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Addressing the Body

Dress and the Body

'There is an obvious and prominent fact about human beings', notes Turner (1985: 1) at the start of *The Body and Society*, 'they have bodies and they are bodies'. In other words, the body constitutes the environment of the self, to be inseparable from the self. However, what Turner omits in his analysis is another obvious and prominent fact: that human bodies are *dressed* bodies. The social world is a world of dressed bodies. Nakedness is wholly inappropriate in almost all social situations and, even in situations where much naked flesh is exposed (on the beach, at the swimming-pool, even in the bedroom), the bodies that meet there are likely to be adorned, if only by jewellery, or indeed, even perfume: when asked what she wore to bed, Marilyn Monroe claimed that she wore only Chanel No. 5, illustrating how the body, even without garments, can still be adorned or embellished in some way. Dress is a basic fact of social life and this, according to anthropologists, is true of all known human cultures: all people 'dress' the body in some way, be it through clothing, tattooing, cosmetics or other forms of body painting. To put it another way, no culture leaves the body unadorned but adds to, embellishes, enhances or decorates the body. In almost all social situations we are required to appear dressed, although what constitutes 'dress' varies from culture to culture and also within a culture, since what is considered appropriate dress will depend on the situation or occasion. A bathing-suit, for example, would be inappropriate and shocking if worn to do the shopping, while swimming

in one's coat and shoes would be absurd for the purpose of swimming, but perhaps apt as a fund-raising stunt. The cultural significance of dress extends to all situations, even those in which we can go naked: there are strict rules and codes governing when and with whom we can appear undressed. While bodies may go undressed in certain spaces, particularly in the private sphere of the home, the public arena almost always requires that a body be dressed appropriately, to the extent that the flaunting of flesh, or the inadvertent exposure of it in public, is disturbing, disruptive and potentially subversive. Bodies which do not conform, bodies which flout the conventions of their culture and go without the appropriate clothes are subversive of the most basic social codes and risk exclusion, scorn or ridicule. The 'streaker' who strips off and runs across a cricket pitch or soccer stadium draws attention to these conventions in the act of breaking them: indeed, female streaking is defined as a 'public order offence' while the 'flasher', by comparison, can be punished for 'indecent exposure' (Young, 1995: 7).

The ubiquitous nature of dress would seem to point to the fact that dress or adornment is one of the means by which bodies are made social and given meaning and identity. The individual and very personal act of getting dressed is an act of preparing the body for the social world, making it appropriate, acceptable, indeed respectable and possibly even desirable also. Getting dressed is an ongoing practice, requiring knowledge, techniques and skills, from learning how to tie our shoelaces and do up our buttons as children, to understanding about colours, textures and fabrics and how to weave them together to suit our bodies and our lives. Dress is the way in which individuals learn to live in their bodies and feel at home in them. Wearing the right clothes and looking our best, we feel at ease with our bodies, and the opposite is equally true: turning up for a situation inappropriately dressed, we feel awkward, out of place and vulnerable. In this respect, dress is both an intimate experience of the body and a public presentation of it. Operating on the boundary between self and other is the interface between the individual and the social world, the meeting place of the private and the public. This meeting between the intimate experience of the body and the public realm, through the experience of fashion and dress, is the subject of this chapter.

So potent is the naked body that when it is allowed to be seen, as in the case of art, it is governed by social conventions. Berger (1972) argues that within art and media representations there is a distinction between naked and nude, the latter referring to the way in which bodies, even without garments, are 'dressed' by social conventions

and systems of representation. Perniola (1990) has also considered the way in which different cultures, in particular the classical Greek and Judaic, articulate and represent nakedness. According to Ann Hollander (1993) dress is crucial to our understanding of the body to the extent that our ways of seeing and representing the naked body are dominated by conventions of dress. As she argues, 'art proves that nakedness is not universally experienced and perceived any more than clothes are. At any time, the unadorned self has more kinship with its own usual *dressed* aspect than it has with any undressed human selves in other times and other places' (1993: xiii). Hollander points to the ways in which depictions of the nude in art and sculpture correspond to the dominant fashions of the day. Thus the nude is never naked but 'clothed' by contemporary conventions of dress.

Naked or semi-naked bodies that break with cultural conventions, especially conventions of gender, are potentially subversive and treated with horror or derision. Competitive female body builders, such as those documented in the semi-documentary film *Pumping Iron II: The Women* (1984), are frequently seen as 'monstrous', as their muscles challenge deeply held cultural assumptions and beg the questions: 'What is a woman's body? Is there a point at which a woman's body becomes something else? What is the relationship between a certain type of body and "femininity"?' (Kuhn 1988: 16; see also Schulze 1990, St Martin and Gavey 1996). In body building, muscles are like clothes, but unlike clothes they are supposedly 'natural'. However, according to Annette Kuhn,

> 'muscles are rather like drag, for female body builders especially: while muscles can be assumed, like clothing, women's assumption of muscles implies a transgression of the proper boundaries of sexual difference'. (1988: 17)

It is apparent from these illustrations that bodies are potentially disruptive. Conventions of dress attempt to transform flesh into something recognizable and meaningful to a culture; a body that does not conform, that transgresses such cultural codes, is likely to cause offence and outrage and be met with scorn or incredulity. This is one of the reasons why dress is a matter of morality: dressed inappropriately we are uncomfortable; we feel ourselves open to social condemnation. According to Bell (1976), wearing the right clothes is so very important that even people not interested in their appearance will dress well enough to avoid social censure. In this sense, he argues, we enter into the realm of feelings 'prudential, ethical and aesthetic, and the workings of what one might call sartorial conscience' (1976: 18–19). He gives the example of a five-day-old beard which could not be worn to the theatre without censure and disapproval 'exactly comparable to that occasioned by dishonourable conduct'. Indeed, clothes are often spoken of in moral terms, using words like 'faultless, 'good', 'correct' (1976: 19). Few are immune to this social pressure and most people are embarrassed by certain mistakes of dress, such as finding one's flies undone or discovering a stain on a jacket. Thus, as Quentin Bell puts it, 'our clothes are too much a part of us for most of us to be entirely indifferent to their condition: it is as though the fabric were indeed a natural extension of the body, or even of the soul' (1976: 19).

