

Interviewing Joanne Entwistle...

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How did your interest in studying sociology of fashion arise?

It is a very good question and it arose after I finish my undergraduate degree in Goldsmiths, which was in Communications and Sociology, and I was lucky to be taught by Dick Hebdige, a professor in the department of communications and one of the founders of the British culture studies. It was a very exciting intellectual environment and when I left college I knew I wanted to go on and do some further research, and I counted on Elizabeth Wilson's book "Adorned in Dreams" which, at that time, was one of the few studies of fashion that was not just a historical text with gorgeous photographs of historical garments or a biography of a designer; but it was a text trying to give an account of the emergence of fashion, locating it within debates about modernity and post-modernity which I have been studying on my undergraduate degree. So I kind of consumed this book in a day and I was very excited, and it got me thinking about what other things have been published in fashion and what about the way people dress. I asked many, many questions. And I go off, before the days of Google, to the library to try and find some books of fashion and there was literally almost nothing, there were just this costume histories which were about the details of the lays and color or the biographies of designer that was very much about adoring, saying beautiful things about

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Chanel, or something. However, there was nothing actually exploring the meaning of dress in everyday life, how do people get dressed, and I began to think: “Why isn’t there a sociology of dress and even in subcultural studies?”. When we have studied aspects of dress, it was always spectacular dress, it was mods, and punks, the rockers, it was goths, it was communities, spectacular communities, that do spectacular things with their clothes, that I had seen from my subcultural theory classes (with Dick Hebdige) and of the classic account of subculture, from that kind of tradition. I was thinking “What do the rest of us do with a dress?”, “where are the accounts of people’s daily experience of getting dressed?”, and as a sociologist I was interested in dress as the essential part of the social order: unless you are a nudist – a tiny percent of the population live without clothes – but the vast majority of us have to get dressed, it is part of a daily account with the social world and social order, and again it was an absence of it. Exploring that from the perspective of 2019, it seems extraordinary that there were no texts in the area. There is a little bit of anthropology, the way you found some exploring of people daily dress it was from Papua New Guinea, there was some [...]⁹ of anthropology of dress, the kimono, Indian traditional dress. So where were the studies of western dress? Daily everyday dress, not spectacular way of dress, but ordinary dress? I had to do a PhD in this area but given that it was a wide in the field of nothing, I had to pick one kind of experience of dressing to study, to turn this world narrow in some aspects, so I decided to pick power dressing and do a study of women dressing for workplace. The career world, because it just seemed a very specific kind of dressing, where I would imagine people are in some way conscious. It is much better than asking people in attractive suits how they get dressed. I picked a style of dress that had a debate about it – at the time people were talking about the career woman, what it means to be a woman in the world of work in a power suit. So, I chose a specific case study to explore the debates about body dress culture.

Goldsmiths College, the institution where you earned your doctoral degree in sociology in 1997, had been during the late 1980s and early 1990s a creative center that produced one of the most inventive generations of British contemporary art. Since Freeze Exhibition, in 1988, artists such as Damien Hirst and Angela Bulloch, under the aegis of Michael Craig-Martin’s new teaching, have become worldwide phenomena. At the same time, a new generation of designers such as Alexander McQueen, John Galliano, and Andrew Groves was graduating from Central Saint Martins. How do you perceive the relation between the aesthetic production of the period in art and fashion, and what was it like to be academically inserted in this context, in a phase of changes in the modes of production of British culture?

⁹ We will use reticence as a resource to represent audio passages that are incomprehensible. These excerpts, edited with the permission of the author, do not represent loss of content in the answers provided.

Big question, but it was very exciting to reflect back on my period at Goldsmiths. I was a Goldsmiths [student] [...], so I was there in this really exciting period and Freeze [the exhibition], and everything up, occurred at a time when I was doing my undergraduate degree. I saw this exhibition several times, it was huge [...] that was a great time to be a Goldsmiths [student] and later, much later, my career ended up with a job at London College of Fashion which is part of the University of Arts, connected to some of the CSM (Central Saint Martins) scholars. I have kind of had a journey between both, the world that was not an art degree but as a Goldsmiths student experiencing this kind of creativity you get at London, and also the experience in a London fashion college. There is a big history and tradition in British Academia to be playful with these boundaries between art and popular culture, the trace about pop art, the playfulness [...] and so on. This is clearly the kind of thing that was happening in Goldsmiths at that time, continuing a great tradition of being irreverent with art. The kind of Art College that was training to be playful, to be irreverent, critical and play with the boundaries between high and low culture. So, it just being part of the tradition of that kind of world, in these colleges – like Goldsmiths and CSM –, that playfulness was there, artists playing with low culture, fashion designers mixing up many different things like McQueen, just mixing things up. That is kind of a tradition at the Art College, which I think is the reason London is known as a creative center, a place where fashion designers come out with clever, funny, coworking, creative ideas. I supposed the traditions of our training and other cultural fashion training in Milano New York or Paris – where things might be more technical, with skilled labor, the kind of business in Milano or New York which turns these spaces into very commercial places. London is this kind of creative center, and later when you get British Pop and Cool Britannia, the late government in 1970 builds a sense of creative Britishness. So it was a fantastic time to be studying and going to fashion education because I come out of those traditions and I used to think about a fashion and arts, communicating and moving between these different practices. That is what makes Britain kind of famous, and CSM especially famous as a really vibrant lucky kind of place to study fashion. So, what was it like? It was fantastic! Great fun! I think although my work has never really moved to art, I am very much a sociologist of fashion, you cannot get away from that tradition of being irreverent and that kind of creativity that is just being part of art training or fashion training in universities.

