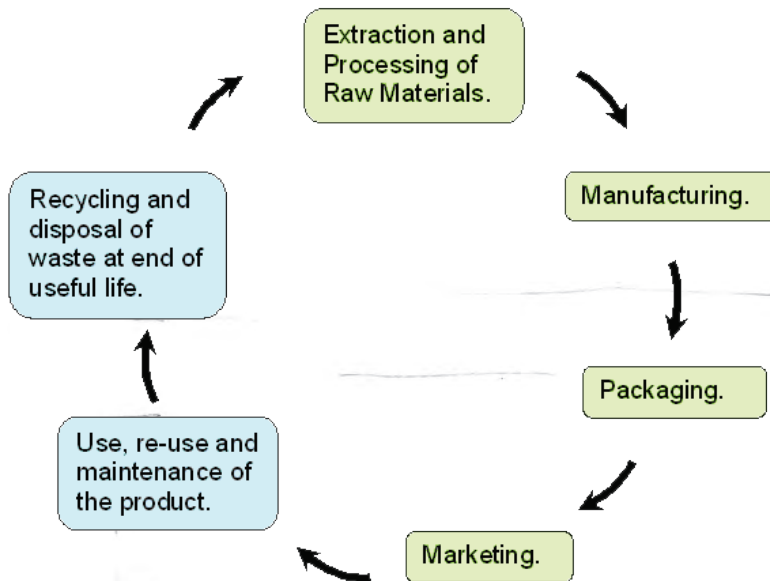


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Extraction: An Apology for Cutting

1. Etymologies, only after the fact

In its most common usage, the word “extraction” is

utilized, as Samuel Johnson evidences in the eighteenth-century, as a noun, or more precisely, as a noun signifying some previous action, “To take from something of which the thing taken was a part.”¹ The circularity of Johnson’s syntax underlines the word’s metonymic-core, where a noun *part* functions as a stand-in for some former *whole*. Within industry and mining, in particular, and even in a dentist’s removal of a rotten tooth, extraction cuts out some, either primary or problematic, element. The removed material, in this initial stage, is conceived as cut from some (prior) whole that remains left behind. *Extraction* begins then, by taking away from an image or object, while also in its very realization, intimating what remains.

In the wider context of art-making, taking from already extant



Samuel Johnson, circa 1772. Painted by Joshua Reynolds.

¹ As a way of loosely distinguishing the artistic process of *extraction* from its standard associations, I will italicize in the text those instances meant to signify the process of art-making, while keeping conventional uses of the word non-italicized.

Johnson, Samuel. *A dictionary of the English language in which the words are deduced from their originals, and illustrated in their different significations by examples from the best writers: to which are prefixed, a history of the language, and an English grammar.* (London: J.F. and C. Rivington [etc], 1785), 6th ed.

Throughout the seventeenth-century there are repeated uses of the word to

images, recordings and media should appear almost commonplace, especially when considering how digital technology and the wider culture of appropriation have helped to redirect contemporary art practices. New circuits of authorship have supplanted, at least for the moment, the artist’s hand, offering new ways of tracing the space between the quotidian and the rarified. Using the now conventional formulation, what distinguishes postmodern art from romanticism’s *remaking of the world in its own image*—and at the other pole, realism’s *mirror to nature*—is how it self-reflexively minds the gap between represented and real, between presence and absence.

^{1.} The process of *extraction* foregrounds this gap, while remaining attentive to what is typically viewed as background, what exists at the borders of an aesthetic field. Fabrics and images are simultaneously juxtaposed and pulled apart, held together with crude stitching, oscillating between a recognizable space and flat patterning. Cutting objects from the world and physically threading images back together in ways that emphasize a gap, suggests an indeterminate starting point within a complex signifying chain.

