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## BOOK REVIEW ESSAY

**'Fashion: Red in tooth and claw': A lycology for Alan Moore and Malcolm McLaren's *Fashion Beast*, Alan Moore, Malcolm McLaren, Anthony Johnston and Facundo Pericio (2013)**

Fashion Beast, Rantoul, IL: Avatar Press.

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### Abstract

The graphic novel *Fashion Beast* from 2012 is a story by Alan Moore and Malcolm McLaren that takes the reader into an apocalyptic world on the verge of war, but also into a narrative about a fashion house and its inner workings.

As an example of popular fiction on the topic of fashion, from both an acknowledged popular author (Moore) and a fashion-insider (McLaren), the graphic novel exposes an interesting perspective on what could be seen as the personal and social forces of fashion. Whereas the novel starts with clothing and fashion being used as part of an individual identity project, the story quickly evolves into a more violent narrative, revealing the double-faced nature of fashion: attraction and rejection, desire and death, beautiful as well as beast-like. At a key passage in the novel, the designer reveals the evolutionary essence of fashion and glamour: power.

This article is structured as follows: the first section introduces the *Fashion Beast* storyworld, while the following sections examine a series of narrative hints at the main themes of the novel; firstly, the Janus-faced evolutionary force of fashion (Section 2); secondly that the *faction*, the pack, is the main vehicle for this social competition (Section 3); and finally, that this force of fashion is something beyond human control, a rage or a meme, in itself a monster of sorts (Section 4). The article then sketches a framework of what Jacques Derrida calls a *lycology*, a 'politics as discourse about the wolf, *lucos*' (Section 5). The article concludes by pointing towards how a *lycology* drawn from *Fashion Beast* may help expose how fashion is a realm of both peace and war, attraction and rejection, with beautiful as well as beast-like qualities. As the *Fashion Beast* suggests, there is a beast in fashion: red in tooth and claw.

### Section 1: The *Fashion Beast*

*Fashion Beast* is a graphic novel by Alan Moore and Malcolm McLaren, with sequential adaptation by Antony Johnston and artwork by Facundo Percio, released in 2012. The full story was released as trade paperback in 2013 (Moore et al. 2013). The story, which stretches over ten issues, is an adaptation of a 1985 script that Moore wrote with McLaren based on the classic fairy-tale *Beauty and the Beast*, that was originally intended to be turned into a feature film.

The story is set in a dark future, on the brink of war and a threatening nuclear winter or apocalypse. As the plot develops, the subplot of a coming war becomes apparent through ever-recurring hints in the dialogue. At the beginning of the novel, the main protagonists, Doll and Jonni, are having an argument about clothes, identity and street style, and later both come to work for the much-hyped but never seen fashion-designer Celestine. Celestine, who is trapped in his fashion castle with his *oeuvre* and a warped mirror reflecting his image in a distorted and ugly way, is portrayed as the 'beast', imprisoned by his creepy matrons, who protects the legacy of Celestine's mother by keeping Celestine locked up and in the creative delusion about his own ugliness and beast-like appearance.

Already from the first encounter, Celestine is revealed as the sovereign king of the fashion house, forming the world according to his whims and desires. After a quarrel with Jonni, Doll runs away wearing one of Celestine's creations, and in town a mob of austere anti-fashion activists attacks her. She runs back with the ruined dress to Celestine who then 'discovers' Doll as a model, and makes her his mannequin, his doll. Later, as the conflicts mount, Celestine savagely beats Jonni, as Jonni does not agree with Celestine's artistic vision and threatens Celestine's creative leadership. As Celestine calms down and returns to reason after his temporary and beast-like rage against Jonni, he now explains to Doll the true nature of fashion: the evolution of aestheticized power. This monologue by Celestine about the evolutionary power of fashion and the degeneration of humanity stands as the central part of this research text as it also echoes throughout the novel's main narrative.

The beast-like behaviour of Celestine and his monologue on power leads the narrative towards the moment when he is actually revealed to be a handsome young man, imprisoned and oppressed

in a reversal of the traditional *Beauty and the Beast* narrative: here, the beast is a handsome designer prince who carries a beast within (discussed in Section 2).