You contributed with texts and researches to Nick Knight's Showstudio platform, one of the most experimental British fashion photographers who was also responsible for the first live transmission of a fashion show (Alexander McQueen's *Plato Atlantis* in 2010). In 2002, you embarked on a large-scale project, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), to examine the work of fashion buying within the UK retail sector. These are entrances on quite different scales, the first in a more experimental and subjective field, the other in an official and objective approach. Would you like to tell us a little about both experiences and how they influenced your career as a sociologist and fashion researcher?

As far as I know, I only collaborated once. It was a small collaboration. They asked me to contribute to an essay about body size. Nick Knight explores these fashion aspects, he criticizes that kind of thin aesthetic. That collaboration came from Penny Martin's invitation, she asked me when she was, the title – I guess – was “time curator”, she was Nick Knight's second in command. It was fantastic, as far as they never asked me to go back (*laughs*). I occasionally do more popular essays about body and fashion. I just did something recently for Days Beauty – which is a Jefferson Hack's initiative. They invited me to comment on it with two other fashion scholars, Elizabeth Wilson is one of them (...). So I contributed to this essay that just came out a few months ago in Days Beauty. I do this kind of thing. I am always really excited to write in a more popular style to communicate some theoretical ideas but to a different kind of audience. Those ones are the kind of collaboration I have, I do not have more to say about that except those texts are the kind of things that I am, also, interested in doing. It was a challenge to think differently because you can have to write in a more accessible way. However, where I am more solidly located has been in sociology and the empirical approach to understanding fashion. The ESRC project of fashion buyers arose out of my interest to look at who are the mediators, who are the people that make decisions about fashion, who are the ones behind the scenes? With Nick Knight, Kate Moss, you have a whole group of designers with names and faces that you immediately know when you think in the fashion industry, they are the public faces of fashion, the big names to be creative. As a sociologist of fashion studying it, I know instead there is a whole system of production and consumption, there is a network of mediation that produces what arrived at stores and what counts as fashion. I was interested in exploring that kind of shadowy figures, the powerful but unknown people behind the scenes, and so that was what led me to make an application to the SOC (Standard Occupational Classification); which I have to say about the time, when I was doing the application for the loan, they never fund fashion; fashion had always had this low status in Academia, it is changing but it is already quite a long time. I think it was 2001 when I applied, and people told me “you will not get any money, because they will never fund something as fluffy as fashion”, but I got the loan and it was fantastic. It shows us the changing in the ways fashion has been valued. That is, on that occasion being the most serious thing to study and to have a government fund [...]. I wanted to study specifically the mediation of fashionable clothing, the work of the buyers do to mediate. I was studying the way they face business and go searching designers in their studios, make choices and selections about what to buy to the store and how they face the consumer. When I think about the mediating process from producer, from the designers to the consumer – having to look both ways: it was really what I was curious about. This project focuses on the investigation about who the mediators are, those individuals, where they are located. It also looks at the work of mediation, how things are mediated, how fashionable clothes are mediated, how to think mediation on the calculations of fashion? What is going on, really? How do things arrive on the shopping floor? How does the continuing mediation of these goods occur? This is just a way of understanding the work, the important work of creating fashion value, that is made by those people, they are all behind the scenes and so that was really, you know, it just seemed a logical direction for me to go after studying bodies in the way of how the dress

works. How they are choosing clothes? The choices are pre-determined by a group of people that make choices? [...].

