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Clothes without Bodies: Objects, Humans, and the Marketplace in Eighteenth-Century It-Narratives and Trade Cards

Chloe Wigston-Smith
University of Georgia

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Abstract
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Keywords
trade cards, it-narratives, clothes, marketplace, objects, eighteenth-century narratives, object narratives

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While recent studies of the things of literature call attention to the narrative and psychological slippage between people and their possessions, this essay argues that rather than representing a loss for human agency, humans and things intermingle to the disadvantage of objects. I show how trade cards and object narratives engage with the same nexus of commercial culture, objects, and humans, and share a mutual resistance to "autonomous garments"—petticoats, shoes, gowns, and other garments depicted independently of the human form. Object narratives, read in tandem with trade cards, suggest that the growth of distance between persons and things, as opposed to their collapse into each other, constitutes a central narrative in the period's commodity culture and fiction. Object narratives, even as they transform coats, waistcoats, petticoats, slippers, and shoes into first-person narrators, actively work against the entanglement of human and material spheres. Together these genres place sartorial commodities under human control, emphasizing the human subject's agency over those items worn closest to the self.

IN RECENT years, things have captured the imagination of eighteenth-century scholars. Attention to the consumption and representation of objects has unveiled a period in which the agency of objects, at the very least, entangles humans with their possessions, and at the very most, threatens to displace humans altogether.[1] When women and men invest objects, such as muffs, snuff-boxes, wigs, and miniatures, with affective meaning, a

[1] Recent full-length studies include Maxine Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Julie Park, *The Self and It: Novel Objects in Eighteenth-Century England* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010); and Cynthia Sundberg Wall, *The Prose of Things: Transformations of Description in the Eighteenth Century* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2006). See also Bill Brown, ed., *Things* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004). I am indebted to Jennie Batchelor, Lynn Festa, Julie Park, and the anonymous readers of *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* for their extensive comments and suggestions. Research for this article was funded by the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, Vassar College's Susan Turner Fund, and the Lewis Walpole Library.

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cultural climate emerges in which "objects challenge subjectivity by blurring the boundaries between thought and thing, self and stuff."[2] Cherished clothes and accessories in eighteenth-century novels, from Pamela's lettered petticoats to Yorick's tear-stained handkerchief, suggest how people might become their clothes, as opposed to their clothes adorning them. In accounts of the jumbling of people and things, scholars have drawn attention to the ways in which this slippage undermines human subjectivity.[3] In this article, I argue that rather than representing a loss for human agency, humans and things intermingle to the disadvantage of objects.

Visual and textual representations of sartorial objects, rather than eliding distinctions between the animate and the inanimate, attempt to establish a comfortable distance between humans and their possessions. By juxtaposing two genres that attempt to limit the power of autonomous clothes, this essay examines how trade cards (early business cards) and object narratives (sometimes described as it-narratives or novels of circulation) engage with the same nexus of commercial culture, objects, and humans, and share a mutual resistance to autonomous garments. By autonomous clothes, I mean unworn garments that are represented as detached from the body, the kind of clothes capable of thwarting their owner's agency, of circulating beyond the owner's grasp. Autonomous clothes were perceived as threatening and promiscuous forms in eighteenth-century print and visual culture. Moreover, scenes of shopping and shop keeping articulate the sexual connotations that the buying, selling, and producing of clothes possessed in the period.[4] Unworn smocks, petticoats, and

2 Barbara Benedict, "Encounters with the Object: Advertisements, Time, and Literary Discourse in the Early Eighteenth-Century Thing-Poem," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 40, no. 2 (2007): 194.

3 Treatments of the relations between commerce (or mercantilism) and literary culture tend to stress the collapse of humans into commodities. See, for example, Laura Brown, *Alexander Pope* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985); Laura Brown, *Ends of Empire: Women and Ideology in Early Eighteenth-Century English Literature* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993); Erin Mackie, *Market à la Mode: Fashion, Commodity, and Gender in "The Tatler" and "The Spectator"* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997); and Colin Nicholson, *Writing and the Rise of Finance: Capital Satires of the Early Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

4 Clothes without bodies have been described as a post-modern phenomenon, as garments that evoke the absent presence of the dead. See Juliet Ash, "The Aesthetics of Absence: Clothes without People in Paintings," in *Defining Dress: Dress as Object, Meaning and Identity*, ed. Amy de la Haye and

breeches could appear titillating, particularly when their shapes suggested the bulk and depth of absent corporeal forms. In short, autonomous clothes could appear curiously embodied despite their missing wearers.

Trade cards for the clothing professions visually neglect their wares—in contrast with lush visions of commodities in cards for other trades—favouring textual description over visual illustration. London shopkeepers, starting in the sixteenth century, used trade cards to advertise their goods, pinpoint the shop location, and record commercial transactions, crowding their engraved cards—for luxury and second-hand products alike—with mnemonic and textual details.[5] Why did illustrations of gowns, petticoats, and suits constitute unappealing images for English shopkeepers and consumers? In posing this question, I link the design of trade cards to the negative perception of independent clothes in visual and fashion culture, and in fiction. Towards the end of the long eighteenth century, as trade cards begin to include illustrations of clothed figures, their designs resist the promiscuous connotations of clothes buying and selling by schooling consumers in dressmaking and tailoring techniques.

Object narratives, read in tandem with trade cards, suggest that the growth of distance between persons and things, as opposed to their collapse into each other, constitutes a central narrative in the period's commodity culture.[6] Associated with speaking coins, banknotes, and lapdogs, object narratives purport to endow

Elizabeth Wilson (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 128–42. Dana Cavallaro and Alexandra Warwick connect clothes without bodies to "the radical fragmentation of the self" in *Fashioning the Frame: Boundaries, Dress and Body* (New York: Berg, 1998), 31. But neither of these frameworks accounts for the resistance to representing autonomous clothes in eighteenth-century commodity culture.

5 On the aesthetics of trade cards, see Michael Snodin, "Trade Cards and English Rococo," in *The Rococo in England: A Symposium*, ed. Charles Hind (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1986), 82–103; Maxine Berg and Helen Clifford, "Selling Consumption in the Eighteenth Century: Advertising and the Trade Card in Britain and France," *Cultural and Social History* 4, no. 2 (2007): 159; and Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure*, 186.

6 I am thinking here of Karl Marx's description of what happens when "man seeks to decipher" the meaning of commodities. Marx draws on coats, silks, and linens as examples in his explanation, arguing that this "ultimate money-form of the world of commodities ... actually conceals, instead of disclosing, the social character of private labour, and the social relations between individual producers." Marx, *Capital, Volume One*, in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: Norton, 1978), 324.

petticoats, coats, and waistcoats with subjectivity, turning these garments into the protagonists of commodity culture. Recent investigations into the subgenre have stressed its emphasis on the blurred boundaries between consumers and commodities.[7] This article argues, however, that object narratives, even as they transform coats, waistcoats, petticoats, slippers, and shoes into first-person narrators, actively work against the entanglement of human and material spheres. Both trade cards and object narratives attempt to render sartorial commodities safe by placing them under human control, emphasizing the human subject's agency over those items worn closest to the self.

Autonomous Clothes in the Marketplace

In eighteenth-century periodicals, fiction, and engravings, the act of purchasing, selling, or producing clothes was tinged with sexual implications. Milliners and dressmakers, as Jennie Batchelor has shown, were viewed as promiscuous flirts.[8] In non-fiction prose and novels, millinery shops serve as fronts for brothels, and dressmakers moonlight as courtesans, their employers as bawds. For Richard Steele, the sexualized shop constitutes an alarming result of commodity culture. Writing in response to his *Spectator* readers, who complain about the typical "young Fop [who] cannot buy a Pair of Gloves, but he is at the same Time straining for some ingenious Ribaldry to say to the young Woman who helps them on," Steele deplores such a "melancholy Thing, when the World is mercenary even to the buying and selling of our very Persons."[9] Steele's description of the fluid boundaries between trade and flirtation, commerce and sex—in which shopgirls are "treated as if they stood there to sell their Persons to Prostitution" (215)—undergirds the well-

[7] See Mark Blackwell, "Introduction: The It-Narrative and Eighteenth-Century Thing Theory," in *The Secret Life of Things: Animals, Objects, and It-Narratives in Eighteenth-Century England*, ed. Mark Blackwell (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2007), 9–14.

