorporated into the schema, although the traditional, unpleated pencil skirt was the most common form. A collared shirt buttoned to the top was the norm, and the shirt sometimes had some feminine touches, such as ruffles or extra embroidery (Fig.3). Ties were not so common as their evocation of the 1920's *gamine* persona tended paradoxically to feminise the wearer because it was an overt inversion of the norm.

[8] "The Women's Dress for Success Book, 34.
[9] "The Women's Dress for Success Book, 125.

Fig.3. British Prime minister Margaret Thatcher (1925-2013) wearing a typical power dressing outfit. The Thatcher Estate. Public domain.

Meg Whitman, Chief Executive Officer of Hewlett-Packard, commented that "back in the 70s and 80s there was no established dress codes of how women executives should dress in the corporate arena," instead "we used to dress in suits with a skirt and a jacket with button-down shirts and a little bow tie, because that was sort of our interpretation of the man's tie…It was our attempt to be feminine but fit into what was then a male world."[10]

IV. THE RENUNCIATION OF FASHION

In many respects, women's approach to power dressing from the 1970s onward was another version of the Women's Dress Reform movement in the late 1800s, when suffragettes rejected the dictates of fashion and opted for more practical and comfortable clothing that they either designed themselves or bought as sewing patterns from stores. Along with the right to vote, and access to education, suffragettes renounced fashion as detrimental to health. They called for the emancipation of the body from constricting garments like tightlacing corsets, cumbersome bustles, and large crinolines that restricted women's movements for more simplified garments that women could modify and adapt for greater mobility and independence. Two such garments were the knitted wool union

[10] Tracy Eagan Morrissey, "The Feminist History Behind your Floppy Bow Blouse, which Actually is a 'Pussy Bow Blouse'," *Jezebel*, February 27, 2013. https://jezebel.com/the-feminist-history-behind-your-floppy-bow-blouse-whi-452560822 (accessed November 1, 2023).

suit, with its long pants and sleeves that buttoned up from the neck down to the groin area, and long thermal underwear called Long Johns. In literary and artistic circles, the natural shape of the body was celebrated and bloomers or the "divided skirt" was adopted for freedom of movement. Suffragettes considered fashion as an instrument of control enacted upon the body by institutions governed by men as a form of bio-power. The renunciation of fashion with new styles that allowed for greater movement to work and earn income would give women greater independence from men and the institution of marriage.

There is no denying fashion's role in disciplining the body and in promoting certain body types as desirable—slender, small waisted and able-bodied. As a product of free—market capitalism, fashion relies on "growth" through the perpetuation of new styles that produce a system of commodification and a culture of consumerism which relies on frameworks of exploitation (models, labour). As Foucault argues, technologies of production, technologies of domination, and technologies of the self produce effects that constitute the subject. They control a person's conduct through the exercise of power to produce useful, docile, and practical citizens[11] or, in this case, "slaves of fashion". As Foucault writes, by renouncing fashion and adapting various "operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being"[12] that the subject makes by their own free will, or with the assistance of others, (as in part of a movement such as feminism), they are able to transform themselves to reach a "state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality."[13]

There are many more such examples where the renunciation of fashion has made dress a framework from which to draw attention to the dynamics of power. In the 60s and early 70s, second wave feminists refused to submit to mainstream culture's standards of "feminine" fashion, beauty, and behaviour and adopted an "anti-fashion" form of dress that was characterised as comfortable and loose fitting, flannel shirts, loose jackets, and baggy pants. Hair was cut short, and they wore tennis shoes, Birkenstock saddles or fry boots. At the 1968 Miss America Beauty Pageant, they carried placards that read "No more Beauty Standards" and "Welcome to the Miss America Cattle Auction" to protest the objectification of women by the beauty and fashion industry. Women took off their bras and threw them into a "Freedom Trash Can" along with their lipstick and high heels as a symbolic gesture of women's emancipation from patriarchal control.

[11] Michel Foucault, "Truth, power, self: an interview with Michel Foucault," in *Technologies of the Self*, ed. L. H. Martin, H. Gutman and P. H. Hutton (1988), 9–15.
[12] Foucault, "Truth, Power," 18.
[13] "Truth, Power,"18.

Fig.4. Alaska Airlines Flight 6 from Los Angeles International Airport to Washington Reagan Airport in Arlington County, Virginia, carrying protestors wearing 'pussy hats' for the 2017 Women's March. Ted Eytan. 20 January 2017. Public domain.

