Fashion, Time and the Consumption of a Renaissance Man in Germany: The Costume Book of Matthäus Schwarz of Augsburg, 1496–1564

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1520. Today, 20 February 1520, I, Matthäus Schwarz of Augsburg, having just turned twenty-three years old, looked as I do in the above painting. Then I said that I have always enjoyed being with the old folk … And among other things we came to talk of costumes and manners of attire, that is, how they dressed everyday … This caused me to have my apparel portrayed as well, in order to see over a period of five, ten or more years what might become of it.¹

With this preface, Matthäus Schwarz, citizen of Augsburg, announced his intention to record his personal clothing history. It has come down to us in the form of a miniature leather-bound manuscript measuring 10 x 16 cm, encompassing 137 pages of vellum, with text and painstakingly detailed hand-painted colour illustrations. It contains the pictorial representation of Schwarz’s life history, told on the basis of the fashions he wore over the years, and depicting him in changing outfits within and without the walls of his home city of Augsburg.² The book offers present-day readers (and viewers) both a unique insight into the wardrobe of a male individual of the Renaissance period and a seemingly narcissistic glimpse of a masculine Self. Most remarkable, however, is the fact that his personal history of fashion is accompanied by the story of his life, a story indeed completed only by the final pictorial and textual entry of 1560. In fact, M. Schwarz did not originally conceive of his book as an autobiographical account. It began instead as more of an experiment, to see ‘what might become of it’. It assumes its final form only with the last picture and text entry from the year 1560. I would thus like to ask to what extent fashion made a
particular contribution to the conceptualisation of a masculine ego in the Renaissance. To put it more precisely, to what extent did linking his subjective history of fashion with his life story produce a singular model of a masculine self? The almost total lack of a female presence, (except for his mother and sister), whether in the form of concrete persons or environments, is characteristic of this document. One may thus regard the document as purely masculine, to the extent that ‘masculinity’ is understood as ‘extended in the world’ and ‘merged in organised social relations’.3 One may thus address the gender dimension by examining how, where and when not speaking about women becomes a constructional element of, or even a precondition for, his conception of masculinity. It is thus remarkable for the reception history of Schwarz’s costume book that, while it clearly presents itself as a specific product of male self-perception, it has scarcely been studied from this perspective.

For August Fink, writing in the 1960s, gender constructions were not yet a focus of interest, and his extensive and highly detailed study pursues mainly biographical, art historical and fashion historical issues.4 It is more surprising, however, that later biographical research has also ignored the gender issue, limiting the analysis instead to questions of the conditions and genesis of autobiographical writings in the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance.5 The historian Heide Wunder was the first scholar to draw our attention to the clothing rituals of male socialisation in M. Schwarz’s life history, and to treat the work as a contribution to a history of Renaissance masculinity.6 Recent publications such as those by Philippe Braunstein, Pierre Monnet and Valentin Groebner presuppose this masculine attitude, but do not address it separately or question its genesis. Certainly, Philippe Braunstein explicitly explores the construction of the bourgeois self, but without taking into account its gender dimension. In contrast, Monnet writes of the male-defined life-world of the early modern city, without however examining this construction more closely. Groebner is more concerned with issues such as the relationship between the ‘bookkeeping’ mentality displayed in the texts, fashion and Schwarz’s corporeality, and does not explicitly examine the cultural concept of Renaissance masculinity. All three approaches nevertheless indicate key aspects that helped to constitute Schwarz’s masculinity: first, the dimension of corporeality and the history of the body (Braunstein); second, the significance of the city as an environment and an agent of memory (Monnet); and third, the influence of bookkeeping on Schwarz’s self-image and self-understanding (Groebner).7

