BODY CONSTRAINTS IN THE 18TH CENTURY *TATLER* AND *SPECTATOR*

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Abstract

Starting from the "Ecole des annales" perspective this paper aims at the observation and analysis of the 18th century communicative, mirroring and disciplined bodies in The Tatler and The Spectator and in some of Hogarth's paintings and engravings. The sharing principle of Bodies creating themselves in a communicative relation on both self-relatedness and other-relatedness implies a re-formation of an already existing world which they are an active part of and not a mere reflection of the External World like in a monadic, consumer society.

From an etymological perspective *Constraint* comes from the Old French word (before 1400) *constreindre* < Lat. *constringo, ere* < [Lat. *com* meaning together + Lat. *stringere* meaning to bind tight]. According to *The New International Webster's Comprehensive Dictionary of the English Language* the first and foremost meaning of the verb *to constrain* is to compel, to oblige by physical or moral means whereas the meaning to confine as by bonds comes in the second place being followed by to restrain or compel to inaction. Binding could also mean linking, connecting, concatenating Bodies in a communicative other-relatedness where Dress and Manners are forms of Exchange and Sharing while restraining has the precise meaning of refraining, bridling or abstaining from Excess by controlling and disciplining both Body Natural and Body Artificial.

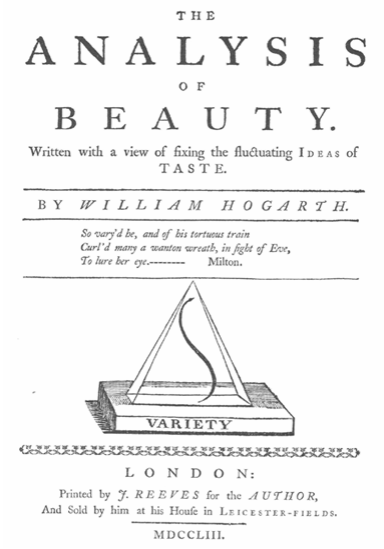
18th century attempts to control and discipline the body by setting standards of behaviour were mainly done in periodicals specialised in the Reformation of Manners and Morals as well as in Clubs and Assemblies, at Tea-Tables and in Coffee-houses. This topographic shift enables an easier access to culture as well as to a standardised, genteel type of Manners and marks the beginning of a commodification of Culture and Cultural Objects out of Closets and Libraries, Schools and Colleges. The extension of the reading market and the growing interest in periodicals is a step forward towards civilisation and civilised behaviour. There is also a shift in the cultural focus from a traditionally

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Communal, Rural life to a more Individualised, Self-determined, Urban life together with an ever-expanding art-buying public in a rapidly growing artistic milieu. Manuals and brochures containing advice and standards of polite, urbane ways of living deal particularly with London fashions, London habits and affectations having thus a major influence on urban families.

Similarly, 18th century periodicals are a characteristic expression of the middle-class England of their time. The two popular periodicals *The Tatler* (1709–1711) and *The Spectator* (1711-1714), together with *The London Spy* as well as Edward Caves' most successful monthly periodical *The Gentleman's Magazine* or *The Trader's Monthly Intelligencer* whose first issue came out in 1731 are meant to cover a wide range of subjects from economic ones such as current affairs, stock prices or preferments, to literary ones – poems and ballads or mathematical problems as well as to practical subjects such as medical advice concerning the Body.

Besides ordinary social life topics the focus is laid on Body Care and Fashioning. Novels and Periodicals as well as Graphic or Pictorial Satire were not only the main form of entertainment for half a century but they also had a sociological significance which contemporary readers were well aware of. Hogarth's *Analysis of Beauty* (1752) responds to a constant 18th century need of accessible manuals of appearance and behaviour that would give the reader the basic conceptual tools with which to construct a polite, urbane identity for them in their daily lives. The visual motif of the serpentine line on the title page of Hogarth's book *The Analysis of Beauty* **(Picture 1)** purposefully suggests the undulating and twisting movement between two extremes: Variety, Irregularity and Intricacy on the one hand, Uniformity, Regularity and Simplicity on the other.