Historic circumstances have rendered certain garments as symbols of power and resistance, such as the *lavallière* blouse, for instance, or the "pussy hat" that has become associated with the Me Too movement that grew to prominence in 2017 in response to the sexual harassment of women in the workplace (Fig.4). Another such example is what John Flügel in the 1930s referred to as the "great male renunciation". This was directed at the (almost) universal appearance of the suit in Western male dress by the early nineteenth century and the reduction of extra adornments that had been so popular and expected in upper class dress for over two centuries.[14] Naturally, it was an approach to dress that grew out of the French Revolution when dress was one of the sites of identification in ideological and class distinctions. In France since at least the courts of the first Bourbon kings Henri IV and Louis XIII, elaborate dress was a decisive marker of where one stood in society: there were even laws, albeit unevenly enforced, about wearing a sword (*épée*), which applied only to men of aristocratic birth (the *épée* was a potent signifier of state power because it bore connotations of the older and more distinguished nobility, the *noblesse d'épée*, the nobility of the sword that supposedly haled from the time of Clovis and Charlemagne. They stood opposed to the *noblesse de robe*, who to the former were the more

[14] John C. Flügel, "'The Great Male Renunciation and Its Causes' from *The Psychology of Clothes* (1930)," in *The Rise of Fashion*, ed. Daniel Leonhard Purdy (2004), 102–8.

recent parvenu upper classes who gained their status through the softer activities of law and administration instead of the rigors of war). By the 1760s, however, it became less the case for aristocrats to assert their rights to the sword as they joined the ranks of the enlightened middle-classes, some of whom were a great deal more wealthy than they were (fashion fact: the use of the pistol as the weapon of choice for duelling was largely due to this trend to eschew the sword as part of the dress ensemble). The language of the male "renunciation" was that of the functional and therefore useful individual at the service of the state (and capitalism). He was not distracted by vanity and unnecessary fripperies; ultimately, the bourgeois was the person whom dandies and bohemians stood against as a countervailing social force. In "The Painter of Modern Life," Charles Baudelaire makes the observation that men were clothed uniformly in black, and from a distance it was next to impossible to tell them apart in class or creed. In "On the Heroism of Modern Life" from *Salon of 1846*, Baudelaire remarks on the ubiquity of funereal black that renders people and classes drably indistinguishable:

> Is it not the necessary garb of our suffering age, which bears the symbol of a perpetual mourning even upon its thin black shoulders? …the dress-coat and the frock-coat not only possess their political beauty, which is an expression of universal equality, but also their poetic beauty, which is an expression of the public soul – an immense cortege of undertaker's mutes (mutes in love, political mutes, bourgeois mutes). We are each of us celebrating some funeral.[15]

Against this uniformity was another kind of power of distinction that required knowledge of nuance, namely in the quality of the fabric and the cut of the clothing. Class distinctions, according to status, education, and wealth, prevailed but in a far less obvious way, which, it could easily be argued, was a deeper entrenchment of the signs of power for the way that it could draw lines between the cabal who were in the know and those who did not know. Likewise, when it came to female power dressing in the 1980s, tailoring and fabrics were defining factors, as were the accessories, such as jewellery, the modest pearl necklace, for one, and handbags. One of the paradigmatic power dressers of the 1980s was Margaret Thatcher, who made the lavalliere (pussy bow) blouse a key element of her sartorial arsenal and the handbags from the exclusive Bond Street firm, Asprey, famous. These retail at a small fortune, some rivalling the cost of a new car.[16] Many reading this article were doubtlessly, until now, ignorant of Asprey, as were we before writing this article, which is indeed a large part of the point.

[15] Charles Baudelaire, "The Salon of 1846," in *Art in Paris 1845–1862: Salons and Other Exhibitions,* trans. and ed. Jonathan Mayne (1965), 118.
[16] See for example: "167 Mini in Jade, Sky Blue & Malibu Crocodile, £24,000.00," Asprey London.

Knowledge of such commodities is largely confined to those who can afford them, and such exclusivity is also a form of insulation from ostentation. As Young Lee Han et al. observe, *patricians* (those "in the know") use inconspicuous consumption and "subtle signals because only other patricians can interpret them," while avoiding "being misconstrued as someone who uses luxury brands to differentiate themselves from the masses."[17] Subtlety is key: not only as the target to impress is narrowed to the cognoscenti but also as the obvious need to impress is reserved for those who are compensating for a lack. These power-signifying-systems are more registrations than compensatory assertions. Jonah Bergere and Morgan Ward explain that,

> while subtly marked products are misrecognized by most observers and thus seem like less effective signals in general, people with domain-specific cultural capital (i.e., insiders) actually prefer them because they provide differentiation from the mainstream and should facilitate interaction with others "in the know."[18]

Like the secret ink or handshake from a secretive and exclusive club, this is a special form of signalling that is self-aware and that takes gleeful satisfaction in the tacit vetting provided by a disproportionately higher degree of ignorance and misrecognition.