[8] In stories about milliners and dressmakers, Jennie Batchelor notes the persistance "with which writers conflated [working] women and the goods they produced" in *Dress, Distress, and Desire* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 52.

[9] Richard Steele, *The Spectator* no. 155 (Tuesday, 28 August 1711), in *The Commerce of Everyday Life: Selections from The Tatler and The Spectator*, ed. Erin Mackie (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's Press, 1998), 214, 215. References are to this edition.

known exchange between Yorick and the Parisian Grisset in Laurence Sterne's *Sentimental Journey* (1768). Yorick finds her "the handsomemest grisset, I think, I ever saw," twice referring to her as the "beautiful Grisset."[10] Over the course of Yorick's shopping experience, the saleswoman acquires the typographical rites of capitalization (if not a name). Similar to Steele's fops, for Yorick shopping approximates a sexual experience: the trying on of gloves climaxes with customer and saleswoman "lolling" on the counter (74). Yorick purchases several pairs of gloves, even though none of the gloves he tries on actually fits (suggesting that the Grisset profits from her interaction with her besotted customer).[11] Moreover, he confesses, "I wish'd she had ask'd a livre more" (75). Presumably Yorick wishes to account for the sexual rewards of commerce in a scene that emphasizes human relations over the use-value of objects, as implied by the ill-fitting gloves he acquires. The gloves accrue value, not from their material or monetary worth, but from their potential to sustain the kind of flirtatious exchange critiqued by Steele. While Steele depicts the sexualized shop as a space in which both things and people are for sale, Sterne refuses such equivalencies, highlighting instead how objects are displaced by human relations.

On the rare occasion that autonomous clothes and accessories are depicted in paintings and engravings, they tend to feature in the sexualized settings evoked by Steele and Sterne. Scenes by William Hogarth and Thomas Rowlandson illuminate how independent clothes were perceived as risqué in eighteenth-century visual culture. On the right side of plate 3 of *A Rake's Progress* (see Figure 1), Hogarth shows a semi-dressed prostitute, leaning over to remove her shoe; her hitched-up shift and petticoats expose her legs and her torn clocked stockings. She turns

10 Laurence Sterne, *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy*, vol. 6 in *The Florida Edition of the Works of Laurence Sterne*, ed. Melvyn New and W.G. Day (Gainseville: University Press of Florida, 2002), 70, 74. References are to this edition.

11 To some degree, this might recall Marx's description of the enigmatic nature of commodities: "the relations connecting the labour of one individual with that of the rest appear, not as direct social relations between individuals at work, but as what they really are, material relations between persons and social relations between things" (*Capital, Volume One*, 321). Laura Brown sees eighteenth-century mercantile capitalism as an extension of Marx's commodity fetishism, in which "relations between things replace relations between people" (*Ends of Empire*, 119).

Figure 1. William Hogarth, *A Rake's Progress* (1735), plate 3. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London (E.1267-1990). Reproduced by permission.

her head towards a pile of clothes heaped on the floor beside her, as though contemplating the stays and gown she has just discarded. The three-dimensional stays are precariously poised on top of the gown.[12] In a scene that exposes Tom Rakewell's antics at the Rose Tavern, the prostitute's crumpled garments serve as another sordid symbol of excess, underlined by the pile's prominent position in the foreground of the composition. In the aquatint "Old Cloaths, Old Cloaths" (see Figure 2)—part of a satirical response to Francis Wheatley's sentimental *Cries of London*—Rowlandson ascribes moral and sexual taint to a pair of unworn breeches.[13] Two second-hand clothes sellers, one stereotyped as a Jewish dealer, present a pair of breeches to a young woman who already holds some shoes and a coat—items she has either just purchased from the street sellers or is about to sell. While the composition does not explain the

12 For a similar image of stays, see the engraving *A Description of the Miseries of a Garreteer Poet* (1751), The Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University, 751.02.00.01 (a digital copy of this engraving is available in the Lewis Walpole Library Digital Collection).

13 On Francis Wheatley's series, see Sean Shesgreen, *Images of the Outcast: The Urban Poor in the Cries of London* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 136.

Figure 2. Thomas Rowlandson, *Old Cloaths, Any Old Cloaths* (1799), *Cries of London* no. 7. Courtesy Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington.

woman's interest in a man's garment, the old man's lewd gesture clearly sexualizes the economic transaction, as the animated breeches dance between buyer and seller. The young woman's expression proves more difficult to read. Does her slightly open mouth indicate shock? Or does her stare convey her continued interest in the breeches or the sexual gesture? In either case, Rowlandson's satiric print—like Hogarth's narrative engraving—exploits autonomous clothes in order to suggest the intersection between sex and commerce. In granting three-dimensional depth to stays and breeches, these images relay how unworn clothes might be visualized as embodied.

As the Rowlandson print reminds us, ready-made garments were associated with second-hand ware, often sold by street peddlers rather than in the refined—if risqué—setting of the milliner's shop. Detached clothes appear in scenes of country fairs (often in the form of ready-made garments or laundry), underlining the visual association between labouring people and

Figure 3. John Collett, *An Holland Smock to Be Run for, by an Woman Born in This Country: The Best Woman in Three Heats* (1770). Courtesy of The Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University.

autonomous garments.[14] The John Collett engraving *An Holland Smock to Be Run for, by An Woman Born in This Country: The Best Woman in Three Heats* (see Figure 3), as John Styles notes, displays the prize smock (depicted in a T-shape) and two tri-cornered hats suspended from a tree.[15] An inquisitive sailor, perched on a branch, lifts up the hem of the smock and peers into its interior. The gesture evokes James Boswell's sense of his good fortune when he "advanced to the greatest freedom by the sweet elevation of [Louisa's] charming petticoat," for few eighteenth-century women wore underwear beneath the under-petticoat and shift.[16] Although the sailor's smock lacks the same rewards as Louisa's

14 See, for example, the line of drying shirts in *Lottery Ticket—or the Sunshine of Hope*, printed and sold by Carrington Bowles (1792), Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University, 792.09.29.01+ (a digital copy of this engraving is available in the Lewis Walpole Library Digital Collection).

15 John Collett, *An Holland Smock to Be Run for, by an Woman Born in This Country: The Best Woman in Three Heats* (1770), Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University, 770.0.38 (a digital copy of this engraving is available in the Lewis Walpole Library Digital Collection). For more on this view of plebeian festivities, see John Styles, *The Dress of the People: Everyday Fashion in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 318.

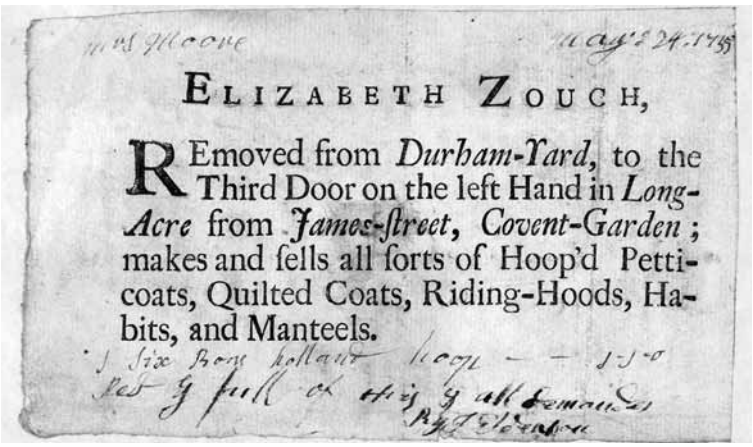
16 James Boswell, "Saturday, January 1, 1763," in *Boswell's London Journal 1762–1763*, ed. Frederick A. Pottle (New Haven: Yale University Press), 115.

petticoat, the image clearly trades in the erotic confusion between autonomous clothes and the bodies of their absent, or future, owners. In this case, the smock—the garment worn closest to the body—is sexualized by the sailor's invasive peeping, by a small branch that almost penetrates its interior, and by its prized status at a bawdy country fair. Other prints, such as Isaac Cruikshank's *Gown Metamorphos'd into a Ghost!!* (1797), portray embodied gowns as nightmarish visions for the labouring classes.[17] In this print, an unkempt man, lantern in hand, recoils from the ghostly vision of a white gown drying on a line. The gown turns a large, menacing face on the terrified man, while the folds of the gown, like Collett's smock, suggest the body beneath. Although the print takes humorous aim at the excesses of the Gothic imagination, its point of critique conveys the uncanny potential of embodied garments. Whether visualized in erotic or Gothic terms, in these engravings independent clothes—especially three-dimensional garments that mimic the shape of the body and its parts—evoke the disquiet produced by autonomous clothes.