Matthäus Schwarz was born at Augsburg in 1496 and died there in 1564, four years after completing his costume book. The little book, begun when he was 19 years old, provides a retrospective view of his childhood and youth before continuing with Matthäus’s present life and ending with
Figure 1: Schwarz: ‘When I wanted to learn fencing’, dated June 1518, when Schwarz was 21 years old. Published with the kind permission of the Herzog-Anton-Ulrich Museum, Braunschweig.
his sixty-fourth year. Valentin Groebner coined the term picture chain (Bilderkette) for the 137 carefully painted images in which Schwarz surveyed his life in the form of the clothes he wore. On the one hand, this term refers to the book’s apparent lack of coherence when approached from the modern perspective. On the other, it emphasises how closely the individual pictures or pictorial stories relate to each other both thematically and formally. Schwarz begins his account with a portrait of his parents, relates his childish pranks and experiences as a youth and then continues with descriptions of personal situations, political events, celebrations, activities such as fencing, riding, hunting and the like, and ends with the illness, old age and death he perceived in his immediate surroundings in 1560, aged 64. His picture of his parents, taken from an older portrait, is followed by depictions of scenes from his childhood showing him as the pupil of a pastor in Heidenheim, as a schoolboy and young runaway, until his entry into the service of the mercantile house of Fugger. He then notes the journeys he undertook on behalf of the Fuggers, the images of which always show him on horseback. Other pictures tell of his drinking bouts with friends, his attempts to become a hunter and his sporting activities such as fencing and archery. They show him on a wintry sleigh ride in which he crashes the sledge, they mention his falling in love with a Dutch girl (who does not appear in the picture) and portray him in his wedding attire on the occasion of his marriage at the age of 41: ‘20 February 1538, when I ventured to take a wife.’ The subjects of his narrative are events that occurred in and around Augsburg, such as the time that an epidemic of influenza (the ‘English sweat’) was visited upon his home town, or the onset of another epidemic in Augsburg in 1535, which caused numerous deaths. He also mentions his own ailments and subsequent recovery. However, very often he only describes his clothing. The way in which he refers to his clothing is consistently remarkable. Even his mother’s pregnancy is interpreted in terms of his first mode of dress, and he describes his nappies as his first suit of clothes. The description of his self revolve almost exclusively around his physical person. The scenes from his childhood and later the scene of his sick-bed, which shows him amidst his children, are important exceptions, as is the picture that shows him together with his employer Jacob Fugger in his counting house. Women are occasionally mentioned in the text, but are portrayed only in the retrospective pictures of childhood. The pictures present the different phases of his life with varying intensity. Some periods are documented in particular detail, for example his young manhood between the ages of 19 and 30. With increasing age, however, the intervals between the pictures grow longer. The narrative ends with a depiction of what he wore on the day of Anthony Fugger’s death: ‘16 Sept. 1560, this was my clothing when
my gracious master, Anthony Fugger of blessed memory, died on the 14th at 8 o’clock in the morning’.13

When he began his book at the age of 19, Matthäus was already employed as a bookkeeper to the Fugger company. He commissioned most of the pictures from the illustrator Narziss Renner, whom he knew personally. The portraits were prepared either after copies of earlier pictures of M. Schwarz or simply traced and then painted in the relevant clothing. The year is written over each portrait, along with descriptions of the subject’s attire and indications of the occasion, event or activity. Underneath the picture, Schwarz’s age at the time was noted tidily, down to the exact month and day. Everything was executed in a fine calligraphic hand, in late Gothic minuscule. One even occasionally encounters corrections added later by Matthäus, which suggests his spontaneity in dealing with the manuscript, and concern for the veracity of the documentation. In technical and artisanal terms, the portraits seem rather dilettantish, because the representation of physical traits is often very imprecise and clumsy, so that at times Matthäus is practically unrecognisable or appears much altered. On the one hand, these stylistic differences stem from the techniques of the various illustrators who contributed to the book after the death of Narziss Renner. On the other, they correspond to the stylistic and painterly conventions of the time, for, as recent art historical studies of the portrait have discovered, even aristocrats were frequently too impatient to spend hours sitting for artists. Portrait painters were often negligent in depicting even such important details of physiognomy as the hands.14 In contrast, they paid enormous attention to costume, whose ornate splendour was lovingly reproduced, causing Christopher Breward to conclude that the aesthetics of fashion in those days were primarily intended for pictorial effect. After all, it was in paintings that the finely woven patterns of damasks and silks developed their full aesthetic impact.15 Dress thus served as an essential means of social identification and consequently also played a central role in the cultural construction of masculinity.

In his constant wardrobe changes, Matthäus Schwarz also displayed a marked sense of contemporary fashionable taste and extravagance alongside his consistent concern to be on the cutting edge. The slashed fashions he wore from his youth onward permitted a particular flirtation with the fine points of dress and reveal him to have been an elegant man with a highly developed sense of his own body. With increasing age he became more reserved, favouring more sombre colours – a bow to Spanish fashion – and most pictures show him wearing a loose coat or Schaube, the central representative item of male costume, albeit always in an appropriately luxurious version. He rarely dispensed with an imposing biretta, occasionally wearing a close-fitting coif, which sometimes even lent him
quite an exotic and foreign appearance. In his individual clothing history he thus also represents the more general history of fashion of his day. Special emphasis is placed on his slashed breeches and the particular shape of leg they created, depending upon whether they were loose or tight. The demonstratively dramatised leg poses, in which his legs are always slightly spread, gain particular significance against the background of the gendered history of fashion in the late Middle Ages. One could interpret them as an expression of the increasing dichotomy between male and female dress and, by implication, between male and female worlds, to which Schwarz alludes. Schwarz does not, to be sure, adopt the sartorial stance of the mercenary soldiers, whose elaborately slashed breeches and bag-shaped codpieces embodied the aggressive masculinity of the age. For him, the highly developed language of the body and costume, as well as his ‘elaborate consumption of clothing’, represented primarily an appropriate medium for expressing his social rank and position within Augsburg’s elites. With his competence and taste in matters of fashion, he demonstrated at the same time his knowledge of the way of life of urban elites. \(^{16}\) Slashed breeches in particular allowed for sophisticated play with patterns and fabrics. The stuffs and colours on which Matthäus laid great stress in his descriptions changed frequently and were of great preciousness – the production of dyes was a costly and technically elaborate process. The garments he mentions most often are doublets, breeches and shirts, for example a ‘golden shirt’. The ‘golden shirt’ hints at a particular luxury for the time; it served as an important means of distinction for the demonstration\(^ {17}\) of luxury as well as a new standard of cleanliness. In one picture (Figure 2) he models three different types of shirt.\(^ {18}\) The Renaissance eye for details of costume was already trained by the stipulations of contemporary sumptuary laws, which linked social demarcations precisely to such apparently inconspicuous details as the width of sleeves, pleats and the like. Matthäus delighted in playing with exactly such details and so testing the boundaries of dress codes.