But how to situate these manifestations if the desire is to go beyond the simple equation of money, status, wealth, and access to the commodity? In her essay on Foucault and fashion, Jane Tynan draws attention to several criticisms of Foucault concerning how he "attributes more power to institutions than to people". This concern, she advises, can be mitigated with a more detailed understanding of the ways in which institutions exert complex webs of control over human beings and the ways in which bodies practice and reflect the dynamics of power in their own stead, where "specific body practices reflect the workings of power."[19] These workings devolve to Foucault's thesis of governmentality that he explored in the 1970s. Governmentality in Foucault's thought are the operations of social control that exist well beyond written laws and locatable relationships to the far more furtive and insidious codes that order a society, which from an outside or habitual perspective are deemed "natural" and indeed "normal." "Biopolitics" is the name he gives for the frameworks that are enacted upon the body, by the body itself or by others, to instrument such controls. New concepts of criminality, for example, lead to new ways of punishing and "reforming" prisoners. One key process is control through the apparatus of tools of surveillance, which is not only achieved through centralisation but through

[17] Young Jee Han, Joseph C. Nunes, and Xavier Drèze, "Signaling Status with Luxury Goods: The Role of Brand Prominence," *Journal of Marketing* 74:4 (2010), 17.
[18] Jonah Berger, and Morgan Ward, "Subtle Signals of Inconspicuous Consumption," *Journal of Consumer Research* 37:4 (2010), 556.
[19] Jane Tynan, "Michel Foucault: Fashioning the Body Politic," in *Thinking Through Fashion: A Guide to Key Theorists*, ed. Agnes Rocamora and Anneke Smelik (2016), 187.

bodies regulating themselves and others and enforcing hierarchies and systems. Tynan asks: "Do the principles of hierarchical observation and its goal to separate the normal from the abnormal resonate with the fashion system?"[20]

Clearly yes, and power dressing in its original and developed forms is yet another avenue (in addition to Tynan's own analyses) to explore this, especially as it easily lends itself to such an argument. It is precisely that it lends itself so easily that makes it so valid as a theme because a more subtle set of values lurks in its self-evidence. These values are centered on how knowledges are guarded and purveyed and on the novel, multivalent manipulation of renunciation as a signifier of sacrifice to a cause (martyrdom) or as a freedom to do so. It is what Nietzsche, a significant influence on Foucault throughout his career, called the "will to power," which has been improperly construed as vulgar Nazi machismo. However, it is more rightly understood as the freedom to exist unfettered from imposed mores and expectations, an inner abundance much in line with Buddhist renunciation and transcendence.

V. DRESSING DOWN IS THE NEW DRESSING UP

The television series *Billions* (2016-2023) revolves (mostly) around the rivalry between a tenacious and obsessive lawyer, Charles "Chuck" Rhoades Jr. (Paul Giamatti) and a ruthless hedge fund manager, Robert "Bobby" Axelrod (Damian Lewis). Rhoades is depicted as coming from old money – at least older than his rival. His alma mater is Yale University and although he is ostensibly politically left-leaning in his search for equity and justice, his actions often violate his principles. He lives in a brownstone in the salubrious Brooklyn Heights of New York and wears tailored suits with ties of no special flamboyance—he is a generic public service executive. His girth and studied solemnity are in stark contrast to the vulpine informality of Axelrod, who after his divorce lives in a slick glass-encompassed high-rise apartment and exclusively wears casual wear and sportswear to work (jeans and hoodies); exclusively except on those occasions when the power dynamic does not pertain, namely, when he is brought before government officials or legal tribunals on matters that he must defend—but even then he flouts his sartorial prerogatives. Axelrod's 2IC, or corporate lapdog, Mike "Wags" Wagner (David Costabile) bridges the gap between his boss and the nerdy informality of the trade room below: he wears a blazer (with pocket kerchief) and collared shirt but without a tie and jeans, a stylistic reserve that is always in deference to his boss.

This kind of dressing is conceivably the tertiary stage of power dressing: first there is the clear signs of distinction on the surface, then there is the secret club of consumers with

[20] Tynan, "Michel Foucault," 188-189.

their covert signs of smug recognition, and third a strategic dressing down in a dressed-up environment. The purpose is to act as a dynamic foil and to be a reminder of what all the others are not at liberty to appear, do, or say. According to a 2014 study by Silvia Bellezza, Francesca Gino, and Anat Keinan, the disobedience of dress codes in professional and nonprofessional settings can lead to a positive reception by observers who equate status and competence with the signals of nonconformity. The "red sneaker effect," as the authors call it, leads to inferring higher status and power with nonconforming individuals, provided one is familiar with the respective contextual codes.[21]

