

# Entanglement, Affect and Experience: Walking and Wearing (Shoes) as Experimental Research Methodology

*Ellen Sampson*

*Ellen.sampson@network.rca.ac.uk*

*Chelsea College of Art, United Kingdom*

## Abstract

Wearing is fundamental to our experience of clothing; though we experience our garments through other senses it is a relationship predicated on touch. It is through the tactile experience of our garments that we come to know them; to comprehend texture, fit and form. Drawing upon a phenomenological and a psychoanalytic approach to touch and wear this article examines the possibility of wearing as a methodology for practice and performance based research, wearing as a means of ‘doing’ research.

This paper explores the possibility of a wearing based research, as an addendum or adjunct to the more widely understood practice and performance based researches. It asks if wearing as a research practice might open up new avenues in fashion and textile knowledge, uncovering different aspects of our lived experience of cloth and clothes.

Building upon the work of phenomenologists Schilder (1935) and Merleau-Ponty (1962) it presents the act of wearing, the embodied experience of clothing and the body together, as a tool for developing knowledge, of ‘being in’ or ‘being with’ rather than observing from outside.

**KEYWORDS:** Wearing, Shoes, Clothes, Walking, Auto-ethnography

## Introduction

The experience of wearing is fundamental to our relationship with cloth and with clothing. Though we engage with our clothes through all of our senses, wearing is a relationship grounded in touch; it is through the tactile experience that we come to know them. Understandings of clothing are both sensory and cumulative; Our knowledge of a garment is predicated on both our experience of it and of all the garments we have worn before. This article explores the possibilities and potential of wearing-based research to be used as an addendum or adjunct to more widely utilized practice-based and performance-based research methodologies. It presents the act of wearing, or the embodied experience of clothing, as a

tool for the production of knowledge about the relationships between wearer and worn: producing different perspectives on the spaces and situations where body, cloth and psyche meet. In doing so it proposes a methodology of entanglement, or of blurred subject-object relations, which draws upon the works of phenomenologists Schilder (1935) and Merleau-Ponty (1962), psychologist Winnicott (1971) and sensory ethnographer Pink (2015).

This article builds upon the experimental practice-based methodology developed throughout doctoral research at the Royal College of Art, London. Titled ‘Worn: Footwear, Attachment and Affective Experience’, it examined the embodied experience of wearing shoes and how the material outcomes of wearing, the marks of use, embody experience. Through a focus on the intimacies of our relationships to shoes, it asked how wearing creates attachment between the wearer and the worn? Drawing on anthropological and psychoanalytic perspectives on attachment, affect and the self, and utilizing an auto-ethnographic methodology of writing, object and filmmaking, my research sought to highlight the experience of wearing and the materiality of ‘wornness’, presenting shoes as records of lived experience. Through an iterative process of making, wearing and observation, it sought to make apparent the intimacies of our relationship with shoes.

In exploring the possibility of ‘wearing-based research’, this article is divided into three asking what a ‘wearing-based’ research methodology might look like and what types of knowledge such a methodology might produce. Interspersed between these theoretical and methodological explorations are excerpts from the wearing diaries I kept as I conducted my research (auto ethnographic field-notes on the experience of my body in clothes).

## 1. Practice-Based Research and Tactile Knowledge

*I have flattened the back of my shoe, unthinkingly pressing my heel into it as I walk around the flat. My gentle morning routine, the shuffling from kettle to fridge to table has...my shoe. Conscious of the damage and unsure of whether to repair it, I am suddenly aware that this unconscious behaviour is not new but a regression. That throughout my childhood I did exactly this; flattened the heel of my left shoe while the right remained intact. At some point I grew out of it, I left this bodily tick behind. I had forgotten the familiar feeling of the compressed leather beneath my heel but now it is there for me. I am flooded with familiarity and loss. My past selves have re-emerged.*

(Excerpt from wearing diary, August 2015)