This basic fact of the body – that it must, in general, appear appropriately dressed – points to an important aspect of dress, namely its relation to social order, albeit micro-social order. This centrality of dress to social order would seem to make it a prime topic of sociological investigation. However, the classical tradition within sociology failed to acknowledge the significance of dress, largely because it neglected the body and the things that bodies do. More recently, sociology has begun to acknowledge dress, but this literature is still on the margins and is relatively small compared with other sociological areas. A sociology of the body has now emerged which would seem germane to a literature on dress and fashion. However, this literature, as with mainstream sociology, has also tended not to examine dress. While sociology has failed to acknowledge the significance of dress, the literature from history, cultural studies, psychology and so on, where it is often examined, does so almost entirely without acknowledging the significance of the body. Studies of fashion and dress tend to separate dress from the body: art history celebrates the garment as an object, analysing the development of clothing over history and considering the construction and detail of dress (Gorsline 1991, Laver 1969); cultural studies tend to understand dress semiotically, as a 'sign system' (Hebdige 1979 Wright 1992); or to analyse texts and not bodies (Barthes 1985 Brooks 1992 Nixon 1992 Triggs 1992); social psychology looks at the meanings and intentions of dress in social interaction (Cash 1985, Ericksen and Joseph 1985, Tseëlon 1992a, 1992b, 1997). All these studies tend to neglect the body and the meanings the body brings to dress. And yet, dress in everyday life cannot be separated from the living, breathing, moving body it adorns. The importance of the body to dress is such that encounters with dress divorced from the body are strangely alienating. Elizabeth Wilson (1985) grasps the importance of the body in terms of understanding dress and describes

the unease one feels in the presence of mannequins in the costume museum. The eeriness of the encounter comes from the 'dusty silence' and stillness of the costumes and from a sense that the museum is 'haunted' by the spirits of the living, breathing humans whose bodies these gowns once adorned:

> The living observer moves with a sense of mounting panic, through a world of the dead... We experience a sense of the uncanny when we gaze at garments that had an intimate relationship with human beings long since gone to their graves. For clothes are so much part of our living, moving selves that, frozen on display in the mausoleums of culture, they hint at something only half understood, sinister, threatening, the atrophy of the body, and the evanescence of life. (Wilson 1985: 1)

Just as the discarded shell of any creature appears dead and empty, the gown or suit once cast off seems lifeless, inanimate and alienated from the wearer. The sense of alienation from the body is all the more profound when the garment or the shoes still bear the marks of the body, when the shape of the arms or the form of the feet are clearly visible. However, dress in everyday life is always more than a shell, it is an intimate aspect of the experience and presentation of the self and is so closely linked to the identity that these three – dress, the body and the self – are not perceived separately but simultaneously, as a totality. When dress is pulled apart from the body/self, as it is in the costume museum, we grasp only a fragment, a partial snapshot of dress, and our understanding of it is thus limited. The costume museum makes the garment into a fetish, it tells of how the garment was made, the techniques of stitching, embroidery and decoration used as well as the historical era in which it was once worn. What it cannot tell us is how the garment was worn, how the garment moved when on a body, what it sounded like when it moved and how it felt to the wearer. Without a body, dress lacks fullness and movement; it is incomplete (Entwistle and Wilson 1998).

A sociological perspective on dress requires moving away from the consideration of dress as object to looking instead at the way in which dress is an embodied activity and one that is embedded within social relations. Wright's analysis of clothing (1992) acknowledges the way in which dress operates on the body and how clothing worn deliberately small (such as leggings or trousers that do not meet the ankles) works to emphasize particular body parts. However, in general, studies of dress neglect the way in which it operates on the body and there remains a need to consider dress in everyday life as embodied practice: how dress operates on a phenomenal, moving body and

how it is a practice that involves individual actions of attending *to* the body *with* the body. This chapter considers the theoretical resources for a sociology of dress that acknowledges the significance of the body. I propose the idea of dress as situated bodily practice as a theoretical and methodological framework for understanding the complex dynamic relationship between the body, dress and culture. Such a framework recognizes that bodies are socially constituted, always situated in culture and the outcome of individual practices directed towards the body: in other words, 'dress' is the result of 'dressing' or 'getting dressed'. Examining the structuring influences on the dressed body requires taking account of the historical and social constraints on the body, constraints which impact upon the act of 'dressing' at a given time. In addition, it requires that the physical body is constrained by the social situation and is thus the product of the social context as Douglas (1973, 1984) has argued.

Becoming a competent member involves acquiring knowledge of the cultural norms and expectations demanded of the body, something Mauss (1973) has examined in terms of 'techniques of the body'. Goffman (1971) has described forcefully the ways in which cultural norms and expectations impose upon the 'presentation of self in everyday life' to the extent that individuals perform 'face work' and seek to be defined by others as 'normal'. Dressing requires one to attend unconsciously or consciously to these norms and expectations when preparing the body for presentation in any particular social setting. The phrase 'getting dressed' captures this idea of dress as an activity. Dress is therefore the outcome of *practices* which are socially constituted but put into effect by the individual: individuals must attend to their bodies when they 'get dressed' and it is an experience that is as intimate as it is social. When we get dressed, we do so within the bounds of a culture and its particular norms, expectations about the body and about what constitutes a 'dressed' body.