In your book *The fashioned body*, initially published in 2000, you criticize fashion studies because in general, until that moment, most of the theoretical and sociological works that focused on fashion were not concerned with thinking about the intrinsic relationship between body and fashion, focusing more on relating fashion to consumption, text, writing, or image, for example. Almost 20 years after the publication of the work, what do you think has changed in the scientific production of fashion, regarding the relationship between body and fashion? What would be the impact of growing gender studies on fashion studies and specifically on studies relating to body and fashion? Besides the influence of gender studies, what other related themes would have affected contemporary body and fashion studies?

Since *The fashioned body* was released, slowly at first, but I think accelerating in the last of the 10 years, we have just seen an explosion in works in this area. It would be impossible to say nobody looks at fashion and the body anymore because everyone does. Everyone working in this area is doing various things with these themes and there are books that explore many, many different aspects of different practices of dress, moreover, lots of works thinking through the embodiment and fashion and the body dressed. I think that is one of the biggest changes, simply the knowledge [...] If you look at the catalogue of Berg – one of the key publishers in the UK; they published my second book, *Body dressing* –, the grown-up catalog of these studies, in a massive way [...] it is a huge catalog of works in this area and arguing different aspects. Gender has been quite critical in this aspect of the growing agenda around the body and the world of dress plays in gendering body. That carries a huge influence, I mean, you know, fashion studies are multidisciplinary but definitely the feminist studies and gender studies have been pretty critical in the growing working in this area. Obviously, work has moved beyond that as well. One of the biggest kinds of changes in this kind of work is with transgender, queer studies, that provoked a massive development further exploring the way in which the world of fashion does with the body. Therefore, I would say the transgender and postgender queer studies have been another big, big development, but other kinds of themes and issues are emerging. I mean, there are other works about fashion and sustainability that I think are really about to expand in terms of being a climate change and climate emergency, so there are other agendas that are now shaping the future of fashion in addition to the scholarship that shaped its early phase. [...] In addition to that, the other kinds of themes that have been around have been the other geographies of fashion in a global system understanding the connections, the globalization of fashion, and the whole fashion system. You cannot understand contemporary fashion without this, I mean, you know how it is in Brazil, I know not much about Latin American studies in fashion – I do apologize – but in Europe the high streets are full of fast fashion, you cannot be in the world of fashion studies

without questioning what fast fashion is. How to ignore what arrives on the shop floor of Zara? We had this massive change in the fashion industry that has moved around the globe, the materials, the stitching of garments circulating across many countries before the time they were on the shop floor. Researches in that area of geography are very important in raising those questions about the trail of fashion or the movement of fashion, an actual physical movement of goods. Clearly has been a whole play in the debates of sustainability as well, I mean, doing all of that you are making an impact; that is a huge thing for today's debates on fashion. And probably the other massive area that is expanding is the development of alternative spaces to be fashionable outside fashion magazines. In social media, for example. The growth of social media, blogging initially, and later Instagram. It is hugely significant and that used to be what counted as fashion and what was counted as a fashionable body; this disturbs the mediation of fashion leads that were made in particular magazines, with particular photographers and stylists and designers, choosing particular kinds of bodies, skinny, young models, styling to put in the magazines campaigns. Social media have really changed the control of that aspect, provoking a challenge for this fashion leads, now people can be on Instagram. That has really changed the control of what aesthetic is, made a challenge to those fashion leads, who promoted a particular kind of fashion bodies and put those fashion images out of there; now people can be their own fashion model, fashion stylist, fashion editor, with their blog or Instagram account. Therefore, this is another kind of area at development in fashion studies, which is one direction I want to take in my new work, to explore ordinary fashion on Instagram. It is not a total liberating space out of these fashion leads that control the fashion aesthetic and fashion representation. They are clearly still there, but they have been challenged by the images of alternative fashion communities that now have the ability to promote their ideas of fashion, their bodies that could be other than the skinny, young, white body. There we can find a different kind of body and there are many, many different communities of bloggers promoting this alternative aesthetic (...) The power of that is a rupture with a narrow fashion view. When you have only the print media, you have to pass through that gateway to get a fashion idea, for example in Vogue. Now you do not need these tools, and it is why fashion magazines are going down: people go to Instagram to see fashion. In short, I think this is another area in fashion studies that is moving: very much in the direction of media and communication studies [...].

Could you tell us about the *Body dressing* project in partnership with Prof. Elizabeth Wilson? What are the main questions that guided the edition of the publication? In addition, from what perspectives can we think the contemporary notions of 'embodiment'?