This excerpt from my wearing diaries, recording the reemergence of forgotten bodily memories, seems an apposite place to start a discussion of the tacit and sensory knowledge

which are central to practice-based research. What is distinct about research by, through, or into practice, is that it often examines those things which are unspoken: knowledges and experiences which sit outside words. To paraphrase Polanyi (1967: 4) we, as researchers, sense more than we can write; the knowledges produced in practice-based research are not always articulated or articulable in text. Tacit and tactile knowledges, are increasingly understood as central aspects of how we encounter and navigate the world (cf. Ingold 2013; Sennett 2008). In this context of this what might be the nature of knowledge produced through wearing be? Macleod, writing of the artwork as a form of knowledge, suggests:

*This is theory which is not written; it is made or realized through artwork. This theory is the result of ideas worked through matter. It might be appropriate to see this as a matrixial theory, a complex of ideas/matter/form and theory which is external to practice.*

(Macleod 2000: 5)

For Scrivener (2002), the role of the artist-as-researcher is in uncovering knowledge through its manifestation as a material form. That is to say, the artist-as-researcher's role (and the role of the artwork as research output) is not to present explanations but to produce or enable the encounter, or to create an affective experience.

In proposing and exploring wearing-based research, I suggest is that the knowledges produced and embodied in wearing are not just tacit but tactile, knowledges of skin and cloth. To begin to address them one must locate them as material and bodily, knowledges which abide in bodies and things. This is not to say that this knowledge should not be articulated but that their verbalization may not, in itself, be necessary. They might be experienced and understood by interaction with artwork rather than read. The works I produced attempted to create and contain body knowledge, to make body experience apparent in material form. The manifestations of this knowledge are dual, both the marks made through wearing (both on the garment and on my body) and the knowledge within my body, or the memory of sensation, the understandings of fit, restriction and comfort.

While fashion and fashioning are predominately visual practices – practices of image making, of looking, and of mimicry – dressing, or the day-to-day 'fleshy practice' of covering the body is tactile: we feel our clothes (cf. Entwistle, 2000). Garments produce a multi-sensory experience, which both mediate and create our experience of the world. This tactile experience of our garments that binds us to them: attachment rooted in touch. It is through these participations that we become bound to the things we wear. Phenomenologist Schilder (1935) formulated a conceptualization of the body that was not bounded by the skin. Instead the 'bodily schema' incorporates multiple proximate artefacts and technologies into the self.

Any object that was held or used had the potential to become part of the self, in particular Habitual bodily objects, such as clothes:

*The bodily schema does not end with the human skin as a limiting boundary. It extends far beyond it and, from the point of view of motility, perception and emotions, includes all the objects we use and to which we are geared.*  
(Schilder 1935: 56)

In his development of the idea of ‘bodily schema’, Merleau-Ponty (1962) expresses this particularly well: ‘To get used to a hat, a car or a stick is to be transplanted into them or conversely to incorporate them into the bulk of our own body’ (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 166). Thus, a wearing-based research into clothing is research into and within the ‘body schema’.

## 2. The Maker as Researcher

As research into (and through) the “body schema”, my work addresses the dual themes of transmissions and of transformation – the ways that persons and artefacts entwine over time. It was concerned with object relations in both a literal and psychoanalytic sense. This blurring of subject and object is common to much practice-based research. In viewing our relationships with clothing as a form of object relations, this research positioned the work of Winnicott (1953, 1971) as central. Winnicott’s theory of the transitional object (1953), an object capable of mediating and maintaining the boundaries of the psychic self was applied both to the relationship between wearer and garment and between artist and artwork<sup>2</sup>. For the ‘transitional object is not an internal object (which is a mental concept) – it is a possession. Yet it is not (for the infant) an external object either’ (Winnicott 1953: 3). Transitional phenomena are intermediary spaces, spaces which allow inside and outside worlds to meet. It is this capacity for a possession (or in the case of the artist an artwork or performance) to become an intermediary between psychic and external realities, which this research aimed to

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<sup>2</sup> Winnicott’s ideas are present in this work both in relation to ideas of touching and holding and of the capacity to contain (Winnicott 1953, 1971). The shoe in this research is both a literal symbolic container, holding the body, and mediates its relations with the material world, but simultaneously also holding records of our experience, the traces of wear. As a container for experience the shoe is an additional psychic vessel, an object which is capable of holding things we may not otherwise retain. Our bodies are held by our shoes and so are our experiences; psychic containment embodied in touch.

both explore and embody. It was the shifts from me to not me, from new to used and from commodity to inalienable possession, that my work explored.

