Liasons Dangereuses: buttons, button-holes and the materials of masculinity in eighteenth-century England[1]

Button collecting is a popular pastime if the evidence of the web is anything to go by. Groups with names like The Peach State Button Club in Georgia and Milbuttons for collectors of military buttons communicate and meet on a regular basis. 'When it comes to collecting, nothing really beats antique buttons' claims one site. [2] On the other hand if you google button-hole, you get sites that offer flowers to put in the lapels of male guests at weddings and advice on how to sew or knit button- holes. There are also some distinguished historical button collections: in the UK at Waddesdon Manor you can see Baroness Edmonde de Rothschild's collection [3] and Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery is custodian of the Luckock collection of 500 buttons collected in the 1780s by a Birmingham jeweller and button maker. The whole point about a button collection according to the criteria that governed these historic assemblages is that there should be a series, that is, more than one of a type. In the eighteenth century, the great age of buttons as a major fashion accessory, we are told, buttons were made in sets from five to thirty-five. [4] Those made of the most precious materials – diamonds for example – were made to be detachable and so to be part of a range of different clothing (pl.1). Most valued by collectors are sets of buttons that survive in their original boxes. On quite different principles are founded the button collections that most households possess, or used to possess before making and mending gave way to cheap clothing. The buttons in my button tin (pl.2) have come to me either as spare buttons sewn on the inside of a garment I have purchased, or have been cut off old garments that have reached the end of their lives and gone into the nether world of dusters and rags for cleaning paint brushes. It has to be admitted that it is generally very difficult to find a match, as button makers seem to change their designs very frequently, and clothes are now made in places so far from the streets in which they are sold that one is compelled if a button is lost to buy a new set – and sew them all on – or to tolerate the odd one out, unless one wishes to make a design statement by having a whole row of dissimilar buttons.[5]

For all its banality, my button collection is a good starting point. It occupies a shadowy world of loss, of wear and tear, of what is discarded, of make-and-mend, of disorder and accident, of unattributable manufacture, of superannuation. It bespeaks misfit and mismatch. My collection represents the underbelly of fashion and the inverse of the performance of social relations within which the encultured and clothed body is the key player. In this paper I shall challenge the orthodoxy that buttons are 'appendages to the

history of costume' and that they are 'a microcosm of conventional taste.' [6] I shall question the orderliness that the stately march of buttons on a coat, or breeches, or set out in a collection, conveys (pl.3). Each item in my button graveyard invokes a lost button- hole; I shall endeavour conceptually to reunite buttons with their button-holes in eighteenth-century culture and in so doing to open up to examination the subversion of politeness.

The transformation of manners that took place at the end of the seventeenth century as a consequence of political and economic changes has widely been recognised as a major element in social change. Public life generated productions in multiple media governing the languages of politeness as forms of social currency within which the performing body plays its most crucial interactive role. [7] The body that I discuss is masculine since buttons were primarily (though not exclusively) part of men's attire in this period. I adopt the notion of the body as an inescapable textual surface perpetually available for social relations and hence as possessed of a particularly acute capacity for representation. [8] Metaphors originating in the terminology of dress and fashionable ornament were well embedded in rhetorical language among those who lived through the eighteenth century, as a couple of examples will demonstrate. In 1812, the seventy-two year old Hester Lynch Thrale, wrote in her pocket book: 'Imagination should be the Fringe to our Mental Drapery … not the Texture' [9] reminding us of the fringe that the tedious Lady Bertram was invariably found making with Fanny Price in attendance in Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* (1814).Most famously, Edmund Burke, lucubrating in 1790 on the awful consequences of the French Revolution described how:

 All the pleasing illusions, which made power gentle, and obedience liberal, which harmonized the different shades of life, and which by a bland assimilation, incorporated into politics the sentiments which beautify and soften private society, are to be dissolved by this new conquering empire of light and reason. All the decent drapery of life is to be rudely torn off. All the superadded ideas, furnished from the wardrobe of a moral imagination, which the heart owns, and the understanding ratifies, as necessary to cover the defects of our naked shivering nature, and to raise it to dignity in our own estimation, are to be exposed as a ridiculous, absurd, antiquated fashion.'[10]

I shall demonstrate that the button and the button- hole in tandem allows a site for the disorderly and low other, effectively reinscribing the materiality of flesh into a rhetoric of

carefully acquired and socially orchestrated eloquence that disavows the visceral, the low, and the common – in short disavows the sexualised body.