Most of the theorists I discuss do not specifically relate their account of the body to dress, but I have aimed to draw out the implications of each theoretical perspective for the study of the dressed body. The main discussion focuses on the uses and limitations both of structuralist and post-structuralist approaches, since these have been influential in the sociological study of the body: in particular, the work of Mauss (1973), Douglas (1973, 1984) and the post-structuralist approach of Foucault (1977, 1980) are pertinent to any discussion of the body in culture. However, another tradition, that of phenomenology, particularly that of Merleau-Ponty (1976, 1981) has also become increasingly influential in terms of producing

an account of embodiment. These two theoretical traditions have, according to Crossley (1996), been considered by some to be incommensurable but, as he argues, they can offer different and complementary insights into the body in society. Following both Csordas (1993, 1996) and Crossley (1995a, 1995b, 1996), I argue that an account of dress as situated practice requires drawing on the insights of these two different traditions, structuralism and phenomenology. Structuralism offers the potential to understand the body as a *socially constituted and situated object*, while phenomenology offers the potential to understand dress as an *embodied experience*. In terms of providing an account of the dressed body as a practical accomplishment, two further theorists are of particular importance, Bourdieu (1984, 1994) and Goffman (1971, 1979). Their insights are discussed at the end of this chapter to illustrate the ways in which a sociology of the dressed body might bridge the gap between the traditions of structuralism, post-structuralism and phenomenology.

Theoretical Resources

The body as cultural object

All the theorists discussed in this chapter can broadly be described as 'social constructivists', in that they take the body to be a thing of culture and not merely a biological entity. This is in contrast to approaches that assume what Chris Shilling (1993) refers to as the 'naturalistic body'. These approaches, for example, sociobiology, consider the body 'as a pre-social, biological basis on which the superstructures of the self and society are founded' (1993: 41). Since the body has an 'obvious' presence as a 'natural' phenomenon, such a 'naturalistic' approach is appealing and indeed it may seem odd to suggest that the body is a 'socially constructed' object. However, while it is the case that the body has a material presence, it is also true that the material of the body is always and everywhere culturally interpreted: biology does not stand outside culture but is located within it. That said, the 'taken-for-granted' assumption that biology stands outside culture was, for a long time, one of the reasons why the body was neglected as an object of study by social theorists. While this is now an object of investigation within anthropology, cultural studies, literary studies, film theory and feminist theory, it is worthwhile pointing out the ways in which classical social theory previously ignored or repressed the body, since this may account, at least in part, for why it has largely neglected dress.

Turner (1985) gives two reasons for this academic neglect of the body. First, social theory, particularly sociology, inherited the Cartesian dualism which prioritized mind and its properties of consciousness and reason over the body and its properties of emotion and passion. Further, as part of its critiques of both behaviourism and essentialism, the classical sociological tradition tended to avoid explanations of the social world which took into account the human body, focusing instead on the human actor as a sign-maker and a maker of meaning. Similarly, sociology's concern with historicity and with social order in modern societies, as opposed to ontological questions, did not appear to involve the body. As Turner argues, instead of nature/culture, sociology has concerned itself with self/society or agency/structure. A further reason for the neglect of the body is that it treated the body as a natural and not a social phenomenon, and therefore not a legitimate object for sociological investigation.

However, there has been growing recognition that the body has a history and this has been influential in establishing the body as a prime object of social theory (Bakhtin 1984, Elias 1978, Feher et al. 1989, Laquer and Gallagher 1987, Laquer and Bourgois 1992, Sennett 1994). Norbert Elias (1978) points to the ways in which our modern understandings and experiences of the body are historically specific, arising out of processes, both social and psychological, which date back to the sixteenth century. He examines how historical developments such as the increasing centralization of power to fewer households with the emergence of aristocratic and royal courts served to reduce violence between individuals and groups and induce greater social control over the emotions. The medieval courts demanded increasingly elaborate codes of behaviour and instilled in individuals the need to monitor their bodies to produce themselves as 'well mannered' and 'civil'. As relatively social mobile arenas, the medieval courts promoted the idea that one's success or failure depended upon the demonstration of good manners, civility and wit and in this respect the body was the bearer of social status, a theme later explored in contemporary culture by Bourdieu (1984, 1994) in his account of 'cultural capital' and the '*habitus*'. The impact of these developments was the promotion of new psychological structures which served to induce greater consciousness of oneself as an 'individual' in a self-contained body.

Along with histories of the body, anthropology has been particularly influential in terms of establishing the legitimacy of the body as an object of social study (Benthall 1976, Berthelot 1991, Featherstone 1991a, Featherstone and Turner 1995, Frank 1990, Polhemus 1988, Polhemus and Proctor 1978, Shilling 1993, Synnott 1993,

Turner 1985, 1991). Turner (1991) gives four reasons for this. First, anthropology was initially concerned with questions of ontology and the nature/culture dichotomy; this led it to consider how the body, as an object of nature, is mediated by culture. A second feature of anthropology was its preoccupation with needs and how needs are met by culture, an interest which focuses in part on the body. Two further sets of concerns focus on the body as a symbolic entity: for example, the body in the work of Mary Douglas (1973, 1979b, 1984) is considered as a primary classification system for cultures, the means by which notions of order and disorder are represented and managed; in the work of people like Blacking (1977) and Bourdieu (1984) the body is taken to be an important bearer of social status.