It is the nature of practice-based research that the researcher is also often the creator of the object of enquiry. For the maker, the capacity to look, and the self-reflexive ability to spot a problem or error and acknowledge it, is an intrinsic tool in the production of the artifact. The practice of making is one of charting the dissonances between intention and actuality. Making as auto-ethnographic process is self-reflexive so that in my work I was both the producer and the product of this research.<sup>3</sup> The shifts in my research were mirrored by shifts in my own capacity to contain and articulate knowledge.

### 3. Making and Wearing as Practice-based Research

*Today the noise of my shoes, the slap of flip-flops against my soles, is mirrored by the sounds of the street outside. Outside my window thousands of feet hit the floor in rhythmic time as they run the 13 miles of a half-marathon. The paced rhythm of marathon running is so at odds with the usual patter of the street. Their feet hit the ground: one foot, two foot in time with one another; the sound of the impact amplified as though their bodies are singing as one.*

*The sound of my shoes reminds me that I am walking, that they are there with me: companion and aid. They mirror my movements, each step followed by the fleshy slap. Slip slap, slip slap I sound across the kitchen floor. A woman accompanied by her echo.*

(Excerpt from wearing diary, April 2015)

The research aimed to uncover the attachments that wearers have to their garments, the ways that, through tactile engagement, they become incorporated into our bodily and psychic selves. It asked, if by addressing the material outcomes of wear and the experiences of wearing, we might develop a greater understanding of relationships we experience with our shoes. Here, however, rather than drawing on a social science methodology of object-based interviews (c.f. Woodward 2014 and Chong-Kwan 2017), participant observation (cf. Clark and Miller 2002), or archival research, this research utilized processes of wearing and performance to examine our attachments to and relationships with our shoes: it was material culture research enacted through the production of art works.

This research employed shoe and image making as its primary practices, constructing objects and making images of them as they were used and worn. However, central to the

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<sup>3</sup> For Ellis and Bochner (2000) auto-ethnography is successful when it provides affective experience for the reader/viewer. Similarly for Richardson (1994) successful auto-ethnography must be 'substantive, aesthetic, reflexive, impactful and expressive' (1994: 527).

research was the practice of wearing, of using these shoes and, altering their material form through use: leather stretching and heels wearing away. As such, it positioned wearing as another form of ‘making’ as the shoes themselves are transformed through use. This wear ‘activated’ the objects as they became resonant with experience. Over the course of this research I made, walked, and wore multiple pairs of shoes, an iterative practice of production, use and wear. These shoes as objects ‘made’ through wear, were designed to amplify and increase the wearer’s interaction with the world, both through the choice of materials and the design of their form. Many of the shoes produced and worn throughout this research had pronounced pointed or extended toes. By extending and lengthening the foot, and thus the bodily schema, and the boundaries of the body, I, as wearer and performer, was more, ‘in the world’. The toes of the shoes scuffed more easily and soles had greater surface area to press into the dirt of the ground. My dressed body moved forward before me, my shoes jutting out beyond my feet. The shoes became degraded or abject more quickly; they hastened and amplified my interactions with the world. The curled toes and scuffs that are the outcomes of wear are the indexical imprints of my research, they are the traces of the research performed. The empty shoes are records of an absent performance, of gestures which are lost to the viewer, so that only their traces, the marks upon the shoe, remain.