Extraction’s root and prefix highlight this disjunction. *Ex* carries a variety of inter-related associations within Latin: *from* (extrapolate), *out(side)* (external, extrinsic),

^{3.} describe the distillation of minerals, precious stones and metals, as well as references to the physical removal of arrows and bullets from the bodies of the injured. In one of its earliest recorded uses, extraction describes the procurement of building materials, “whole mountaines of excellent blacke Marble . . . out of which the Imperiall Palace was extracted and cut out” (T. Herbert 1604). In this colonial-sense, extraction also describes estate owners and the unruly squatters that occupy their land, those “Freeholders, whose estates were extracted out of the demesnes of the manor” (Cruise 1804). In all these examples, extraction denotes

exterior, extraneous, extradite, etc.), and *beyond* (extraordinary, extraterrestrial, extrasensory, extravagant, extreme, etc.). In all these cases, the prefix is positioned against a root from which it might be said to pull. In extraction's case, the root word, *tract*, typically translates to "an expanse of land or lineage" or, in related anatomical terms, "a bundle of organs/tissue/nerves," and, most interestingly in terms of textual history, "a leaflet or pamphlet containing a declaration or appeal, especially one put out by a religious or political group."² In this sense, *ex* marks a kind of resistance or breaking away, and it is interesting to note how in contemporary parlance we often hear extraction used in the context of police and wartime interrogations, when one group elicits information, money, a confession, etc. against the will of another. In these situations, extraction suggests a charged and highly volatile form of coercion, a violence embedded in the

word itself— where prefix and root appear to clash. Where a politician or lawyer might *retract* a statement in an attempt to erase/rewrite a public proclamation, *extraction* exists at the moment of an initial split and fall.

Emphasis on the root of some primary form is also evident in mathematics, whereby one extracts or seeks the square root in algebra.

the removal of an unwanted occupant or the distillation of some vital resource.

All references in this note come from the *Oxford English Dictionary*, Second Edition, 1989; online version November 2010.

² Definitions can be found in various dictionaries, online and in print.



If the word *radical* famously comes from the Latin word *radix* for root, *extraction* refers to the method by which the cutting away from the root must first occur. Where retract and recycle exist at the far end of a production (and signifying) chain, extraction is precariously poised at its beginning. This principle of emergence suggests an inchoate severance within the long calculus of representation.

This problematic calculus is evident in John Milton's famous origin story, *Paradise Lost*. In Milton's conception of the genesis of humankind, Eve is described this way: "I now see . . . myself Before me: Woman is her Name; of Man Extracted."³ Within this context, extraction signals a fall and it is through the removal of a rib that an entire chain of events is put into motion, throwing the world irrevocably off balance. There is no place or origin to return to in *extraction*, only bastardized patterns of remove where a promised root appears constantly undermined.

³ Milton, John. *Paradise Lost and Other Poems*. (New York: Signet Classic, 2003), Book 8, p. 205-206.



God Creating Eve from Adam's Rib, from
Genesis, Creation of the World

BARKER-JENNINGS HARDWARE CO., LYNCHBURG, VA.

391

FIRE SHOVELS



Stamped sheet steel, flat handle

No. 65, Japanned, size of blade 4½ x 7 in., length over all 27 in. per dozen, \$9.99

One dozen in a bundle



Stamped sheet steel, round handle

No. 54, Japanned, size of blade 4½ x 7 in., length over all 27 in. per dozen, \$1.00

No. 256, Galvanized, size of blade 4½ x 7 in., length over all 27 in. per dozen, 2.00

One half dozen in a bundle



Stamped sheet steel, round handle

No. 57, Japanned, size of blade 4½ x 7 in., length over all 27 in. per dozen, \$2.00

No. 257, Galvanized, size of blade 4½ x 7 in., length over all 27 in. per dozen, 2.50

One half dozen in a bundle



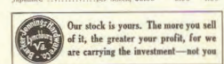
Stamped sheet steel, round handle, with cap

No. 209, Japanned, size of blade 5 x 8 in., length over all 29½ in. per dozen, \$3.75

One half dozen in a bundle



Stamped sheet steel blade, wrought iron round handle with hook

No. 2 3 4
Size of blade, in. 11½ x 7½ 11½ x 8 11½ x 9
Length of handle, in. 27 27 27
Japanned per dozen, \$2.00 2.50 4.00

Our stock is yours. The more you sell of it, the greater your profit, for we are carrying the investment—not you