THE
ANALYSIS
OF
BEAUTY.
Written with a view of fixing the fluctuating IDEAS of TASTE.
BY WILLIAM HOGARTH.
So vary'd he, and of his tortuous train
Curl'd many a wanton wreath, in sight of Eve,
To lure her eye.-------- Milton.
VARIETY
LONDON:
Printed by J. REEVES for the AUTHOR,
And Sold by him at his House in LEICESTER-FIELDS.
MDCCLIII.

In *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*, Addison and Steele try to give a solution to the modern conflict between The Body as a Constant in a World of Flux and The Body as a Flux in a Fluctuating, Contingent World by setting Norms to get to a Standardised state of Equilibrium in point of Body Fashioning, Manners and Morals. This Equilibrium implies a Change in the social standards of the time so that in their opinion what is sober, sensible, modest and decent should also be fashionable. The outcome of their method of aligning individual contingencies is to reach a new set of Mutually balanced and ordered Contingencies made up of individual bodies coming to terms with each other and with the socially governing force exercised on Bodies.

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The two periodicals are in favour of a communicative type of Inter-human relations rather than of a socially imposed artificial behaviour based on hierarchy and consequently on Discipline. The Standardised behaviour introduced by the two journalists aims at liberating people from artificially set class constraints by a Contingent Body Control of Natural Norms, great Simplicity and Common-sense**.**

The Subjects and the Objects of Criticism in *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* are not repressed or expelled but trans-formed / re-shaped / re-formed by light irony, self-irony, satire and playfulness. The Prescriptive, Didactic, Instructive tone is doubled by an Entertaining and Playful one. In *Spectator* No.10 on March 12, 1711 Addison writes on the purpose of his periodical: *"I shall spare no Pains to make their Instruction agreeable, and their Diversion useful. For which Reasons I shall endeavour to enliven Morality with Wit, and to temper Wit with Morality, that my Readers may, if possible, both ways find their account in the Speculation of the Day. And to the End that their Virtue and Discretion may not be short transient intermitting thet arts of Thought, I have resolved to refresh their Memories from Day to Day, till I have recovered them out of that desperate State of Vice and Folly into which the Age is fallen."* (*The Spectator*, 88-9)

Steele and Addison write their articles behind the mask of Mr. Isaac Bickerstaff and Mr. Spectator used as agents of witty social and political satire. They play almost the same role as Montesquieu's Usbek and Rica in *Lettres Persanes* (1721) but they lack the oriental charm and "innocence" of the two Persian travellers inquisitive and critical approach to *The Other*. Steele and Addison needed a character to mediate their *"office of censors of Great Britain"*: "a fictional, gently satiric persona", a self-mocking, "somewhat eccentric" character. *(Mackie, 4)*

As an illustration of their declared purpose of Instructing, Informing and Persuading the reader and not of Imposing Rules and Regulations on him, Bickerstaff signs his letters to the audience with: *"Your most Obliged, most Obedient, and most Humble Servant, Isaac Bickerstaff."* (Mackie, 49)

The 18th century Middle-class members manifested two or even three simultaneously contradictory tendencies among which the Ideal type of a middle-class Gentleman belonging to those who willingly choose to Copy/ Imitate the aristocratic life-style and who become, thus absorbed by the aristocracy. They are the Rich and the Educated, both socially and economically valuable. Thanks to Politeness, to that *je ne sais quoi* intrinsic to a gentleman's idea of a civilised conduct, this middle class subdivision acquires enlightenment and sociability belonging to a much wider elite.

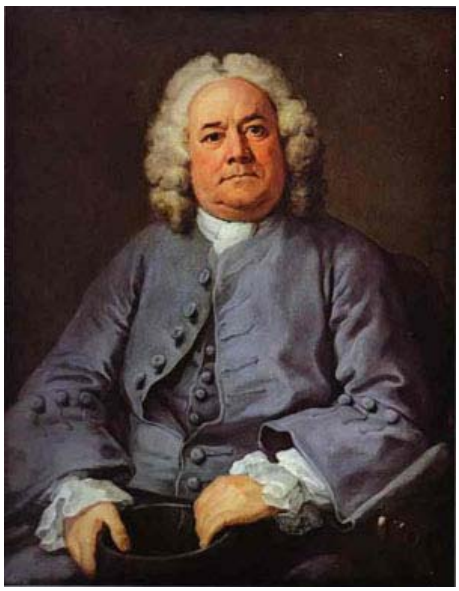
Hogarth's pictorial representations of two Middle-class gentlemen *William Jones* (1740 – oil on canvas) **Picture 2** and *George Arnold. Esq. of Ashby Lodge* (1740 – oil on canvas) **Picture 3** differ both in form and content from the aristocratic sophistication and pretence. If Jones' portrait "preserves" certain traces of aristocratic elegance in its florid handling and in details like the background column,

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the unfurling wig and the poised right hand, Arnold's portrait lacks such touches. The sitter is placed in a bare setting. His torso and stance are almost aggressively square and his expression, when compared to those found in most contemporary portraiture, is strikingly blunt.