The shoes made the traces of embodied and bodily relationship between wearer and worn more apparent to. In doing this, I abstracted the shoe’s form, taking it apart and simplifying its construction. I emphasized certain qualities such as the capacity of the insole to bear an imprint of the wearer’s foot, the soft enfolding nature of a slipper, the solidity and echoing resonance of wooden soles. Eventually the softest shoes, those made only of silks and leather, broke down completely, disintegrating under the weight of my body. Simultaneously I made clogs and pattens ,or hard wooden and metal over-shoes, which chipped, scratched and bent, rather than stretching or fraying. Hard shoes pushed back against my body, jarring my knees and stubbing my toes. I made shoes whose insides are explicit and open and which demand that the viewer engages with the intimate materiality of wear.

### 3. Walking as Practice-Based Research

*Although I walk for several miles the shoes do not loosen at all, they still grip my feet tightly, pressing my toes together and biting at my heels. They are cool and faintly sticky inside, I can feel the copper adhering to my soles. When I reach home, I peel off the shoes, letting them fall to the kitchen floor. I look down at my feet to see perfect imprints of their stitching; the shoe mirrored on my foot. The dye has bled, leaving black stitch marks where the sole and upper meet. These marks are uncanny and unsettling, like something from a horror film. Stigmata of the path I walked. (Excerpt from wearing diary, November 2015)*

Walking was the primary means of mark making for much of this research, a process of imprint through movement: shoes were designed to mark through wear and in turn to make marks on my body. The shoes were worn for varying periods, which ranged from hours to days, weeks and months. These acts of walking crossed and re-crossed lines between the habitual, the routine and performative. As I performed research, art work in turn became daily practice. The practices of everyday life are the mastery of these ‘techniques of the body’ – that is, learning to walk, move and interact towards and in context of others (c.f. De Certeau 1984). Though techniques are acquired in the transmission of tradition, they become individuated, for our movements are both cultural and personal, our gestures are only ever our own. Our movements are a form of skilled work, a bringing together of social and bodily knowledge in the performance of the everyday. The worn and used garment, and in particular the worn and used shoe, is made unique through the techniques of the body, the individual’s assimilation and interpretation of bodily cultural practices. In the performance of dressing and the practice of everyday life, we are marking and altering our clothes. Just as the line of a pen or paintbrush is fundamentally gestural, informed by the techniques of the body, the marks upon our clothes are the output of our bodily techniques. It was these marks, the evidence of our intermingling, that this research sought to augment and make apparent.

#### 4. Wearing Clothes as Social Relations

Though the particular methodology of this research may be unconventional, the topic of enquiry, the wearing of clothes as embodied experience, is not. Wearing, as the embodied relationship between garment and user forms a distinct and increasingly important strand of research. Entwistle’s book *The Fashioned Body* (2000) was at the forefront of a move towards a more embodied understanding of wear. Situating fashion as a ‘fleshy practice’, she suggests that wearing is an active process of appropriation, alteration and compromise. In exploring the modifying and mediating capacity of garments Practice-based costume and performance researcher Sally E. Dean (2012) articulates (and utilizes) this particularly well:

*In our daily-life observations, we see how what we wear affects the way we move and how we are perceived. If I wear high heels, for example, I walk in an entirely different way than if I wear boots. My experience of my feet, and indeed of my whole body, is different; I create a quite different ‘character’, and the basis for my interactions with my environment and with others around me also changes.*

(Dean 2012: 168)

This affect – or the capacity of garments to affect us – is both symbolic and bodily/material.

Clothes are both the locus and the agents of affect, while at the same time being affected themselves. To borrow from Ahmed 'We are moved by things, and in being moved, we make things' (2010: 33), the body and the garment are in a constant reiterative cycle of affecting one another. The body-self is affected physically and emotionally through wearing and simultaneously the materiality of the garment, its meanings and value are changed through wear.

In the context of these orientations, Woodward's (2014), research highlights the material agency of the garment, or its capacity through form, rather than signification, to impact on bodily and embodied experience.