The negative connotation of autonomous clothes helps to account for the curious visual absence of commodities in English trade cards for the clothing trades, in which textual description eclipses the visual representation of goods. Trade card composition exploits graphic features such as decorative headings, shop signs, and mixed typefaces, but text plays the most important role in articulating both the image of the goods for sale and of the shop. These cards dodge the erotic visual territory of the Hogarth and Rowlandson prints, as well as the uncanny terrain of the Collett and Cruikshank engravings. In an example of a card for a milliner's shop from 1735 (see Figure 4), Elizabeth Zouch provides careful instructions—"the third Door on the left Hand in Long-Acre, from James-Street, Covent-Garden"—to alert old and new customers of her change of address.[18] Her card represents a standard design for trade cards for milliners and tailors, in which text outshines image as the favoured mode of description. The precise directions occupy one-half of the textual space, reflecting the topographical detail, as Cynthia Wall has

[17] Isaac Cruikshank, *A Gown Metamorphos'd into a Ghost!!* (1797), Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University, 797.2.11.2dr (a digital copy of this illustration is available in the Lewis Walpole Library Digital Collection).

[18] Bodleian Library, University of Oxford: John Johnson Collection; Trade Cards 12 (27a).


ELIZABETH ZOUCH,

REmoved from *Durham-Yard*, to the Third Door on the left Hand in *Long-Acre* from *James-street*, *Covent-Garden*; makes and sells all sorts of Hoop'd Petticoats, Quilted Coats, Riding-Hoods, Habits, and Manteels.

Figure 4. "Trade Card for Elizabeth Zouch." John Johnson Collection. Trade Cards 12 (97a). Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.

pointed out, of the "vast new production of city maps, guidebooks, imprints, and urban fictions"[19] pouring from London's presses in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, as well as the importance of shepherding consumers to the right location. Deploying rhetoric common to trade cards of every profession, Zouch devotes the rest of her text to a brief, though wide-ranging, list of women's garments.

In trade cards for drapers and mercers, lengthy lists of goods elaborate a dizzying array of commodities for sale, as seen in the case of Abraham Young's 1745 card for his Hay-Market shop in Southwark.[20] Young's card exploits a standard composition in which the shop sign, the seven stars and King's Arms, occupies the upper half and a dense paragraph the lower half. His goods range from luxury watered silks and brocades to sturdier textiles associated with the labouring classes, such as calamanco (a wool with silky sheen). In addition to itemizing 37 textiles, he broadcasts his wide selection of ready-to-wear garments: "Makes and sells all sorts of Silks, Brocades, Tissues, Damasks ... Likewise Ready-made Morning Gowns, Banyans, Velvet and Cloth Cloaks,

19 Wall, "'*At Shakespear's-Head*, Over-Against *Catharine-Street* in the *Strand*': Forms of Address in London Streets," in *The Streets of London: From the Great Fire to the Great Stink*, ed. Tim Hitchcock and Heather Shore (London: Rivers Oram Press, 2003), 17.

20 Abraham Young, Guildhall Trade Card Collection, City of London.

Cappachines, Mantalers, Riding Hoods, Velvet Hoods and Pilgrims, Quilted Coats, Hoop Petticoats and Farthingals; Silk Bonnets, Velvet Caps, of all sorts, for Men, Women or Children, Long Carrying Cloth Cloaks for Children, and Crape for Men's Hatbands of all sorts, Wholesale and Retail." The text conveys the abundance of products for sale, designed to whet the appetite of a literate market.[21] The language—"likewise" and the thrice repeated "all sorts"—further evokes how the expansive list creates the image of a store brimming with a variety of textiles and ready-made garments designed to attract men and women, young and old. The bountiful list potentially encourages consumers to try things on mentally, thus promoting a kind of imaginative play in which shoppers experiment with silk, damasks, and fine tissues and are seduced by the process of selection.[22]

Few trade cards before the end of the century depict men and women wearing the clothes for sale or any garments or textiles at all.[23] As the data in Table 1 show, each of the archival collections that I examined tells a similar story: trades cards for the clothing professions exploit text to advertise their wares rather than illustrations of objects. Instead, trade card compositions source other graphic devices—such as mixed typefaces, shop signs, and frames—for visual inspiration. As most museums and trade card collectors were drawn to views of shop interiors, shop signs, products, and rococo cartouches, the proportion of text-only cards and plain bill heads may have been even higher during the period.[24] The visual lack of sartorial commodities

21 Berg and Clifford contend that cards were "used to reinforce a business image and reputation rather than particular wares" ("Selling Consumption," 149).

22 I am grateful to Lynn Festa for her comments on this point.

23 I have based my archival interpretations on approximately 2,000 trade cards held at the John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera at the Bodleian Library (University of Oxford), the Guildhall Library (City of London), the Banks and Heal Collections at the British Museum, the Victoria & Albert Museum, the Rothschild Collection at Waddesdon Manor, Buckinghamshire, and the Lewis Walpole Library (Yale University). These numbers provide a general picture, rather than a precise account, of contemporary practices in cards for milliners, dressmakers, tailors, mercers, drapers, haberdashers, hosiers, lacemen, and hatters (only the Banks and Heal collections are organized by trade). For more on the problematic provenance and dating of trade cards, see Berg and Clifford, "Selling Consumption," 154; and Anne Lambert, *A Nation of Shopkeepers: Trade Ephemera from 1654 to the 1860s in the John Johnson Collection* (Banbury: Classic Cheney Press, 2001), 9.

24 The Guildhall Collection includes fewer decorative examples than the smaller collections at the Victoria & Albert Museum and Waddesdon

Table 1. Objects in Trade Cards for the Clothing Trades

Collection Name	Number of Cards	Cards with Illustrated Objects	Percentage of Total
JJCPE*	119	45	38
Guildhall Library	191	20	10.5
Lewis Walpole Library	80	13	16.25
Banks: Linen Drapers	124	20	16
Banks: Woollen Drapers	30	8	27
Banks: Mercers	236	6	3
Banks: Tailors	43	4	9
Banks: Milliners	69	5	7
Heal: Clothiers	80	11	14
Heal: Linen Drapers	241	27	11
Heal: Mercers	83	10	12
Heal: Milliners	69	7	10

*John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera

conflicts with standard designs for other trades, in which baroque and rococo frames drip with enticing goods such as tea, china, silverware, glassware, chandeliers, jewelry, watches, tools, pewter, and stationery, and illuminate the tantalizing material world of the eighteenth century. Cards for cabinet makers, for instance, illustrate chairs, cupboards, mirrors, card tables, coffins, sofas, wardrobes, beds, chests of drawers, cases, and japanned furniture, offering a visual bounty that competes with the images of barrels, bottles, bunches of grapes, and lush vineyards on view in cards for wine and spirit merchants (see Table 2). While the numbers indicate the anomalous practices of the clothing trades, historical distance from the everyday use of trade cards and their respective meanings complicates the archival picture. Merchants such as Frederick Hahn, who sold mantuas, coats, and riding habits, might advertise a "Variety of Trimmings & Hoops in the Newest Taste,"[25] but may have been reluctant to date this taste with visual

Manor. For the Guildhall collection, I have included hatters, hosiers, and breeches makers in the sample; these trades were more likely to represent objects (as part of a street sign) than tailors and milliners.

25 Frederick Hahn, 1766, Guildhall Trade Card Collection, City of London.

Table 2. Trades with Higher Rates of Illustrated Objects

Collection Name and Trade	Number of Cards	Cards with Illustrated Objects	Percentage of Total
Heal: Breeches Makers	38	29	76
Heal: Undertakers	50	38	76
Banks: Wine & Spirits	46	32	70
Banks: Undertakers	30	19	63
Banks: Cabinet Makers	94	55	59
Heal: Cabinet Makers	148	81	55
Banks: Staymakers	28	15	54

examples of the latest fashions, as merchants often relied on the same card for a number of years to save the expense of frequent engravings.[26] Moreover, it is possible that the cards of cabinet makers and wine merchants depict exemplary goods, rather than current merchandise for sale.[27] Such strategies would have freed them from the aesthetic and economic constraints associated with depicting seasonal changes in fashion, a freedom unavailable to dressmakers and tailors.