Hogarth accentuates this by "bringing the sitter into dramatic close-up which definitely allows little pictorial breathing space around his body." (Hallett, 115) The two gentlemen are depicted as if they have only just sat down after being engaged elsewhere, clutching their hats firmly in their hands. Modern bourgeois masculinity is defined in the portraits by the Plainness and Informality of their clothing, the openness of their stance and the directness of their address to the viewer.





These standardised requirements are seen as Social, Religious and even Cultural Body Constraints by Beaus, Fops, Coxcombs or Rakes.

Beaus' and coquettes' addiction to the material world and its items, to the external objects' possession and their boastful, fashionable management described in Addison's and Steele's articles are meant to enhance the opposition between the External fashionable and Sensual Body on the one hand and The Internal, Emotional, Intellectual, Sensitive Body on the other. Addison explicitly distinguishes between the two dimensions – Body Internal, Body External - and their cause-effect relation.

"I must therefore, once for all inform my Readers, that it is not my Intention to sink the Dignity of this Paper with Reflections upon Red-heels or Top-knots, but rather to enter into the Passions of Mankind, and correct those depraved Sentiments that give Birth to all those little Extravagancies which appear in their outward Dress and Behaviour. Foppish and fantastik Ornaments are only Indications of Vice, not criminal in themselves. Extinguish Vanity in the Mind and you naturally retrench the little

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Superfluities of Garniture and Equipage. The Blossoms will fall of themselves, when the Root that nourishes the, is destroyed." (*The Spectator*, No. 16, ed. Mackie, 495)

In his shift from External to Internal Body approach Addison strips and dissects Human Body from all artifice to reveal its own Identity, that of an Inhuman, Shameless, Conceited Character.

"I was invited, methought, to the dissection of a Beau's Head and of a Coquet's Heart, which were both of them laid on a table before us.[…] We made a very odd Discovery, namely, that what we looked upon as Brains, were not such in reality but an Heap of strange Materials wound up in that Shape and Texture, and packed together with wonderful Art in the several Cavities of the Skull. […] We observed a large Antrum or Cavity in the Sinciput, that was filled with Ribbons, Lace and Embroidery, wrought together in a most curious Piece of Network, the Parts of which were likewise imperceptible to the naked Eye.Another of these Antrums or Cavities was stuffed with invisible Billet-doux, Love-Letters, pricked dances, and other Trumpery of the same nature. […] There was a large Cavity on each side of the Head, wich I must not omit. That on the right side was filled with Fictions, Flatteries and Falsehoods, Vows, Promises and Protestations; that on the left with Oaths and Imprecations. […] The great Cavity was filled with a kind of Spongy Substance, which the French Anatomists call Galimatias and the English, Nonsense." (*The Spectator No.275*, ed. Mackie, 529-530*)*

Falsehood, Vanity and Foolish Pride are brought into discussion in Addison's Humorous, Ironical manner.*"We could not but take notice in particular of that small Muscle, which is not often discovered in Dissections, and draws the Nose upwards, when it expresses the Contempt which the Owner of it has, upon seeing any thing he does not like, or hearing anything he does not understand."* (*The Spectator* No.275, ed. Mackie, 530)

The dichotomy External vs. Internal corresponds to the opposition Form / Content, Superficial / Meaningful Behaviour, or Shallow External Objects' Possession and Use / Internal Emotions and Thoughts. According to Addison when External Objects influence Internal Behaviour by Desire Production people are in danger of superficial, harmful behaviour as they are interested in the Show this kind of triflings offer them.*" Many a Lady has fetched a Sigh at the Toss of a Wig, and been ruin'd by the Tapping of a Snuff-Box. It is impossible to describe all the Execution that was done by the Shoulder-Knot while that Fashion prevailed, or to reckon up all the Virgins that have fallen a Sacrifice to a Pair of Fringed Gloves."* (*The Tatler*, No. 151, ed. Mackie, 487)