This question I struggled with (*laughs*), just because it was such a long time ago and I "do not remember exactly" what happened. In terms where the book came from: I got my job in what is now called the London Metropolitan University, no longer after my Ph.D, and I got the job in the same department as Elizabeth Wilson, and as soon as I arrived, I mean, it was like one of the two main Scholars of fashion in the UK, so it made sense to do a project

together. So I drove the themes in terms of wanting it to be about fashion and embodiment, but there was clearly the historical component, there was a lot of historical texts in the book as well, and they spoke to Elizabeth's interests and history of fashion. It was an edited collection and it took a long time in the making, it was a lot of work but it was just a way for us to consolidate the joint of interest in fashion to start a dialogue about it, having a joint project that put a flag and a statement about fashionable embodiment. The question that organizes the book was divided into three parts. Theoretical concerns and concerns about emerging debates on different moments in history. Well, we started to think connections between the dress and the body, rather than just thinking about the dress phenomenon in terms of the fabric and what styles of dress might have sales. We saw these themes articulating with the body and their moment in history, just begging to prompt people to connect their body practices together. Again, it was an early book in stating of claiming about the role of the body and embodiment in fashion, and if you do work on dress, it is important to connect these dimensions. It is still one of the first books, I think, that was really making a statement. About contemporary notions of embodiment? I mean, I struggle a little bit with this, [...] these debates about embodiment came from a phenomenological tradition that I had studied in Goldsmiths for my PhD. My supervisor was Helen Thomas. She was a dance expert actually, not a fashion expert, but a lot of her work on dance have this phenomenological inflection. My take on that was to develop some ideas about phenomenology to talk about the experience of being a body. Where can we find contemporary notions and debates about this? Honestly, I do not feel I am qualified to say. I know that: the idea that you need to think about, you can think about the body as a kind of representation of full and embodiment as experience; the experience of being a body. I think there are phenomenological studies that talk about embodied experiences of dress. It has become part of the language of fashion studies but I could not name you any names, and I could not really indicate where you can find these debates. I think I stopped developing it because I did my SOC study, and at the moment I entered more in the industry problem. So, yeah, I do not know exactly but I think that it is a quite firmly established sense that we can talk about the body as a representation image or we can talk about experienced bodies. People as Nick Crossley [...] are developing something in these terms. There is a lot of work that was done on that but I cannot think of any exactly names right now.

One aspect of your research that calls my attention is the interest in the aesthetic values of fashion and the ways it relates to both cultural and economic agendas. Particularly in your book *The Fashioned Body: fashion, dress and modern social theory* (2nd ed., 2015) you mention some recent developments on fashion theory and the field's attempt to broaden the concept of fashion to economic models outside the modern Western world. As researchers working from Brazil and considering our complex historical experience of European colonization, could you share your perspective on how to address fashioning the body as a practice beyond specific economical models such as the one which has consolidated the imagery of a global fashion system?

I think when I wrote *The fashioned body*, this is the weakest part of my book [the post-colonial debates]. I am a sociologist, a European sociologist, and my starting point was – like for Elizabeth Wilson’s – the meanings of modernity. I started it from the perspective of European modernity. Clearly there are other modernities – and clearly, there has been a lot more work done about Western modernity. European western modernity is one modernity it is not The Modernity. I think a lot of the more recent work has been done with anthropology, and in fashion studies is in the sense of produce an acknowledgment of those crisscrossed different kinds of modernity, different speeds of modernity. Modernity in Latin America was different from modernity in India and it is different from modernity in Europe. I think because I was not coming out with an anthropological background at that time, and I locate myself in a very specific narrative, but I know it is not the only narrative [...]. I think in the second edition I addressed it a little bit in the introduction, a preface what they call it, to think more broadly about modernity. Clearly you got many differences with fashion crossing the globe, ideas of fashion, but also materials, clothing garments, fabrics and so on, you clearly have a crisscrossing, a very material political crisscrossing of these different modernities. Fashion houses in Paris, in London, sending designs out to factories in Bangladesh, where poor people stitch clothing in factories, and then go back to dress modern western themes. We are dealing with an understanding of what European colonization has meant and what capitalism means; they provoke these cycles of production that, why is it landing in a factory in Bangladesh and not somewhere else? Clearly, we are encountering people for whom the dress and the stitching have no relationship with them, who they are themselves and their conditions of labor and so on: they are lost. However, affected by that poor contract of chains, you have different modernities immediately colliding in that factory: between the conditions of stitching clothes for western consumers, but back in Bangladesh, that economic chain, where that factory is important in Bangladesh modernity. Fashion has always been the center of many developing economies. It was at the center of the Industrial Revolution – it was the motor of the Industrial Revolution. Cotton production in Lancashire was one of the drives of the British industrial revolution and that depends on colonization because it came with the colonies. The story of fashion is the story of different modernities, different forms of modernization, and now in India, in Bangladesh, fashion again is in the center of many of those economic developments, in the way some economies are moving out of the area based on an agricultural economy into more modern industrial economy, so, it is important in Bangladesh, in India, and Turkey, and many other places. I do not know about Brazil and I do not know about Latin America, I do apologize, but clearly, we need to start thinking about the many complex interactions between these different time modernities and different geographical modernities. This is the reason why actually a lot of work has been done. In geography, it is quite useful. Fashion studies, they came out of geography, so that is one kind of a way to think about; there is a complex history about colonization modernity. I think western colonies now recognize like myself, we recognize, we need to look back those complex modernities. Clearly, as part of those narratives, as part of those different modernities, in these other countries, in India, in Brazil, across the globe we know how to think, the emergence of Fashion Week, in different fashion capitals. Therefore, another

