



Worn: Footwear, Attachment and the Affects of Wear, Ellen Sampson, Bloomsbury, London, England, 2020, Bibliography, Photography Credits, Index, Acknowledgements, 105 Colour Illustrations, 272 pages, Hardback, £70.00.

Ellen Sampson’s palpable exploration of the reciprocal relationship between footwear and the wearer is extraordinary. Built on her doctoral research into the embodied practice of wearing, *Worn: Footwear, Attachment and the Affects of Wear* reconsiders broader questions around the value of things which are marked and worn to consider the act of dressing as a “transactional relationship” and lived experience. Focusing on the shoe as an everyday object, Sampson examines how through use we become intimately entangled with the things we wear. She questions a fashion culture that is predicated by the new and how recognising the value of things that are marked and aged could present an alternative way of fashion thinking.

Innovatively, Sampson structures her book through a series of seven “wearing diaries” that disguise the conventional book chapter format. The diaries record personal complexities had with worn possessions (shoes) embedded with internal and external experiences through acquisition, walking, maintenance, and repair. Finally, she explores the shoe away from the body, the empty shoe in archives, galleries, or memorials. Each diary entry has its own subheading that chronicles the interconnection between garment and user—entanglement, affect, and experience; “New shoes, objects of fantasy, objects of desire,” “Wearing and being worn,” “The dressed body in motion,” “The cleaved garment,” “The empty shoe,” “Encounters and affects,” “Worn.”

The act of wearing is central to this book, and although many eminent fashion theorists and historians have touched on “wornness” (Evans, De la Haye, Taylor) there is little seminal work on materiality and our interrelationship with the life of things, that focuses on how a garment is always in a state of flux—a vessel for memories, impermanence, the transitory. Sampson writes that wornness is a

material state of bodily behaviours and cultural signifiers. The shoe is considered to be an archival repository, an active agent enmeshed with processes of user and maker and is unravelled through a phenomenological approach as she searches through sensory traces and subjective discourses. Understanding the material culture of dress follows the paths of psychoanalysis (Winnicott, 1953), anthropology (Gell, 1998), and ethnography (Pink, 2015) to explore theories of attachment, exchange, value and the way “garments impact upon and reside within our internal and external worlds” (p. 225).

Questioning dressing as a habitual daily practice and performance, this book highlights how wearing is different from the act of performing. Moving beyond Christopher Frayling’s (1993) “practice and performance-based research methodology” (pp. 24–25), and the increasingly growing fashion research approach of learning through making, Sampson has developed a unique and significant methodology of wearing that includes material and materiality to consider Mauss’s (1935) “techniques of the body” (p. 64). At its core is the shoe as a two-way reciprocal path, as a carrier of imprints both from and onto the user and as a creator of bodily, physical and psychological reactions that manifest both internal and external experiences. This psychoanalytical approach in interrogating materiality to understand dressing as a psychic as well as bodily encounter is intriguing and innovative.

Sampson offers an “experimental research methodology” (p. 22) of “entanglement, affect, and experience” (p. 22) through walking in and wearing shoes, that is based on self-experience. This personal approach is a challenge, even though Sampson has written a convincing and robust overview of her methodology, as each individual has their own experience of wearing and each garment worn ingrained with particular lived lives. The book is beautifully illustrated with intimate imagery. Sampson is clear in her process that the object-photograph is a collection of knowledge and “artefacts speak more clearly than words” (p. 13). She writes that text and artefacts are “not analogous,” that they are “different forms of knowing that inform one another” (p. 15). The photographs will speak for themselves thus they are presented alongside, yet separate from, the main body. Some foregrounding, perhaps a suggestion towards them in the text, would be a useful tool for the novice academic to navigate this rich and intensely original approach. Also, in being mindful that the reader has their own interpretation of these images (perhaps this is Sampson’s intention) it would be good to hear the author’s vision—for some kind of validation that the reader is following the intended trajectory. The success of these research routes is exceeded by the proposal that the investigation will form a space between writing and making. The reader finds themselves immersed in Sampson’s poetic language and notes that it has triggered a deviation in past practices of writing a book review. Neatly formatted observations

have become webs of word diagrams, book pages peppered with circled evocative words, pencil trails of thoughts and provoked memories. This is the magic of Sampson's writing, taking everyday worlds on an untrod journey "layered with meanings and significations" (p. 1).

This book is, fundamentally, about a garment on a journey of becoming, yet there is more to this voyage. Sampson's research methodologies and academic thinking provide new points of departure for fashion studies. A book full of slippery metaphors that can be applied to our relationships with the unseen and seen embedded in our everyday footwear and our wardrobes of worn garments. She suggests that her new research offers a "conversation [...] to be extended" (p. 226) in the future, and it is hope that this will be true. As a scholar of fashion, this is a joy of a book. An inspirational burst amongst the conventional fashion studies texts that brings a new hybrid, which pushes and blurs the boundaries of approaches to theories and histories, to create a method of thinking that considers the rapidly transformative qualities of fashion.

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Dr. Cheryl Roberts, formerly a costume designer, is a fashion and design historian, whose research is rooted in the material culture of objects, in particular the consumption of dress and textiles, and how they acquire meaning through their relationship with specific acts in historical and cultural contexts. Her work focuses on the symbolic meanings of objects, the material qualities of "things," and their impact on everyday life in contemporary culture. Cheryl teaches on The Royal College of Art/V&A History of Design and Material Culture MA programme and is currently Visiting Research Fellow in The School of Humanities at The University of Brighton. Her monograph, *Consuming Mass Fashion in 1930s England: 1930s England: Design, Manufacture and Retailing for Young Working-class Women*, is to be published by Palgrave in 2022.