External Objects' veneration and their Desire Production are the leading force in decision making for very serious matters such as marriage: *"When the competition was doubtful and the Lady undetermined in her Choice, one of the young Lovers very quickly bethought himself of adding a*

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supernumerary Lace to his Liveries, which had so good an Effect that he married her the very Week after."(*The Spectator*, No.15, ed. Mackie, 492)

On the other hand these Fashionable Body Items and Manners become unawares Body Constraints for the same Fops and Rakes. Each and every époque has a more or less obvious or violent revolutionary renewal in point of its specific set of Constraints. Fashion does not only mean a Dynamic of Bodies in Motion but a new set of constraints hidden under the guise of a Freedom of Movement and Choice. Yet, a flip-point may occur when a Fashionable Super-Body becomes an outmoded Sub-Body mocked at because of over-usage. The outcome of a Consummer-Commodity Relation is a mirroring and at the same time disciplined body. Our Freedom may consist at the most in our ability to act or not to act and not in being able to choose at random.

In a Consumerist Society the continuos flip-point of Lack or Desire Production is like the wheel that makes the commerce go round as production of goods immediately becomes consumption and consumption requires production. Frank cites Hillel Schwartz when writing about this "mechanism": "no desire is unfulfillable and …no desire can be fully satisfied." (Frank, ed. Featherstone 52)

With the Communicative Bodies The Self associates and is associated with Its own External Image in a process of Producing or Recreating itself within an existing External World of Cultural, Social, Religious Institutions. It is not only that Soul and Natural Taste, emotions, reason or intellect is made Exterior through Face, Gesture or Dress but the respective person feels the relationship of his/her Internal Body to others mediated through his/her External Body and especially through her Clothes. Hence the Great Importance given to Body Appearance in Fashion Magazines and to Fashionable People and the whole Body Caring and Fashioning Industry that make people feel *secure* and give them the opportunity of expressing themselves more confidently every time they wear make-up or a certain type of clothes meant to cover and reveal at one and the same time.

Functional Requirements of Commodification in a modern progressive society inevitably triggered Social Mimetism interpreted as a tendency towards Homogeneity in point of Dress and Manners at both National and Inter-national levels with the Newly Rich and their strong Desire of Imitating the Nobles as well as with the French notoriety in spreading corruption among the English, by changing *"the useful circuit of gold"* into a pleasant, whimsical satisfaction of Opulence. (Roche, 219) Protective measures against instability and lack of order were taken in England out of Economic and Moral Reasons. The fashionable taste for Body Artificial in an increasingly polite and commercial 18th century England was seen as an influence from the corrupt foreign "Other", a contamination from without. An embargo was put on everything that was French – fabric, costume and affected manners as a part of a "resistance policy" against the "continental conspiracy" to neutralise the superior beauties of

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English women. In *The Complete English Tradesman (1727),* a kind of conduct book for tradesmen, Defoe defines this newly formed social division as a phenomenon of *" upward social migration"* based on the economic status of its members and manifested mainly on wealth acquisition from estates to fashionable and fancy objects, furniture, decorations, ornaments and clothes, canes, snuff-boxes or dress superfluities such as ribbons. Tradesmen and merchants are excessively interested in Possessing and they are to a great extent propertied members of the society. Most of the newly rich become interested in the educational status, their finality being the title of Gentleman yet not so many were really worthy of that title.