Fashion is thus frequently the actual theme of the appended text, for example when he models his fine embroidered shirts or explains the various stages of mourning and their sartorial expression. To be sure, the multiple representation of a person in the picture belongs to the formal repertoire of contemporary miniature painting, but it also seems likely that he combined his pleasure in fashion with documentary objectives. Scholars have speculated on the composition of his intended audience, but the intention of the text itself already formed part of his model of masculinity. Above all, Schwarz combined in his own person both the beholder-subject and the beheld object. He becomes an ‘observed observer’, who can examine and correct himself in and through the representations he commissioned. His claim to masculine hegemony arises out

Figure 2: Three views of Matthäus Schwarz, showing different types of embroidered shirt, dated June 1524. Published with the kind permission of the Herzog-Anton-Ulrich Museum, Braunschweig.
of this monopolisation of the visual discourse for the shaping of his self. Schwarz claims the authority of memory, which Monnet relates to the construct of the city, solely for the male side of his family. In this exclusively masculine connotation of pictorial space lies the key difference from other contemporary pictorial documents such as the so-called Augsburger Monatsbilder, which have been attributed to the painter Jörg Treu. These large-format depictions present the cultural and social life of the city of Augsburg in programmatic harmony, and the frequent female presence in urban public space is quite striking.19 Schwarz’s wife also had her portrait painted, though she is significantly excluded from the representations in the costume book, perhaps most notably from the wedding picture. Arguably therefore the costume book formulated an autonomous, particular discourse of masculinity. In terms of methodology, this suggests that we should interpret the document as a whole and not merely take account of individual noteworthy aspects.

Schwarz’s discourse on masculinity is deeply embedded in the social and cultural context in which he lived. His family belonged to the urban upper classes, the so-called Mehrern, who formed a sort of ‘merchants’ chamber’. They occupied a place in the Augsburg hierarchy below the patricians and noble families (Geschlechter), but were gaining in influence.20 Social mobility, both upward and downward, was not unknown in Matthäus’s family. His grandfather had been executed for allegedly embezzling municipal funds. Perhaps these circumstances, along with his near death as a child, helped make Matthäus more sensitive to the experiences of historical and social change. We should, however, be cautious with such psycho-historical interpretations, associated as they often are with projections of modern personality formations backward in time. In fact, upward and downward mobility were both real and related possibilities in Matthäus Schwarz’s Augsburg. His employers, the Fuggers, for instance, tried all their lives to rise to the city’s uppermost stratum of aristocrats and patricians, ultimately succeeding because of their skilful matrimonial policies. Although their wealth had long since moved beyond the city’s borders, to the extent that they became key financiers of more than one early modern state and they had no compunctions about occasionally violating municipal regulations, within Augsburg they remained culturally and socially dependent upon the city’s elites.21

Schwarz maintained close professional and personal ties to the Fuggers. The gifts of clothing that he received from his employers on the occasions of their weddings are evidence of this profound connection. In the Renaissance and later, gifts represented an important component of the network of social relations. They created social connection or cemented already existing ties.22 Gifts of clothing were generally made from the higher placed to their subordinates, and strengthened personal bonds all
the more by referring directly to the body. Thus Matthäus was deeply impressed by the splendid red wedding costume presented to him by Anton Fugger, which was by far one of his most magnificent garments. As head bookkeeper in the Fugger company, Schwarz not only occupied a key position, but had also proven himself as particularly skilled in the modern accounting methods of his day. He had acquired his knowledge in Italy, where bookkeeping techniques were far superior to those current in Germany. Schwarz had also made a name for himself as the author of an expanded bookkeeping system in his work on ‘triple bookkeeping’. He also appears to have shared the Fuggers’ open-minded and advanced economic thinking. Thus he could be understood as a sort of cultural and social go-between, who moved from the narrow horizons of his urban environment to the expansive cosmopolitan horizon of the Fuggers and circulated among the various municipal social strata. We may thus view his self-conception as an attempt at reassurance regarding his cultural and social existence in the form of a self-assigned place within the context of the various social arenas around him. To what extent, then, can Schwarz’s costume book claim to be unique, and to what extent is it comparable to other documents of the period?

