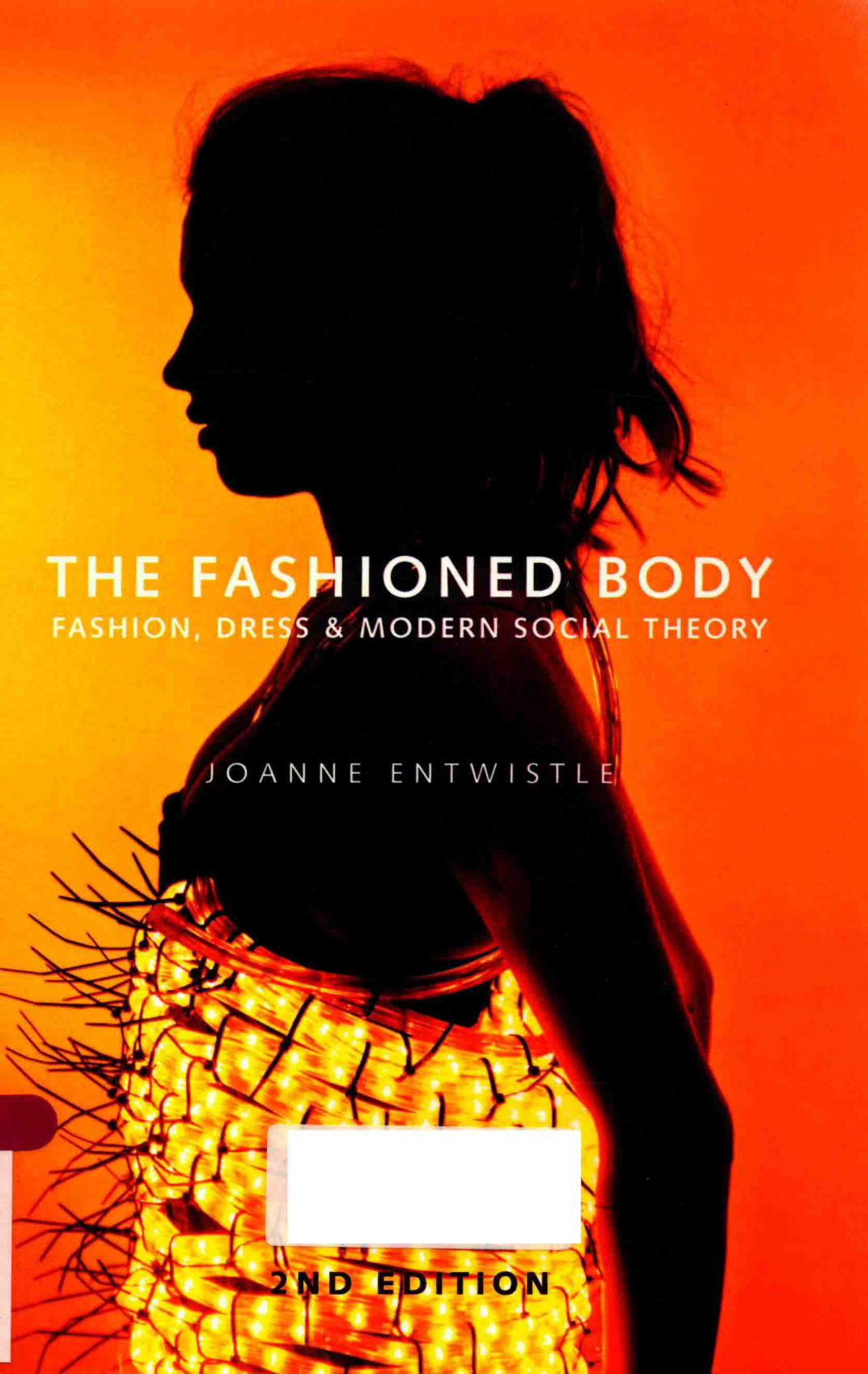
THE FASHIONED BODY
FASHION, DRESS & MODERN SOCIAL THEORY
JOANNE ENTWISTLE
2ND EDITION