er part of the development of different discourses of fashion and different kinds of fashion systems have been in this idea of Fashion Week, the fashion capitals. I had a colleague who has done a lot of work in this area. She was a scholar at the London College of Fashion when I was there, looking at and trying to map all the different fashion capitals, now there are so many, at the point when she did an exhibition a few years ago and she counted a hundred fashion weeks. There is probably a Rio Fashion Week, São Paulo Fashion Week. There are very good questions about what is being a fashion capital of a fashion week? Is it a way to insert yourself into that old tradition that started with the four fashion capitals: London, New York, Paris, and Milan. Anyway, to insert itself as a fashion capital is partly to insert itself into the established system, in an established narrative, and a political narrative. This is important; every big city needs to say about it globally and in this way, promotion its idiosyncratic fashion industries. While many of these fashion capitals are challenging the big four power, those still are the only space where people are sure that the season's trend. In fact, the big four are still powerful, if you ask people about what is a fashion week or what is a fashion capital, they probably will answer with the big four. This is an interesting debate about the way and which narratives about fashion and fashion capitals are elaborated. This expresses the maintaining of an old colonial power if we think in terms of world fashion power. This is an interesting set of issues; I always wanted to do a project about fashion week and fashion capitals but by looking by for different centers, picking ones in other countries in the southern hemisphere. It is a future project.

On the matter of fashion and identity, you have argued that what clothes say about the wearer is something not much more than a cliché as there is much more to say about that, and that identity remains one of the high listed topics in fashion studies. Could you talk a bit more about fashion and identity and say why this may be a challenge to the field in recent years?

I like this question. I get really frustrated when people make simple sessions about fashion and identity, namely about fashion and certain identities, and I come at this purely as a sociologist, which is that individuals only have so much power to make statements because they were born into communities and social contacts into societies, so there is a kind of simple sociological approach that it is that you always look at where people are located. The focus on identity gets problematic when we think that the individual can speak solely through clothes. It is impossible. Clothes clearly are communicative; they clearly speak something about the subject. You have many early studies about fashion as a communication and language, for example, Alison Lurie and Malcolm Barnard. There are a bunch of people trying to explore the way that fashion communicates, but it is never going to be simple, because we do not, as individuals have this kind of freedom, and clothes do not speak freely. They speak about the social context. They speak about complex situations, locations or class backgrounds, and just simply the situation or entering every situation has different rules or codes [...]. When we get dressed, even if we do not do consciously, we are dressing

for a situation, a social situation. It seems we are able to come free wherever we like – bikini is a perfect garment on the beach, but we do not wear it at work, so you do not have complete freedom. “I am going to be myself to speak through fashion” – of course, you will not. You dress for the situation, so the situation... the dress you wear can say something about the context, which you are dressed for and this is why I picked power dressing. I picked this real thing when I did my first study because I was interested in a situation where there is a clear context, how do people prepare their body for that context. However, clearly every context we enter we have to think the way we are going to wear. Rarely we are going to see anyone in a swimsuit sitting in an office, unless they are a designer or in a swimsuit company, where it might be appropriate to wear the middle shorts, but again it would be because of the context. Therefore, as a sociologist, that is my perspective – always based in where the people are located, and dress is always located so you need to think about what are the codes and the rules for that situation and then how dress will speak to those as much as it might speak for the individuals’ choices. Obviously, in the codes there are conventions of situations you have some freedom, you can make some choices, but they are always context-specifics. The other question is if identity is a complex in involving things; I mean, our identity is always in process, so, yes, our dress is always involving with our identity, we move, we transition through various parts. Different identity formations for children, or being a student, where would be appropriate to wear certain things, and in a professional workplace, where you wear something else. So, our identity is fluid, so that is the other way modernity simply says about dress, always articulating some individual expression about ourselves, all kinds of life journey, a kind of expression of different parts of our kind of temporal evolution, if you like. That said, there are moments and places where we may feel ourselves very free and able to express identity and this is why you have so much that has been done in subcultural, where people are generally young and they have a brief moment of freedom from different constraints or even if they do not have freedom they have to work in an office, at the weekend they put on some clothing, and then they can feel themselves to be expressing their true self, their real-self because they identify with a particular subculture. The dress they wear really articulate a very strong identity but it is of the subculture, it is your membership of a subculture. But even in the world of subculture theory, the boundaries between subcultures are very fluid now, and even when we are member of subcultures we still probably have to follow certain codes and rules and they might, on Monday morning, put on a suit, and hide the tattoos, if they are going to a workplace where it would be unappropriated. There are many ways that we can point to very clear statements of identity, but even then, there are social agreements, so you identify with a subculture or identify with a group. And fashion does it very well: it articulates groups of identity very well. Whether if you can look at a person’s dress and know a lot about that individual identity, I think clothing is limited in telling us that, or tell us only ‘that this is what the person has worn today’. Our relationship with clothes is kind of complex, and we have to bring some kind of sociological knowledge about context situations. The individual dialogues have to have a social context, at this point, Simmel is so useful to explain the way we, as individuals, have to fit in a social group, the negotiations between the individuals and the social.