However, as this fact is revealed to Doll, she agrees with the matrons not to tell Celestine the truth about his handsome appearance. She has turned herself into a doll of the fashion narrative itself, and as Celestine later dies in his dark room, she reconciles with him. Yet, later at the funeral, Doll agrees to betray Jonni and lets the matrons put him up for conscription and he is sent to fight in the war, which has finally erupted with the total conscription for all men in the city. The soldiers ritually burn the conscripts' clothes as they are forcefully enlisted.

However, as Jonni later returns to claim his role as the new designer, as the new Celestine, Doll fights with one of the matrons and turns up on the catwalk wearing clothes stained with blood. Witnessing this transformation, the audience turns into a mob and the show becomes a blood-stained, violent riot in which the vicious force of the mob consumes the matrons. Repeating Celestine's original success (which also caused riots), the cycle of birth and death through the rage of the mob becomes an inherent part of the narrative (discussed in Sections 3 and 4).

Finally, in celebrating their victory and the happy ending, Doll and Jonni withdraw to Celestine's old room. In the final panels, as Jonni stares into Celestine's warped mirror his distorted reflection looks back at him. The reader witnesses the beast return: a new sovereign wolf-king born in the cradle of the ephemerally liberated state. The *lycos* – the wolf-king, werewolf – is reborn sovereign, and a new master monarch reigns over the Celestine territory (discussed in Section 5).

The narrative not only resembles the tale of *Beauty and the Beast*, but also portrays the interlinked subject of fashion production, image distortion and recursive violence as perpetual, as a force which may be temporarily displaced, but cannot be stopped, much like Zygmunt Bauman's perspective on fashion as a *perpetuum mobile* (Bauman 2010).

The three following sections will draw from Celestine's central monologue where he reveals to Doll the evolutionary nature or power of fashion. As the text will posit, Celestine's argument is also mirrored within the overall story and reflects three beast-like characteristics in fashion.

## Section 2: The evolutionary force of fashion: A love/hate relationship

In the beginning of the monologue Celestine proclaims that aesthetics are an essential part of nature, and fashion is an invention of man and part of our evolutionary struggle. The point of it is survival and evolution,

There is no other point, not for any of us. This is a constant, throughout the natural world [...] There are moths that embroider their wings with owl's eyes [...] and flowers that can reproduce the inviting hindquarters of a queen bee [...] but the bald ape invented fashion!

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Sheathing its featherless, furless paw within a glove of animal velvet, it took evolution by the throat and shook it 'til it screamed [...] *for in the image there is power!*

(Moore et al. 2013: 125ff, original emphases)

The comparison between fashion and sexual/natural selection is not as far-fetched as it may seem, having been already popularized in Nancy Ectoff's *Survival of the Prettiest* (1999). According to philosopher Elizabeth Grosz (2008), the arts are an extension of the human sexual selection process, emerging from the affirmation of life, the biological surplus energy surging through our species.

There is much 'art' in the natural world, from the moment there is sexual selection, from the moment there are two sexes that attract each other's interest and taste through visual, auditory, olfactory, tactile, and gustatory sensations. The haunting beauty of birdsong, the provocative performances of erotic display in primates, the attraction of insects to the perfume of plants are all in excess of mere survival [...] They attest to the artistic impact of sexual selection, the becoming-other that seduction entails.

(Grosz 2008: 7)

As Celestine suggests on the next page, man understood early that in image there is power: 'The men that wore antlers and beads knew this, dancing like dogs in the lights of the first fires' (Moore et al. 2013: 128). Man used clothing as he turned himself into a magic animal, 'wearing antlers', dancing 'like a dog' in his early rituals. Grosz would probably agree, as she argues how the human arts are an excessive force emerging from life itself, highly intensified in our evolutionary path, but still parallel to most other living organisms. Art is part of our animal nature: 'Art is of the animal. It comes, not from reason, recognition, intelligence, not from a uniquely human sensibility, or from any of man's higher accomplishments, but from something excessive, unpredictable, lowly' (Grosz 2008: 63).