For most trades, the image of the shop sign formed the visual focus of the card composition, serving as a useful mnemonic device for locating the store prior to 1762, when numbers begin to replace signs. Some shop signs for clothing merchants incorporated figures, but these figures rarely wore fashionable dress. Within the clothing professions, hosiers, hatters, and haberdashers—shops selling ready-made accessories that could be quickly brought up to date with new ribbons or trimmings—were more prone to represent their wares in their cards, either hanging from a rococo frame or as part of the shop sign. A few

26 Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure*, 272. On the production and cost of trade cards, see Berg and Clifford, "Selling Consumption," 148–49. Cost seems not to have prevented wallpaper shops from displaying specific patterns in their cards. See, for example, the thirteen patterns in Matt Darly, "Manufactory for Paper Hangings," Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University.

27 See, for example, the card of Robert Broughton, "Hosier and Hatter," Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University, which offers the glimpse of a shop interior, its table laden with packages, bolts of cloth, and a woman's straw hat. The goods on display sport little ornamentation, perhaps as a means of encouraging shoppers to personalize their possessions.

cards for woollen drapers depict bolts of fabric and patterned ells, but rarely do cards for milliners and tailors include actual garments, apart from figures, such as the Indian Queen, that formed part of the shop sign. Iconic figures, like the Indian Queen, generally wear fixed costumes or generic dress. The trade card for Sweet and Thornton, linen drapers in Cheapside, for example, reproduces the sign of the three nuns.[28] The women's shapeless habits omit the corseting and hoops of fashionable gowns, revealing the distance between the apparel of shop-sign figures and the fashionable textiles, ribbons, hats, and clothes for sale inside the shop.

Although shop signs often form the visual focus of trade cards, their relationship to the shop's commodities ranges from evocative to obscure. Woollen drapers often advertised their shops at the sign of the "golden fleece"—a sheep whose fluffy coat recalled the wool fabrics housed inside. The woollen draper Peter Hodgson, in Grace-Church Street, placed his initials at the centre of his sign's icon, the woolpack, a traditional container for unspun wool.[29] In other examples, the link between sign and product proves more associative than concrete. The "queen's head," for instance, was a popular shop sign for mercers.[30] Yet mercers also used the sign of the golden artichoke, golden lion, stars, sun, peacock, Turk's head, hen and chickens, cock, unicorn, cocoa tree, pineapple, and falcon. Many shopkeepers, as Ambrose Heal notes, inherited their signs from the previous tenant of the space, underlining the often arbitrary relationship between shop sign and product.[31] In light of the visual space accorded to the

28 Sweet and Thornton, Victoria & Albert Museum, E. 2356.1987. See also the sign of the three nuns in Rupert Atkinson, "Linen Draper and Habersdasher," Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University. One rare exception is the sign of the green man (a man wearing a justaucorps) in Thomas Jefferys, "Silk Scourer and Dyer," Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University. Other typical shops signs for woollen drapers include the woolpack, golden fleece, and spinning wheel; woollen drapers who specialize in funerals sometimes show mourners.

29 Peter Hodgson, Guildhall Trade Card Collection, City of London. For the limited examples of linen draper and mercer cards that depict bolts of fabric rolls and ells, see trade cards for William Orton, "mercer," British Museum, Heal 84.77; Joseph Burnthwaite, "linen draper," British Museum, Heal 80.49; and R. Maffett, "clothier," British Museum, Heal 40.87.

30 See Ambrose Heal's list of mercer signs in *The Signboards of Old London* (New York: Benjamin Bloom, 1972), 123–35; see also his list of signs associated with specific trades (17–25).

31 Heal, *Signboards of Old London*, 11. Neil McKendrick notes the lingering

shop sign in many designs, it is possible that additional images of clothes would have cluttered the composition, loading the card with too many visual signifiers. While shop signs often bore a metonymic relationship to the goods for sale, or sometimes lacked a clear connection to the shop, they would have been of immense commercial value—like Zouch's specific directions—in guiding consumers towards the shop.

Nonetheless this information does not account for the absence of commodities in examples for the clothing trades. The sexualized work of women in the clothing trades, an association that, as we have seen, confused the exact nature of the goods for sale, provides some insight into the visual resistance to embodied garments in trade cards. In addition, seasonal changes in fashions, colours, and fabrics likely affected the visual representation of garments. Except for the most refined milliners and tailors, it would have been difficult to produce a trade card that reflected the latest fashions, season to season. Moreover, images of autonomous petticoats, bodies, and gowns may have connoted ready-made garments, items that were in low demand among the elite.[32] Not only were ready-made garments associated with the labouring classes, but they were also linked with the working women who produced them. As Beverly Lemire has shown, resistance to ready-made clothing, produced primarily by women, reinforced the "on-going antagonism towards women in the clothing trades, sustained by the implied link between quality work and gender."[33] In the select group of trade cards that includes images of garments and accessories, we see these gendered perceptions of sartorial labour at work: garments stitched by women tend to be overlooked, while those sewn by men are over-represented. This gender division largely stems from the visual economy of shop signs, the most common visual source for cards before the last quarter of the century. Smaller items such as stays, hats, hose, and breeches constitute popular shop signs, whereas larger ready-made items such as gowns, petticoats, riding habits, suits, waistcoats, and

visual influence of the shop sign after 1762 in "The Commercialization of Fashion," in *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England*, ed. Neil McKendrick, John Brewer, and J.H. Plumb (Bloomington: Indian University Press, 1982), 84.

32 Madeleine Ginsburg, "The Tailoring and Dressmaking Trades, 1700–1850," *Costume* 6 (1972): 69.

33 Beverly Lemire, *Dress, Culture, and Commerce: The English Clothing Trade before the Factory, 1660–1800* (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1997), 71.

Figure 5. T. Lea, "staymaker," Banks 18.25, © The Trustees of the British Museum. Reproduced by permission.

coats rarely appear in shop signs (see Table 2).[34] Like staymakers, merchants who sold breeches, in addition to hats and boots, often possessed a shop sign that corresponded with their products (see Table 2).[35] As the results for staymakers and breeches makers show in Table 2, garments produced by men were more likely to receive visual attention than those made by women (see "milliners" in Table 1). In the card for the staymaker Thomas Swainston, near St. Margaret's Hill in Southwark, the simple composition includes the shop sign of a golden bodice, with the stays splayed out flat; the text beneath the sign details the stays, bodices, jumps,

34 For a rare shop sign with a large garment, see the sign of the "hoop-petticoat and crown" in Trade card, James Collins, "linen draper," British Museum, Banks 32.3. For an equally rare shop sign of textiles, "the Two Fustian Rolls Rose & Crown," see Trade card, Jeremiah Hemsworth, "linen draper," British Museum, Heal 80.160.

35 See breeches makers at the sign of the buck and breeches, William Sheringham, "Breeches Maker," and John Langford, "Breeches Maker," Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University.

children's wear, and women's garments available at the shop.[36] Similarly, in a card for the staymaker T. Lea at 18 Craven Street (see Figure 5), the design showcases a pair of stays overlaid with the shop name and the staymaker's credentials.[37] The whimsical typeface is reinforced by the line "*Fait toutes Sortes de Corps et Corsets a la Française*," which follows the curve of the shoulder strap and authenticates the French styles on offer. During the period, breeches and stays were associated with male labour; thus both garments would have been spared the negative association between ready-made clothes and women's work.