In Brazil, in addition to the “classic” works, such as the texts of Veblen, Simmel, and Barthes, for example, more recent productions such as the works of Elizabeth Wilson *Adorned in Dreams* and Gilles Lipovetsky’s *The Empire of Fashion: Dressing Modern Democracy* (both translated into Portuguese) are important references for fashion studies. However, in the work of British researchers, the French philosopher does not seem to be such an important reference. Why do you think Lipovetsky’s work, even translated into several languages, does not make resonances in Great Britain?

Lipovetsky’s work was published at the end of my Ph.D and I was very much located within Sociology. So, when I looked for his work I thought: “Is this relevant?”. I was, in a way, frustrated – and I am still frustrated by over-theoretical statements about fashion. They are not based on empirical evidence. They are not based on any kind of empirical encounter. I am a lit bit of a hypocrite because I might use Veblen, Simmel, and Barthes – I think Barthes uses an empirical material but, in fact, some of them are just writing theory, it is not an empirical foundation. However, I looked up Lipovetsky’s work and I just thought ‘this is a philosopher, sitting in an armchair, writing about fashion’, and maybe he has to do with some actual empirical work. I think I wrote against that tradition, I wanted to do a sociological study that looks at what people do, what they say about what they do, observe what people do with their dress rather than read about philosopher’s thoughts on dress, so that is the reason I tend not to use him. I think the book *The fashioned body* was quite important, but I do not really sign him. I do not know if I am the reason why it is not very powerful in the UK. Maybe other scholars in the UK have a similar frustration. This is not the kind of study addressed and emerged after *The fashioned body* – people went off and interviewed subcultures, they went off and they observed what people did. They did other studies, like Sophie Woodward, an anthropologist, she went and she sat in someone’s bedroom and she opens their wardrobe and she looks at what they are wearing and how will they do when they wear it, what are the considerations, what are the calculations. For me, this is more valuable than reading a philosopher, pontificating. I do not place a great deal of value on that. I just feel myself getting frustrated. How do you know people? How they want to express their freedom and their identity, how do you know? Prove it to me! I think there is a strong empirical tradition in the UK, whereas in France, there is a stronger tradition of philosophy. I just do not think it translates that well, I think that is probably the reason you got these traditions in Academia, national traditions and I am pleased to say that in the UK we generally try to go out and ask people and observe what people do when they dress, rather than making theories about it.

In *The aesthetic economy of fashion* you define an aestheticized market as one in which aesthetic quality – whether an appearance or style – is commodified, that is, defined and calculated as a market in itself and sold for profit; this is, “where aesthetics is not something added as a decorative flair that lies beyond product definition”, in these markets “aesthetics is the product, becoming central to the economic calculations

of this practice”. In this sense there is some hybridization of these structures; we must also understand them as economic and no longer merely as culture or aesthetics. What are the substantial changes in this concept in the sociological tradition – from Simmel to Featherstone, for example? Are there other sensitive changes in these markets that can be detected today, ten years after its first publication?