Even if Grosz does not put an emphasis on the violent struggles of selection in the conquest of life, she addresses the underlying competitive forces enacted between species and in mating play. As among any species, sexual selection is also a territorial struggle,

It is to this extent that architecture, and all the arts that follow from it, are linked to birdsong, the olfactory dance of insects, the performative display of the vertebrates, including humans: they are each the constitution of a territory, a sexualized territory, the space that is one's own in which one can enact sexual seduction, extract sexual satisfaction, and intensify sexual forces.

(Grosz 2008: 12)

A common example of the selection process is that of the peacock with its magnificent plumage, which, as Darwin also noted, is both a display of attraction, but also a risk of predatory attacks, especially compared to the dowdier and safely camouflaged peahen. As Grosz writes, 'sexual appeal imperils as much as it allures; it generates risk to the same extent that it produces difference' (Grosz 2008: 30). However, as Grosz notices, Darwin put an emphasis on the powers of judgment and discrimination in sexual selection as one of the main forces of sexual selection processes. Darwin,

argues that males commonly compete with each other to attract females and that females commonly exert their powers of discrimination, although he admits that it may not be the powers of preference that females exert as much as the powers of distaste.

(Grosz 2008: 30)

A key force in evolution is not only the force of attraction from the male, but perhaps even more so is distaste from the female. The acts of judgment, the active demarcations between attraction and repulsion, or between the tasteful and distasteful, are thus at the heart of evolution, the arts and indeed life itself, or as Darwin writes, 'the season of love is also that of battle' (1981 [1871]: 48). As suggested in the overall narrative of the *Fashion Beast*, Doll and Jonni fight each other for the recognition of Celestine, and for control over the Celestine territorial brand (the name and the fashion house).

The rituals of wearing antlers and dancing like dogs are, as Celestine suggests, artistic endeavours of man-becoming-animal, magically shapeshifting between man and beast, and as Moore and McLaren suggest, between the seasons of love and battle. Or, with a wink to the famous words of the poet Alfred Lord Tennyson – 'nature, red in tooth and claw' – fashion is also red in tooth and claw.

### **Section 3: Fashion and the *faction*: The sociality of pack against pack**

After his initial exposition of the evolutionary processes behind the aesthetic violence of fashion, Celestine continues his monologue. Following his argument about early man wearing antlers and dancing like a dog, he goes on to describe men who knew the power of the image: 'The men in high black boots knew it, marching through the burning rubble of Europe, their gait as stylized as the chorus line in a musical screen spectacular' (Moore et al. 2013: 128).

Celestine hits on the full implications of uniformed violence and warfare, that the power of the image is used for real political goals, as a core component in a ubiquitous war: aestheticized power struggles are components of every lifestyle, which in turn corresponds to the overall story's escalation

to war and total conscription. In Celestine's narrative, urban tribes also wielded the weapon of fashion in their own style wars,

It was the gospel of the new urban tribes that flourished as this century's shadows grew longer [...] The children that eviscerated cinema seats and gave bouquets to riot police; who waged wars over shirt labels along cold, off-season English beaches and wore the cigarette burns on their arms like jewelry, they knew it! They knew it! They knew the meaning of glamour; its oldest, original meaning. Glamour means 'magic'. Glamour *is* magic!  
(Moore et al. 2013: 128, original emphases)

Fashion, as a form of aesthetic antagonism, brings out in us the true Aristotelian political being, the extreme *zoôn politikon*: a political predator of style. The political beast in man seeks territory and sexual selection through the very basic acts of demarcation and judgment, before the beast turns to explicit violence: to tribal war.

As Celestine hints at, fashion is not a phenomenon centred on the individual, even if it may look so for Doll who is primarily interested in exposing 'her' style. But Celestine could just as well have used the words of sociologist Rosalind Coward: 'One thing fashion is quite categorically not is an expression of individuality' (Coward 1984: 30) – fashion as sharing the root with *faction*: being of a political group defined by animosity towards other groups (Barnard 1996: 8). A similar argument was already put forward by Simmel (1957), that fashion is defined by imitation and rejection, ingroups and outgroups.