In contrast with English examples, illustrations of clad bodies and autonomous items of clothes do appear in Parisian advertisements. Parisian trade cards featured illustrations of clothes starting in the late seventeenth century. For instance, the card for Jean Magoulet, a "brodeur ordinaire" in Saint-Germain des Près, shows a shop interior with two merchants who stand behind a long table and a seated couple on the other side of the table.[38] One merchant holds up for inspection a waistcoat, which the man diligently examines, while his partner gestures towards the garment, capturing the woman's attention. Several garments are suspended on the back wall of the shop. Seventeenth-century taste-making periodicals like the *Mercure Galant* also depicted interior views of shops such as a January 1678 engraving after Jean Berain. The image shows a man and a woman inside a shop with recessed shelves; a low shelf, decorated with 14 pieces of fabric, runs around the room. By featuring the couple alone in the shop interior, the scene implies that shopping provides opportunities for a man to converse, and even flirt, with a woman. The shelves are stocked with patterned textiles, shoes, caps, gloves, hose, breeches, and sashes. Most suggestively, the breeches

36 Thomas Swaiston, Victoria & Albert Museum, E. 2344–1987.

37 Trade card, T. Lea, "staymaker," British Museum, Banks 18.25. Two other cards replicate this design: William Sayer, 1785, "staymaker," British Museum, Banks 112.30; and William Simcock, 1796, "staymaker," British Museum, Banks 112.33. For a similar design without flowers or banner, see Trade card, Strange, 1794, "staymaker," British Museum, Banks 112.38. For an example in which the stays crown a simple frame, echoing the typical placement of the shop sign, see Magill, 1794, "staymaker," British Museum, Banks 112.18. Two late examples illustrate stays and clothed female figures: T. Kennelly, 1791, "staymaker," British Museum, Banks 112.15 (this neoclassical figure has an exposed breast); and Nichole, 1788, "staymaker," British Museum, Banks 112.23.

38 "Trade Card of Jean Magoulet, Embroiderer-in-Ordinary," ca. 1690, Waddesdon Manor, 3686.1.6.8.

are depicted as three-dimensional forms with hose and shoes attached, as if to suggest corporeal depth. In contrast with the Hogarth, Rowlandson, Collett, and Cruikshank engravings, the French engraving celebrates the display of autonomous clothes. The accompanying text details each pattern, complete with information on where to purchase it, illuminating the enthusiasm found in the *Mercure Galant* for the Parisian fashion industry.[39] Clothes without bodies here produce a kind of fiction by creating the illusion that these garments are available for immediate wear. In actual practice, luxury apparel was created for each customer, whereas the ready-to-wear market and the second-hand trade catered to non-elite consumers. Nonetheless, these images suggest the visual possibilities for representing clothes as alluring objects worthy of the attention of well-dressed shoppers.

Similar to the French examples, cards for other English trades provide greater visual evidence of dressed bodies (see Table 2), as seen in advertisers of funeral services.[40] Although cards for undertakers tend not to present autonomous clothes, their compositions are crowded with commodities, body parts, and people, depicting coffins, tombstones, funeral processions, skulls, mourners, and the dead. The card for the coffin maker William Grinley in Fleet Street illustrates the shopkeeper's two signs, a naked boy and a coffin (the coffin is decorated with a semi-nude, winged figure holding a scythe and an hourglass); the signs hang above a prostrate corpse, its head resting on a pillow.[41] Below these images, text describes Grinley's various funeral services and products. John Elphick's seventeenth-century card also displays explicit images of the human form.[42] The text advertises the woollen-draper's specialty in hearses, mourning clothes, and room hangings, and is bracketed at the top by the image of a hearse and at the bottom by the image of a body dressed for burial. The edges of the card are ornamented with skulls, skeletons, bones, and shovels. As these undertaker cards reveal, it was visually possible—and even enticing—to represent a generic

39 See Joan DeJean on the *Mercure Galant* in *The Essence of Style* (New York: Free Press, 2005), 46–59.

40 A small number of wig-makers include images of their wares. See, for example, D. Cook, "Peruke-Maker," Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University.

41 William Grimley, Victoria & Albert Museum, E. 326–1985.

42 Trade card, John Elphick, "undertaker," British Museum, Heal 124.23.

Figure 6. Mary Varden, "milliner," Banks 32.5, ©The Trustees of the British Museum. Reproduced by permission.

human form in cards that advertised shrouds and mourning attire, both forms of apparel in which social rituals may have mattered more than individual fashion. In contrast with gowns and suits, mourning apparel, shrouds, and corpses were not perceived as images unsuitable for advertising. For trades centred on the dead, there was no contest between the agency of autonomous clothes and human subjectivity.

In the few cases of trade cards that feature clothes without bodies, the character of the shop largely accounts for the presence of embodied garments. In mid-century, Mary Varden, who specialized in second-hand children's apparel, commissioned a card with an anomalous representation of a gown without a wearer (see Figure 6). The card, designed by Morrison Moorfields, reproduces the shop sign of a rose hovering above a "childs-coat."[43] Shorthand for petticoat, the "coat" was often visible in an open gown or, as seen here, coupled with a sleeved bodice.[44]

43 Trade card, Mary Varden, "milliner," British Museum, Banks 32.5. Heal dates this trade card to circa 1760 (*The Signboards of Old London*, 137); the card also appears in the Heal collection (86.88).

44 Anne Buck, *Dress in Eighteenth-Century England* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1979), 225.

The fullness of the petticoat and the shadow inside the bodice bustline convey the depths of an absent body, while the hovering rose echoes the shape of a cap or bonnet, as though the garments are merely missing shoulders and a head.[45] Although eighteenth-century gowns relied on structural devices such as stays, hoops, weights, and padding, they would not have been able to stand independently of a person. This composition inverts the conventional relations between the human body and absent clothes in visual culture. As Anne Hollander has shown, nude figures wear the "ghosts of absent clothes,"[46] which mark the body with the silhouette of fashion—in the eighteenth century, stays, bustles, panniers, and hoops. In Varden's card, however, the absent body determines the gown's shape, suggesting that clothes are marked by the ghosts of missing—or even future—wearers. Bespoke gowns were commonly stitched to a woman's body, evoking how the body shaped clothes in practice.[47] These made-to-order gowns constituted, of course, the most expensive and elite wear of the period. The Houndsditch location of Varden's shop implies that she sells non-elite apparel, as does her specialty in children's clothes, which were often cut down from women's gowns in the first half of the century. Moreover, Varden's focus on children's clothes may have placed her apart from the sexual reputation of dressmakers, which originated from the confusion between the dressmaker's body and the goods for sale. In either case, the scarcity of such images confirms the difficulty of visualizing clothes without bodies in advertising. Passed around on the street, distributed to patrons inside the shop, and doubling as receipts, trade cards worked to promote the agency of consumers: to direct them towards the right address and to encourage purchases and repeat visits. The absence of autonomous clothes in their designs suggests that clothes without bodies presented some form of distraction from such commercial transactions, either by crowding the composition with too many visual codes (and losing consumers in London's colourful streets) or by reminding consumers of the sexual associations of commodity culture.

45 In the six archives consulted for this article, I found only one other card depicting a similar freestanding gown (also the sign of the child's coat): Trade card, Elizabeth Walker, "woollen draper," British Museum, Banks 131.33.

46 Anne Hollander, *Seeing Through Clothes* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 86.

47 Ginsburg, 68.

Waistcoats, Petticoats, Slippers, and Shoes: The Speaking Garments of Object Narratives

While trade cards affirm the challenge of depicting autonomous clothes—at least in positive terms—their textual descriptions celebrate the material sphere. Object narratives likewise embrace garments and accessories, animating them with their own secret histories. In these stories, speaking garments recount their adventures on the bodies of their former owners. The narrative, however, often begins at the moment at which the object has been severed from the body and lies in disuse under the sofa, in the wardrobe, or at the pawnshop. Structured as a contest of knowledge between the perceptive object and dim owner, these fictions, as Deidre Lynch explains, "play knowing objects against the humans who do not know their properties' histories."[48] While the subgenre has been traditionally associated with speaking coins and banknotes, a small group of object narratives devotes attention to garments and accessories.[49] Petticoats, waistcoats, and gowns constituted a form of currency, easily traded up and down the social ladder, passed from mistress to maid, lost, stolen, or exchanged at the pawnbroker's shop—all favourite plots for object narratives about clothes.

Lynch, Christopher Flint, and Aileen Douglas, among others, have framed object-narrators as metaphors and metonymies for authorship, print culture, and the commodification of people.[50] At first glance, many object narratives support this line of thought. In *Indusiata: Or, The Adventures of a Silk Petticoat* (1773), for example, the object narrative seems to stage the displacement of the human narrative by the object's story.[51] Serialized in seven parts in the monthly *Westminster Magazine*, the tale opens with the

48 Deidre Shauna Lynch, *The Economy of Character: Novels, Market Culture, and the Business of Inner Meaning* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 99.

49 See Liz Bellamy's checklist for the genre in "It-Narrators and Circulation: Defining a Subgenre," in *The Secret Life of Things*, 117–46, 135–44.