August Fink’s conclusion that Emperor Maximilian’s costume book ‘der Weißkunig’, with illustrations by Hans Burkmaier, served as a model for Schwarz’s work does not withstand detailed scrutiny. In terms of internal organisation, the book is more reminiscent of other Renaissance texts. Renaissance Augsburg was well known for the art of printing. A wide variety of written and pictorial documents of the urban elites around Schwarz affirm this reputation. Pictorial representations of manners of dress were among the self-evident practices of the urban elites, who used them to shape their social selves. The Fuggers, for example, pursued a veritable politics of pictures in order to demonstrate their wealth and power. In a recent study Hans Belting emphasises the extent to which the portrait as a medium for burgher self-representation competed with noble coats of arms. According to Belting, both media were concerned with the body, whereby the portrait as a picture of the body referred to immediate subjective corporeality, while the coat of arms mainly referred to the body in the form of signs. However, he overlooks the importance that clothing assumed in the competition between these visual media. After all, it was only apparel, or rather, fashion, that clothed the body in the era’s formal language, thus rendering it culturally communicable. Individual style was less important here than categorisation within a complex set of formal visual rules. Breward speaks in this context of a veritable dictatorship of the portrait, indicating not just the formal rules governing the production of portraits, but above all the relationship between dress and the thematic layout of the picture.
Particularly in the miniature portrait, it is ‘the costume, not the face, [that] is privileged’.\textsuperscript{28}

Groebner’s suggestion that we should read the costume book as the product of a specific form of urban perception in the sixteenth century, which produced the framework for the masculine self, must be expanded or re-evaluated from the perspective of a cultural anthropology of dress; clothing behaviour not only trains and hones social perception, but also intervenes actively in the modelling and shaping of the cultural ego. After all, dress should be understood not as a predetermined cultural object, but rather as a primary arena of negotiation, in which the ego can articulate and express itself culturally via the body. Schwarz’s book thus represents the attempt to demonstrate, by means of attire, the claim to autonomous agency within the framework of the current social norms of dress. This should be understood not just as a fiction, as Groebner suggests, but rather as real practice.\textsuperscript{29} Schwarz himself entitled his work a \textit{Klaydungsbüchlin}, a little book of costume or clothing, thereby clearly admitting to the dominance that he himself accorded dress. Costume gains in significance in several respects; as Schwarz’s personal wardrobe, as the ‘history’ of contemporary fashion and as an expression of the immense consumption of clothing, that is, of fabrics, accessories and the like. Groebner compares the book to a catalogue of merchandise, with the qualification that Schwarz could not, however, be considered a fashion model for the Fugger company.\textsuperscript{30} In fact, the text resembles domestic account books or \textit{libri di ricordi} from the Italian Renaissance (fourteenth to sixteenth century), in which the paterfamilias noted the arrival and stocks of goods and merchandise. These books registered in colourful profusion a mixture of goods owned, key family events and other household occurrences. These writings testify to an increased attachment to the possession of a kind that was unprecedented at this time.\textsuperscript{31} Above all, according to Martha Ajmar, they document the consumer practices of the day, in which the advent of novel objects was particularly noted.\textsuperscript{32} The costume book likewise displays similarities here to another genre as well: in its unsystematic collection of data, in which personal, political and social information mingled with annals, it resembled other ego documents of the early modern period. The far earlier 1360 \textit{Püchel von mein Geslecht und von Abentewr} (Little Book of my Family and of Adventures) of the Nuremberg merchant Ulrich Stromer, for example, is characterised by a comparable blending of annals with information on the author’s personal way of life. Like other ego documents of the Renaissance, this text lacks what Michael Sonntag has called the ‘reflexive coherence of an ego’.\textsuperscript{33} For that reason Schwarz’s text resembles neither an (auto)biography nor a diary. According to the cultural anthropologist Martin Kohli, the organisation of one’s personal lifetime in the form of
a biography presupposes temporalisation, and with it the integration of social life into the chronometric temporal system, that is, the coincidence of social age with chronology. Chronologisation, in turn, demands the liberation of individuals from estate and local ties, that is, from ‘pre-modern ways of life … [and] begins with individuals as autonomously constituted units’.

Kohli’s definition certainly should not be applied schematically to historical epochs. Important socio-cultural preconditions appear to be necessary, however, in order to conceive of one’s own life as a progression with a beginning and an end. The cultural capacity for chronological narrative demands that we incorporate the events of our own lives into a larger whole as a frame of cultural reference like historiography. It is only this precondition that permits the construction of biographical meaning, which can be accomplished through this relating of an individual history to a ‘general history’. Matthäus’s manner of reporting, which appears from a present-day perspective to aggregate disparate facts, including contemporary historical events, personal circumstances and stages of life, randomly and without any logical reason, without any visible coherent context, shows that he was not interested in a reflexive processing of past events and experiences in the sense of an autobiographical text. His conception of self was oriented toward the present and the future, and to that extent contained key dimensions of his era.