For the anthropologist Marcel Mauss the body is shaped by culture and he describes in detail what he calls the 'techniques of the body' which are 'the ways in which from society to society men [*sic*] know how to use their bodies' (1973: 70). These techniques of the body are an important means for the socialization of individuals into culture: indeed, the body is the means by which an individual comes to know and live in a culture. According to Mauss, the ways in which men and women come to use their bodies differ since techniques of the body are gendered. Men and women learn to walk, talk, run, fight differently. Furthermore, although he says little about dress, he does comment on the fact that women learn to walk in high heels, a feat which requires training to do successfully, and which, as a consequence of socialization, is not acquired by the majority of men.

Douglas (1973, 1979b, 1984) has also acknowledged the body as a natural object shaped by social forces. She therefore suggests that there are 'two bodies': the physical body and the social body. She summarizes the relationship between them in *Natural Symbols*:

> the social body constrains the way the physical body is perceived. The physical experience of the body, always modified by the social categories through which it is known, sustains a particular view of society. There is a continual exchange of meanings between the two kinds of bodily experience so that each reinforces the categories of the other. (1973: 93)

According to Douglas, the physiological properties of the body are thus the starting-point for culture, which mediates and translates them into meaningful symbols. Indeed, she argues that there is a natural tendency for all societies to symbolize the body, for the body and its physiological properties, such as its waste products, furnish culture with a rich resource for symbolic work: 'the body is capable of furnishing a natural system of symbols' (1973: 12). This

means that the body is a highly restricted medium of expression since it is heavily mediated by culture and expresses the social pressure brought to bear on it. The social situation thus imposes itself upon the body and constrains it to act in particular ways. Indeed, the body becomes a symbol of the situation. Douglas (1979b) gives the example of laughing to illustrate this. Laughter is a physiological function: it starts in the face but can infuse the entire body. She asks, 'what is being communicated? The answer is: information from the social system' (1979b: 87). The social situation determines the degree to which the body can laugh: the looser the constraints, the more free the body is to laugh out loud. In this way, the body and its functions and boundaries symbolically articulate the concerns of the particular group in which it is found and, indeed, become a symbol of the situation. Groups that are worried about threats to their cultural or national boundaries might articulate this fear through rituals around the body, particularly pollution rituals and ideas about purity (1984). Douglas's analysis (1973) of shaggy and smooth hair also illustrates this relationship between the body and the situation. Shaggy hair, once a symbol of rebellion, can be found among those professionals who are in a position to critique society, in particular, academics and artists. Smooth hair, however, is likely to be found among those who conform, such as lawyers and bankers. This focus on the body as a symbol has led Turner (1985) and Shilling (1993) to agree that Douglas's work is less an anthropology of the body and more 'an anthropology of the symbolism of risk and, we might add, of social location and stratification' (Shilling 1993: 73).

This analysis can of course be extended to dress and adornment. Dress in everyday life is the outcome of social pressures and the image the dressed body makes can be symbolic of the situation in which it is found. Formal situations such as weddings and funerals have more elaborate rules of dress than informal situations and tend to involve more 'rules', such as the black tie and evening dress stipulation. This dress in turn conveys information about that situation. In such formal situations one also finds conventional codes of gender more rigidly enforced than in informal settings. Formal situations, such as job interviews, business meetings and formal evening events tend to demand clear gender boundaries in dress. A situation demanding 'evening dress' will not only tend to be formal but the interpretation of evening dress will be gendered: generally this will be read as a gown for a woman and black tie and dinner jacket for a man. Men and women choosing to reverse this code and cross-dress risk being excluded from the situation. Other specific situations which demand clear codes of dress for men and women can be found within

the professions, particularly the older professions such as law, insurance and City finance. Here again, the gender boundary is normally clearly marked by the enforcement, sometimes explicit, sometimes implicit, of a skirt for women. Colour is also gendered more clearly at work: the suit worn by men in the City is still likely to be black, blue or grey but women in the traditional professions are allowed to wear bright reds, oranges, turquoises and so on. Men's ties add a decorative element to the suits and can be bright, even garish, but this is generally offset by a dark and formal backdrop. The professional workplace, with its norms and expectations, reproduces conventional ideas of 'feminine' and 'masculine' through the imposition of particular codes of dress. In this way, codes of dress form part of the management of bodies in space, operating to discipline bodies to perform in particular ways. To follow Douglas's idea of the body as a symbol of the situation, the image of the body conveys information about that situation. Even within the professions there is some degree of variation as to the formality of bodily presentation: the more traditional the workplace, the more formal it will be and the greater the pressures on the body to dress according to particular codes which are rigidly gendered. I return to this theme in more detail below, when I examine the applications of Foucault's work to the analysis of power-dressing, which is a gendered discourse on dress operating in the professional workplace.

While anthropology has been influential in suggesting how the body has been shaped by culture, Turner (1985) suggests that it is the work of the historian and philosopher Michel Foucault that has effectively demonstrated the importance of the body to social theory, helping to inaugurate a sociology of the body. In contrast to classic social theorists who ignore or repress the body, Foucault's history of modernity (1976, 1977, 1979, 1980) puts the human body centre stage, considering the way in which the emergent disciplines of modernity were centrally concerned with the management of individual bodies and populations of bodies. His account of the body as an object shaped by culture has never been applied specifically to dress but is of considerable relevance for understanding fashion and dress as important sites for discourses on the body.

The influence of Foucault

Foucault's account of modernity focuses on the way in which power/knowledge are interdependent: there is no power without knowledge and no knowledge that is not implicated in the exercise of power.