VI. COURTROOM ATTIRE AND PRACTICES OF SELF

The tertiary transition of dressing down to dressing up is not the final stage in this journey. There is a fourth, which is the use of dress codes as sartorial arsenal to influence public opinion. We have discussed how power dressing by corporate sector women is intended to show career seriousness, whilst at the same time women aim to be taken seriously by their workplace peers. The same holds true in the courtroom, as the authority of defense lawyers and the innocence of defendants are judged by juries according to their appearance. While dress choices may seem mundane, social values concerning gender bias and stereotypes towards women are judged according to courtroom attire. "Whether an advocate is successful may depend on whether they are perceived as neat or sloppy, well dressed or shabbily dressed, and pleasing or unpleasing to the eye."[22] Although this is true of both genders, issues concerning women's sexuality and gender specific clothing have a greater influence on juries and the media then men. In the article "Courtroom Demeanor: The Theatre of the Courtroom," published in the *Minnesota Law Review* (2008) and still relevant today, Laurie R Livingstone argues that defense lawyers use appearance to their advantage to sway the outcome of court cases. Lawyers adjust their own language, dress, and overall courtroom style and encourage client make-overs to please the jury. "Each defendant needs the right outfit, a perfect hairstyle and lessons on appropriate courtroom behavior."[23] "Heads of state wear suits," says Anne Hollander "and men accused of rape and murder wear them in court to help their chances of acquittal."[24] And if they have tattoos, they are best left covered while in a conservative setting.

[21] Silvia Bellezza, Francesca Gino and Anat Keinan, "The Red Sneakers Effect: Inferring Status and Competence from Signals of Nonconformity," *Journal of Consumer Research* 41:1 (2014), 35-54.
[22] Maureen A. Howard, "Beyond a Reasonable Doubt: One Size Does *Not* Fit All When It Comes to Courtroom Attire for Women," *Gonzaga Law Review* 45:1 (2010), 213.
[23] Laurie L. Levinson "Courtroom Demeanour: The Theatre of the Courtroom," *Minnesota Law Review*, 582 (2008), 576.
[24] Anne Hollander, *Sex and Suits. The Evolution of Modern Dress* (1995), 134.

In a study conducted in the university town of Blacksburg, Virginia, one hundred former jurors were questioned about their reactions to women's dress in court. While the three-piece navy, charcoal or dark brown suit, tie and suitcase suggest integrity, power and confidence in males, women were expected to select a tailored suit and blouse. "Ultra-masculine styles should be avoided as should the latest feminine fashion, as neither adds to a woman's credibility."[25] As a general proposition, the advice is to "dress conservatively, simply and inconspicuously"[26] to achieve a successful outcome in court. Let us return to Foucault's concept of biopower, which is a useful tool for understanding dress practices as it focuses on the body as a site of subjugation. Furthermore, it highlights how women are implicated in their oppression as they participate in practices such as the self-regulation of dressing that contributes to the creation of "docile bodies."

Biopower operates on people's bodies, and it is through the implementation of self-disciplinary practices and bodily regimes such as dressing that subjugates individuals. Fashion's force derives from its ability to function through "knowledge and desire"—the production of knowledge results in a discourse of norms to which people desire to conform or, in the case of court room attire, consciously manipulate for a desired result. Individuals regulate themselves by conforming to cultural norms through self-surveillance and self-disciplinary practices, especially those relating to dress and appearance. The body becomes a site of subjugation that highlights how individuals are implicated in their own oppression as they participate in the daily practice of dressing. Fashion, including beauty and fitness regimes, produces disciplined bodies that are appropriate for capitalism—regulated by self-control and self-restraint. Dissatisfaction with the body leads to conspicuous consumption—beauty products, cosmetic surgery, fitness attire, gym equipment and new clothes.

Foucault argues that institutional regimes such as prisons, hospitals, schools, and court rooms maintain order through the production of passive, subjugated and productive bodies under its controlling gaze. The institutional surveillance, disciplining and punishment of the body moulds individuals into subjects accustomed to regulation. Institutions work "to discipline the body, optimize its capabilities, extort its forces, increase its usefulness and docility, integrate it into systems of efficient and economic controls"[27] to produce the bodies that society requires.

---

[25] Charline Lind, Joann Boles, Dennise Hinckle and Sharon Gizzi, "A Woman can Dress to Win in Court," *The American Bar Association Journal* 70:1 (1984), 92.

[26] Howard, "Beyond a Reasonable Doubt," 210.

[27] Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (1980), 139.

Fig 5. Johnny Depp at the 2020 Berlinale, Harold Krichel, 21 February 2020. Public Domain.

In what has become known as the most high-profile defamation case so far in the 2020s, the libel trial between actors Johnny Depp (Fig.5) and Amber Heard (Fig. 6) became a viral phenomenon. Labelled by social media as the first "Trial by TikTok,"[28] people shared hashtags across Twitter and video footage of the trial whilst critiquing the actors' wardrobe in court. YouTube posted a "Trial Fashion Analysis"[29] and Netflix produced the docuseries *Depp vs Heard* (Emma Cooper, 2023), which questioned the validity of the truth and the actors' reputations. The American digital broadcast network Court TV livestreamed the daily proceedings on cable and online. In sum, viewers watched and discussed the celebrity case of the year: "its messiness, its scandal, the glamorous movie stars at its heart, and the question of what to believe."[30]

[28] Floyd Alexander-Hunt, "Trial by TikTok. How Social Media is Affecting the Johnny Depp and Amber Heard Case," *Law Society Journal*, May 17, 2022. https://lsj.com.au/articles/trial-by-tik-tok-how-social-media-is-affecting-the-johnny-depp-and-amber-heard-case/ (accessed December 25, 2023).