Thus we find some remarkable references to contemporary political events or significant municipal occurrences. Schwarz mentions the Schmalkaldic War, during which he performed guard duty, the entry of Francis, king of France, into Milan ‘after the battle’, and the visit of King Ferdinand. He mentions epidemics such as the influenza (englische Schweiß), which caused him to seek refuge outside the city for a time. Each event is connected with the written description of the costume he wore at the time, but is not itself depicted in the visual representation. Public time is invoked by the naming of the event. In this way, as the ethnologist Klaus E. Müller puts it, time is summarised, becoming a history of events that is neither linear nor cyclical. In this manner, Schwarz also demonstrates his fictive participation in public, social time, with which he seeks to secure his position in the public arena of memory. His home city of Augsburg constitutes his spatial network of relations, to which almost every picture refers. With very few exceptions, the pictures do not address domestic intimacy. In most cases, representations of domestic interior space are combined with a prospective view of the surrounding city, for example when Schwarz is just about to leave the house or when he poses impressively in front of the archway to his home. The frequent emphasis on transitions signals the threshold character which they possessed for Schwarz, both spatially and symbolically, both establishing and crossing boundaries between the interior space of the house and exterior, public space.
of this epoch, the historian Heide Wunder notes a growing separation between the worlds of women and men, which chiefly affected the urban upper classes to which M. Schwarz belonged. In the upper strata the domestic sphere increasingly became the realm of women, while the public world became dominated by men. The threshold signals transitions, while at the same time forming the point of orientation from which Schwarz organised urban space, since he began his peregrinations in the city from the door of his own house, or rather that of his familial household.

As a consequence, Schwarz’s clothed appearance was always closely associated with this exterior urban space. His surroundings appear in many scenes in the form of streetscapes, houses or city walls which M. Schwarz strides along or paces off. In this way urban space becomes an extension of his bodily self. At the same time, he classifies his walks through the city according to personal data; his age and changes of costume. Thus he situates his own personal lifetime and its changes within urban space. Schwarz’s urban space must be clearly distinguished from the modern urban space that de Certeau has dissected with such acuity. Schwarz’s urban peregrinations provide no occasion for those ‘aberrations’ that, in de Certeau’s view, shape the topography of the modern city. Instead, in Schwarz’s enterprise the dimension of time is organised in reference to urban space. In this way a spatio-time (Raumzeit) arose that must be clearly distinguished from the temporal space (Zeitraum) of our modern age. Space, after all, remains the primary yardstick, to which time must be subordinated. This is expressed in the prioritisation of the physical dimension, with Schwarz in his massive corporeality appearing to dominate the pictorial space.

The manner in which the pictorial stories are organised within the book also corresponds to this relationship between space and time: the written descriptions, which contain notes on Schwarz’s personal as well as universal time, on the occasion and nature of his respective outfits, create the frame for each portrait. The pictorial contents themselves tell us far more than the written notes alone ever could. One could almost speak here of a hidden autonomy of the visual discourse, which operates with what Bourdieu called a ‘surplus of meaning’. After all, Schwarz’s pictures show habitus, body language and gesture; they ‘speak’ of the city and its environment, everyday life and celebrations. In their language of the body and gesture, they repeat themselves, to be sure – following the contemporary grammar of representation – but through their embedding in the respective pictorial surroundings, they undergo a specific contextual coding. M. Schwarz uses the visual, non-linguistic invocation of his surroundings, the depiction of the city wall, the background of the meadows during fencing or archery, as an additional definition of his clothing, and it provides the justification for a change of costume that is visible in the picture.
What happens here – and what came to assume central importance in the development of an autonomous language of fashion – is the transformation of space into a specific locality; space is appropriated and occupied in a dual sense. This occurs first through the picture itself: ‘Painting united space’, according to Breward, and second through content and pose, which here assume the significance of a mise-en-scène. ‘The body transformed into a representation is positioned in space, and this space thereby transformed into a “place”.’ ‘Clothing is always transformed thereby into a pose, which’, according to Kaja Silverman, ‘is worn by the body. Everything becomes a costume here.’

Silverman’s reflections proceed from photography, that is, they begin with the current regime of the gaze. Her assumptions can, however, be transferred quite fundamentally to costume. For the dress worn by the body forms and shapes space and thus creates the substantive connection between space and body. In so doing, it gives the body its cultural place. The pictorial references to his surroundings, particularly the intensity with which the city is incorporated, gain in significance in relation to the included texts. After all, they render the picture a means for male subjectification and the personalisation of his clothing. This helps explain, on the one hand, the exclusive concentration of the pictorial representation on the person of Schwarz, since the presence of the female ‘other’ would only disturb or confuse the unambiguous quality of this relationship between body and costume. The relationship between space and dress was also a concern of the sixteenth-century costume books, which assigned different types of apparel to geographical spaces such as the great commercial cities. In so doing, they undertook a general cultural-geographical mapping of their world in order to provide a geopolitical and social overview. The Klaydungsbüchlin, in contrast, set new standards by introducing the additional dimensions of time (event and personal time), and mapped the urban universe from an exclusively male perspective.