According to Foucault, the body is the object that modern knowledge/power seizes upon and invests with power since 'nothing is more material, physical, corporeal than the exercise of power' (1980: 57–8). Foucault's ideas about the relations between power/knowledge are embedded in his notion of a discourse. Discourses for Foucault are regimes of knowledge that lay down the conditions of possibility for thinking and speaking: at any particular time, only some statements come to be recognized as 'true'. These discourses have implications for the way in which people operate since discourses are not merely textual but put into practice at the micro-level of the body. Power invests in bodies, and in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries this investment replaces rituals around the body of the monarch: 'in place of the rituals that served to restore the corporal integrity of the monarch, remedies and therapeutic devices are employed such as the segregation of the sick, the monitoring of contagions, the exclusion of delinquents' (Foucault, 1980: 55).

Turner (1985) suggests that Foucault's work enables us to see both how individual bodies are managed by the development of specific regimes, for example in diet and exercise, which call upon the individual to take responsibility for their own health and fitness (the discipline of the body), and how the bodies of populations are managed and co-ordinated (bio-politics). These two are intimately related, particularly with respect to the way in which control is achieved, namely through a system of surveillance or panopticism. This is forcefully illustrated in *Discipline and Punish*, in which Foucault describes how new discourses on criminality from the late eighteenth century onwards resulted in new ways of managing the 'criminal', namely the prison system. From the early nineteenth century new ways of thinking about criminality emerged: 'criminals' were said to be capable of 'reform' (rather than being inherently 'evil' or possessed by the devil) and new systems for stimulating this reform were imposed. In particular, the mechanism of surveillance encourages individual prisoners to relate to themselves and to their bodies and conduct in particular ways. This is reinforced by the organization of space in modern buildings around the principle of an 'all-seeing eye': an invisible but omnipresent observer such as that described in the 1780s by Jeremy Bentham (1843) in his design for the perfect prison, the 'Panopticon'. This structure allowed for maximum observation: cells bathed in light are arranged around a central watch tower which always remains dark, making the prisoners unaware of when they were watched and by whom. This structure is used by Foucault as a metaphor for modern society which he saw as 'carceral' since it was a society built upon institutional observation, in

schools, hospitals, army barracks etc., with the ultimate aim to 'normalize' bodies and behaviour. Discipline, rather than being imposed on the 'fleshy' body through torture and physical punishment, operates through the establishment of the 'mindful' body which calls upon individuals to monitor their own behaviour. However, while from the eighteenth to the early twentieth century 'it was believed that the investment in the body by power had to be heavy, ponderous, meticulous and constant', Foucault suggests that by the mid-twentieth century this had given way to a 'looser' form of power over the body and new investments in sexuality (1980: 58). Power for Foucault is 'force relations'; it is not the property of anyone or any group of individuals but is invested everywhere and in everyone. Those whose bodies are invested in by power can therefore subvert that same power by resisting or subverting it. He therefore argues that where there is power there is resistance to power. Once power has invested in bodies, there 'inevitably emerge the responding claims and affirmations, those of one's own body against power, of health against the economic system, of pleasure against the moral norms of sexuality, marriage, decency... power, after investing itself in the body, finds itself exposed to a counter attack in the same' (1980: 56). This idea of 'reverse discourse' is a powerful one and can help to explain why discourses on sexuality from the nineteenth century onwards, used at first to label and pathologize bodies and desires, subsequently produced sexual types such as the 'homosexual'; such labels were adopted to name individual desires and produce an alternative identity.

Foucault's insights can be applied to contemporary society, which encourages individuals to take responsibility for themselves. As Shilling (1993) notes, potential dangers to health have reached global proportions, yet individuals in the west are told by governments that as good citizens they have a responsibility to take care of their own bodies. Contemporary discourses on health, appearance and the like tie the body and identity together and serve to promote particular practices of body care that are peculiar to modern society. The body in contemporary western societies is subject to social forces of a rather different nature to the ways in which the body is experienced in more traditional communities. Unlike traditional communities, the body is less bound up with inherited models of socially acceptable bodies which were central to the ritual life, the communal ceremonies of a traditional community, and tied more to modern notions of the 'individual' and personal identity. It has become, according to Shilling (1993) and others (Giddens 1991, Featherstone

1991b) 'a more reflexive process'. Our bodies are experienced as the 'envelope' of the self, conceived of as singular and unique.

Mike Featherstone (1991a) investigates the way in which the body is experienced in contemporary 'consumer culture'. He argues that since the early twentieth century there has been a dramatic increase in self-care regimes of the body. The body has become the focus for increasing 'work' (exercise, diet, make-up, cosmetic surgery etc.) and there is a general tendency to see the body as part of one's self that is open to revision, change, transformation. The growth of healthy lifestyle regimes is testament to this idea that our bodies are unfinished, open to change. Exercise manuals and videos promise transformation of our stomachs, our hips and thighs and so on. We are no longer content to see the body as finished, but actively intervene to change its shape, alter its weight and contours. The body has become part of a project to be worked at, a project increasingly linked to a person's identity of self. The care of the body is not simply about health, but about feeling good: increasingly, our happiness and personal fulfilment is pinned on the degree to which our bodies conform to contemporary standards of health and beauty. Health books and fitness videos compete with one another, offering a chance to feel better, happier as well as healthier. Giddens (1991) notes how self-help manuals have become something of a growth industry in late modernity, encouraging us to think about and act upon our selves and our bodies in particular ways. Dress fits into this overall 'reflexive project' as something we are increasingly called upon to think about: manuals on how to 'dress for success' (such as Molloy's classic *Women: Dress for Success, 1980*) image consultancy services (the US-based 'Color Me Beautiful' being the obvious example) and television programmes (such as the *Clothes Show* and *Style Challenge* in the UK) are increasingly popular, all encouraging the view that one can be 'transformed' through dress.