However, as suggested in Social Identity Theory (SIT) developed by social psychologist Henri Tajfel (cf. Tajfel 1981), the establishment of a faction, an ingroup, also requires the rejection of others, an outgroup. Groups use social mechanisms such as comparison, competition and ultimately hostility, to distinguish themselves and create social formations, using inter-group violence. Social psychologist Marilyn Brewer further argues, through her 'optimal distinctiveness theory', that group-living is a fundamental human social organization, characteristic of the human species,

Groups that have clear categorical boundaries satisfy the need for inclusion (intra-group assimilation) at the same time that they provide basis for satisfying the need for differentiation (inter-group contrast) [...] In-groups that meet the simultaneous conditions become an integral part of the individual's sense of self and the basis for a secure and stable self-concept.  
(Brewer 2001: 22)

But, as Brewer highlights, these mechanisms often turn violent as contempt and disgust towards outgroups may not be enough. Avoidance, such as negative discrimination, may however flare up

into violence when the need for secure differentiation is threatened and anger is aroused. This may indeed 'provide the potent ingredients that are sufficient to kindle hatred, expulsion, and even ethnic cleansing' (Brewer 2001: 33).

Celestine evokes the marching of boots through the ruins of Europe, perhaps in agreement with Tajfel and Brewer that the magic of dress is part of an evolutionary and inherently aggressive struggle. The images Celestine hints towards suggest the violent struggle through both liberation as much as violent totalitarianism, through magic as well as marching boots and cigarette burns. Violence appears as an inherent part of the distinction between ingroups and outgroups; between those who are 'in' and those who are 'out'.

Celestine suggests that totalitarianism suffuses fashion, not too unlike how Herbert Marcuse in *One-dimensional Man* (1964) suggests how elements of totalitarian violence echo throughout liberal capitalism. The aesthetic violence of marching in knee-high black boots is not a phenomenon confined to a certain historical period or to demonic regimes. As Marcuse posits, even in liberal democracies, where 'liberty can be made into a powerful instrument of domination. [...] Free election of masters does not abolish the masters or the slaves' (Marcuse 1964: 7). Similarly, even 'free elections' of fashion designers (or 'fast fashion') would not abolish the general slavery to fashion. As hinted by Marcuse's colleague in the Frankfurt School, Erich Fromm, the conformity of fashion may indeed be a type of 'escape from freedom' where the liberal citizen is drawn towards totalitarian mechanisms of sociality (Fromm 1994).

In Moore and McLaren's depiction, fashion is both a celebration of liberation as much as it has an innate need of social aggression, with its loathsome brutality and aesthetic group competition. But resounding in the background of the story's settings, especially in the mass-scenes of the city, is a social situation that suggests that all life is expendable. With the full conscription of all men, they are led away naked into a truck while their clothes are burned, a very symbolic image of another side of fashion: total submission, the leaderless consent of free minds to be subjects to aesthetic domination, and in the end, to become expendable.

#### **Section 4: Fashion as a force, rage and meme: Beyond the individual**

In Celestine's expounding on the nature of fashion, fashion is not so much a language or style, as much as a force or a unit of power, or even, as Coco Chanel proclaimed, a weapon: a weapon wielded by its users to claim power. But also, a weapon that possesses the hand that exerts its power.

As Celestine expounds on how fashion is so much greater than just a tool for expressing human desire, he suggests it is even beyond our control:

Our affections, our vanities, these are the devil-masks that give us power, that make us loved or feared. It is our images, these lantern-ghosts that we project [...] these phantoms are

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the important things, the things that run the world. Our clothes are bigger than we are, are beyond the petty lusts and difficulties of the creatures that inhabit them. If this winter should indeed prove to be endless, as the doomsmiths say, perhaps our clothes are all that will survive.

(Moore et al. 2013: 129)

Not only is fashion a tool for power, it is also a form of violence which possesses the user, making the user become a tool for fashion itself. From this perspective, Celestine's ideas resonate extraordinary well with those of French philosopher Simone Weil. Following her famous analysis of Homer's epic poem *Iliad*, Weil (2005) notes that the main protagonists of the poem are not persons, they are mere puppets in the hands of the story's main hero: the holy rage, *thymos*, the *force* that makes things of men. In Weil's study, she traces the heroism, the intoxication to kill in the *Iliad*, to the warrior's dependence on the force. As Weil proposes,

The true hero, the true subject, the center of the *Iliad* is force. Force employed by man, force that enslaves man, force before which man's flesh shrinks away. In this work, at all times, the human spirit is shown as modified by its relations with force, as swept away, blinded, by the very force it imagined it could handle, as deformed by the weight of the force it submits to.