[29] Style of Thought, "Depp v. Heard - Trial Fashion analysis," YouTube, May 26, 2022. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qXAi30Jd0_8 (accessed December 25, 2023).

[30] Constance Grady, "Johnny Depp, Amber Heard and their $50 Million Defamation Suit Explained. Why Johnny Depp and Amber Heard Accused Each Other of Domestic Violence," *Vox*, November 3, 2022. https://www.vox.com/culture/23043519/johnny-depp-amber-heard-defamation-trial-fairfax-county-domestic-abuse-violence-me-too (accessed December 23, 2023).

Fig 6. Amber Heard speaking at the 2018 International ComicCon, San Diego California, Gage Skidmore, Public Domain.

Foucault introduces the concept of "regimes of truth" in the first chapter, "Body of the Condemned," of *Discipline and Punish* (1975). He notes that within the establishment of the new penal system in the 18th and 19th centuries, "a corpus of knowledge, techniques, 'scientific' discourses [was] formed [that became] entangled with the practise of power to punish."[31]A new "regime of truth" emerged that became interwoven with the power to punish. In December 2018, Amber Heard wrote the article "I Spoke Up Against Sexual Violence- and Faced our Culture's Wrath. That has to Change,"[32] which was published in the *Washington Post* newspaper. A year earlier, the public trial of film producer Harvey Weinstein for the sexual abuse of several Hollywood actresses had sparked the most public phase of the feminist Me Too movement. Heard's article followed in its trail, referring to herself as "a public figure representing domestic abuse."[33] Although Heard did not mention Depp's name in her article, he insisted that Heard was referring to him. Depp denied Heard's allegations of physical abuse and sued her for defamation, arguing

[31] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (1975), 23.
[32] Amber Heard, "I Spoke Up Against Sexual Violence- and Faced our Culture's Wrath. That has to Change," *Washington Post*, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/ive-seen-how-institutions-protect-men-accused-of-abuse-heres-what-we-can-do/2018/12/18/71fd876a-02ed-11e9-b5df-5d3874f1ac36_story.html, (accessed December 18, 2018).
[33] Heard, "I Spoke Up",

in court that Heard defamed him, and the jury agreed. Heard counter-claimed that Depp's lawyer, Adam Waldman defamed her in comments published in the British *Daily Mail* newspaper in 2020. Throughout the trial, Depp's lawyers argued that Heard had been the instigator of domestic abuse rather than the victim. Referring to the Depp vs Heard trial, Constance Grady wrote that, "It's only fitting that the cultural moment that began with women speaking out against the powerful men who they say hurt them [Me Too] announced its end by the courts finding in favour of one of those men."[34] Simply put, it was Heard who abused Depp and lied about it.

Fig.7. 1881 caricature of Oscar Wilde in Punch magazine the caption reads: "O.W.", "Oh, I feel just as happy as a bright sunflower, *Lays of Christy Minestrelsy,* "Æsthete of Æsthetes!/What's in a name!/The Poet is Wilde/But his poetry's tame." Public Domain.

Separated by over a century's worth of cultural changes in perceptions of gender (including five feminist movements), the 1895 libel trials of Oscar Wilde (Wilde v. Queensbury) and Johnny Depp v. Amber Heard have much in common. Wilde was a

[34] Constance Grady, "Me Too Backlash is Here," *Vox,* June 2, 2022. https://www.vox.com/culture/23150632/johnny-depp-amber-heard-trial-verdict-me-too-backlash (accessed December 28, 2023).

celebrity who was constantly in the press, and so too are Depp and Heard. Wilde was accused of posing as a sodomite, and salacious details of his relationships with men were reported in great detail, as were the specifics of Depp and Heard's abusive marriage. Caricatures of Wilde appeared in the popular press (Fig.7), and laughing emojis of Depp and Heard's courtroom exchanges were uploaded onto the internet. Both libel trials attracted a considerable amount of public attention and functioned as a platform for social and cultural anxieties over sexuality and gender. Most importantly, public perception and opinions were played out with detailed commentary of Wilde's, Depp's, and Heard's appearance and what they wore in court. In both instances, the defendants used sartorial codes to their advantage.

Foucault notes that the technologies of identity rely on what he calls "games of truth." Foucault does not mean amusement games but, rather, sets of truths "by which truth is produced… that lead to a certain result, which, on the basis of its principles and rules of procedure may be considered valid or invalid."[35] We can only make claims of subjectivity by complying with the rules and procedures of the game, however, as Foucault notes, "by playing the same game differently," it is possible to exercise agency.[36]

The representation of Wilde at the time of the trials was as an effeminate dandy. Along with his propensity for "posing," Wilde drew attention to his ostentatious style of dressing and intentionally flouted Victorian masculinity with his wide fur collars, rich silks, and brightly colored velvets. At the end of the nineteenth century, one was threat enough if one adopted the outward signs of what constituted homosexual behaviour and appearance at the time. Here we might recall Foucault's observation that it was only in the late nineteenth century that homosexuality appeared as "a species,"[37] and a species whose structure in society holds sway today. The trial put almost every modern liberty at stake: political, personal, aesthetic, cultural, intellectual and, above all, gendered and sexual.