COAL HODS

Japanned Open Top



Japanned, plain body, round bottom, half oval japanned bail

Nos. 5 6 7 8
Size, in. 12 16 18 20
Per dozen \$3.43 3.83 4.58 5.23

One half dozen in a bundle

Galvanized Open Top



Galvanized, plain body, round bottom, half oval japanned bail

Nos. 513 516 517 518
Size, in. 12 16 18 20
Per dozen \$5.18 5.23 10.00 10.00

One half dozen in a bundle

Hercules Galvanized Open Top



Extra heavy, galvanized, plain body, striped, half oval japanned bail, heavy riveted ears and back handle

Nos. 745 843
Size, in. 12 18
Per dozen \$13.00 14.00

One half dozen in a bundle

Galvanized Funnel Top



Galvanized, corrugated body, round bottom, half oval japanned bail

Nos. 717 718
Size, in. 12 18
Per dozen \$12.50 12.50

One quarter dozen in a bundle

Coal Hods advertisement, circa 1912.

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Book # 12422

Quantity in Stock: 27

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Design by Color / Green



Book # 1102424

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FLORADORA

Design by Color / Orange

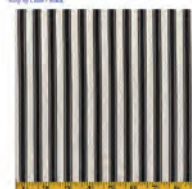


Book # 1102427

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Design by Color / Black

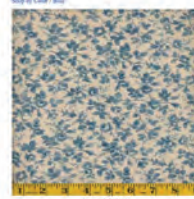


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Design by Color / Blue



Book # 1102427

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LA PETITE FERME/RED

Design by Color / Red



Book # 11116

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THE CHASE - RAISIN

Design by Color / Green



Book # 11116

Quantity in Stock: 25

SHIP OF FOOLS

Design by Color / Green



Book # 11116

Quantity in Stock: 47

CANTONESE BAMBOO/SIENNA

Design by Color / Green



Book # 11116