Woodward explores the garment's capacity to affect bodily and emotional experience, suggesting that, 'whilst there has been a shift towards looking at embodied fashion phenomenologically [...] there has been a lack of focus upon ways of wearing and making fashionable things is multi-sensory, and where the material is central' (2014: 12). Writing of fashion failures, she observes the tactile experience of 'not feeling good' :

*The clothes in a successful outfit that a woman wears and feels comfortable wearing effectively externalize that person's intentions through their materiality. Conversely when outfits go wrong, the materiality of clothing can thwart women's intentionality – the leather skirt that they hoped would make them look sexy can make them look hot and sweaty instead.*

(Woodward 2007: 4-5)

This discomfiting potential, be it mental or physical, is central both to clothing choices and the tactile experience of wear - we often seek the right 'fit' be it stylistically or physically (c.f. Eco 1986). Similarly, Chong-Kwan explores 'how sensory engagement with dress affected both the materiality of the dress items and the participants by triggering behaviour, thoughts, memories and emotions' (2016: 2). she seeks to capture, how garments make wearers and non-wearers (those who smell, hear or touch another's clothing) feel, how textures and scents affect them. In particular Chong-Kwan highlights the difficulty in capturing these experiences in language, the ways that her interviewees struggled to articulate what they had experienced:

*The interviews hinted at a lack of appropriate language to clearly articulate certain types of sensory experience. There were often times when participants found it tricky to explain their experience. This could be when multiple sensory modalities were implicated, and as a result they struggled to define individual sensory modalities, describing instead a more holistic overall 'sense', 'feeling' or 'essence'.*

(Chong Kwan 2016: 25)



It was in the context of this failure of language, the difficulty of articulating to another the overlapping sensory experiences of wearing, that I chose to explore wearing as a research methodology – a methodology which attempted to privilege, embody and materialize the affects of wear. In selecting wearing as a method of doing research I sought to enact a shift, a shift both from observer to participant much in the way that a maker-researcher makes that same leap. This shift both attempted to allow me greater access to my bodily experience of wear and simultaneously to intensify the agency of the shoes I wore. By writing about my experience as the wearer I made my self, my body and my garments the subject of the research. I experienced the garments - my sensory knowing was at the centre of the research. This sensory knowing, as the output of my auto-ethnographic practice was recorded in writing (the wearing diaries and thesis), images and film. In positioning myself as ‘wearer-researcher’ I sought to overcome this ‘gap,’ or the space of unknowing that writing of another’s experience requires.

## 6. Feeling and Knowing

*The shoes are biting me. The central strap pushing into the soft white flesh of my sole. Each step jars, a constant nagging reminder of what my feet are doing, of where I have to go. I move onwards slowly, conscious of my steps ...*

*Bored and in pain I pause on the street and break a conker under my shoe, the first of the year. I can feel the green needles of the shell through the sole of the shoe, a strange masochistic pleasure in rolling the fruit under my foot; as it cracks the conker emerges, white and under-cooked as dough, on the pavement. It is not what I want. I move on.*

*Later on, an escalator, I push the arch of my foot against the lip of the step; I want to feel the prickle of green needles again. (Excerpt from wearing diary- September 2015)*

If wearing is to be a method for research, one must ask what is the embodied experience of wearing; how do we experience the daily and habitual interactions of body and garment, of cloth and skin? What does the experience of wearing do? What are the relationships and affects which are produced and maintained through the tactile experience of wearing? And what is made manifest and apparent through the acts of wear?

Here I return to my own methodology and to the works of psychoanalyst Bick (1968) and psychologist Winnicott (1953) who suggest that attachment to others and self-identification are, from the outset, located in touch. The process of giving and taking, of touch and counter-touch, which typifies our relationships with clothing, has echoes of the reciprocal, touch-based, relationship between mother and infant. Touch is the foundation of

our attachment to others and our sense of self; touch positions us within the world. Pioneer of infant observation, psychoanalyst Bick, observed that this idea of being held or enveloped in skin was central to the development of a sense of self. She suggests that, ‘in its most primitive form the parts of the personality are felt to have no binding force amongst themselves and must therefore be held together in a way that is experienced by them passively, by the skin functioning as a boundary’ (Bick 1968: 56). If touch creates and maintains attachment, then it follows that wearing, as an experience located in touch, does as well. The tactile experience of wearing both binds subject and object and at the same time stimulates and produces sensory knowledge; wearing as a form of thinking.