Featherstone (1991a) argues that the rise in products associated with dieting, health and fitness points not only to the increasing significance of our appearance but to the importance attached to bodily preservation within late capitalist society. Although dieting, exercising and other forms of body discipline are not entirely new to consumer culture, they operate to discipline the body in new ways. Throughout the centuries and in all traditions, different forms of bodily discipline have been recommended: Christianity, for example, has long advocated the disciplining of the body through diet, fasting, penance and so on. However, whereas discipline was employed to mortify the flesh, as a *defence* against pleasure which was considered sinful by Christianity, in contemporary culture such techniques as

dieting are employed in order to *increase* pleasure. Asceticism has been replaced by hedonism, pleasure-seeking and gratification of the body's needs and desires. The discipline of the body and the pleasure of the flesh are no longer in opposition to one another: instead, discipline of the body through dieting and exercise has become one of the keys to *achieve* a sexy, desirable body which in turn will bring you pleasure.

Discourses of dress Since Foucault said nothing about fashion or dress, his ideas about power/knowledge initially seem to have little application to the study of the dressed body. However, his approach to thinking about power and its grip on the body can be utilized to discuss the way in which discourses and practices of dress operate to discipline the body. As I argued at the beginning of this chapter, the dressed body is a product of culture, the outcome of social forces pressing upon the body. Foucault's account therefore offers one way of thinking about the structuring influence of social forces on the body as well as offering a way of questioning commonsense understandings about modern dress. It is common to think about dress in the twentieth century as more 'liberated' than previous centuries, particularly the nineteenth. The style of clothes worn in the nineteenth century now seem rigid and constraining of the body. The corset seems a perfect example of nineteenth-century discipline of the body: it was obligatory for women, and an uncorseted woman was considered to be morally deplorable (or 'loose' which metaphorically refers to lax stays). As such it can be seen as something more than a garment of clothing, something linked to morality and the social oppression of women. In contrast, styles of dress today are said to be more relaxed, less rigid and physically constraining: casual clothes are commonly worn and gender codes seem less rigidly imposed. However, this conventional story of increasing bodily 'liberation' can be told differently if we apply a Foucauldian approach to fashion history: such a simple contrast between nineteenth- and twentieth-century styles is shown to be problematic. As Wilson argues (1992), in place of the whalebone corset of the nineteenth century we have the modern corset of muscle required by contemporary standards of beauty. Beauty now requires a new form of discipline rather than no discipline at all: in order to achieve the firm tummy required today, one must exercise and watch what one eats. While the stomach of the nineteenth-century corseted woman was disciplined from the outside, the twentieth-century exercising and dieting woman has a stomach disciplined by exercise and diet imposed by self-discipline (a transformation of discipline regimes something like Foucault's move from the 'fleshy' to the 'mindful' body). What has taken place has been a *qualitative* shift in the discipline rather than a quantitative one, although one could argue that the self-discipline required by the modern body is *more* powerful and more demanding than before, requiring great effort and commitment on the part of the individual which was not required by the corset wearer.

Foucault's notion of power can be applied to the study of dress in order to consider the ways in which the body acquires meaning and is acted upon by social and discursive forces and how these forces are implicated in the operation of power. Feminists such as McNay (1992) and Diamond and Quinby (1988) argue that Foucault ignores the issue of gender, a crucial feature of the social construction of the body. However, while he may have been 'gender blind', his theoretical concepts and his insights into the way the body is acted on by power can be applied to take account of gender. In this respect, one can use his ideas about power and discourse to examine how dress plays a crucial part in marking out the gender boundary which the fashion system constantly redefines each season. Gaines (1990: 1) argues that dress delivers 'gender as self-evident or natural' when in fact gender is a cultural construction that dress helps to reproduce. Dress codes reproduce gender: the association of women with long evening dresses or, in the case of the professional workplace, skirts, and men with dinner jackets and trousers is an arbitrary one but nonetheless comes to be regarded as 'natural' so that femininity is connoted in the gown, masculinity in the black tie and dinner jacket. Butler's work on performativity (1990, 1993), influenced by Foucault, looks at the way in which gender is the product of styles and techniques such as dress rather than any essential qualities of the body. She argues that the arbitrary nature of gender is most obviously revealed by drag when the techniques of one gender are exaggerated and made unnatural. Similarly Haug (1987), drawing heavily on Foucault, denaturalizes the common techniques and strategies employed to make oneself 'feminine': the 'feminine' body is an effect of styles of body posture, demeanour and dress. Despite the fact that Foucault ignores gender in his account of the body, his ideas about the way in which the body is constructed by discursive practices provides a theoretical framework within which to examine the reproduction of gender through particular technologies of the body.

A further illustration of how dress is closely linked to gender and indeed power is the way in which discourses on dress construct it as a 'feminine' thing. Tseëlon (1997) gives a number of examples of how women have historically been associated with the 'trivialities' of dress

in contrast to men who have been seen to rise above such mundane concerns having renounced decorative dress (Flügel 1930). As Tseëlon (1997) suggests, women have historically been defined as trivial, superficial, vain, even evil because of their association with the vanities of dress by discourses ranging from theology to fashion. Furthermore, discourses on or about fashion have therefore constructed women as the object of fashion, even its victim (Veblen 1953, Roberts 1977). Dress was not considered a matter of equal male and female concern and, moreover, a woman's supposed 'natural' disposition to decorate and adorn herself served to construct her as 'weak' or 'silly' and open her to moral condemnation. A Foucauldian analysis could provide insight into the ways in which women are constructed as closer to fashion and 'vain', perhaps by examining, as Efrat Tseëlon (1997) does, particular treatises on women and dress such as those found in the Bible or the letters of St Paul.