(Weil 2005: 3)

To Weil, this transformation from man to thing can be performed both by killing the victim and by petrifying him by means of the power to kill. A powerless person in front of another with the power to kill, is in Weil's view, reduced to a thing. It is thus both death and fear that makes man into a thing. To Weil, humans, by their very presence, have this influence on other human beings. However, those who are reduced to things do not have this ability: their fear has made them non-persons. The *Iliad* is full of this force, the force that kills:

How much more surprising in its effects is the other force, the force that does *not* kill, i.e. that does not kill just yet. It will surely kill, it will possibly kill, or perhaps merely hangs, poised and ready, over the head of the creature it *can* kill, at any moment, which is to say at every moment. In whatever aspect, its effect is the same: it turns man into a stone. From its first property (the ability to turn a human being into a thing by the simple method of killing him) flows another, quite prodigious too in its own way, the ability to turn a human being into a thing while he is still alive. He is alive; he has a soul; and yet – he is a thing.

(Weil 2005: 5, original emphases)



To Weil, it is force that produces these consequences, both victors and vanquished, beasts and things, are transformed by force. They are possessed by force, and nobody can control it.

Advancing an argument similar to that of Weil, German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk (2010) laments how two pathetic creatures, Narcissus and Oedipus, became prototype losers for the analysis of human behaviour, where their miserable desire and 'lack' were to be models of the sadly trivial eroticism and 'discontents' of modernity. Sloterdijk sees a connection between sex and violence where the latter has been in the shadow of the former. As compensation, Sloterdijk furthers the idea to examine human behaviour through the lens of *rage*, otherwise we will fail to understand the human obsession with strength, glory, pride and honour – and ultimately, powerful human traits such as social struggle and revolution.

Using the perspective of Sloterdijk, it may be no accident that trends are also called '*the rage*', as the driving force and fanatical passion of fashion is *rage*. The *rage of fashion* is thus similar to the fury of power in the *Iliad*, a force of violent strength and pride that possesses man. As Sloterdijk posits, it is the rage that propels heroism, the expression of strength, accomplishment, glory, vanity, ambition and the hunt for recognition. It is the rage of heroes like Achilles, whose deeds and accomplishments echo through the ages, that is blazing from the impulsive centre of the proud self (Sloterdijk 2010: 11). In battle, the hero is possessed by the fury of competition, posturing and violence, and the hero and his rage are indivisible, just like to Homer, 'war and happiness are inseparable' (Sloterdijk 2010: 4).

Such fury seems to resemble what Celestine suggests and also enacts, as he violently beats Jonni just before he starts his monologue on the nature of fashion: one can be 'possessed' by fashion, just like the warrior is 'possessed' by fury. This is also what happens to the mob at the end of the final catwalk show, as they riot and the pack consumes the matrons. Not only is Celestine possessed by his beast-like artistic vision, violent in its execution, but also the violent vanity of the fashionista-mob breeds a social battle, their rage fuelled by fashion.

As Celestine goes on to suggest that fashion and clothes may indeed outlive humanity itself, his thoughts clearly resemble the recent decades' discussion on 'memes'. Memes are 'viruses of the mind' which possess other organisms in order to reproduce, and specifically cultural ideas, that prey on the mind of the human species (Brodie 1996; Blackmore 1999). Examples could be everything from shorter fashion fads, the epic histories of heroes (like Achilles' rage), to religions spanning the centuries, bits of culture which cause people to shift their thinking and thus their behaviour, reproducing that same culture, something Brodie calls 'designer viruses' (Brodie 1996: 45). As with Weil's *force*, the idea of memes displaces the human as the main protagonist in the fashion narrative, or in the case of fashion, a creation which, like Frankenstein's monster, goes out of human control.