If wearing and knowing may coalesce, then how might this experience be expressed, quantified and explored and what might wearing as a research practice tell us about people and their clothes? What might this methodology of entanglement look like? If we reframe wearing not as a passive process but an active engagement of two agents, how might we view our attachment to our clothes? Ingold’s (2007) call to look at the transformations of materials can here be utilized to view wearing as ‘process’, or wearing as a shifting and transformative dynamic between wearer and worn (c.f. Ingold 2013: 31). If we understand wearing as process, continuously updated and mediated by changes to the wearer’s and the garment’s material forms, we must understand wearing knowledge as an iterative, tactile, cumulative and potentially complex to articulate. To borrow from (and paraphrase) Sennett’s writing on making, could it be that *wearing* ‘establishes a realm of skill and knowledge perhaps beyond human verbal capacities to explain; ... language is not an adequate “mirror- tool” for the physical movements of the human body’ (Sennett 2008: 95)?

## 7. Entanglement as Research Methodology

*The dew has crazed tiny lines across the surface of my shoes. They have become a network of creases, the skin of my shoe aged from wear. I am pleased my shoes have remembered my steps, that they have taken this task from me. They remember what I do not. When the shoes dry the tiny lines disappear.*

(Excerpt from wearing diary, May 2015)

My research adopted a methodology based around theories of entanglement; of the enmeshed and indivisible relationship between artefact and user. Hodder (2012) writes of people and things being ‘entangled’ or as inseparable from their environments. The user, artefact and environment are in a continuous reiterative dialogue, every change impacting the next.

Drawing upon Gibson's (1979) theory of affordances, he interprets the world as one in which artefacts afford or allow human behaviors. A shoe, for example, may permit a user to walk longer, while a chair may allow them to sit, or a path to cross space. Material things facilitate and produce our relationships with the external world. Within this context, the term 'entanglement' was afforded dual meaning, referring both to the physical cleaving of garments and body through touch and wear and to the psychic mingling as the garment becomes a repository for bodily experience and is simultaneously incorporated into the wearer's psyche or body ego. Instead of attempting to lessen this entanglement in hope of an elusive objectivity, my research practice embraced the entangled position of maker and wearer as researcher. It places this enmeshed nature of our relationship with the material world at its center, as both the subject, and research methodology. Ingold, in writing on ethnography and anthropology, writes of the idea of 'observing from the inside' (2014) as central to fieldwork practice. In this way, the anthropologist must be 'along with' their subject. This 'being with' is the act of acknowledging and embracing one's enmeshed relationship with the research subject. In my research, I was 'along with' my subject; I made, I walked, I wore.

Touch is central to our capacity both to self-identify and to relate to others, for it is through touching that we come to know ourselves and the world. For Pink (2015), 'sensory knowing is produced through participation with the world' and it was through these participations (walking to the shops, meeting friends, going to college) that my knowing was made. As wearers we know our own clothing through touch, and that touch may produce a form of knowing. However, for the auto-ethnographer, knowledge produced through touch may be problematic, it raises questions about how the sensory and non-verbal can be articulated, recorded and quantified.

By acknowledging my position at the center of this research, I used techniques borrowed from auto-ethnographers such as Taussig (1983), acknowledging and embracing my subjective position within this work. My own subjectivity and sensory experience became inseparable from the research. seeing, sensing and knowing have become entwined. In locating myself as subject and researcher, I utilized Pink's (2015) formulation:

*(Auto) ethnography is a process of creating and representing knowledge (about society, culture and individuals) that is based on ethnographers' own experiences. It does not claim to produce an objective or truthful account of reality, but should aim to offer versions of ethnographers' experiences of reality that are as loyal as possible to the context, negotiations and inter-subjectivities through which the knowledge was produced.*

(Pink 2015: 22)