There are many works about that dimension. I mean, Simmel and Featherstone may be part of it, but there has been done a lot of work in the UK in terms of understanding the role of aesthetic products, markets, services, and the economy. It is not necessarily about fashion but it is about the role that aesthetic – goods and services – now play in western economies. There are huge debates about the value of the role of culture to the economy and aesthetics economy. My book is trying to describe those developments and show how the capitalist market – in a late capitalism context – really depends upon these products rather than heavy industry. Clearly, heavy industry is important [...]. It is just an empirical fact: something that happened in the last few years, partly through postmodernism, with Featherstone, like the growing rise of consumption, consumer activities, choices and so on. What sense of changes in these markets? Well, I do not actually know this book has had that much impact. I think beyond, the elaboration of a knowledge that these goods and services are all key now onto creative industries. Angela McRobbie’s work, for example, I mean, there has been a range of different people who understand changes in late capitalism markets and the economy. It is important. Understanding McRobbie’s world of fashion businesses, for example, and the role that fashion plays in the economy. In terms of debates, I have not really followed where many of those debates have gone beyond, that is, after the book publication. We have to understand where the emerging markets are, what is the volume of all kinds of culture and aesthetics to the market. One of the big developments has been done in geography and looking at the role of play in those policy developments, initiatives like government policy. You need a policy in creating industries and it is about money, it is about other commercial values, the kinds of goods, services, commodities to the economy, kind of the rise of the aesthetic economy. The other area I suppose is becoming a value is the role that is played by aesthetics within many markets, so I guess it is where aesthetic labor is being part of, so even if you are in the business selling many products and services, not necessarily fashion, any service provider, will play some value in the aesthetic labor. There is another big debate around the kind of role of aesthetics as a way of selling stuff, being an aesthetic product but selling something that you have to dress for, for example, the corporate policies and uniforms, and rules, about the way people have to be and employed as part of, they have to present themselves in a certain way to be employed, so that is another kind of era, and I wrote about it, the aesthetic labor as a big part of an economic subject.

In *The aesthetic economy of fashion and Fashion, Latour and actor-network-theory*, starting from the debates already established in social theory, you offer us a model of analysis that updates such discussions by incorporating the notion of sociability networks (ac-

tor-network theory) by Bruno Latour and the ideas of Michel Callon. What are the advantages of this methodology for the sociological and historical study of the fashion phenomena?

[...] Actually, when I study modern agencies, as well, so much of understandings about fashion, fashion system, have been about individuals, even groups, the way of those people influence what we were, what we buy or what count as fashion... for me, the big values of ANT (actor-network theory) are two things. Firstly, the absolute requirement to follow the actors, to look at what people and things do in situations that result in fashion. There is a purely methodological insistence in ANT, which I completely agree. When I was going to study fashion buyers, which was the principal method I wanted to use, I was going to follow the fashion buyers, follow them to all the spaces where they make the calculations, also meetings, travel trips, the fashion week, and the encounters with designers in studios, encounters in the shop floor, what they do with the commodities they shop. So, following the actor is more of a method than a theory, although it introduces all kinds of theoretical concepts, it is very much a method. So that is the first thing: looking and seeing what happens in the situations when you follow actors is the critical difference between ANT and other theories of fashion. They do not just look at humans, they look at things, the relations between things and the situation; agencies can be non-human [...]. Actually, when you look at what fashion buyers are doing, they do not calculate in a vacuum, they calculate through tools, through materials, and in that sense, in an ANT sense, the materials are themselves agencies in the process of calculation. So, looking at how fashion buyers interact with products, the way they touch and feel the fabrics, may or may not make a decision about what they are going to buy because of the way the fabric feels, so that fabric, the garment, it is an agency. Watching how fashion buyers make decisions as to what to buy, you cannot avoid looking at the way the spreadsheets and financial plans, the budgets to spend, documents about trends, everything is employed when they are calculating. So you cannot get around the fact that these financial devices play a role in how they choose what to buy. When they are following products back to the store, every week they review sales statistics – they look at the weekly sales, and then the monthly sales – they have merchandising to guide them to the maths, but they have to look to the financial statistics to make decisions about what the things are going to buy or what they need to get moved to a different shop floor. In fact, that sense of agency, the idea that when you look at calculation you cannot just talk about human calculation – human calculations are a value that comes through a whole range of calculative devices and tools – so that is how it became very important to me. Economic sociology has insisted on the theme of agency, the calculation that happened across different spaces, not just in the human mind. It is not a big theme in fashion studies, so that is why I thought we have to enroll and incorporate some of these ideas from ANT in order to understand fashion.

Based on this notion of actor-network; how do digital tools – Facebook, Instagram, for example, responsible for producing networks on a scale never known – act in the redefinition of fashion and body in contem-

porary times? What is the influence of this virtualized content on objective transformations in the fashion system and the subjects who consume it? Are there, in this sense, more positive or negative transformations?