The Fashioned Body

Fashion, Dress and Modern Social Theory

Second edition

Joanne Entwistle

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The Fashioned Body

This book is dedicated to the memory of my grandmother, Winnie Cowhig

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Acknowledgements for second edition

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Preface to the Second Edition

This second issue is long overdue. By the time this edition is published it will have been fifteen years since *The Fashioned Body* first came out. When I was writing this monograph in 1999, the landscape of fashion scholarship was very different from the contemporary scholarship we now have that comes under the broad banner of 'fashion studies'. Indeed, while there were some key texts, such as Wilson's *Adorned in Dreams* (2007, first published in 1985), classic studies of fashion such as Simmel (1904, 1971[1904]) and Flugel (1930) and a range of anthropological analysis, there was a surprising dearth of analysis on fashion and dress, which this book set out to address. However, in the intervening years, there has been a veritable explosion of interest in fashion, dress and the body that I would never have predicted in 2000 when the book came out. This development coincided with the rise of 'consumption studies', examining different aspects of 'consumer culture' and a growing interest in all things to do with the 'body', with fashion being one area that appeared to connect up these two (food within consumption studies was the other big development at the time). I would like to think that *The Fashioned Body* played some small part in establishing fashion studies by calling attention to the fruitful connections to be made between body, dress and fashion consumption, but it probably would have happened in its own time. I have, of course, been able to participate in this expansion in publications since 2000, following with an edited book *Body Dressing* (Entwistle and Wilson 2001) and later, in 2009, a study of the 'aesthetic economy' of fashion, which was based on empirical work on models and fashion buyers (Entwistle 2009) in addition to

numerous journal articles and book chapters. More recently, I was co-editor with Elizabeth Wissinger (2012) on *Fashioning Models*, and one of a number of editors on a major 'fashion reader' for Berg (2013). Indeed, Berg, (now under Bloomsbury and one of my publishers) was quick to sense the mood of the moment in the early noughties growing an impressive list of dress studies/fashion studies that continues to expand apace. Even today, writing in early 2014, there seems to be no end to this development and the rise of fashion studies, as more edited collections, sole authored monographs, specialist journals, like *Fashion Theory* (first issue 1997), *Critical Studies in Fashion and Beauty* (first issue 2010) and *Critical Studies in Men's Fashion* (first published in 2014) emerge alongside fashion courses at universities, and fashion research centres, notably in the Nordic countries: the Centre for Fashion, Stockholm University, was established in 2006, with linked events and activities spotlighting fashion, such as 'Creative Encounters' at the Copenhagen Business School (see McNeil and Wallenberg, 2012 for more details on 'Nordic' fashion studies). Throughout this development in the noughties, *The Fashioned Body* remained on core reading lists. It did, inevitably, grow out of date and there is a clear case for updating the book with a new edition.

It has been interesting to read the wealth of new material published since 2000 and also rather uncomfortable to encounter the various interpretations of this book in its original form. I have not, I hope, ever sought to 'exclude anthropologists from the study of fashion at home through the use of a simplistic modernity paradigm' as O'Connor (2005: 41) implies I do. It was simply the fact that in 1999 there were no such anthropologies of dress, at least not to my knowledge. I do, indeed, link fashion to western modernity but did not mean by this that we cannot have anthropologies of dress practices within the west. However, I concede that since the first edition of this book the arguments concerning modernity need to be updated as the narrative I presented originally has since been challenged. I therefore agree when O'Connor argues that 'the passage of time has revealed the limitations of these competing approaches' (p. 42). More on this below.

What this particular discussion indicates is how much the field has massively complexified and now breaches disciplinary boundaries. Fashion studies, which designate a thematic area of interest rather than a specific discipline, captures the open range of work in this area. In their excellent review essay of current sociological research on fashion, Aspers and Godart (2013) acknowledge the various disciplines close to sociology that have attempted to analyse aspects

of clothing and dress, including philosophy, economics, geography and cultural studies. Similarly, in this new Preface I want to update the material and arguments laid out in the various chapters. While it would have been interesting to see how much new material I could work into the old text, I finally decided that to rewrite whole chapters in dialogue with new material would, in effect, ensure the unravelling of them: I might as well write a new book. Since I stand by most of what I argued in 2000 and do not wish to write a new book, I decided it was easier to lay out the central arguments of the original text here in a new, long Preface that examines how recent material substantiates, develops, or even challenges my original analysis. As such, it is not an exhaustive review of the literature – there is too much to squeeze into one chapter – but a selective critique based on the original themes and issues raised. I therefore offer up this new Preface as a definitive statement on my original text and discuss where things have gone and how the arguments have developed since publication. The sub-headings in this chapter are more or less the same as the main text, allowing the reader to identify easily the pertinent parts of my argument here and where they fit within the main text.