My evidence in this paper is drawn from verbal texts, from visual imagery and from clothing. My account constitutes therefore an attempt to understand the interrelatedness of diverse forms of empirical historical material. Portraiture does not reflect or illustrate fashion, though it is often used in this way.[11] Rather it participates in a dynamic relationship with fashion. Equally clothing is discursive as well as material (it relates interactively to other texts) and the author of a novel, tract, or poem produces an imagery that by no means alludes exclusively to the written. The potential for elision and contiguity between clothing, the body, and acts of creative communication is most persuasively stated by the eponymous hero in Sterne's novel *Tristram Shandy* published between 1759 and 1767, a text which will be a major point of reference for my argument, when he asserts: 'A man cannot dress, but his ideas get cloathed at the same time; and if he dresses like a gentleman, every one of them [ie ideas] stands presented in his imagination, genteelized along with him – so that he has nothing to do but take his pen, and write like himself.'[12] In other words, to write like a gentleman – and by extension to paint like one – you must dress like one not for reasons of propriety but because mind, body and clothing are coterminous. Thinking about clothing and, in particular, the inconvenient fashion in the reign of George I for pockets cut very low, we learn how holding his wig with his right hand, Tristram's father reaching into his right pocket with his left hand to get his handkerchief, succeeded in pulling a tendon. Had he done it the other way round, his whole attitude, we are told, would have been natural and easy. Indeed 'Reynolds himself, as great and gracefully as he paints, might have painted him as he sat.'[13]

Tristram Shandy was a publishing phenomenon in its time and has been admired ever since for its doubles entendres, its scarcely covert sexual suggestiveness and its textual sophistication which includes seemingly post-modern constructions, pages that eschew words, and abrupt terminations. Sterne is viewed as the master of the verbal who creates characters for whom the verbal is always problematic and the non-verbal eloquent. Much of the half-concealed obscenity focuses on clothing and, more particularly, on the construction of clothing. Plackets and other apertures determine events and the button-hole is the subject of a chapter that is perpetually promised, deferred, and never delivered. From the point of view of the history of material culture, if it is hard to agree that buttons are a minor sideshow in the history of fashion, it is equally hard to agree with the proposition that button-holes, along with candles, and sausages and empty bottles and old hats are 'ordinary domestic

objects' made to look like articles in a sex shop catalogue. [14] Rabelaisean they may be, but each has a distinctive identity and historical significance. Gaps in Sterne's text – literally openings in the printed page – (pl.4) have been identified as spaces that shatter the following of straight lines linking the rigid recounting of narrative action to the phallic principle. I suggest that these mirror and interact semantically with the deviations from the classical erect male body in its seamless whole, a whole the holes of which are concealed by an ingenious system of openings in clothing all of which are in one way or another buttoned. Eighteenth-century portraiture clearly stages this drama of enclosing the male body, pouring it into tube like containers that in representation offer an idealised whole while simultaneously retaining graphic indications of the material equipment required to produce this effect (pl.5). In *Tristram Shandy*, it has been argued, male sexuality is always threatened by impotence and castration. [15] Female sexuality – what has been called 'the invagination of the text' – is key to the whole principle of the reader's imaginative occupation of the text. [16] If we accept this, the fact that Tristram never gets round to writing his chapter on button-holes is a summation of masculine sexual deferral.