In an article published in 1977 in the journal *Radical Philosophy*, Foucault argues that "truth isn't outside power or deprived of power…. it is produced by virtue of multiple constraints, and it induces regulated effects of power."[38] Foucault continues, "each society has its regime of truth,"[39] and by this statement he explains that (1)"the types of discourse [that society] harbours and causes to function as true," (2) "the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true from false statements," (3) "the way in which each

[35] Michel Foucault, "The Ethics of a Concern of the Self as a Practice of Freedom," Interview with H. Becker, R. Fornet-Batancourt and A. Gomez-Miller [1984], in *Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth: The Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984. Vol.1*, ed. P. Rabinow, trans. P. Aranov and D. McGrawth (1997), 297.
[36] Ibid., 295.
[37] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction* (1990), 43.
[38] Michel Foucault, "The Political Function of the Intellectual," *Radical Philosophy* 017 (Summer 1977), 12.
[39]Foucault, "The Political Function,"12.

[statement] is sanctioned," (4) "the techniques and procedures which are valorised as obtaining truth," and (5) "the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true."[40] As such, "truth" is a "system of ordered procedures for the production, distribution, circulation and functioning of statements"[41] that is linked by a circular relation to systems of power which "produce it and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces, and which redirects it."[42]

Let us examine media representations of Amber Heard's appearance in court with a view of the above statements and how her sartorial choices affected public perception and the outcome of the trial. In 2016, Heard appeared in court requesting a restraining order against Depp. Her face was bruised and swollen, and she wore a simple, conservative black belted dress whose length stopped short below the knee. Her dress was modest and conveyed innocence and vulnerability. Sartorial history credits Chanel for disassociating the black dress from funeral attire to a statement of elegance and modernity. Likened to the 1926 Model T Ford automobile, Chanel's "little black dress" (LBD) was a simple silhouette consisting of a few diagonal lines that became associated with elegance and modesty. Five years later, in 2021, Heard reappeared in court wearing the same black dress, but instead of requesting a restraining order, she was on trial to defend herself against allegations that she lied about being abused by Depp. Heard shared two photographs of herself on Instagram wearing the black dress. On both occasions Heard wrote the caption "One dress, four years apart. Sometimes it's important to wear the same thing twice."[43] Heard was playing a "truth game" with her sartorial choices. The image that Heard curated had significant impact on how she was perceived by the public, the courts, and the jurors. Reporting on the trial for *The New York Times*, Vanessa Friedman wrote,

> From their first entrance [in court], Mr. Depp and Ms. Heard looked their parts: not as showy people-page magnets, but as respectful members of society sensitive to the seriousness of the moment, the traditions of the court and the weight of the truth. You've heard of dress to impress? This is dress to suggest."[44]

Heard was dressed in a way that accentuated her femininity and her integrity as a victim/survivor of domestic violence. Her dress code informed the types of gendered

[40] "The Political Function,"12
[41] "The Political Function,"13.
[42] "The Political Function," 13.
[43] Marca News, "Amber Heard Gets Slammed on Social Media for her Funeral Dress," *Marca News*, June 2, 2022. https://www.marca.com/en/lifestyle/celebrities/2022/06/03/62998d0ae2704e28398b4584.html (accessed December 31, 2023).
[44] Vanessa Friedman, "In Court, Johnny Depp and Amber Heard Dress to Suggest," *The New York Times*, May 19, 2022. https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/19/style/amber-heard-johnny-depp-clothes.html (accessed December 30, 2023).

discourses that operate (in patriarchal society) as "regimes of truth" that function to keep women in subordinate positions to men. Gender bias produces myths concerning women as pure and innocent or as "untrustworthy, deceitful and motivated by greed."[45] In sum, a woman is either a dutiful wife or a scheming whore. While there has been "an increase in the *recognition* of domestic violence an overall mistrust of women is still very, very strong."[46] It is a common perception, says Padma Raman, CEO of Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety, that "it's common for women to use sexual assault allegations as a way of 'getting back at men' (whereas in reality, false allegations are very rare)."[47]