Addison and Steele overtly express their disapproval of The Newly Rich Masquerading Performances. In one of the last issues of *Spectator* Steele adds: *"The woman's Man expresses himself wholly in that Motion which we call Strutting: an elevated Chest, a pinched Hat, a measurable Step, and a sly surveying Eye are the Marks of him."* (*The Spectator*, No. 187, ed. Mackie, 524)

Longford writes: *"nothing unified the middling orders so much as their passion for aping the manners and morals of the gentry, as soon as they possessed the material means to do so."* (Longford, 67)

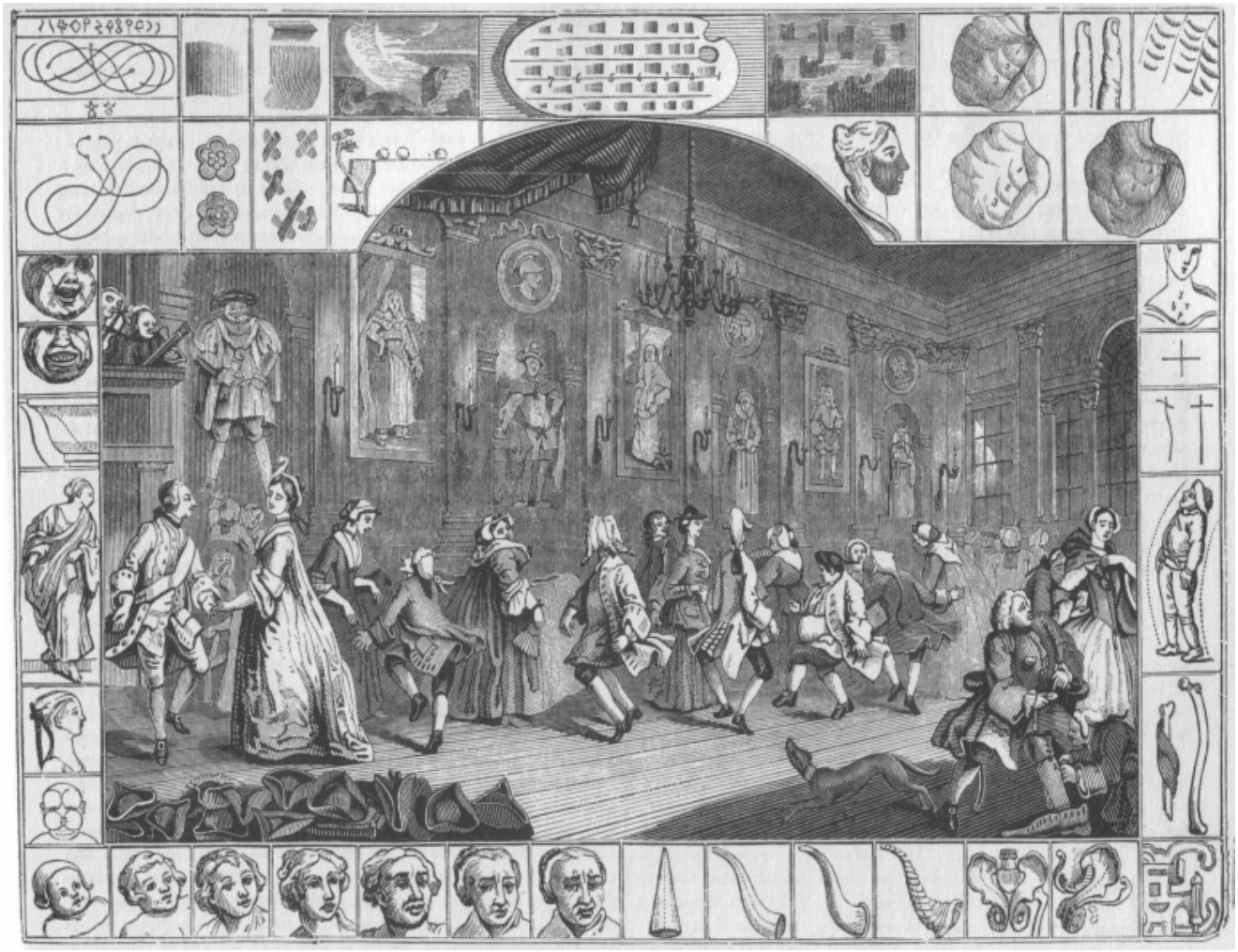
Hogarth's English rake, Tom Rakewell, is represented in one of the 8 paintings of the series *A Rake's Progress* (1733-5, oil on canvas) **Picture 4,** as a CIT, an embodiment of a social class transgressor. The painter focuses on the hypocrisies of wealth and social status, typical of the polite satire associated with **Moliere**. "The CIT was a recurrent target of satiric humour in the period and **Moliere**'s newly translated *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* (*The Cit turned Gentleman*) offered a powerful comic parable of the middle-class tradesman attempting to turn himself into an aristocrat with the help of a dancing master, a fencing master, a master tailor, a music teacher and a philosophy master." (Hallett, 116-7**)** Tom seems the copy of the extravagantly dressed cit, Mr. Jourdan, blundering through a fencing lesson, watched by the amused figures of his teachers. Tom seeks to purchase and manufacture, to buy and artificially



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create his aristocratic identity. Tom's French dancing master tiptoes up to him holding a miniature violin, his fencing master thrusts his sward towards the viewer, his tailor stands in the background with a new coat draped over his arm and a paid musician plays on a harpsichord.