Richard Brodie gives a basic example of how fashion as a meme is not only the visual expression in itself, the visual symbol, but the whole social setting of the values of fashion which reside in the individual's mind,

According to this definition, a woman might have in mind a meme like *It's good to be aware of the current fashion*; another meme, *Women who dress fashionably get ahead*; and a third meme, *I want to get ahead*. Wearing short skirts when they become fashionable is a behaviour that results from having all these memes working together in her mind.

(Brodie 1996: 7, original emphases)

As Brodie argues, the *Short skirts are in fashion* meme is in my mind, not on the model's body (Brodie 1996: 7). The idea keeps reproducing, affecting not only its own life, but also human mating behaviours. But whereas Grosz (2008) sees 'art' as a creative evolutionary force with the purpose of furthering sexual selection, psychologist Susan Blackmore (1999) sees social popularity as a mechanism for memetic power, which would mean,

the general ability to spread memes – to be the fashion setter as well as the best follower. This suggests that desirable mates should be those whose lives allow them to spread the most memes, such as writers, artists, journalists, broadcasters, film stars, and musicians.

(Blackmore 1999: 130)

Not only are Celestine and the mob possessed by fashion, they are also puppets in the violent meme-war between cultural ideas: the riot is a projection of Celestine's own rage or *thymos*, amplified throughout the social body.

Moore and McLaren makes it a playful narrative gesture to use the folktale of *Beauty and the Beast* as a reference for their story, which by itself is a cultural formation, a meme. Transposing an evolutionary trait onto fashion, as Celestine does, opens for new metaphors and meanings for the fashion meme. But as the authors suggest, the gesture also puts the beast-like tendencies of fashion at centre-stage. Fashion is no longer just a playful aesthetic game of Doll and Jonni, but a predatory contest of life and death, an aesthetic competition set within a world on the verge of war. The beast is out.

### **Section 5: Becoming-beast: The *lycology* of fashion**

So how are we to understand the role of the fashion designer in the evolutionary narrative suggested by Celestine? Celestine is himself the beast, yet still later in the story revealed as the imprisoned beauty himself. He is both the creator of beauty, of Groszian 'art' and sexual selection, yet still also possessed by the fury of his own creation. Like a mad scientist, a Frankenstein of fashion, he creates an uncontrollable monster. As we have seen in the earlier sections, there are potential elements of violence inherent in the phenomenon of fashion, but how could we better frame this becoming-beast within fashion?

At least since Thomas Hobbes's book *De Cive/On the Citizen* (1998 [1647]), Plautus' classic saying that 'man is a wolf to [his fellow] man' (*homo homini lupus est*) has been a popular reference for describing the violent nature of inter-human relations. French philosopher Jacques Derrida expands on this and calls for a closer examination of the potential beast of political man; a science of the werewolf, of man-becoming-wolf-man, what Derrida calls a *lycology*. Derrida seeks to expose a 'politics as discourse about the wolf, *lucos*' (Derrida 2009: 11). Indeed, as Derrida notices, Rousseau also hints that the potential of the wolf is inherent in the social contract, where 'we have the human race divided into herds of cattle, each with its chief who keeps it in order to devour it' (Rousseau, quoted in Derrida 2009: 11f).

The wolf feasts upon the cattle – the animals already destined for meat – but he keeps them *in order to devour*, to push forward the death, to play with time. As Derrida notices, it is as if the wolf is eating time itself, like the Norse wolf Fenris devouring the moon and sun, Kronos appearing with the face of Anubis feasting upon time itself (Derrida 2009: 12). Not too unlike Celestine's monologue, here fashion, the ephemeral passion possessing man, becomes a self-consuming flame, a self-eating snake (as in alchemy), and not too unlike the old Greek tale about the giant Kronos devouring his own children.

In order to draw out a framework for his *lycology*, where the sovereign king, the ruler, is simultaneously both lawmaker and outlaw, just monarch and tyrant, Derrida draws upon Ernst Kantorowicz's concept of the 'king's two bodies' (Kantorowicz 1957). Kantorowicz's idea suggests the merger of two bodies, the beast and the sovereign, the wolf and king-maker, neither of them subjected to the law: the beast is outside the law (the werewolf) and the king stands above it. From this Derrida draws an ontological copula, a coupling, an 'onto-zoo-anthropo-theologico-political copulation: the beast becomes the sovereign who becomes the beast' (Derrida 2009: 18). The beast is no sociable animal, it is a rogue, a 'rascal' and outcast: 'the individual who does not even respect the law of the animal community, of the pack, the horde, of its kind. By its savage or indocile behavior, it stays or goes away from the society to which it belongs' (Derrida 2009: 19).