50 See Aileen Douglas, "Britannia's Rule and the It-Narrator," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 6, no. 1 (1993): 67–82; Chistopher Flint, "Speaking Objects: The Circulation of Stories in Eighteenth-Century Prose Fiction," *PMLA* 113, no. 2 (1998): 212–26; and Lynch, "Personal Effects and Sentimental Fictions," in *The Secret Life of Things*, 63–91.

51 Edward Thompson, *Indusiata: Or, The Adventures of a Silk Petticoat*, in *Westminster Magazine* 1 (June–December 1773), 7 parts. References are to this edition.

history an Italian beauty named Indusiata. Her story dominates the first two and a half instalments—prior to the creation of the skirt—but both parts of the tale together emphasize commerce and circulation.[52] The move to the petticoat's first-person narrative is smoothed over by the language of advertising. After a quick visit to a Spitalfields loom, the heroine's bale of silk—now woven into fabric—is "purchased for the *Golden Wheatsheaf* in *King's Street*: from thence it was taken by the *Queen's* Mantuamaker, and converted into a Petticoat for her Majesty" (471). The language here borrows from the rhetoric of trade cards and suggests the fluid material transformation of person into thing; the petticoat even takes the name of her mistress. Other examples testify to the ability of speaking garments to shape the narratives and bodies of their owners—a reflection perhaps of the material reality of stays, hoops, and panniers that altered women's figures. In *The Episode of the Petticoat*, an interpolated story in the two-part *Memoirs and Interesting Adventures of an Embroidered Waistcoat* (1760), the petticoat heroine describes the curious appearance of her first owner, Miss Flippant. Although she sports a fine face, complexion, bosom, and teeth, according to the petticoat, "Nature had not been so kind in furnishing her with a Shape, which was at best ordinary, and never, for certain Reasons, could bear a Critical Examination."[53] Her story and body are materialized through her petticoat, reinforcing what Flint has described as the "vulnerable human bodies" and "partial histories" rendered by object narrators.[54] Miss Flippant's story is truncated when she passes the petticoat to her maid, demonstrating how her story depends on the subjectivity of her petticoat (as opposed to her own). Despite their mutual emphasis on the elision between owner and object, possessor and possession, in suggestive ways these petticoat narratives are marked by telling moments of interruption and stasis that reassert the boundaries between women and their petticoats. As we shall see, narrative interruptions and the physical

52 See Bonnie Blackwell's suggestive reading of the conflation between object narrators and the female body in "Corkscrews and Courtesans: Sex and Death in Circulation Novels," in *The Secret Life of Things*, 265–91. Lynch notes the gendered narratives of object-tales about currency in which the female body represents promiscuous circulation (*The Economy of Character*, 100).

53 *The Memoirs and Interesting Adventures of an Embroidered Waistcoat*, 2 vols. (London, 1760), 2:7. References are to this edition. A shorter version was first published in 1751.

54 Flint, 215, 219.

degeneration of objects together foreclose the subjectivity of sartorial objects, revealing how stories about speaking garments mute the very objects they seek to animate. These narratives ultimately contain autonomous clothes, stripping them of subjectivity and reducing them to the status of mere object.

These pauses reassert the difference between people and things by undercutting the subjectivity of garments, positioning them as subject to the arbitrary power of their owners.[55] Edward Philips's *The Adventures of a Black Coat ... As Related by Itself* (1750) twice curtails the autobiography of its speaking garment.[56] The tale begins in a wardrobe in which Sable, the black coat, is pushed aside to make room for a newer white coat. On the one hand, Sable's autobiography depends on his arrested circulation, as well as that of its interlocutor.[57] The closed, dark space of the wardrobe thus animates objects. On the other hand, Sable's narrative capacity depends on human interaction, a dependence that ultimately compromises the object-narrator's ability to complete its story. Early into its personal history, Sable is interrupted when pulled from the wardrobe and presented to a secondhand clothes dealer. The dealer refuses Sable, describing the coat's fabric as rotted and "consist[ing] of nothing but Patches" (43). Thus Sable's degraded physical appearance is set against its copious narrative abilities. The close of the story recasts this interruption with the white coat's removal from the wardrobe by an unspecified "person" (165), truncating Sable's narrative in mid-sentence. An omniscient narrator steps in to explain: "As truth has presided over our pen throughout the relation of these uncommon adventures, we are not at liberty to set down words that were never really uttered; therefore we chose to leave Sable's last sentence broken, rather than put down any thing we have not authority for, as some historians do" (165–66). Alone in the

55 Jonathan Lamb sees a similar dynamic in advertisements for lost things, in which "the more an article is described the less it is supposed to speak" in "The Crying of Lost Things," *ELH* 71, no. 4 (2004): 957, while Mackie (examining *Spectator* no. 441) links the loss of autonomy for objects to human possession wherein "objects are refashioned in ways that make them seem less autonomous, all the more one's own" (*Market à la Mode*, 85).

56 Edward Philips, *The Adventures of a Black Coat* (London, 1760). References are to this edition.

57 Lamb, by contrast, emphasizes the narrative "advantages that accrue from being seized and held" ("Modern Metamorphoses and Disgraceful Tales" in *Things*, 216).

wardrobe with no promise of re-entering the marketplace, Sable is silenced before the end of its narrative.[58] By muting Sable in mid-sentence, the narrative underscores the speaking garment's lack of agency when confronted with any human hand. The fashionable petticoat Indusiata likewise encounters various forms of stasis as she descends from the status of luxurious adornment to secondhand apparel. She describes her service to the pious and prudish Tabitha Stiff, for instance, as an "inanimate state" (640). When Indusiata spends several weeks at the pawnshop, where she is subject to the gaze of uninterested customers, she grumbles, "this again proved to be an inanimate situation" (641). In both episodes Indusiata continues her narrative, dissecting her mistress's secret history and speculating about the lives of customers. But the repetition of "inanimate" emphasizes how objects depend on circulation between people—as do the object narratives themselves within the literary marketplace—evoking the kind of economic transactions that people aimed to promote via trade cards.

While the arrested history functions as a trope of object narratives (coins, for example, get trapped by misers), pieces of clothing constitute particularly threatening objects because of their ability to shape their owners. Miss Flippant's petticoat, as we saw, furnishes her with both a shape and a narrative. The periods of stasis, by contrast, threaten the subjectivity of object narrators, as illustrated in *The Adventures of a Pincushion* (1780).[59] Here the pincushion—an object holding the essential pins that fastened one garment to another (such as bodices to skirts and ruffles to sleeves) and without which women could not dress—becomes wedged under a bookcase for several weeks. As the pincushion laments, "Long have I remained in this dull state of obscurity and confinement, unable to make known my distress, as I want the power of articulation: at least my language can be only understood to things inanimate as myself. A pen, however, which fell down near me, engaged to present these memoirs to the world, if ever

58 Bellamy argues that "narrative closure is not possible or necessary" in many examples of the subgenre (123). Flint reads this type of confession as emblematic of concerns about the literary marketplace (223–24). On copyright and property law in object narratives, see Hilary Jane Englert, "Occupying Works: Animated Objects and Literary Property," in *The Secret Life of Things*, 218–41.

59 Mary Ann [Jane?] Kilner, *The Adventures of a Pincushion: Designed Chiefly for the Use of Young Ladies* (London, 1780). References are to this edition.

it should be employed by the hand of kindness, to rescue my name from oblivion" (56). This narrator stresses the limitations of speaking objects. A lack of the "power of articulation" is metaphorized by imprisonment under a bookcase, material evidence of the articulation of people. At the same time, the pen's promise to write down the pincushion's story would seem to compromise the authority—and authorship—of people by suggesting that persons, or their synecdochic hands, function as the amanuenses of things.[60] Although the pincushion glosses its immobility as an object-lesson, so to speak, in entertaining oneself, its lack of agency is compounded when the second part finds it still wedged under the bookcase. In this episode, the family's removal to a new house prompts its release. The housekeeper finds the pincushion during the move, propelling it into new adventures among the labouring classes. Thus the resolution of the pincushion's dilemma—as well as the continuation of the narrative—depends on the activity of its owners.