Button-holes and buttons were much in evidence on the clothing Sterne would have both worn and seen others wearing. What strikes me when I look at the clothing of elite men that has survived from the eighteenth century in England is just how full of openings of various kinds it is, and just how ingenious is the construction of these openings (pl.6). Pockets, like those that got Shandy senior into trouble, are just one category but they indicate how the construction of clothing could be a yardstick for the evaluation of social and political conduct. In a famous passage about utility, the economist Adam Smith in 1759 marvelled at people's passion for personal gadgetry (or toys to use the eighteenth-century term):

They contrive new pockets, unknown in the clothes of other people, in order to carry a greater number. They walk about loaded with a multitude of baubles, in weight and sometimes in value not inferior to an ordinary Jew's-box [ie pedlar's box], some of which may sometimes be of some little use, but all of which might at all times be pretty well spared, and of which the whole utility is certainly not worth the fatigue of bearing the burden. [17]

Adam Smith was thinking of the luxury trades and their effect on human conduct but the implications of his remarks are that what offers itself as functional is simultaneously

available for individual fantasy and that pockets are a kind of personal archive (pl.7). More than a century later, looking back to the eighteenth century, the author of *Pinocchio* would exploit the same repertoire in writing of the sky blue fairy's poodle coachman who: 'wore … a chocolate colored jacket with diamond buttons and two oversize pockets for storing the bones his mistress gave him at dinner'.[18]

Button-holes similarly merge the utilitarian and the fantastic; noone could fail to recognise that the elongated button-holes that were a feature of men's coats in the eighteenth century are in excess of any requirement to join together two sections of a garment (pl.8). But just how significant this style feature is can be gauged by the ingenuity in construction whereby the actual hole is small enough for the button to fit snugly, while a look at the inside of the coat reveals no suggestion of what is going on outside (pl.9). Lining and lined merge and it is this image that Sterne uses to convey body-mind relations when he has Tristram state: 'A man's body and his mind … are exactly like a jerkin, and a jerkin's lining; rumple the one – you rumple the other.' [19] In this example of a coat, we see how the lining cleverly disguises the mechanics required to produce a button-hole that is twice as long as its button is wide. Like the performance of a Mozart opera, or an automaton clock such as were so popular in the eighteenth century, the 'nuts and bolts' of what makes the object work are concealed. This is a form of dissembling, a deliberate sleight of hand, recognition of which is a necessary component of acknowledging the narrative force of clothing in representation. And it is representation in turn that alerts us to the elements of masculine dress that signified powerfully not only for readers but also for viewers.

So let us turn to portraiture. Precisely because the portrait of Major-General James Wolfe attributed to J.S.C. Schaak and painted circa 1767 (pl.10) is a run-of the mill portrait of a famous person by a relatively undistinguished artist, many times engraved, and copied, it provides a median take on the visual rhetoric of eighteenth-century male portraiture, suggesting the languages of clothing and physiognomy that were accessible and acceptable to a wide audience. [20] Shown in profile, the head is rendered in a flattened and imprecise manner, giving an evasive sense of Wolfe's physiognomy. By contrast, the steel buttons on Wolfe's coat (pl.11) are gleaming globes with a life of their own. The pigments used for these buttons range from red, black and grey to a dry white high-light where the convex surface of the reflects the light. The buttons cast shadows on the crimson coat as they make their vertical march down the General's coat. Similarly the hugely elongated button-holes are depicted with extraordinary attention to detail; their raised edges indicating the sewing to seal the aperture and the uneven shadow suggesting usage or wear and tear.

It is not my task here to go into the question of button production: others have researched this so suffice it to say that button manufacture expanded at an enormous rate in England during the eighteenth century. By 1770 a trade directory for Birmingham and the surrounding area listed eighty-three button-makers. [21] As early as 1763 there are references in *St. James's Chronicle* to tradesmen trying to ape their superiors by covering their coats with gilt buttons.[22] The idea that the great march of the button across men's clothing is explicable simply as part of 'an era characterised by excess' [23] or that 'new occasions for elegant buttons inspired new subject matter for designs' [24] is overly simplistic and, indeed, tautological. Recognition of the significance of things in eighteenth-century life and discourse has moved in the past thirty years from the history of consumption to a recognition that, as one writer concerned with poems about objects puts it: 'subjectivity might collapse into objectivity under the pressure of handling, collecting, owning, seeing, stepping around, and feeling things, while objects, in turn, were becoming the subjects of literature and culture'. [25]

