

* **Fetish** (n.) "object regarded with awe as having superior powers or being the representative of an ideal that may be worshipped through it," orig. 1610s, from Portuguese *feitiço* "charm, sorcery, allurement," noun use of an adjective meaning "artificial." The Portuguese adjective is from the Latin *facticius* "made by art, artificial," from *facere* "to make, do, produce." Compare French *factice* "artificial," restored from Old French *faitise*, also from Latin *facticius*.

Via the French word, Middle English had *fetis*, *fetice* (adj.) "cleverly made, neat, elegant" (of things), "handsome, pretty, neat" (of persons). But in the Middle Ages the Romanic derivatives of the word took on magical senses; compare Portuguese *feiticeira* "sorcery, witchcraft," *feiticeiro* "sorcerer, wizard." Latin *facticius* in Spanish has become *hechizo* "artificial, imitated," also "bewitchment, fascination."

The specific Portuguese use of the word that brought it to English probably began among Portuguese sailors and traders who used the word as a name for charms and talismans worshipped by the inhabitants of the Guinea coast of Africa. It was picked up and popularized in anthropology by Charles de Brosses' *Du Culte des Dieux Fétiches* (1760), which influenced the word's spelling in English. The figurative sense of "something irrationally revered, object of blind devotion" appears to be an extension made by the New England Transcendentalists (1837). In the purely psycho-sexual sense, it was first recorded 1897 in writings of Henry Havelock Ellis (1859-1939). "In certain perversions of the sexual instinct, the person, part of the body, or particular object belonging to the person by whom the impulse is excited, is called the fetish of the patient." [E. Morselli in *Baldwin Dictionary of Philosophy*, 1901]