Quantity in Stock: 10

DAWSON TOILE - PASSION

Design by Color / Green

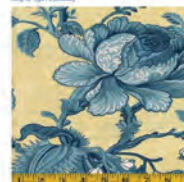


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Quantity in Stock: 101

MONTAGUE

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Book # 11116

Quantity in Stock: 27

WORLD TRAVELER/SIENNA

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Book # 11116

Quantity in Stock: 47

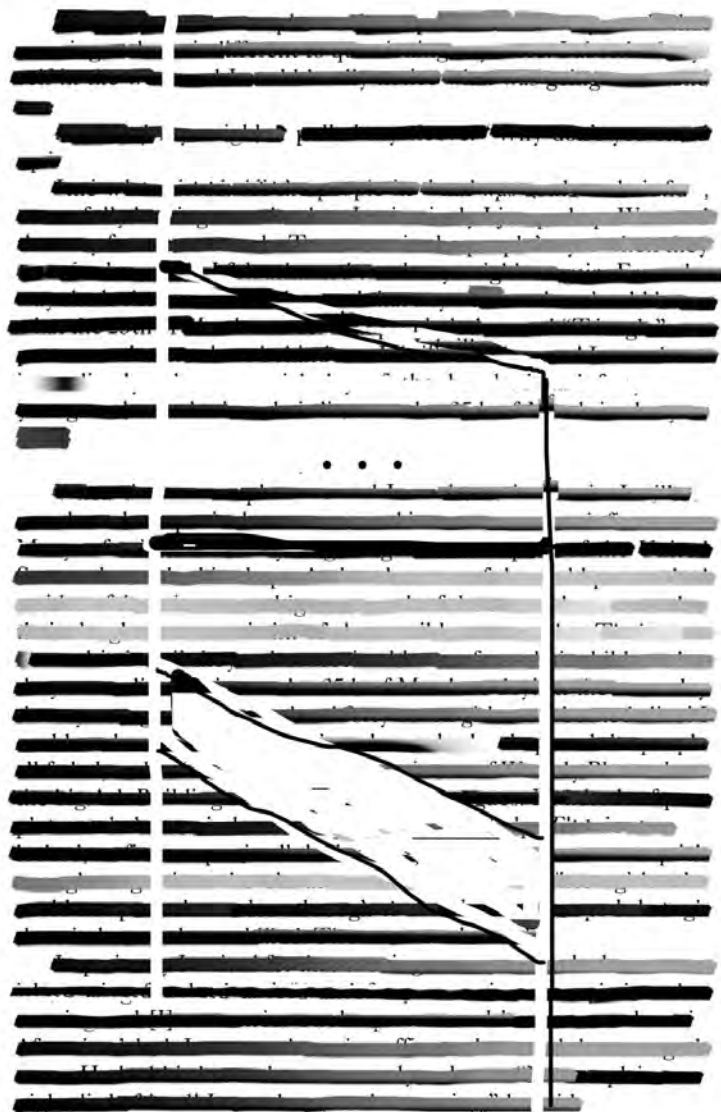
COUNTRY LIFE/ GARNET

Design by Color / Green



Book # 11116

Quantity in Stock: 101





At that volatile moment, some even claimed that "women are the cause of modernism, whatever that is." Alert to the latest trend, the *Evening Sun* told its reporter to find out "who is she, where is she, what is she—this 'modern woman' that people are always talking about." The obvious place to track down one of these controversial females was Greenwich Village, the haunt of Duchamp's friend the alarmingly modern Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven: she had recently been sighted wearing black-and-purple anklets, a postage stamp on her cheek, and a purple wig tied on her head with shipping cable, in place of her usual headgear, a coal scuttle. But the Baroness had been done.

Yoko Ono, *Cut Piece*:

... a set of instructions, to be performed by anyone, regardless of gender, executed by the audience/ participant on the subject (question: who is performing here?).

One by one, audience members approach the motionless subject, pick up a pair of scissors and cut a piece of clothing off of him/her.

Decisions have to be made: what piece of clothing should be selected, from

where on the body, and how much?

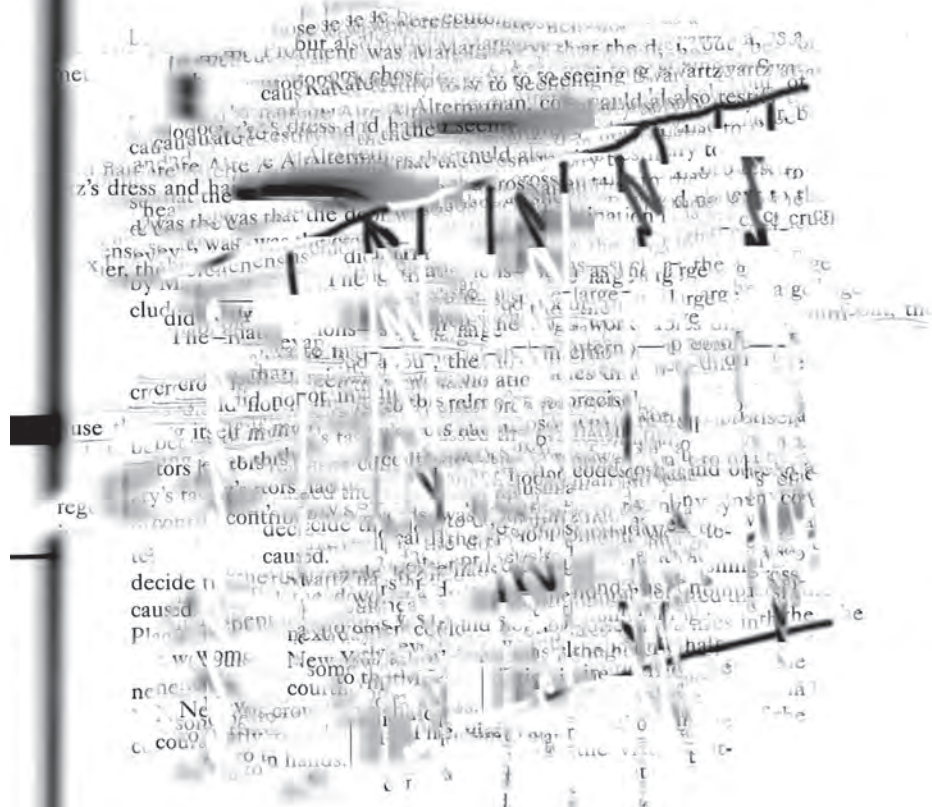
How much will you reveal by your singular act?