In other examples, formal features undermine the object, echoing the visual elision of clothes without bodies in the graphic design of trade cards. The hybrid tale *The Secret History of an Old Shoe* (1734), for example, is divided between a poem about a shoe and prose passages in which cacophonous critics question the legitimacy of the verse.[61] The prose sections function as a meta-commentary on genre, audience, and the literary marketplace. The verse begins with 28 lines that define the shoe through negative comparisons; the comparisons work to displace the shoe's material substance, echoing Alexander Pope's juxtapositions in canto 2 of *The Rape of the Lock*. We never learn whether the shoe was "fashion'd to relieve the Gout, / Or wore by *Lord*, or *Lady*, out; / Or grac'd the Foot of neat *Jane Shore*; / Or some more clumsy modern Wh—re" (lines 23–26). The shoe thus constitutes a blank at the centre of the text, and the verse works to vaporize its materiality. The shoe's textual role is likewise jeopardized when it is displaced by the story of a prostitute named Sweetissa, reversing the substitution of petticoat for woman that structured *Indusiata*. The story attests

60 Blackwell sees this dynamic as symptomatic of a literary marketplace in which "hack writers are things, mere instruments of a culture that commodifies texts" ("Hackwork: It-Narrators and Iteration," in *The Secret Life of Things*, 207).

61 *The Secret History of an Old Shoe* (London, 1734). References are to this edition.

to the shoe's nominal role in the narrative, uncovering its precarious narrative and material positions.

The Secret History of an Old Shoe constitutes a striking example of a sartorial object unravelled by its own story. The narrative structure of tales about autonomous clothes often depends on the deterioration of the protagonist. As we saw in the case of Sable's rotted and patched form, the quality of speaking garments is rarely improved by their adventures. Novels of circulation exploit the progressive physical disintegration of garments; their depreciating value is linked to their repeated re-entries into the second-hand marketplace. Indusiata's story, for example, traces her descent from a place in the queen's wardrobe to a tattered garment rented by beggars for a penny per day. Object narrators report multiple instances of being damaged, dropped, and dripped on, events that drive them from one owner to the next. Indusiata loses her place on the queen's body when the "youngest Prince ... when seated on the Queen's knee, did what all other children do" (549). Indusiata is later injured by a man who tears "a large hole from the pocket downwards" in an attack on an actress (599).

The fate of these objects rests in the often careless hands of their owners, a condition that yokes their increasing narrative experience to progressive material loss.[62] The waistcoat, for instance, proves a loyal subject by facilitating his first owner's access to balls and to the beds of countless beauties. But when this rakish Lord is involved in a scuffle, the waistcoat bears the consequences: "he, by Accident, tore me in my conspicuous Parts, and entirely effaced my Splendour, by which I became unfit for his Lordship's Service, and next Morning he made a Present of me to his Pimp" (8). Patched back together, the waistcoat continues to support the amorous intrigues of its next owner, before this "templar" returns the favour by spilling a large bowl of "crimson libations" on it (12).[63] The embroidered and gilded shoes of *The History and Adventures of a Lady's Slippers and Shoes, Written by Themselves* (1754) are soiled by the sloppy

[62] Lynn Festa stresses, by contrast, the reciprocal relationship between object and owner, arguing that objects can bestow personality and social character on their owners. Festa, *Sentimental Figures of Empire in Eighteenth-Century Britain and France* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 122–23.

[63] See Batchelor on the waistcoat's disintegration in "Reinstating the '*Pamela* Vogue,'" *Women and Material Culture, 1660–1830*, ed. Jennie Batchelor and Cora Kaplan (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 173.

paramour of their first mistress; eventually the shoes have disintegrated to such a degree that they wait "to moulder away to the last shred."[64] The pincushion is tossed outside, thrown on a dunghill and then pecked by birds; it laments: "My last unfortunate adventure has so dirtied my outside, that I should not now be known" (105). In detailing the material sufferings of garments, these narratives reaffirm the agency of owners over the physical and textual shape of their possessions, sharing the lesson repeatedly that objects only suffer when they intermingle with humans. The dismissal of the object's subjectivity, in these tales, foregrounds the distance between people and things in object narratives and trade cards at the close of the period.

Objects in Instructive Forms

Both object narratives and trade cards become increasingly didactic towards the end of the period, schooling consumers in the practices of commodity culture. A small number of London cards for clothes-sellers, like their Parisian counterparts, bring consumers inside the shop.[65] In earlier cards, images of shopping illustrate interior views; in later examples, the scene moves outside to display the shop exterior.[66] In both cases, however, the objects play second fiddle to the interaction between buyer and seller and to the consumer's gaze. The inferior status of these objects mirrors how object narratives constrain the subjectivity of speaking garments. When in the early nineteenth century trade cards embrace the visual representation of garments—not as autonomous clothes but as the apparel of generic fashion models—they do so in prescriptive ways. As we shall see, these cards provide detailed instructions for measuring the body, which emphasize the agency of the consumer over the production and cost of apparel, rather than the mixing of people and things.

64 *The History and Adventures of a Lady's Slippers and Shoes, Written by Themselves* (London, 1754), 28. References are to this edition.

65 Berg and Clifford point out that trade cards "played a crucial role in creating an image of the shop and the activity of shopping," in "Commerce and the Commodity: Graphic Display and Selling New Consumer Goods in Eighteenth-Century England," in *Art Markets in Europe, 1400–1800*, ed. Michael North and David Ormrod (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing, 1998), 193.

66 Other professions exploited these views of interiors, as seen in the card for John Watts, an operator in Racquet Court, Fleet Street, Victoria & Albert Museum, E. 2365.1987.

Figure 7. Mary and Ann Hogarth, "clothiers," William Hogarth, engr. T. Cook, Heal 19.27, © The Trustees of the British Museum. Reproduced by permission.

In the rare depictions of autonomous clothes in trade cards, sartorial objects are overshadowed by the interaction between shopkeeper and customer. For example, a trade card designed by William Hogarth for his sisters' second-hand clothing shop (see Figure 7) shows two women, presumably Mary and Ann Hogarth, assisting a family of four.[67] Exploiting a familiar visual trick, the composition stages the shop interior as a theatrical set; the view is framed by cornices, statuary, and topped by the King's Arms—the sign for the sisters' "Frock-shop."[68] The text promises

67 Trade card, Mary and Ann Hogarth, "clothiers," William Hogarth, engraved by T. Cook, 1720–30s, British Museum, Heal 19.27. Two other examples of shopping scenes similarly stress human interaction. See Trade card, Benjamin Cole, "draper," British Museum, Heal 70.39; and Trade card, Farmilo and Fricker, "shoemakers," British Museum, Banks 18.25.

68 Such embellishments reflect the lush mouldings, cornices, and pedestals, described by Claire Walsh as the "battery of promotional devices and elements

the "best & most Fashionable Ready Made" garments—detailing a range of non-elite textiles and ready-made items—but the composition highlights the group's interaction, and garments are shunted to the background (on the right, one waistcoat lies on a table, and a coat is suspended on a back wall). As in the Varden card, the second-hand offerings presumably account for the representation of freestanding clothes. From the shopkeeper who kneels to assist one child to the adults' animated gestures, each figure engages with the activity of shopping, and the scene itself constitutes a lesson in consumer culture, in which women teach men. The children perform as reluctant shoppers: one Hogarth sister helps the boy on the right squirm his way into a coat, and the young boy on the left (still in a frock) hangs back from his father. The mother advises her husband, gesturing towards the older child; her hand is met by the outstretched arm of a Hogarth sister. The father points at the young child, as if to suggest that he has reached the age to wear a coat like his brother, yoking consumerism to cultural rites of passage. By glossing shopping as an intimate family affair—as opposed to the titillating experience in Steele and Sterne—the image both instructs consumers in the rituals of consumer culture and prioritizes human interaction.

Towards the end of the century, in cards that depict the shop exterior, the composition highlights the importance of the consumer's gaze. A late card for pawnbroker and silversmith John Flude (see Figure 8) illustrates the exterior of the expansive shop windows.[69] The illustration constitutes a departure from earlier designs; here the textual detail provided by long lists of wares has been replaced by the visual abundance of waistcoats, buckles, gowns, stays, and spoons that crowd the front windows, competing for the consumer's attention. On the one hand, the design foregrounds commodities and lacks the personal relations highlighted in the Hogarth card. As in other examples of shops that specialize in the second-hand market, the pawnshop eschews

which created an influentially imposing [shop] interior." Walsh, "Shop Design and the Display of Goods in Eighteenth-Century London," *Journal of Design History* 8, no. 3 (1995): 162.