Schwarz expressed his personal time, the biographical thread, through the history of his body, spun out from its beginnings in the womb, through birth to sickness and old age – even his apparent death is addressed. In this way, his clothing history parallels his body and his life history. The repeated changes and renewal in his clothing contrast with the biological process of the body’s aging. Matthäus Schwarz’s fashion history develops along and is oriented toward this personal history of the body. He speaks of his body often, consciously and extensively; for example of his remarkably trim twenty-four inch waist, showing off his fashionably slender silhouette in various sporting pursuits. Later, he increasingly mentions illness and age. Nowhere is this connection more apparent, however, than in the portrayals of his honest and realistic nakedness, both from the front and behind. ‘I had grown fat and portly’, he comments ironically.
scenes of exposure thus gain a multiple cultural weight, and they can be read in several ways. In their drastic realism and the radical portrayal of nakedness, they signal a break with medieval conceptions of the body, in which complete nudity was conceivable only as an act of self-abnegation.43 Braunstein’s claim that this was the first realistic portrayal of the human body, however, is rightly rejected by Groebner with reference to a similar picture by Albrecht Dürer. Here too, according to Groebner, we have the mise-en-scène of a self-image not uncommon for the time, which makes the male body the site of critical self-orientation.44

By contrast, for women such radical exposure was completely inconceivable, because female honour was directly inscribed upon the individual body.45 The meanings of clothing were thus constructed on different levels and from different points of view for men and women. The connotations of feminine clothing arose primarily in direct relation to women’s bodies, while the fields of connotation of masculinity remained oriented towards the outside world. Masculinity and the male honour associated with it were inaugurated in the first place through the incorporation of external material objects.46 To this extent M. Schwarz, too, had to refer to the urban environment in order to imbue his clothing with meaning. This, in turn, enabled him in his nakedness to distance himself from his clothing and, with it, at the same time, from his social role. His naked body stands for Nature, which, as difference, invades the artificial history of clothing, the ‘fashion time’ on which the pictures report. This in turn shows that clothing fashion has emancipated itself from the history of the body in order to develop a narrative of its own. After all, in the world of commodities, the world of consumption, to which fashion belongs, natural time is eliminated: fashions in dress create their own time with its own rhythm, to which the category of aging is alien. Fashion never ages, but rather always finds itself anew in permanent change.

One can also decipher another message in the scene showing Schwarz naked. The point in time of the portrayal coincides with the death of Jacob Fugger, Schwarz’s beloved and revered employer. While, at his father’s death, he showed himself in various versions of mourning, he now breaks with this ritual and dispenses with clothing altogether. Regardless of the economic well-being of the Fuggers, he was not only fixated on Fugger as a person and a friend, but also participated in Fugger’s economic and social power and its potential uncertainties.47 The loss occasioned by Fugger’s death may have left Schwarz feeling vulnerable and naked, both symbolically and materially – that is, economically. After all, it may have entailed a loss of financial security and with it the possibility of future investment in sartorial luxuries. It triggered this crisis in the representation of his self, since he dispensed altogether with clothing as the decisive instrument of his self-representation. The temporary representational
departure from the economic-cultural sphere was motivated not only by mourning and a sense of threat, but also by the experience of the finiteness of Schwarz’s own corporeal time. In this way the costume book brings the fashion discourse back to its actual beginnings and hidden prerequisites, namely the death of the individual body. At that moment the archaeological link connecting the fashion discourse with the body is revealed.

The scenes of nakedness suggest another conclusion, namely that the connection to the Fuggers had become Schwarz’s central identity, affirming him not just in his capacity as a citizen, but also as a ‘modern’-style merchant, who himself occupied an unconventional position in urban society. Groebner has already pointed to the close connection between Schwarz’s ego-project and the idea and concept of accounting. It also becomes evident in the form and content of the book, which the temporal axis lends a clear thematic structure and cohesion and, formally speaking, a uniform frame for the various portraits. The temporal axis is composed of a combination of the chronometric calculation of time with Schwarz’s own lifetime. It does not result from simple addition, however, but rather gradually forms a qualitatively new category of time. Within this category, the time of commodities, or, more precisely, of fashion, achieves a synthesis with personal and social time. A close examination of the picture showing Schwarz in the counting-house together with his employer Jacob Fugger provides the key to the construction of this concept of time. Here, for the first and only time, he relinquishes the dominance of his own pictorial self-representation. The only commanding figure here is Jacob Fugger. In the background, in the form of the names of their branch offices, appears the European mercantile world of the Fuggers, and with it the horizon and fabric of Schwarz’s life-world.48 As head bookkeeper, Schwarz occupied a key position in the Fuggers’ merchant capitalist enterprise. He performed a multiplicity of monetary and commodity transactions and oversaw the work of the branch offices. The trade in commodities or, in the German parlance of the time, die Hanterung mit Waren in the Fugger empire was an abstract operation, which placed Schwarz in an equally abstract relationship to space and above all to time, thereby conveying a dynamic concept of time.49 Schwarz was considered a bookkeeper of outstanding quality and rank. He not only possessed knowledge of Italian bookkeeping, the most advanced of its time, which was far superior to German methods, but with his treatises on the subject had himself set new standards in the field, which helped make economic history. Based on his Italian experiences in the Fuggers’ Venice office, he had developed the concept of ‘triple bookkeeping’. He was motivated here not just by economic concerns, but as he himself said, used his accounting methods above all as a memory aid. It was ‘like a copyist [Gegenschreiber] and

controller’ or ‘a money box … a suitable, orderly, exact, diverting, pleasant … art for merchants’. It was practised as a veritable mnemonic technique for the merchant’s memory, necessary in case of legal disputes, but also appreciated as a passionate game by the era’s men of affairs. The mercantile mentality penetrated and took hold of life practice more generally and was closely tied to the visual arts, since it promoted new forms of perception. According to Michael Baxandall, commercial arithmetic and the trade in goods were manners of describing reality that rendered it at once accessible and comprehensible. The costume book arose in this economically determined cultural context: It is indeed the record of the ‘credit’ side of his clothing and thus evidence of his demonstrative consumption of dress.