However, not all the most interesting or important new material could be included under these sub-headings, either because a new theme has emerged since I wrote the book, or because the material is so extensive and pertinent that, in my view, it warrants a fuller discussion. There are two such exceptions given additional space, which are, indeed, linked. The first relates to issues of space and urban geography and the second to current debates between cultural sociology and economic sociology concerning fashion as an 'aesthetic economy', which developed out of 'cultural economy' debates. The link would be the focus on fashion as a significant market that blurs our notions of 'culture' and 'economy' and which is located in particular market spaces, cities and places. To deal with these themes, I have added a new sub-heading at the end of this chapter on the general issue of space, while I have chosen to expand Chapter 7 on the fashion industry to include new material on fashion markets, including my own more recent research.

Addressing the Body: Current Analysis

One good place to start for this new edition is with the central basis of my argument, which I still stand by, namely the original premise of the book to examine *fashion, dress* and the *body*. Although this hardly

sounds revolutionary today, at the time this was an original attempt to connect up different and unrelated bodies of literature, which failed to look at the totality of the dressed body in everyday life: as I noted at the time, the sociology of the body attended to philosophical questions concerning bodies, but took for granted that bodies are always dressed, while on the other hand, literature on fashion and dress was strangely devoid of bodies, analysing texts, images or general patterns and historical trends. My original claim that dress is a 'situated bodily practice' aimed to bring the totality of the *dressed body* into social analysis and continues to be a relevant starting point for analysis.

It may be true, as Edwards (2009: 35) argues, that the book was 'more critique and prescript for future research than an explication of how such connections work either theoretically or empirically' and that my attempt to delineate a range of theoretical perspectives – Foucault, Bourdieu, Merleau-Ponty – to analyse dressed bodies was 'underdeveloped'. I would have hoped, however, that I did more than 'muddy[ing]the waters rather than clearing them', as he suggests (p. 35). I certainly hoped that my summary of some key sociological theories of the body showed the potential of applying this thinking to the analysis of fashion/dressed bodies. This second edition is, unfortunately, not the long-awaited 'sequel' Edwards requests, since I have not added any new empirical data here to expand or develop my theoretical approach. However, I would like to think that my recent work on fashion models and buyers, which utilizes Bourdieu and Callon (among others) to understand embodied labour and practices, goes some way towards answering Edwards' request.

What should be noted, however, is that we now have a range of materials that brings bodies and clothing/fashion together. Some of this is captured in edited collections like Mitchell and Weber (2004) that cover a wide range of responses – artistic, literary, sociological – to explore the power of dresses to tell stories about bodies, along with other edited books (Black et al. 2013, Entwistle and Wilson 2001, Paulicelli and Clark 2009) and a now vast number of monologues, some of which are discussed here. To take one in particular, Woodward's work (2005, 2007) emphasizes ordinary dress practices among women in contrast to semiotic examinations of texts and also 'spectacular' youth groups, and offers rich data on the everyday decisions and practices that go on behind a multitude of closed doors every morning as women grapple with the question of what they want to wear: what 'goes' with what? Notions of 'comfort' are also found to involve many dimensions: fit of clothing and fit with the social context into which they are entering, and whether something is

'really me' (p. 22). She thus places emphasis on the dressed body/self as a totality: the dressed body emerges out of complex negotiations between one's (fat/thin/youthful/ageing, etc) body, with the many multiple identities (student, professional, mum, etc.), that have to be presented in different social situations. There is a real sense of the 'situated bodily practices' of the women and similar concerns such as 'what to wear' reverberate around other studies too, as discussed below in relation to 'identity'.