These associations of women with dress and appearance continue even today and are demonstrated by the fact that what a woman wears is still a matter of greater moral concern than what a man wears. Evidence of this can be found in cases of sexual harassment at work as well as sexual assault and rape cases. Discourses on female sexuality and feminine appearance within institutions such as the law associate women more closely with the body and dress than men. Wolf (1991) notes that lawyers in rape cases in all American states except Florida can legally cite what a woman wore at the time of attack and whether or not the clothing was 'sexually provocative'. This is true in other countries as well. Lees (1999) demonstrates how judges in the UK often base their judgements in rape cases on what a woman was wearing at the time of her attack. A woman can be cross-examined and her dress shown in court as evidence of her culpability in the attack or as evidence of her consent to sex. In one case a woman's shoes (not leather but 'from the cheaper end of the market') were used to imply that she too was 'cheap' (1999: 6). In this way, dress is used discursively to construct the woman as 'asking for it'. Although neither Wolf nor Lees draws on Foucault, it is possible to imagine a discourse analysis of legal cases such as these which construct a notion of a culpable female 'victim' through a discourse on sexuality, morality and dress. In addition, greater demands are made upon a woman's appearance than a man's and the emphasis on women's appearance serves to add what Wolf (1991) calls a 'third shift' to the work and housework women do. Hence, the female body is a potential liability for women in the workplace. Women are more closely identified with the body, as Ortner (1974) and others have suggested; anthropological evidence would seem to confirm this (Moore 1994). Cultural

association with the body results in women having to monitor their bodies and appearance more closely than men. Finally, codes of dress in particular situations impose more strenuous regimes upon the bodies of women than they do upon men. In these ways, discourses and regimes of dress are linked to power in various and complex ways and subject the bodies of the women to greater scrutiny than men.

Returning to the issue of dress at work, we can apply Foucault's insights to show how institutional and discursive practices of dress act upon the body and are employed in the workplace as part of institutional and corporate strategies of management. Carla Freeman (1993) draws on Foucault's notion of power, particularly his idea about the Panopticon, to consider how dress is used in one data-processing corporation, *Data Air*, as a strategy of corporate discipline and control over the female workforce. In this corporation a strict dress code insisted that the predominantly female workers dress 'smartly' in order to project a 'modern' and 'professional' image of the corporation. If their dress did not meet this standard they were subject to disciplinary techniques by their managers and could even be sent home to change their clothes. The enforcement of this dress code was facilitated by the open-plan office, which subjects the women to constant surveillance from the gaze of managers. Such practices are familiar to many offices, although the mechanisms for enforcing dress codes vary enormously. Particular discourses of dress, categorizing 'smart' or 'professional' dress, for example, and particular strategies of dress, such as the imposition of uniforms and dress codes at work, are utilized by corporations to exercise control over the bodies of the workers within.

As I have demonstrated, Foucault's framework is quite useful for analysing the situated practice of dress. In particular, his notion of discourse is a good starting-point for analysing the relations between ideas on dress and gender and forms of discipline of the body. However, there are problems with Foucault's notion of discourse as well as problems stemming from his conceptualization of the body and of power, in particular his failure to acknowledge embodiment and agency. These problems stem from Foucault's post-structuralist philosophy and these I now want to summarize in order to suggest how his theoretical perspective, while useful in many respects, is also problematic for a study of dress as situated practice.

Problems with Foucault's theory and method As a post-structuralist, Foucault does not tell us very much about how discourses are adopted by individuals and how they are translated by them. In other words, his is an account of the socially processed body

and tells us how the body is talked about and acted on but it does not provide an account of practice. In terms of understanding fashion/dress, his framework cannot describe dress as it is lived and experienced by individuals. For example, the existence of the corset and its connection to moral discourses about female sexuality tell us little or nothing about how Victorian women experienced the corset, how they chose to lace it and how tightly, and what bodily sensations it produced. Ramazanoglu (1993) argues that the notion of reverse discourse is potentially very useful to feminists, but it is not developed fully in his analysis. It would seem that by investing importance in the body, dress opens up the potential for women to use it for their own purposes. So while the corset is seen by some feminists (Roberts 1977) as a garment setting out to discipline the female body and make her 'docile' and subservient, an 'exquisite slave', Kunzle (1982) has argued in relation to female tight-lacers that these women (and some men) were not passive or masochistic victims of patriarchy, but socially and sexually assertive. Kunzle's suggestion is that women more than men have used their sexuality to climb the social ladder and, if his analysis is accepted, could perhaps be seen as one example of the 'reverse discourse'. He illustrates (unwittingly since he does not discuss Foucault) that once power is invested in the female body as a sexual body, there is a potential for women to utilize this for their own advancement.

Foucault's particular form of post-structuralism is thus not sensitive to the issue of practice. Instead it *presumes* effects, at the level of individual practice, from the existence of discourse alone. He thus 'reads' texts *as if* they were practice rather than a possible structuring influence on practice that might or might not be implemented. In assuming that discourse automatically has social effects, Foucault's method 'reduce[s] the individual agent to a socialised parrot which must speak/perform in a determinate manner in accordance with the rules of language' (Turner 1985: 175). In failing to produce any account of how discourses get taken up in practices, Foucault also fails to give an adequate explanation of how resistance to discourse is possible. Rather, he produces an account of bodies as the surveilled objects of power/knowledge. This, as McNay (1992) argues, results in an account of 'passive bodies': bodies are assumed to be entirely without agency or power. This conception undermines Foucault's explicit contention that power, once invested in bodies, is enabling and productive of its own resistance.