Buttons are things that have the capacity – through partnership with the button-hole – to join together two pieces of fabric, to close an opening. But even this, as we have seen, is no straightforward matter. Conjoined like the proverbial horse and carriage, the button and button-hole as duo signify closure and hence stability; it is like chicken and egg, or Jules et Jim, always more than the sum of its parts. The separateness of each component destabilises the coherence that taken together they represent. This destabilisation may be exploited for purposes of style and fashion, as with Pompeo Batoni's portrait of Frederick Lord North (pl.12) [26] where the depiction of the buttons' stems and their drunken-looking progress down the side of the unbuttoned coat contribute to a general and studied air of nonchalance of the aristocrat on the grand tour who is socially as well as sartorially unbuttoned. On the other hand, failure may signal disaster as when buttons strain and burst – a feature much exploited by caricaturists - but also possessed of sinister connotations as in our own time when the novelist W.G. Sebald evokes the battle of Sole Bay in 1672 and describes the bloated body of the Earl of Sandwich washed up on the beach a few weeks later, 'the seams of his uniform had burst asunder, the buttonholes were torn open …'. [27] Men caught improperly unbuttoned are a stock-in-trade of the overtly moralising but equally titillating subject matter of eighteenth-century imagery of sexual dalliance.

Of course buttons had, and still have, many functions apart from joining: they may signal allegiance as part of a livery [28] or as membership of a club; they may carry discreetly the mark of a maker; they may be used as currency when none is available – such was the

use Australian convicts put them to; [29] they are image surfaces that could be used for the whole gamut of genres from pictorial art except the religious (pl.13). Especially when reflective or historiated (that is offering narrative depictions) they must not only have drawn attention to parts of the male body but generated discussion. Ginsburg remarks on the banality of the subject matter [30] and both she and Epstein note the prevalence of amorous themes. But the point is precisely that that the derivative nature of the imagery enabled social equals to recognise it immediately, and themes of sexual love on a man's torso surely served to endorse the frisson of assemblies and private parties where the décor staged similar themes of pastoral dalliance and where – if observes like the novelist Fanny Burney were to be believed - sex both licit and illicit was never long absent from conversation and social practices, however politely disguised.

I marvel at the ability of those who have written on the history of buttons to sanitise the subject. Caricature, market driven and therefore a good gauge of just how generally prevailing might be the problematic relationship between things and the ideas they generate, suggests a range of correlatives for buttons. Some are scatological as with *The Button-Maker's Jests* by George King of St. James's, Button Maker (pl.14)with an illustration in which George III (whose hobby of button making was well known) is seated on a throne in ordure (sic) to receive a report from the court of sycophants, and in which the King boasts he is making an even better set of buttons in paste. Others , like *The Button-Maker's Jest*, are sexually suggestive. [31] All belong to what Mikhail Bakhtin famously analysed as the carnivalesque in which the indecency of the lower stratum is not only allowed to enter but is actually celebrated in scarcely disguised forms of grotesque realism as part of public spectacle.[32] Even the 1911 *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, published at the end of the Victorian era finds it hard to avoid innuendo: 'Button', we are told, comes from the old French 'bouter' to push. As well as describing something that serves 'as a catch between the different parts of a garment &c.', we learn that 'the word is also used of other objects which have a projecting knob-like character', for example the guard at the end of a fencing foil, or things that resemble them. It was recognised in the eighteenth century that words refer not to things but to the idea we have of things.[33] Language is unstable; the relationship between signifier and signified is not anchored in empirical reality. The use of rhetoric in classical oratory was to persuade; in fulfilling this aim one was not required to tell the truth, as Allen has remarked.[34] Visual languages are also rhetorical and thereby empowering: well-established components persuade viewers of a reality beyond what they see. And portraiture is an intensely rhetorical genre: it functions according to recognised conventions that

through the very fact that they operate in a regulatory manner bespeak those things that cannot be publicly voiced.