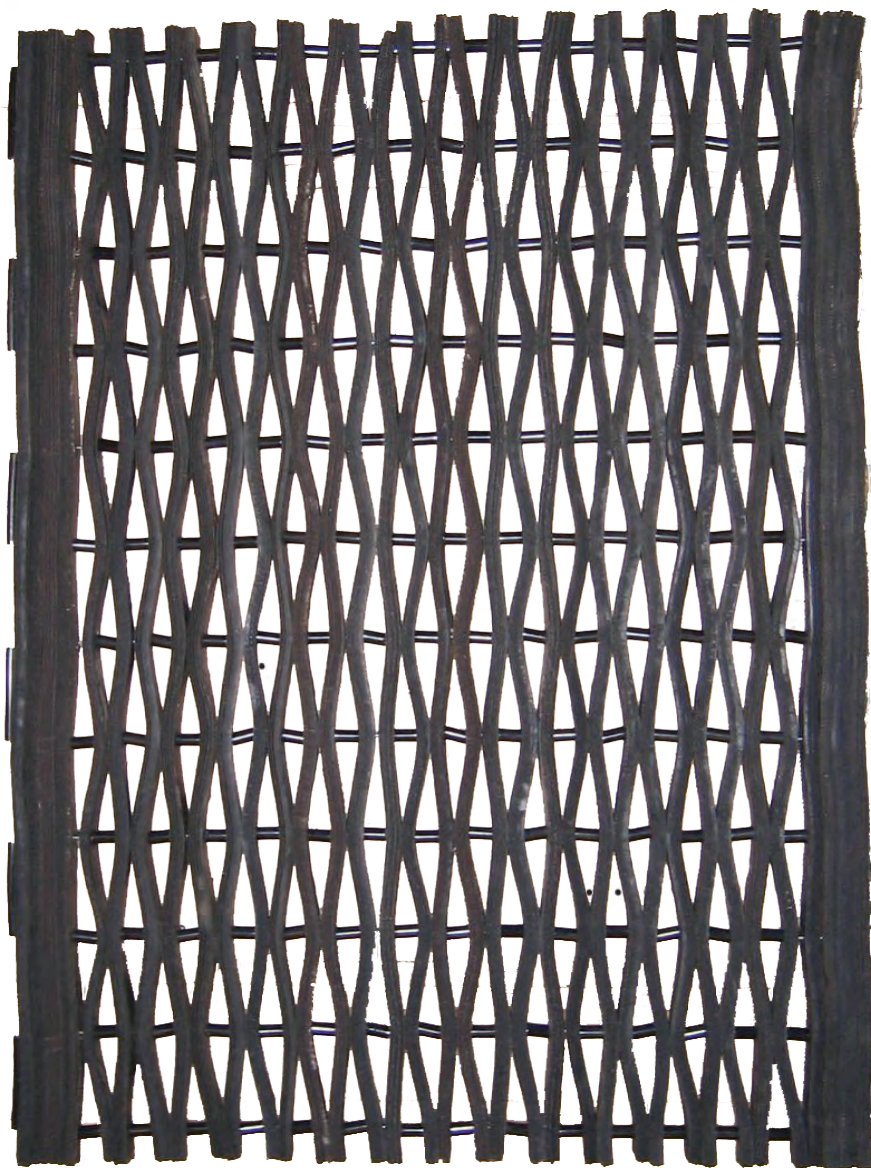
Making a picture by the act of cutting, or removing- each act making a snapshot, in stages.

What is left and what remains? And in making these ostensibly formal decisions, other issues arise.

What kind of act are you performing on the body- the physical body in time and space? Is it aggressive, revealing, liberating? Is there more at stake in the first cut or the last cut?