Schwarz used the Arabic numerals that had been introduced by Italian accounting for the pagination of his costume book. His life story is organised into uniform units of text and image. The order of the numbers and the textual descriptions adhere closely to the rules of bookkeeping: the chronology of the years follows the time elapsed since Schwarz’s birth, which occupies the lower portion of the page. He tirelessly calculates it each time, down to the month and day: ‘27 years 19 weeks 1 day’. The order of the dates in the upper portion of the picture – the numerical order of society – is followed in the text by event, occasion, personal circumstances, and assigned to the appropriate depiction of clothing. The outfits are always described according to the same scheme, including the name of the garment (biretta, doublet), the fabric and colour. Herein, too, Schwarz follows the very rules that Luca Paccioli set down for bookkeeping records in his famous text of 1494: ‘I possess garments of several kinds, so many of this, and so many of that sort, listing quality, colour, lining and shape.’ This is precisely how Schwarz proceeds. ‘On 2 June 1527 I was dressed thus: the doublet of satin, a sayon of camelot, biretta with velvet all around.’ Using bookkeeping logic and its language, he succeeds in rendering dress describable, and thus founding a first ‘language of fashion’. The terms for fabrics used by Schwarz frequently contain geographical and spatial designations such as ‘Spanish mantle, Genoese biretta, Lombard sayon’. The semantics of this language of fashion is indeed still replete with economic meaning, since it refers to real sites of production and trade.

By orienting himself closely to the order of bookkeeping, M. Schwarz succeeds in transforming his lifetime into a linear structure and in developing a specific coherence of his personal ego. Therein lies the achievement and uniqueness of his work. The basis for the creation of linearity was formed by his changes of costume, which he takes as units of measurement for the stages of his life. For each new picture, and thus each new temporal interval, is occasioned by the respective change of dress. Fashion
Figure 3: Schwarz in Augsburg, ‘27 years 19 weeks 1 day old’, dated 14 June 1524. Published with the kind permission of the Herzog-Anton-Ulrich Museum, Braunschweig.
time thus becomes the standard for his subjective experience and shaping of time. He uses it to manage and structure his biographical time. It is thus what characterises the essence of Schwarz's biography, for it becomes his clock, socially, psychologically and economically speaking. Clothing thus constitutes the decisive interface in Schwarz's life story, because it represents the plane on which the order of bookkeeping could intervene in his life. At the same time, it is tailor-made to fit his body. In and through the mediating device of clothing, the natural order of the body, which resists accounting, and Schwarz's history, beginning with birth, through old age and death, become intertwined with the order of economic time.

‘To see what might become of it’ was the intention with which Schwarz began his book, which, following the course of his own life, demonstrated the social development of his male self through the construction of the world he lived in. His clothing served not merely as a medium for associating the outside world with his masculine self, but also became the instrument for structuring his life-world and organising his lifetime as a linear temporal concept. In the medium of contemporary fashion, the passing of time became objectified for him, and the historical-social process was rendered tangible and comprehensible.

The construction of the world from the masculine perspective is accomplished here in both a symbolic and a material-practical sense. For the production of the portraits, he will have placed the professional knowledge of the manufacturing and types of textiles that he had acquired in the service of the Fuggers at the disposal of the artist. After all, the procedures employed for colouring painted clothing paralleled those used for dyeing textiles. The obsession with detail and painstaking care in depicting clothing in the miniature manuscript thus also provides evidence of his knowledge and abilities as a merchant who handled the most precious stuffs on a daily basis. Thus the Klaydungsbüchlin offers no finished product of his masculine self, but documents instead his process of coming to grips with himself and the world. Step by step, or rather picture by picture, his path of self-discovery on the way to a ‘coherent’ masculine ego appropriate to the time in which he lived emerges. With it, he staked his claim to establish the male line as the repository of family memory, a task he later delegated to his son Veit. And so his costume book, whose outcome he himself awaited with anticipation, may also be read as a rite of initiation into a public, masculine world of his own making.