In court, Heard wore pant or skirt suits in classic, muted tones of grey and navy, considered appropriate courtroom attire. Skirts were mid-calf length, and her blouses were buttoned up all the way up to the base of her neck. Her makeup was subtle, her jewellery understated.[48] On one occasion, she wore a black twin set suit, sheer white *lavaliere* blouse (also worn by model Kate Moss when she appeared in court to testify for ex-boyfriend Depp) and hair perfectly coiffed and pinned into curls that swept down the side of her face. She looked glamourous and immaculate. Her dress code read professionalism, strength, and reliability. Then, quite unexpectedly, Heard opted to play the "game" differently by wearing a suit with strong tailoring and masculine lines that fastidiously and tirelessly mimicked Depp's courtroom attire. He wore a light-grey double-breasted suit, and the following day Heard wore the same suit as Depp. He wore a bee tie, and the next day she too wore a bee tie. He wore his hair back in a ponytail, she wore her hair in a ponytail. By exercising agency in her dress choices, Heard was signifying that she held the power and was in total control of the situation. Strange coincidences, perhaps, or premeditated decisions? In any case, at the end of the trial, the court ruled in Depp's favour. Perhaps the outcome of the trial would have been different if Heard had avoided imitating Depp. As we noted earlier in the findings of the Blacksburg research, "ultra masculine styles should be avoided as should the latest feminine fashion, as neither adds to a woman's credibility."[49]

[45] Meg Watson, "Is the Amber Heard Judgement Really the Death of #Me Too?" *The Sydney Morning Herald*, June 3, 2022. https://www.smh.com.au/culture/celebrity/is-the-amber-heard-judgement-really-the-death-of-metoo-20220602-p5aqkn.html (accessed December 31, 2023).
[46] Watson, "Is the Amber Heard Judgement,"
[47] Watson, "Is the Amber Heard Judgement".
[48] Friedman, "In Court."
[49] Lind, et.al. "A Woman can Dress,"92.

VII. CONCLUSION

The paradox of modern dress, and a very Foucauldian paradox at that, is that at the very same time as the average person with even limited purchasing power was subject to a broad range of choices, that same person was also subject to regulations and controls, many of them invisible and unknown. Power for Foucault is a kind of intangible pressure that structures us as subjects within social regimes and manifests in how we act, speak, interact—and dress. Dressing with this power in mind is to identify and acknowledge power by also playing full lip service to it. We undergo a renunciation for the sake of frictionless access into a system. Even its inversion of dressing down in a dressed-up context is to succumb to this language and dynamic. If all fashion and dress is a form of compliance to regulatory principles—just as we are born into a language, we are also born into a point in history with its attendant codes of appearance and so on—then power dressing is playing expediently and strategically with such principles. If anything, it is a case of hypertrophied conformity – a conformity that stretches in anticipation of what new advantages and results may eventuate.

References

Alexander-Hunt, Floyd, "Trial by TikTok. How Social Media is Affecting the Johnny Depp and Amber Heard Case," *Law Society Journal*. https://lsj.com.au/articles/trial-by-tik-tok-how-social-media-is-affecting-the-johnny-depp-and-amber-heard-case/ (accessed December 25, 2023).

Asprey London, "167 Mini in Jade, Sky Blue & Malibu Crocodile, £24,000.00," Asprey London. https://www.asprey.com/gb/en/product.html/167-mini-crocodile-tri-colour-jade-sky-blue-malibu.html (accessed November 1, 2023)

Baudelaire, Charles, "The Salon of 1846," in *Art in Paris 1845–1862: Salons and Other Exhibitions,* trans. and ed. Jonathan Mayne, 41–121. London: Phaidon Press, 1965.

Bellezza, Silvia, Francesca Gino and Anat Keinan, "The Red Sneakers Effect: Inferring Status and Competence from Signals of Nonconformity," *Journal of Consumer Research* 41:1 (2014), 35-54. https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/674870

Berger, Jonah, and Morgan Ward, "Subtle Signals of Inconspicuous Consumption," *Journal of Consumer Research* 37:4 (2010), 555–569. https://doi.org/10.1086/655445

Britton, Fleur, "Take a Bow: Kate Moss Outfit Sends Subversive Message at Depp Libel Trial," *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/film/2022/may/27/kate-moss-outfit-johnny-depp-amber-heard-trial (accessed December 23, 2023).

Eagan Morrissey, Tracy, "The Feminist History Behind your Floppy Bow Blouse, which Actually is a 'Pussy Bow Blouse'," *Jezebel*. https://jezebel.com/the-feminist-history-behind-your-floppy-bow-blouse-whi-452560822 (accessed November 1, 2023).

Entwistle, Joanne, "'Power Dressing' and the Construction of the Career Woman," in *Fashion Theory. A Reader*, ed. Malcolm Barnard, 208–219. New York: Routledge, 2007.

Flügel, John C, "'The Great Male Renunciation and Its Causes' from *The Psychology of Clothes* (1930)'," in *The Rise of Fashion*, ed. Daniel Leonhard Purdy, 102–8. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004.

Foucault, Michel, *Discipline and Punish*. London and New York: Penguin, 1975.

Foucault, Michel, "Les techniques de soi" [1982], in *Dits et écrits*, ed. Daniel Defert and François Ewald, vol. 4. Paris: Gallimard, 1994.

Foucault, Michel, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon. Brighton: Harvester, 1980.