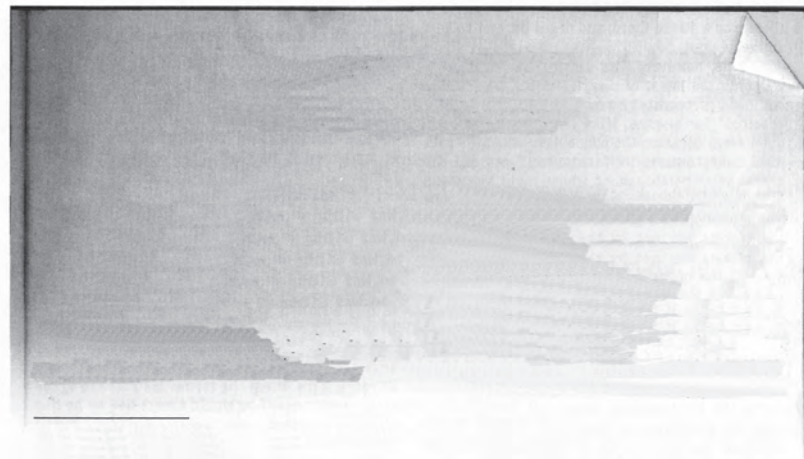






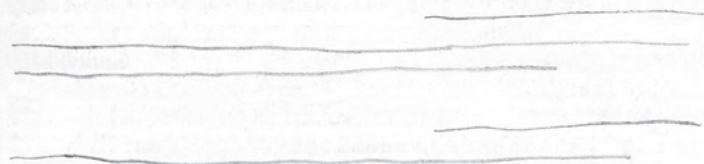


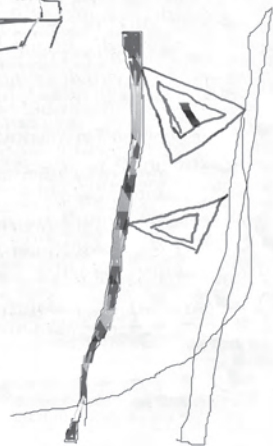
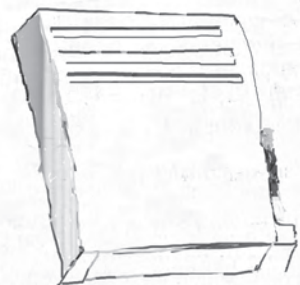
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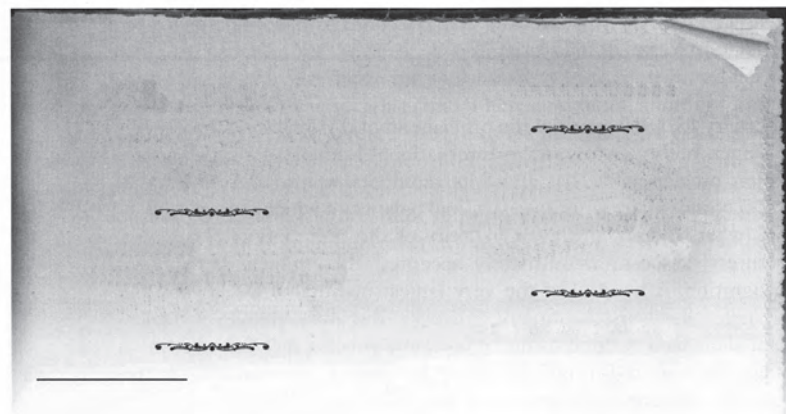


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Since those portraits stopped at the shoulders, there is no reason to believe that Duchamp didn't keep his pants on.







The 13-year-old girl rolls up her sleeve. She takes the blade in her right hand and draws it across her left wrist. She watches the blood start to flow. Then she does it once more.

This is not a suicide attempt. The girl is sitting in a classroom at her school, surrounded by other pupils, some of whom look across to see her injure herself. She has taken the blade out of her pencil sharpener (another time, she might use her compass to puncture her skin, or even the end of her plastic ruler, gouging it back and forth across her wrists). She has cut herself, but not deeply.

When healed, the marks up her arm or on her inner thighs may resemble the scratches made by a cat, or brambles, and perhaps you would think nothing of them. Anyway, she wears trousers and has long sleeves, and is careful not to let her cuts show.

This is both public display and private self-abuse, a morbid secret and a public confession. And it is simultaneously very serious and weirdly casual - a cross between Sylvia Plath and wearing your baseball cap backwards.

All over the country, teenagers are cutting themselves, and in some schools it has almost become a group-led gothic kind of fashion-statement: a grungy display of hardness (look at the pain I can bear) and softness (look at the pain I am feeling inside).

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The Triangle Waist Company building, off of Washington Square Park, New York, NY.