Here, outside society, man is an outlaw, literally outside-the-law. Aristotle's notion of man as a 'political animal' or 'political living being' marks this relationship to the pack, the animal society. Being without a city, a polis, makes man an apolitical being, either much worse or much better than man, superior to man, from which Derrida draws the conclusion that this 'clearly marks the fact that politicity, the being-political of the living being called man, is an intermediate between those two other living beings that are beast and god, each in its own way, would be "apolitical"' (Derrida 2009: 25f).

By becoming-wolf, the designer becomes a rebel, a lawbreaker. Celestine acknowledges his ability to shapeshift, but simultaneously releases the werewolf inside. The creative God, king Celestine, is the sovereign beast. Celestine, the ruler over the territorial brand of Celestine, as well as his

crown-prince Jonni, are both wolves, rogue kings and 'rascals' – possessed by fashion as much as their mob-like followers. Traces of blood follow in their creative footsteps.

### **Section 6: Conclusion: A lycology for the Fashion Beast**

As the reader will have noticed throughout this text, shapeshifting is perhaps the most important feature in the narrative of *Fashion Beast*: the transgressions across categories such as man/woman, beautiful/ugly and beauty/beast. In his study on the concept of the state of exception and political man, Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben makes an extensive study of the shapeshifting werewolf and the problems the creature creates as it transgresses the misty veils of social realities and political laws.

The life of the bandit, like that of the sacred man, is not a piece of animal nature without any relation to law and the city. It is, rather, a threshold of indistinction and of passage between animal and man, *physis* and *nomos*, exclusion and inclusion: the life of the bandit is the life of the *loup garou*, the werewolf, who is precisely *neither man nor beast*, and who dwells paradoxically within both while belonging to neither.

(Agamben 1998: 63, original emphases)

Specifically, Agamben notices a story of a werewolf baron who needs his clothes to turn back to a human shape. He is however betrayed by his wife who together with her future lover steals the clothes, which makes him remain a wolf forever (Agamben 1998: 64).

The transformation into a werewolf corresponds perfectly to the state of exception, during which (necessarily limited) time the city is dissolved and men enter into a zone in which they are no longer distinct from beasts. The story also shows the necessity of particular formalities marking the entry into – or the exit from – the zone of indistinction between the animal and the human (which corresponds to the clear proclamation of the state of exception as formally distinct from the rule).

(Agamben 1998: 64)

While examining political philosopher Carl Schmitt's notion of sovereignty, Derrida highlights how the sovereign beast has a creative agency, 'a certain power to *give*, to *make*, but also to *suspend* the law; it is the exceptional right to place oneself above right, the right to non-right' (Derrida 2009: 16, original emphases). This produces an *unheimlich*, uncanny reciprocal haunting between the lawmakers and lawbreakers: the beast, the criminal and the sovereign. Or perhaps, as in the

world of fashion, within the creative and transgressional realm of the designer and rebel, as exemplified in the worlds of Celestine, Jonni and Doll. Their worlds are not realms of serene beauty, but of equal parts beast-like violence. And as shown in the *Fashion Beast* it would be a mistake if we merely focused on the desire and beauty of fashion, leaving its aesthetic violence out of the equation. A fuller understanding of fashion would require us to also take its *lycology* into account.

The *Fashion Beast* hints towards several layers of underlying violence concealed in fashion. Yet, as the narrative exposes, man can disarm none of them, as they are forces dictated by evolution itself. It is as if the violence in fashion cuts through the very heart of fashion itself, and it draws the reader's thoughts towards Alexander Solzhenitsyn's observation about the evil in man,

If only it were all so simple! If only there were evil people somewhere, insidious committing evil deeds, and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them. But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being. And who is willing to destroy a piece of his own heart?

(Solzhenitsyn 2007: 75)

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