Foucault, Michel, "The Ethics of a Concern of the Self as a Practice of Freedom," Interview with H. Becker, R. Fornet-Batancourt and A. Gomez-Miller [1984], in *Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth: The Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984. Vol.1*, ed. P. Rabinow, trans. P. Aranov and D. McGrawth. 281-301. New York: The New Press, 1997.

Foucault, Michel, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction*. Vintage: New York, 1990.

Foucault, Michel, "The Political Function of the Intellectual," *Radical Philosophy* 17 (1977), 12–14.

Foucault, Michel, "Truth, power, self: an interview with Michel Foucault," in *Technologies of the Self*, eds. L. H. Martin, H. Gutman and P. H. Hutton, 9–15. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988.

Friedman, Vanessa, "In Court, Johnny Depp and Amber Heard Dress to Suggest," *The New York Times*. https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/19/style/amber-heard-johnny-depp-clothes.html (accessed December 30, 2023).

Geczy, Adam and Vicki Karaminas, *Libertine Fashion. Sexual Freedom, Rebellion and Style*. London: Bloomsbury, 2020.

Grady, Constance, "Johnny Depp, Amber Heard and their $50 Million Defamation Suit Explained. Why Johnny Depp and Amber Heard Accused Each Other of Domestic Violence," *Vox*. https://www.vox.com/culture/23043519/johnny-depp-amber-heard-defamation-trial-fairfax-county-domestic-abuse-violence-me-too (accessed December 23, 2023).

Grady, Constance, "Me Too Backlash is Here," *Vox*. https://www.vox.com/culture/23150632/johnny-depp-amber-heard-trial-verdict-me-too-backlash (accessed December 28, 2023).

Han, Young Jee, Joseph C. Nunes, and Xavier Drèze, "Signaling Status with Luxury Goods: The Role of Brand Prominence," *Journal of Marketing* 74:4 (2010), 15–30.

Heard, Amber, "I Spoke Up Against Sexual Violence - and faced our Culture's Wrath. That has to Change," *Washington Post*. https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/ive-seen-how-institutions-protect-men-accused-of-abuse-heres-what-we-can-do/2018/12/18/71fd876a-02ed-11e9-b5df-5d3874f1ac36_story.html (accessed December 27, 2023).

Hollander, Anne, *Sex and Suits. The Evolution of Modern Dress*. New York: Kodansha International, 1995.

Howard, Maureen A., "Beyond a Reasonable Doubt: One Size Does *Not* Fit All When It Comes to Courtroom Attire for Women," *Gonzaga Law Review* 45:1 (2010), 209–224.

Levinson, Laurie L., "Courtroom Demeanour: The Theatre of the Courtroom," *Minnesota Law Review* 582 (2008), 573–633.

Lind, Charline, Joann Boles, Dennise Hinckle and Sharon Gizzi, "A Woman can Dress to Win in Court," *The American Bar Association Journal* 70:1 (1984), 92–94.

Marca News, "Amber Heard Gets Slammed on Social Media for her Funeral Dress," *Marca News*. https://www.marca.com/en/lifestyle/celebrities/2022/06/03/62998d0ae2704e28398b4584.html (accessed December 31, 2023).

Molloy, John T., *The Woman's Dress for Success Book.* New York: Warner Books, 1977.

Prescott, Eileen, "Review: The Woman's Dress for Success Book," *Library Journal* 103:2 (1978), 159.

Style of Thought, "Depp v. Heard - Trial Fashion analysis," YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qXAi30Jd0_8 (accessed December 25, 2023).

Tynan, Jane, "Michel Foucault: Fashioning the Body Politic," in *Thinking Through Fashion: A Guide to Key Theorists,* ed. Agnes Rocamora and Anneke Smelik, 184-199. London: I.B. Tauris, 2016.

Watson, Meg, "Is the Amber Heard Judgement Really the Death of #Me Too?" *The Sydney Morning Herald*. https://www.smh.com.au/culture/celebrity/is-the-amber-heard-judgement-really-the-death-of-metoo-20220602-p5aqkn.html (accessed December 31, 2023).

Author info

Adam Geczy

Adam.geczy@sydney.edu.au

Associate Professor, Director, Research Education

Sydney College of the Arts, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

University of Sydney

Australia

Vicki Karaminas

v.karaminas@massey.ac.nz

Professor and Director of Doctoral Studies

School of Design, Massey University

Aotearoa-New Zealand

Adam Geczy is an artist and writer who teaches at the University of Sydney, Australia. Recent books (with Vicki Karaminas) include *Gaga Aesthetics* (Bloomsbury, 2021) and *Libertine Fashion* (Bloomsbury, 2020).

Vicki Karaminas is Professor of Fashion at Massey University, Aotearoa-New Zealand. She holds an honorary professorship at the University of Sydney and is an honorary fellow of the University of Melbourne. Recent books (with Adam Geczy) include *Queer Style* (2nd.ed. Bloomsbury, 2024) and *Gastrofashion from Haute Couture to Haute Cuisine* (Bloomsbury, 2022).