The Triangle Waist Company, on fire, March 1911

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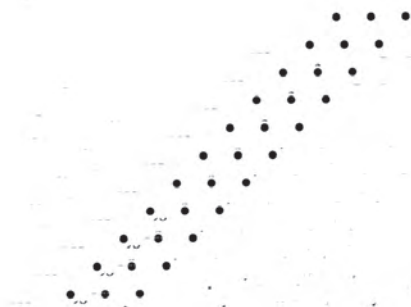
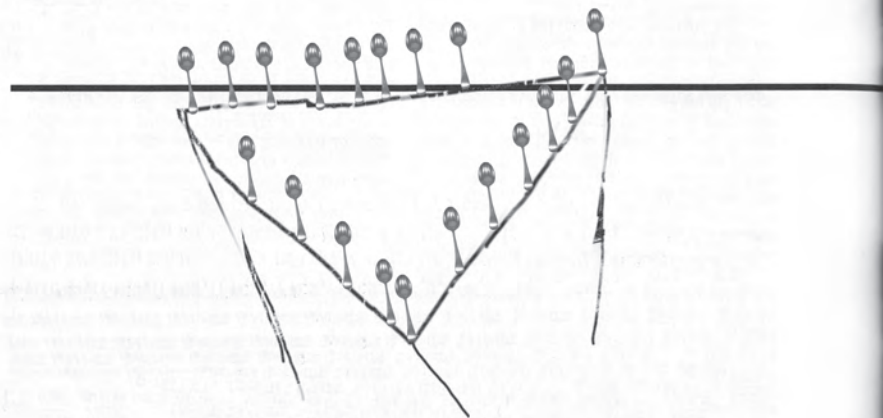
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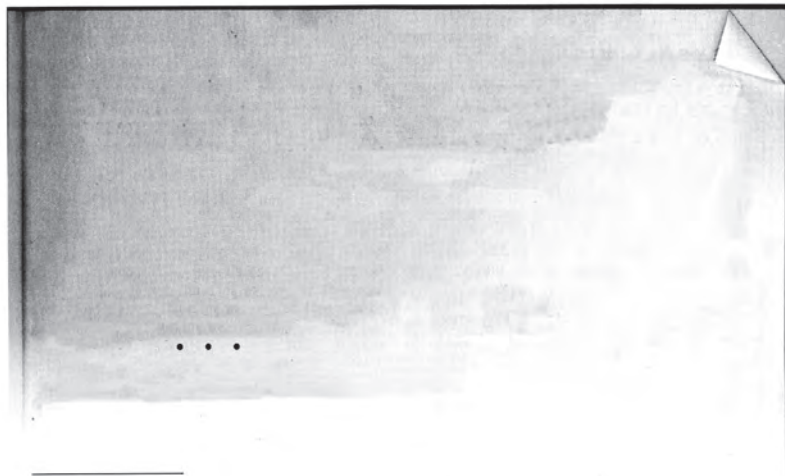
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The whole ensemble, literally safety-pinned together, became the celebrated and highly photogenic phenomenon known as punk which throughout 1977 provided the tabloids with a fund of predictably sensational copy and the quality press with a welcome catalogue of beautifully broken codes. Punk reproduced the entire sartorial history of post-war working-class youth cultures in 'cut up' form, combining elements which had originally belonged to completely different epochs. There was a chaos of quiffs and leather jackets, brothel creepers and winkle pickers, plimsolls and paka macs, moddy crops and skinhead strides, drainpipes and vivid socks, bum freezers and bover boots – all kept 'in place' and 'out of time' by the spectacular adhesives: the safety pins and plastic clothes pegs, the bondage straps and bits of string which attracted so much horrified and fascinated attention.

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List of Text and Quotes

- pg. 22-19____Gempp, Brian with Meredyth Sparks. *Extraction: An Apology for Cutting. 1. Etymologies, only after the fact*, excerpted from *Extraction: An Apology for Cutting*, unpublished.
- pg. 135____Burke, Carolyn. *Becoming Modern: The Life of Mina Loy*. (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1997), pg. 8
- pg. 128____Notes on Yoko Ono's *Cut Piece*
- pg. 5____Harding, James Martin. *Cutting Performances; Collage Events, Feminist Artists, and the American Avant-Garde*. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010), pg. 65
*on Man Ray's portraits of Duchamp's alter ego, Rose Selavy
- pg. 140____Gerrard, Nicci. "Why are so many teenage girls cutting themselves?", *The Observer*, Sunday, May 22nd, 2002
- pg.____Hebdige, Dick. *Subculture: The meaning of style*. (London and New York: Routledge, 1979), pg. 26