69 John Flude, Guildhall Trade Card Collection, City of London. Other cards depict the exterior windows of the shop with products: see the trade cards for Whiteman and Bristow, 1801, "linen draper," British Museum, Banks 80.199; Banks, 1773, "linen draper," British Museum, Heal 80.81; Beeching, 1793, "linen draper," British Museum, Banks 80.15; and Becher, 1788, "linen draper," British Museum, Banks 80.52.

Figure 8. John Flude, Guildhall Library, City of London.

bespoke garments, a detail reinforced by the availability of the pawned clothes behind the glass.[70] On the other hand, the design stresses the agency of the consumer's gaze on the wares. Frozen behind the expanse of glass, these garments are immobilized by the composition, evoking the petticoat Indusiata's complaint of its "inanimate situation" in the pawnshop. Despite the absence of people, then, the composition positions the objects squarely under the gaze of consumers.

Late-period cards display garments and fabrics for sale, as well as generic female and male figures modelling gowns and suits. Several cards from the early 1800s break down the body into separate components and position measuring charts alongside male and female figures. J. Wharton's card for his tailoring

70 Some late engravings of second-hand shop interiors likewise show autonomous clothes. See, for example, the hanging pair of breeches in the etching by J. Cooke, *Monmouth Street* (1789), Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University, 789.6.9.1 (a digital copy of this engraving is available in the Lewis Walpole Library Digital Collection).

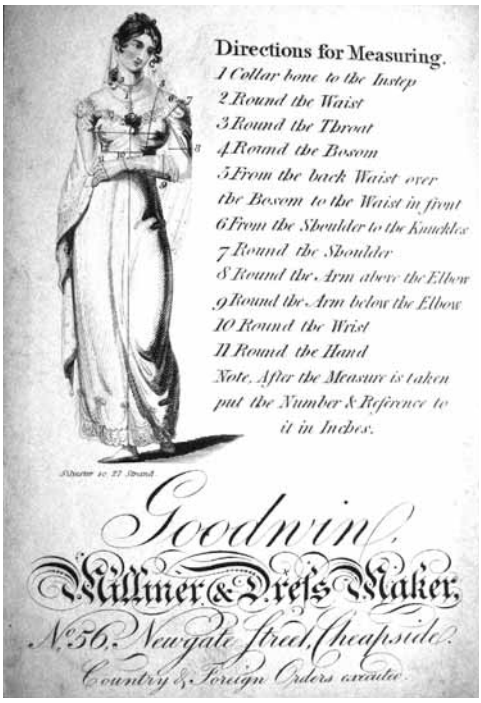


Figure 9. Goodwin, Guildhall Library, City of London.

shop offers helpful instructions to potential customers on how to determine the dimensions of their own bodies.[71] A trade card for the milliner Goodwin (see Figure 9) pairs a female figure with numbered directions.[72] Goodwin's card reflects the visual possibilities of trade cards in the last two decades of the eighteenth century, in which designs incorporate women (and the occasional man and child) wearing neo-classical apparel and often standing next to a medallion or a rectangle of text that relates the shop address and the goods available.[73] In the

71 Bodleian Library, University of Oxford: John Johnson Collection; Trade Cards 27 (47). For similar compositions of a generic figure coupled with measuring instructions, see the trade cards for Crane, "tailor," British Museum, Heal 40.29; Baker, "tailor," British Museum, Banks 112.5; Beck, "tailor," British Museum, Banks 112.10; and Cole, "tailor," British Museum, Banks 112.49.

72 Goodwin, Guildhall Trade Card Collection, City of London.

73 See, for example, the trade cards for Kilham, "linen draper," British Museum, Heal 80.198; Rook, "tailor," British Museum, Banks 112.72; Walter Cross, "tailor," British Museum, Banks 112.28; Thomas Weightman, "mercer,"

Goodwin card, the female figure cocks her head and bends her left leg; her leg motion mimics the poses of classical female figures in trade cards from the same period, and evokes the postures of figures in fashion plates in women's periodicals. The influence of fashion plates perhaps account for the card's directions. Similar to fashion journalism, these cards teach shoppers how to reproduce the latest looks: in this case, fashions from the early nineteenth century.[74] Moreover, the simplicity of neo-classical gowns—in contrast to the intricate, cascading folds of earlier mantuas—would have enabled consumers to follow the instructions with ease. In providing directions for measuring the body that stress the economical use of fabric, instructive illustrations for both women's and men's garments democratize bespoke clothing by encouraging access to made-to-order garments produced by tailors and milliners. Rather than highlighting the experience of shopping or alluding to the craftsmanship of wares, these early nineteenth-century trade cards nurture the agency of the consumer, producing a coherent diagram of the relationship between the body and the cost of fabric. Such images differ dramatically from eighteenth-century trade cards and suggest a didactic representation of the relationship between the body and its clothes—one based on exact dimensions, rather than on how the person might feel when purchasing clothes.

Like the commercial lessons embedded in trade cards, late-century object narratives preach proper commercial behaviour. In the afterlife of object narratives as children's literature, the moral registers of the genre take centre stage. These stories anticipate the moral territory that the genre will claim in the nineteenth century, formulating a world in which, as Lynn Festa elucidates, "things remain things."[75] In some ways, object tales for children work to close the gap between people and things by turning animals and toys into metaphors for people; lessons in social relations are couched as instructions in not mishandling one's

British Museum, Heal 84.100; Hammond, "milliner," British Museum, Banks 86.56; Humphreys, "milliner," British Museum, Banks 86.65; Sharman, "linen draper," British Museum, Heal 80.173; Humphreys, "milliner," British Museum, Heal 86.42; and Wardell, "milliner," British Museum, Heal 86.88.

74 On the intersection between fashion advice and moral advice in the *Lady's Magazine*, see Batchelor, *Dress, Distress, and Desire*, 108–119.

75 Lynn Festa, "The Moral Ends of Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Object Narratives," in *The Secret Life of Things*, 309.

toys. But this distance is compromised by a move in the opposite direction, in which the subjectivity of objects is undercut from the very start of the narrative. In the genre's development, then, the gap between people and things widens and is emphasized by narrative interjections that partition fantasy from reality. This technique builds on the moments of stasis examined above, but in late-century stories such as *The Adventures of a Pincushion*, the narrator belabours the fictive status of the object narrator, limiting its subjectivity from the start of the narrative:

> I shall take the liberty to speak for myself, and tell you what I saw and heard in the character of a *Pincushion*. Perhaps you never thought that such things as are inanimate, could be sensible of any thing which happens, as they can neither hear, see, or understand; and as I would not willingly mislead your judgment: I would, previous to your reading this work, inform you, that it is to be understood as an imaginary tale, in the same manner as when you are at play, you sometimes call yourselves gentlemen, and ladies ... So, when you read of birds and beasts speaking and thinking, you know it is not so in reality, any more than your amusements, which you frequently call *making believe*. (14–15)

In knitting the narrative to the realm of make-believe, the narrator instructs her young readers not to mistake fantasy for reality.[76] Thus speaking garments can never compete with the subjectivity of humans; in effect they remain objects to be bought and sold by consumers, safe both for narrative and visual representation. The effort to distance the pincushion narrative from realism affirms the human narrator's ability to conceptualize the material world.

Both trade cards and object narratives demonstrate the risks of representing autonomous clothes in eighteenth-century visual and print culture. Their textual management of things offers alternate possibilities for interpreting the relations between people and their possessions within the period's commodity culture. Rather than focusing on the disquieting slippage of humans into material objects, I have sought to recover the ways in which two genres strive to assert the agency of humans. From petticoats to waistcoats, gloves, and textiles, the subjects of trade cards and object narratives are animated through words rather than through image. The fashion figures of late trade cards and the moral lessons of object narratives for children both suggest

[76] Festa also points out the "provisional fantasy" suggested by this interjection ("The Moral Ends," 317).

that, to some degree, these genres successfully downplayed the titillating associations of shopping and the competing subjectivities of autonomous clothes. Object narratives and trade cards, however, engender imaginative costs for material objects, endowing them with subjectivity only to return them to their inanimate state or denying them visual purchase altogether. The comfortable distance between people and things emphasizes the material status of objects rather than their sustained narratives, substituting moral advice for the narrative adventures of speaking garments. In reasserting the consumer's agency over clothes, object narratives and trade cards together reflect the material and creative costs exacted by humans.

Chloe Wigston Smith, assistant professor of English at the University of Georgia, is completing a book on women and material culture in the eighteenth-century novel.