This way of thinking implies that dress is always particular, contingent and context specific. While not a fully mapped-out method as such, this approach involves a methodological commitment to understanding the dressed or fashioned body empirically, sometimes ethnographically, and examining what dressed bodies do in different contexts. In other words, my contention at the time was that a *sociology* of the fashioned body should properly focus on empirical realities of dress – the particular ways in which it is achieved by actors in particular settings. These will, of necessity, be constantly in flux, always contingent and context specific, as situations demand different kinds of dressed bodies and because fashion itself is in constant motion.

As part of my consideration of embodiment and fashion it has to be acknowledged that one glaring omission is design and design practice. Evidently, the very thing that gives shape to fashion is the material coverings themselves. I can do little more here than acknowledge this omission and the work of scholars, such as Evans (2003), who have attended to it. In her analysis of 1990s fashion design, Evans' intellectual concern is to go further than good journalism and 'join up disparate histories, designs and ideas in order to cast new light on contemporary practice and its context' (ibid.: 3). Drawing on a range of theorists, such as Marx, Freud and Benjamin, Evans examines the designs of a number of leading fashion designers in an attempt to analyse the multiple meanings emerging out of their work. In the case of Alexander McQueen, for example, she argues that the simple condemnations of his work as 'misogynistic' (after he sent down models apparently in ripped garments for his 'Highland Rape' show in 1993) neglects to understand 'the theatrical staging of cruelty' (2003: 142) in his work. This is not merely a substantive theme he plays with in his collections, but also intrinsic to his design technique for cutting and tailoring fabric, which are 'razor sharp . . . like surgical incisions' (ibid.).

Anthropological work has always been sensitive to questions concerning materials and the meanings and context of their usage. In recent years, a wide range of anthropological books continued to analyse the variety of different practices from around the world

(Akou 2001, Allman 2004, Goff and Loughran 2010, Ivaska 2011, Kuchler and Miller 2005, Miller and Woodward 2011, Norris 2010). For Kuchler and Miller, as for Evans, the intention is to integrate different practices and disciplines that separate out the various components of dress, only their work perhaps goes further. Where Evans relies largely on visual texts to detail design work, Kuchler and Miller adopt a 'material culture' approach to clothing. In doing so, they refute long held distinctions between the form and texture of fabric and cloth, which has been the basis of parallel material cultural analysis that is located within museums and dress conservation, with the more anthological study of dress as meaning of identity that tends to be divorced from materiality. This distinction, they argue, is artificial: instead they see 'integrity in the complex interweaving of what can rarely be separated out into distinct material and social domains' (2005: 1). Thus, the aim is a 'certain maturity of perspective' that borrows and integrates many areas of expertise into one 'larger project of academic understanding' (p. 2). Although I have not the anthropological motivation to develop a study of the dressed body that offers a cosmological account of society, I am certainly in sympathy with Kuchler and Miller's project.

A further development within anthropology has been the focus on the complex mixing of national dress practices with western dress. Tranberg Hansen's (2004) analysis of the issues raised by western dress –in this case a mini-skirt – in Zambian society, or the mixing of 'traditional' dress within the global market, as in the case of Rovine's (2004) analysis of an African textile. Increasingly, anthropological work in this area has focused on western dress cultures (Woodward 2007). One significant area of interest of late has been religion, and the growth of faith-based fashion is discussed below. This is precisely the sort of western anthropological (and sociological) work that O'Connor wished to see develop and it has flourished of late.

Defining/Theorizing Fashion and Dress: Current Debates

While Aspers and Godart (2013), citing Kawamura (2004a), argue that fashion is still devalued within academia, I would probably disagree. At least for the UK, with fashion studies so widely developed here, the low status it was once accorded within sociology, and which I argued in the first edition, no longer holds entirely true today. There are now too many sociologists and aligned academics working on fashion that it is probably no longer viewed with distain. Much of

this has to do with developments around what is referred to as the 'creative industries'. Where once fashion was seen as marginal, it has now entered into core economic discourse focused around ideas about 'cultural' and 'creative' work as a major driver of developed economies. No longer seen as a frivolous bit of 'fluff', fashion now enters the rhetoric and in some cases policy of many government and local councils in the UK and around the world (Pratt 2008, 2009). Although fashion remains a 'cultural' entity, this alignment with 'economic' forces has helped bump up its status and legitimacy in the academia as well as within policy circles.