Notes
1. ‘1520. Auf heut, 20 Febrario 1520, was ich Matheus Schwartz von Augspurg, krad 23 jar alt in obgemalter gestalt. Da sprich ich, das ich all mein tag gern was bey den alten. Und anderl ward wyr etwa auch zo röd der trachtung und monier der klaydungen, wie sy
sich also teglich verkerete ... Da ursacht mich, die meyne auch zu controfaten, zu sehen
uber ein zeit als 5, in 10 oder mer jarn, was doch daraus werden wölle.' Quoted in August
Fink, Die Schwarzschen Trachtenbücher (Deutscher Verein für Kunstwissenschaft, 1963),
p. 98.
2. The original manuscript is now housed in the Herzog-Anton-Ulrich-Museum in
Braunschweig.
4. Fink, Trachtenbücher.
5. See Ralph Frenken, Kindheit und Autobiographie vom 14. bis 17. Jahrhundert: Psycho-
historische Rekonstruktionen (Oetker-Voges Verlag, 1999), pp. 362–87. See also Erhard
Wiersing, ‘Vormoderne Lebensformen als Thema und Herausforderung der Lebenslauf –
und Biographieforschung am Beispiel des Edelherrn Bernhard zur Lippe (1140–1224’),
6. Heide Wunder, ‘Wie wird man ein Mann: Befunde am Beginn der Frühen Neuzeit
(15.–17. Jahrhundert)’, in Was sind Frauen? Was sind Männer? Geschlechterkonstruktionen
im historischen Wandel, ed. Christiane Eifert (Frankfurt a. Main, 1996), pp. 130–38 (p. 135),
English trans., ‘What Made a Man a Man? Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-century Findings’,
trans. Pamela Selwyn, in Gender in Early Modern Germany, ed. Lyndal Roper and Ulinka
7. Pierre Monnet, ‘Reale und ideale Stadt: Die oberdeutschen Städte im Spiegel autobiogra-
phischer Zeugnisse des Spätmittelalters’, trans. Hermann Krapoth, in Von der dargestellten
Person zum erinnerten Ich, ed. Kaspar von Greyerz, Hans Medick and Patrice Velt (Böhlau,
Forschung, 25 (1998), pp. 323–58; and ‘Inside Out: Clothes, Dissimulation and the Act
of Accounting in the Autobiography of Matthäus Schwarz 1496–1574’, Representations, 66
(1999), pp. 100–121; Philippe Braunstein, Un Banquier mis à nu (Gallimard, 1992).
10. Pl. 95.
11. Pl. 111.
12. Pl. 28.
see also Ann Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass, Renaissance Clothing and the Materials
of Memory (Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 34.
16. On this more generally, see Jutta Zander-Seidel, Textiler Hausrat: Kleidung und Haustextilien
in Nürnberg von 1500–1650 (Deutscher Kunstverlag, 1990). On aggressive masculinity, see
also Lyndal Roper, ‘Stealing Manhood: Capitalism and Magic in Early Modern Germany’,
in her Oedipus and the Devil: Witchcraft, Sexuality and Religion in Early Modern Europe
(Routledge, 1994), pp. 125–44.
17. Gerhard Jaritz, ‘“Seiden Päntel an den Knien” oder: Die Hoffart liegt im Detail’, in
Ut populus ad historiam traktatur; Festgabe Herwig Ebner, ed. Gerhard Michael Dienes
18. Pl. 70.
19. ‘Kurzweil viel/ohn’ Maß und Ziel’: Augsburger Alltag und Festtag auf den Augsburger
Monatsbildern der Renaissance, ed. Hartmut Boockmann, Deutsches Historisches Museum
(Hirmer, 1994).
und politischer Führungsgruppen 1500–1620, ed. Wolfgang Reinhard (Akademie Verlag,
1990), p. xv. See also Götz Freiherr von Pölitz, ’Augsburger Kaufleute und Bankherren der
Renaissance’, in AUGUSTA 955–1955: Forschungen und Studien zur Kultur- und Wirtschafts-


23. Pl. 86.


27. Breward, Culture of Fashion, p. 67.

28. Jones and Stallybrass, Renaissance Clothing, p. 35.


38. Breward, Culture of Fashion, p. 65.


41. Fink, Trachtenbücher, p. 123.

42. Quoted in Fink, *Trachtenbücher*, p. 145, pls 79, 80.
47. M. Schwarz was all too familiar with the insecurity of social status, since his own grandfather had been executed for fraud. See Groebner, ‘Inside Out’, pp. 111–12.
48. For an explanation of this picture from the perspective of economic history, see Balduin Penndorf, *Geschichte der Buchhaltung in Deutschland* (1913; repr. Sauer und Auermann, 1966), p. 56.
49. See Alberto Tenenti, ‘The Merchant and the Banker’, in *Renaissance Characters*, ed. Eugenio Garin, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (University of Chicago Press, 1991), pp. 154–79 (pp. 162–3). The merchant class of the Renaissance was marked by a new consciousness of time that differed from that traditionally propagated by the church; they were guided by the conviction that every instant in life was precious, and founded their fortunes on that belief.
51. On this, see Iris Origo’s brilliant study, *The Merchant of Prato* (Jonathan Cape, 1957).
55. Pl. 88.
56. Quoted in Fink, *Trachtenbücher*, p. 149. ‘The sayon of camelot is a black jacket (*Wappenrock*) with pleated tails slit at the sides, a wide neckline and slightly bell-shaped puffed sleeves ending in conical cuffs.’ Camelot was a fabric made of camel’s hair.