There are, as I mentioned earlier, clearly hugely important changes in the way fashion is distributed, disseminated and mediated. The elites would have control of what to buy and what put in the front magazine. Those people had tight control over regimes of representation in the media, and clearly, Facebook, Instagram, all the social media platforms place the ability to create other representations of fashion, your own fashion body. They are transforming the way we think about fashion and trends when they used to be tightly controlled by fashion elites and a notion of temporal flow. Collections and pre-collections are still very tightly controlled, there is in there the temporal flow of fashion, the speed that way trends can move is much, much faster. Therefore, there are still biennial shows, but there are many seasonal collections in between, even the big fashion houses had to speed up the delivery of trends because it changes very fast. There is a kind of purely temporary changing, and that is the result of it. Fashion time has changed. It has speeded up. That is a big deal. People can place themselves in the fashion system. The fashion bloggers in the back of that, in the early days, they were able to generate a huge amount of followers running outside the system. Clearly, the fashion system had recognized the power of these people that were located outside and they could not talk about fashion being outside, but they were for a long time. Now they are in the front row. Instagram is the same, even in a way more democratic than blogging. Instagram is super instantaneous. Many more people can share and upload their images of fashionable styles. There is kind of a great volume of circulation of fashion images that is not controlled, is not mediated by the normal fashion channels and I recognize it is changing how we think about the fashion ideal. The very thin, young, skinny and white fashion model is still in front covers of magazines, everybody complains about the fashion system as a very narrow aesthetic. In fact, it is changing very slowly. If you go outside, if you go to Instagram, you can find many communities of people whose body does not conform to that status of the body, who are posting images of their bodies, linking themselves with other communities of people on social media. There, you get alternative ideas of the fashion body, large bodies, black style, and different bodies and so on. There is a more democratic voice, enabled by those platforms. I think there are many questions we need to ask and we are at the beginning of asking this kind of question about the relationship between power and the platforms. There are problems there. The way the fashion system is trying to incorporate bloggers, how do they use Instagram, what ways fashion brands are using Instagram – so we need to ask questions about that. Clearly, everyone is posting images of himself or herself on Instagram but not everyone is going to receive as many followers as somebody else, not everyone is going to work with a brand. We need to think about the way the fashion industry and fashion brands are colonizing Instagram and the questions about who they work with and who they do not work with. There is a more powerful democratic voice, but we need to start to be critical about what is really happening on Instagram and how the fashion system engages with it, colonizes it, and monetizes it. There are many questions to

be made about the platform: about the algorithm, what is appearing in people's feed, how is the algorithm curated, is there a human hand behind it? There are many questions about the way social media and Instagram are changing the debates about fashion on the outside, but knocking on the door of the fashion industry.

When you study specific ways of dressing the body, such as certain profiles on Instagram or traditional Indian dress, you present a challenge to deal with the binary opposition commonly found in fashion theory between “modern” and “traditional” dress and fashion. How do you deal with such assumptions in your research? Are methodological approaches to dress and fashion a way to surpass this binarity?

This is certainly one of the weaknesses in my early work, especially in *The fashioned body*. It was a weakness at the time I was writing, again, as a European sociologist. I was not an anthropologist and I was not really that familiar with the work in anthropology. I think since then we had many fantastic studies of the crossovers between some modern and traditional dress [...]. A lot of anthropologists and geographers have done their work and I think it is a binary that is hard to sustain in contemporary situations when you have these crossing over modernities, so I think it is an assumption in the first book that I would suppress. If I were writing *The fashioned body* today, I would write it very differently. I was writing from the idea that there is a kind of European modernity and the idea that a modern fashion system in the modernity of fashion in Europe was this idea that you rapidly change your dress system. It is kind of a change for change's sake [...]. If you keep pursuing a definition of fashion it will be about rapid turnover change and about a constant design for novelty. What I was saying at the time was that the kind of way of thinking about dress that is quite peculiar to the kind of clothes in France, and in London at a particular moment in history. There is still something peculiar about it, but clearly, you have got many different kinds of crossovers between what we might call traditional dress and modern dress. There are a few points to know, really. Clearly, we can think about crossovers between modern and social traditional dress, there are many ways in which we can draw clear lines between these two modern fashions. You have one kind of appropriation of many traditional forms of dressing, recycling it constantly, but now communities are making claims against it, and producing their own designs. You clearly got a kind of modern fashion system that often realizes on traditional dress to keep that novelty cycle going and you have got lots of adaptations of traditional dress, social traditional dress. In India, that incorporates areas of fashion, for example. The binary is more blurred today, I think. [*Speaking about the writing process of The fashioned body:*] at that time I was stuck in a very sticky definition, but I think it is impossible now to use the terms of traditional dress as pure entities. They are quite hybrid entities.

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