Let us turn again to button-holes. 'Then reach me my breeches off the chair, ' says Tristram Shandy's father to the maid Susannah when told his new-born son may die at any moment and the curate is waiting to baptize him. Susannah rushes off and Shandy bounces out of bed in the dark 'groping for his breeches'. By the time he arrives at his wife's side, the child has recovered and has been named not Trismegistus as his father, an enthusiast for the Classics had intended, but Tristram because all the chambermaid could remember was 'Tris'. The misfortune of Tristram's naming is a failure of paternal authority – one of many – and it is accompanied by, and elucidated through, a kind of running commentary concerning what is these days euphemistically called a 'wardrobe malfunction'. In his haste Shandy senior arrives on the scene with his breeches fastened with a single button which 'has been thrust only half into its button-hole'. As he learns that his son has been wrongly christened, he cries: Pish! … the button of his breeches slipping out of the button-hole'. Tristram, who is the narrator of his own life story, then tells us he can't be sure at what the 'Pish!' was aimed and it will have to remain in doubt until he has time to write 'the three following favourite chapters, that is, my chapter of chamber-maids, my chapter of pishes, and my chapter of button-holes.' The idea of button-holes has, as he goes on to say, 'something lively' about it; it is 'a maiden subject'. [35]

The narrow line that Sterne treads in *Tristram Shandy* between humour and obscenity is constructed on the basis of a knowing and complicit audience. Jacques Berthoud defines thus the difference between a pun and a double-entendre, arguing that Sterne's readers are active in a special way as they are forced to become participants in the double-entendre:

> The pun involves an ambiguity that is fully admitted – signalled by its emitter and recognized by its receiver. The sexual sense of the *double-entendre* is suspended between writer and reader: the one can always retain the option of disowning it in favour of the other. It thrives in the twilight of discourse; it requires the tacit and the conspiratorial. It cannot exist in soliloquy, for it depends on collusion. [36]

One might go further and, acknowledging this dependence of the double-entendre on collusion, propose that it is a linguistic analogy to the button and button-hole, where each component is innocent when solitary but when taken together replete with additional meaning.

Tristram Shandy was a gigantic publishing success, generating puffs and pamphlets by the dozen. The book was admired for 'the science of human feeling' and criticised for being 'interlarded with obscenity'. Reviewers for the *Monthly* emphasised both the 'indelicacies' of the book and its triumphantly 'pathetic' cameos. [37] What I think has not been recognised by modern scholars is the extent to which it draws so effectively on knowledge of, and ideas about, clothing. In writing this paper I have been reminded how until very recent times familiarity with textiles and the construction of clothing was widespread; my mother's generation either made their own clothes or bought cloth and took it to seamstresses while my post-war generation grew up having to make our own clothes if we wished to be at all fashionable. I am struck by how many proverbs and commonplace sayings in English that must have been embedded in popular culture for centuries relate to clothing: 'cutting one's coat according to one's cloth', being a turncoat, or a question that my grandmother used when looking at the weather – is there enough blue sky to make a sailor a pair of trousers? In the eighteenth century people knew about clothing from its appearance whether through their own or others' clothing or through portrait representations. And they knew about materials, their construction and their cost. This being the case, all these were available for travesty, satire, or other forms of subversive humour. Take, for example, the case of 'drab' (pl.15). Originating in the French 'drap' meaning simply 'cloth' drab was a heavy and closely woven overcoating that was costly and stout. [38] In the process of manufacture the cloth was felted and thus became waterproof and popular for men's overcoats. It is seen in many eighteenth-century portraits the entire subtle and subdued palettes of which may be attributable less to available pigments or aesthetic considerations than to the overriding importance of this item of clothing in a fashionable man's wardrobe, especially when in the country. Words are, however, not anchored and associations generate new meanings. So the colour of this cloth gave us the word drab meaning dull in appearance. Moreover, in the eighteenth century to drab was a common expression for whoring and a drab was a prostitute. [39] Two anonymous poems entitled 'On a DRAB' and 'Upon another DRAB' in a collection published in 1723 and produced expensively (the British Library copy belonged to Lord Oxford) includes a range of innocuous double-entendres such as 'laugh in his sleeve', 'stitch in his side' and 'canvas it further'. The poet excels himself, however, over the drab – that is the overcoat – itself, telling us that:

It is not over wide, and too gaping before:
Well shap'd, as yourself, *Jaunteee*, and full chested

And (like you) sits clean, easy, free, open-breasted;

The 'Fore-body' has the 'good stiff'ning' required and due account has been taken by the owner of the fact that a drab 'more wetting endures,/when allow'd a full Length, as you have done yours.' Inside and outside also provide poetic scope as the author claims:

I remember you chose, when you first knew the Town,

What was red within Side, and without a dark brown

But it is with buttons and button-holes that the poet reaches the climax of sartorial double-entendre:

When the Hole is too open, too large or too slack,

The Button is apt (as I'm told) to slip back;

And a Button too large so widens the Slits,

That it tears, and abuses, nay some Times it splits;

But here Button, it seems, and Button-Hole fits.

But when, the Hole, you the Button advance,

(And the Thing goes in easier, being form'd as a Glans)

Yet tho' Finger with Thumb be ne'er so good Guider,

That, th'oftener thrust in makes t'other the wider.[40]

All this is, of course, a lot of fun. But it is more than that. Collections, like the one from which I have just quoted, indicate not only that decades before Sterne began writing *Tristram Shandy*, the relationship between clothing in all its ramifications and masculinity was established as a significant and versatile resource for humorous exploitation, appealing to a sophisticated and educated audience. Above all it is details of masculine dress that provide the materials for humour. Poems in which objects are speaking personifications were a popular eighteenth-century genre so it is perhaps not surprising that we have a song (to the tune of The Abbot of Canterbury') that begins:

I'm a Hole, tho too narrow,

When first I am try'd,

Yet the thing I was made for

Can stretch me out wide:' [41]

Yet this attention to the detail of the button and the button-hole suggests a fetishistic preoccupation with loss. I opened with the poignancy of the lost buttons in the button tin, and briefly explored the complexity of pockets that in their own way also conjure loss especially in a century in which pick-pocketing was rife, and advertisements for lost property abound.[42] It would be overly simplistic to posit the problematic relationship between the button and its button-hole as a playing out of classic Freudian castration anxiety. Yet, as Freud also established, all humour is at the expense of someone and there is no humour with anxiety.[43] If clothing is a defining characteristic of civilised as opposed to savage humanity – a subject that much preoccupied a century that saw the voyages of Captain Cook and the publication of *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) – it follows that a subversion of clothing, a subversion in which material, visual and verbal forms of communication collude, represents the articulation of a profound anxiety about just how secure the polite practices so central to eighteenth-century cultural self-perception might be.

Marcia Pointon

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[1] This essay was first devised as a presentation to the Fashion and Materiality conference at the University of Stockholm in 2009. I am grateful to the organisers for providing this opportunity to present my work and to all those who made helpful observations

[2] http://www.antiquebuttoncollecting.com/

[3] There are sixty-five sets in the Waddesdon collection. The most authoritative account of the collection is Madeleine Ginsburg, 'Buttons: Art and Industry', *Apollo*, ns. 184, June 12977, pp. 462-467.

[4] Diana Epstein, *Buttons*, London: Studio Vista, 1968, p. 27

[5] According to Ginsburg, op. cit., p. 462, The merit of buttons 'lies in matching and their profit in quantity'.

[6] Ibid, p. 462.

[7] There is a great deal written on the culture of politeness in the eighteenth century. For a summary and a discussion of the performing body see Paul Goring, *The Rhetoric of Sensibility in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, Cambridge: CUP, 2005, pp. 20 and passim.

[8] Ibid p. 19.

[9] Inscribed in her copy of Goldmith's Almanack for 1813, John Rylands University Library, Manchester.

[10] E. Burke, Reflections on the Revolution in France, London: J. Dodsley (2nd. Edn. 1790) p. 114

[11] See, for example, Farid Chenoune, *A History of Men's Fashion*, trans. Deke Dusinberre, Paris: Flammarion, 1993.