With the recent rise of fashion studies and the flourishing of new monographs, edited collections and articles attempting to define and delineate fashion (see for example, Eicher and Lutz et al. 2008, Kuchler and Miller 2005, Paulicelli and Clark 2009) have come more attempts to define fashion. Here we find there is still much complexity and many differences among academics in different disciplines. In addition, there are now numerous, extensive fashion encyclopaedias that try to capture and define all the key terms and terminology (Cumming and Cunnington 2010, Eicher 2010, Steele 2010)

In their detailed analytic overview of current literature on fashion within sociology, Aspers and Godart (2013) argue that research on fashion has been hampered by a lack of clarity as to what it is and how to distinguish it from related concepts, like fads or trends or style. And other questions still persist: does fashion only refer to dress found in developed industrial and capitalist modernity? While Aspers and Godart (2013: 174) argue that fashion might be found anywhere, 'its extent and feature depend on several factors related to the type of social order at play' and yet the factors shaping fashion – class and industrial processes being two key ones – are associated with industrial revolution and thus western, modern developments. Their definition of fashion as 'an unplanned process of recurrent change against a backdrop of order in the public realm' (p. 174) might, however, seem open enough to include non-western development. Some further clarification might be necessary here to iron out this apparent contradiction.

One central theme not examined fully in the original text is the importance of belief within the system. It is not enough to consider the *physical* production of garments; we have to take account of the *desire* to be 'in fashion' that promotes consumption. That is to say, we have to look at the meanings and relationships around goods that make them desirable. This is discussed eloquently by Bourdieu (1993c) in his analysis of field relations and the quality of 'magic'. Precisely *how* belief in fashion is generated, and how aesthetic styles

come to be popularly desired and worn means integrating the seemingly 'immaterial' qualities of aesthetic value with the materials – the cloth, fabric – itself. This is a key theme in my own later work, which examines how aesthetic value accrues within and across these markets (Entwistle, 2002, 2009) and is discussed in the addendum to chapter 7. For now, it is enough to state that fashion and dress refer to a social arrangement regarding anything (object or idea) that has currency and is popular – in this case aesthetic appeal – that will be worn widely. This fashion quality is held in place by the multitude of choices and decisions that momentarily secure the particular appeal and celebrate it as the *new*. This brings me to the debates about fashion and modernity, discussed in chapter 3.

Fashion, Dress and Social Change: Developments

Is fashion, as I argued in 2000, linked to particular social developments, such as the emergence of mercantile capitalism, the rise of bourgeois class culture and the emergence of cities in which to display clothing? When we speak of a 'fashion system' are we talking about very particular social institutions of production, distribution, consumption that characterize it, as opposed to other clothing systems of production? These questions still remain and rest upon the definition of fashion established. If indeed the notion of dress styles changing is adopted as the working definition, it can certainly be argued that all dress in all places at all times has adapted to different circumstances: historians and anthropologists have traced many small changes in supposedly 'traditional' dress like the kimono. However, if a narrower and more precise definition of fashion, widely used by historians and cultural theorists, defines fashion as regular and systemic change, then fashion must be historically located within western modernity, albeit now a contemporary global phenomenon.

Wilson (2007) still argues once more for a pairing of fashion and modernity and keeps to a definition of fashion closely tied to very particular processes of modernization. Her essay, situated in an edited collection on modernity (Breward and Evans 2004) locates fashion within the west/north. Likewise, Buckley and Fawcett (2002: 4–5) suggest that 'fashion was the embodiment of modernity . . . it was urban and it constituted the type of visual spectacle, which characterized the city'. The focus on fashion as a textile industry at the core of the social, political, and economic transformations in Europe from the eighteenth century is central to Paulicelli and Clark's edited collection (2009) and central to colonialism and struggles for

independence, as Ross's (2008) analysis acknowledges. In the latter analysis, Ross examines the global exporting of western fashion to the colonies, noting the take up of western dress globally as well as the pockets of national resistance in some African and Asian countries.