Wearing, as the extended sensory interaction of the garment and the skin, was at the center of

my research methodology. As I read and wrote, carved and sewed, I also walked in the shoes that I had made. This wearing was a performance enacted over many months and recorded in the objects themselves. They travelled with me and became records of my movements and experiences. As such my 'field' was not geographical but instead was bodily and psychic. My body-schema (cf. Schilder 1935: 7) were the site both on and through which this research was conducted. As such my 'field-notes' were multiple: the dairies I wrote as I wore and walked in the shoes, the images I made as they altered and broke down through use, but also the shoes and my body themselves as they as the imprinted and changed, becoming records of the research practice I performed. In layering different kinds of 'notes', I attempted to produce for the reader/viewer a fuller and more embodied understanding of my experiences of wear; so that what could be said (or written) was enveloped in what could be sensed and seen.

Wearing made it impossible for me to ignore the importance of my shoes in my lived experience. In denying myself the comfort of my usual everyday footwear, my embodied and sensory experiences were brought to the fore: my gait was changed, my pace, my experience of navigating spaces and social situations shifted – my body and the material of the shoe were altered and marked. Similarly the function of the garment as records of experience, bearers of material memory, was made evident in the ways that the materials molded to my body or were altered by the environments experienced.

It became clear that what I wore was integral to my lived experiences, that each change in footwear constituted a shift in the practices of the body. The way I navigated the world, the complex negotiations of dressing, and acquiring clothes, were negotiations of ideals and imageries (c.f. Sampson, 2017), but that wearing was a predominantly a material negotiation, one constituted in tactile bodily engagement. Wearing as practice forced me to engage with the garments' agency. In doing so, their power to impact upon and alter my embodied experience was increased; their agency made materially manifest. In wearing as research, I pushed and orientated my body in ways I might otherwise not have done. I chose shoes which were uncomfortable in order to problematize wearing. In wearing as research, both shoes and I became subject and object of this research; together, we became records of the experience of doing, wearing and of being together in the world.

## 8. Conclusion: Being in the World

*'At times this project was a painful one. To make objects with care that I knew, later, I would destroy. To feel an object, once beautiful, tipping over the edge from cleanliness to abjection. Feeling the weight of my body obliterate*

*the fruits of my labour. This research made me more conscious of my body: of the weight of it, its capacity to crush or break my shoes. It made me aware of the ways I walk, the rhythm of my steps, my right-handed and thus left-footedness. The shoes made to be symmetrical did not wear evenly; they are records of the asymmetry of my body postures and movements. As I broke my shoes I felt loss, the sorrow of my creations destroyed. Simultaneously I was glad; the shoes which had caused me blisters and cuts were no more, my work with them was done'* (Excerpt from wearing diary, December 2015)

The breakdown of subject/object dualism, which underlies the material turn and is immanent in much of the development of practice-based research in fashion, is brought to an unconventional if logical conclusion in wearing as research. In wearing, one is creating a 'fleshy practice' of research, a practice which is embodied and bodily. It suggests that both sensory ethnography and auto-ethnography might come together, just as they have in the writings and outputs of craft-person researchers (Lee 2016; Harrod 2015; Marchand 2015) to communicate and present embodied and bodily knowledge. It is apparent that most, if not all, fashion and dress research is concerned with wearing (or not wearing) clothes: However, the experience of wearing is still relatively under-explored. In this article, I put forward the idea that wearing need not only be a topic for research but might also be a methodology. Much in the way that making has shifted from being the subject of craft/design research to the methodology through which it is enacted, I asked if wearing too may make the leap from subject to method.

This article does not present wearing-based research methods as resolved or formalized but instead as possibilities or as works in progress. It suggests that wearing might be adopted by a certain subgroup of clothing researchers as a form of practice-based research. It asks if in opening up of research practices to wearing as a methodology, might enliven and deepen our understanding of the clothes we wear. This, this article perhaps raises more questions than it answers. To this end, it is, I hope, the start of a discussion: about methodologies, about practice, about performance, about the artist as researcher, and about the relationship between practice and theory. What we as researchers learn by being in and with the world.

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