[12] Laurence Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy Gentleman* (1759-1767), Harmondsworth: Penguin Books (1967), 1985, pp. 587-8. Hereafter *Tristram Shandy*.

[13] Ibid, p. 173

[14] Jacques Berthoud, Shandeism and Sexuality' in Valerie Grosvenor Meyer, ed., *Laurence Sterne: Riddles and Mysteries*, New York: Vision and Barnes and Noble, 1984, pp. 24-38, p. 25

[15] Dennis W. Allen, 'Sexuality/Textuality in Tristram Shandy', Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900, 25:3, summer 1985, pp. 651-670, p. 660 (accessed Jstor 29/07/2009)

[16] Ibid p. 665-66

[17] Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) ed. D.D. Raphael and A.L. Macfie, Oxford: OUP, 1976, p. 180

[18] Carlo Collodi, *Pinocchio* (1883) tran. Geoffrey Brock, Ney York: New York Review of Books, 2009, p. 53. For women's tie on pockets in this period see: http://www.vads.ahds.ac.uk/collections/pocketsofhistory.html

[19] *Tristram Shandy*, p. 174

[20] oil on canvas 52.7 x 43.2, National Portrait Gallery, London no. 48. For provenance see J. Kerslake, *Early Georgian Portraits*, National Portrait Gallery, HMSO, 1977, no. 48.

[21] Ginsburg, n. 9.

[22] See D.P. White, 'The Birmingham Button Industry', *Post Medieval Archaeology*, xi, 1977, pp. 67-70, p. 70.

[23] Epstein, p. 21.

[24] Epstein, p. 22

[25] Barbara Benedict, 'Encounters with the Object: Advertisements, Time, and Literary Discourse in the Eraly Eighteenth-Century Thing-Poem', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 40:2, 2007, pp. 193-207, pp.193-4.

[26] 1753-1756, National Portrait Gallery, London, 6180

[27] W.G. Sebald, *The Rings of Saturn* (1995), trans. Michael Hulse, London: Vintage, 1998, p. 77.

[28] On this see, for example, P. Peacock, 'Buttons on the Dress of Household Servants', *Costume*, 13, 1979, pp. 54-57.

[29] Eleanor Casella, 'Doing Trade: a Sexual Economy of 19th Century Female Convict Prisons', *World Archaeology*, 32:2, pp. 209-221

[30] Ginsburg, p. 466

[31] 'A button-maker being married to a taylor's daughter; a gentleman observed that he always suspected he would get a button-hole for his button.' The Button-Maker's Jest. By George King of St. James's, Button-Maker, printed for Henry Frederick, near St. James's Square, nd., no. 3

[32] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World* (1965), transl. Hélène Iswolsky, Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1984

[33] John Locke, *An Essay concerning Human Understanding* (1689), ed. Peter H. Nidditch, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979

[34] op. cit. loc.cit

[35] *Tristram Shandy*, IV (xiv) pp. 287-8

[36] J. Berthoud, op. cit., p. 29.

[37] John Mullan, Sentiment and Sociability: the Language of Feeling in the Eighteenth Century, Oxford: Clarendon, 1988, p. 152

[38] Florence M. Montgomery, *Textiles in America 1650-1870*, New York: Norton & Co., 1984, p. 224.

[39] Oxford English Dictionary

[40] Button, and Button-Hole: with a Character of the Drabs, and the Change of Old-Hat. In Three Familiar Epistles in Verse, London: for A. Moore,1723, pp. 3-7

[41] *The Button Hole Garlang [Garland] compos'd of Four Excellent New Songs*, no place, no date, no. 21

[42] See John Styles, 'Print and Policing: Crime Advertising in Eighteenth-Century Provincial England', in Douglas Hay and Frances Snyder eds., *Police and Prosecution in Britain in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989, pp. 55-111

[43] Sigmund Freud, *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious* (1905), transl. James Strachey, Pelican Freud Library, vol. 6, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1976