For Parkins (2012), modernity is defined as transformations from the Renaissance onwards, which wrought changes in governance and subjectivity and which, later in the nineteenth century, set the conditions for the emergence of a modern fashion system as 'a quintessentially modern form' that emphasizes constant change and newness. Her specific point concerning the role of fashion in modernity is that the close association of fashion with femininity places women at the heart of modernity in challenging conservative associations of women as static and unchanging. Buckley and Fawcett concur: '[F]ashion provided a unique opportunity for women to experience modernity, which connected both the domestic and the public spheres.' It afforded women new opportunities for display in the drawing room and beyond. Further, as Parkins (p. 3) notes, 'in place of such conservative representations of woman: Fashion's tempo intervenes . . . it offered a very different account of femininity. It seemed to admit women into modern time'. Indeed, the modernist writers – Baudelaire, Simmel, Benjamin – in giving space in their writings to fashion and its tempo, unwittingly place women centre stage in modernity. This narrative of western modernity does, of course, contrast to other places where the spread of western modernity has been uneven, or where there are alternative modernities. As Ross argues, in some parts of the world, western dress has been tempered by cultural nationalism coupled with religious restrictions, which have resulted in more controls over women's appearance, sometimes enforced by religious men. However, the picture is more complicated than this, with modern, young women in recent years taking to the hijab voluntarily, as the discussion on modesty and dress suggests below.

Bearing this latest literature in mind, my view still remains that to argue that fashion can be found everywhere and at other historical moments is Eurocentric; it is a view that imposes particular western characteristics onto non-western places, flattening out regional variations and differences and alternative systems of dress production, distribution and consumption. As such, it appears to see fashion as a trans-historic and trans-cultural phenomenon and therefore totally at odds with most academic scholarship today, which tends to recognize and detail the local and the specific. Of course there are more complex flows of dress styles and motifs between west and non-west today. Production of much western fashion is now located in India

and China, who are therefore participators in the fashion system and today's 'fast fashion', and increasingly a new middle class in the south and east consume western fashionable dress. Further, as Geczy's (2013) work demonstrates, eastern motifs enter into western fashion all the time. But acknowledging the complex historical relationships between east and west should not result in a collapsing of the two into one fashion system. We can still trace the *origins* of the fashion system in mercantile capitalism and nineteenth-century modernity and describe the particular systemic features that facilitated it.

I am not entirely sure why some authors feel the need to see fashion in all systems of dress. Perhaps it is in order to raise the status and profile of non-western dress. However, there is no assumed superiority among authors who write on fashion and modernity: to argue that modern fashion system has arisen out of particular circumstances is not to diminish or undermine other, earlier systems of dress and does not mean one cannot also see contemporary systems of non-western dress in the west. If we stick to the more precise definition that fashion is incessant, cyclical pursuit of the 'new' it is clearly not the case that this is true of traditional dress. This does not mean fashion is a superior system, but acknowledges the rich variation in dress practices within and beyond the fashion system.

Fashion and Identity

It might be argued that identity is the central concern in fashion literature, alongside the focus on 'meaning', though perhaps the two are one and the same, since the accounts often given of fashion's 'meaning' boil down to questions of identity: what do clothes *say* about the *wearer*? While, as I have argued elsewhere (Entwistle, 2013), we might say this pairing of 'fashion' with 'identity' is something of a cliché – 'we are what we wear' – there remains a lot more to say, especially considering the more recent scholarship in this area, which is much more nuanced than earlier work. Partly we need to see what, indeed, is the connection between fashion and identity and to ask whether it is especially important over and above other things: do our clothes say more about us than, say, our furniture or interiors? Moreover, what are the limits of this expressiveness in dress? Tseëlon (2012: 109) challenges the prevailing 'homogeneity of dressing meaning' in academic scholarship with 'the diversity of looks and meanings in ordinary people's wardrobes' by testing the 'accuracy and reliability of clothing communication' in actual interactions and interpretations. Whether I would go along with this methodology is