The Country Dance, (1753, engraving) **Picture 5,** Hogarth's second plate accompanying *The Analysis of Beauty*, was clearly designed to be read in satiric terms. Once again Hogarth makes the disjunction between the elegant posture and demeanour of the pair of dancers on the left and the grotesques shapes of their companions. "In doing so, Hogarth offers a comic critique of the pretensions and incongruities typically found at modern assemblies." (Hallett, 257)



Here, Hogarth's pictorial, graphic and even textual satire resembles Addison's and Steele's articles in his compositional methods of juxtaposition and play or montage – parallels and overlapping visual forms in a blurring of boundaries between Reality and Representation, as well as of a bricolage of the series that could be treated as an assemblage of disparate objects that can be broken down into different sequences.

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Social or religious constraint presupposes a Regimentation of the Body Usage, which becomes predictable in point of external or internal activity.

When the Balance between an Internal or External Body activity is broken and the Internal Body can no longer control its own external manifestations, a dyadic other- relatedness of force would use the same disciplinary regimens – in our case, Fashion or Fashionable Manners or Morals – on their neighbour. In other words, there is an other-domination out of a failure of self-domination.

Thus the exclusive, oppressive behaviour of the rich and uneducated middle-class members force honest middle-class members into following their "fashionable" Manners and Morals if they want to maintain their social status. They are perfectly conscientious of their compromise and "succumb to the extravagant and irrational new fad" in point of dress and manners precisely to avoid being cast out. (Mackie, 12) In *The Tatler* No.116 a young lady expresses her opinion of the hoop-petticoat explaining her dissident behaviour by her abhorrence to have " a Mind to look as big and burly as other Persons of her Quality. She had kept out of it as long as she could till she began to appear little in the Eyes of all her Acquaintances" (*The Tatler*, No. 116 ed. Mackie, 483) Addison adds that "if she laid it (the petticoat) aside, People would think she was not made like other Women." (*The Tatler*, No. 116 ed. Mackie, 483) Mackie writes in his introduction that *"in the early eighteenth century as today, there were well established human types that set the pattern for both the style of clothes it was fashionable to wear and the sort of person it was fashionable to be"* (Mackie, 12)

Natural characters of sober, modest, honest behaviour, always looked upon by both Sexes as unfashionable Fellows of no Life or Spirit, are forced to make compromises and take courses of conspicuous and stylised dissipation becoming artificial characters. In *The Tatler* No.154 such a *"reformed poseur"* writes: *"I was forced to wench, drink, play and do every thing which are necessary to the Character of a Man of Wit and Plasure, to be well with the Ladies. […] In due Process of Time I was a very pretty Rake among the Men, and a very pretty fellow among the Women."* (Mackie, 150-51)

Speaking of the Internal / External Body Dissociation, silent or mirroring bodies are open to the external world in a Societal Reflectionism of mutual Assimilation and Appropriation lacking any form of Involvement or Internalisation of External Body Perceptions. "Outside of the mirror of its own body there is no reality", says Frank in his essay. (Featherstone, 62) In other words Bodies are only reflexive surfaces of a world that exists thanks to their reflection alone. Addison distinguishes a narcissist mirroring body relation when writing of the coquette. *"The Passion of an ordinary Woman for a Man is nothing else but Self-Love diverted upon another Object."* (*The Spectator*, No.128, ed. Mackie, 517)

In conclusion, Communicative bodies respond to fashionable external stimuli, which inevitably lead to reversals of ordinary societal hierarchies at the level of the External Body. Fashionable items

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pointing to a ridiculously obsessive, limitless appetite of middle class members for social status transgression and the possession of worldly goods discipline both the Internal and the External Body.

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