Turner (1985) commends the work of Volosinov as an alternative to this version of structuralism. In Volosinov's work, language is a system of possibilities rather than invariant rules; it does not have uniform effects but is adapted and amended in the course of action by individuals. Bourdieu (1989) also provides a critique of structuralism that claims to know in advance, from the mere existence of rules, how human action will occur. He attempts a 'theory of practice' which considers how individuals orient themselves and their actions to structures but are not entirely pre-determined by them. His notion of practice is sensitive to the tempo of action; to how, in the course of action, individuals improvise rather than simply reproduce rules. (Bourdieu's critique of structuralism is examined in more detail at the end of this chapter.)

This focus on structures (as opposed to practices) in Foucault's work is closely related to the second major problem with structuralism and post-structuralism, namely the lack of any account of agency. For Foucault, the body replaces both the liberal-humanist conception of the individual and the Marxist notion of human agency in history. However, the focus on 'passive bodies' does not explain how individuals may act in an autonomous fashion. If bodies are produced and manipulated by power, then this would seem to contradict Foucault's concern to see power as force relations which are never simply oppressive. The extreme anti-humanism of Foucault's work, most notably in *Discipline and Punish*, is questioned by Lois McNay (1992) because it does not allow for notions of subjectivity and experience. With this problem in mind, McNay is critical of the attention feminists have paid to this aspect of his work and turns instead to Foucault's later work on the 'ethics of the self'. She argues that in his later work Foucault develops an approach to questions of the self and how selves act upon themselves, thus counteracting some of the problems of his earlier work. He acknowledged the problems with his earlier work and addressed some of these criticisms by arguing that

> if one wants to analyse the genealogy of the subject in Western civilisation, one has to take into account not only technologies of domination but also technologies of self... When I was studying asylums, prisons and so on, I perhaps insisted too much on the technologies of domination... it is only one aspect of the art of governing people in our societies. (Foucault in McNay 1992: 49)

Hence, Foucault's later work began to examine techniques of subjectification – how humans relate to and construct the self – and he considered how, for example, sexuality emerges in the modern period as an important arena for the constitution of the self. In the second volume of *The History of Sexuality* Foucault (1985; also 1986, 1988) goes on to consider how the self comes to act upon itself in a conscious desire for improvement. These 'technologies of the self'

do go some way to counteract the problems of Foucault's earlier work and are potentially useful for understanding the way in which individuals 'fashion' themselves. For example, discourses on dress at work operate less by imposing dress on the bodies of workers, and more by stimulating ways of thinking and acting on the self. Power-dressing can be analysed as a 'technology' of the self: in dress manuals and magazine articles the 'rules' of power-dressing were laid out in terms of techniques and strategies for acting on the self in order to 'dress for success'. Thus the discourse on power-dressing, which emerged in the 1980s to address the issue of how professional women should present themselves at work, invoked notions of the self as 'enterprising'. As I have argued elsewhere (Entwistle 1997b, 2000) the woman who identified with power-dressing was someone who came to think of herself as an 'enterprising' subject, someone who was ambitious, self-managing, individualistic. The techniques for dressing laid out in these manuals implicated the self and stimulated one to act towards one's body in particular ways. However, the problem with Foucault's 'technologies of the self' is that they are peculiarly disembodied and this point highlights a problem endemic to Foucault's work, namely his account of the body.

The body versus embodiment

While Foucault's approach to the body is useful since it enables the analysis of the body without resorting to biological determinism, his body is peculiarly lacking in features which would seem crucial. As noted above, Foucault's account of the body and its relationship to power is problematic for feminists such as McNay (1992) and Ramazanoglu (1993) because it is not sensitive to the question of gender which, they insist, is crucial to any account of the body and how bodies are operated on by power. As McNay (1992) argues, not only is gender the most crucial division between bodies but power does not act on male and female bodies in the same way.

Furthermore, Foucault's analysis is internally inconsistent at times and his conception of the body confused. Turner notes that Foucault vacillates between some idea of a 'real' material body and a body constructed by discourse:

> at times he treats the body as a real entity – as, for example, in the effects of population growth on scientific thought or in his analysis of the effect of penology on the body. Foucault appears to treat the body as a unified, concrete aspect of human history which is continuous across epochs. Such a position is, however, clearly at odds with his views on the discontinuities of history and with his argument that the body is constructed by discourse. (1985: 48)

Thus, on the one hand, Foucault's bio-politics would appear to construct the body as a concrete, material entity, manipulated by institutions and practices; on the other, his focus on discourse seems to produce a notion of the body which has no materiality outside the representation. Such a vacillation is problematic since the question of what constitutes a body is one that cannot be avoided – does the body have a materiality outside language and representation? The body cannot be at one and the same time both a material object outside language and a solely linguistic construction. Terrance Turner suggests that Foucault's body is contradictory and problematic in terms of his own claim to critique essences: it is 'a featureless *tabula rasa* awaiting the animating disciplines of discourse . . . an a priori individual unity disarmingly reminiscent of its arch-rival, the transcendental subject' (1996: 37). Further, the dominance of the discursive body in Foucault's work would seem to undermine his aim to produce a 'history of bodies' and the investments and operations of power on them. What is most material and most vital about a body if not its flesh and bones? What is power doing if not operating on, controlling or dominating the material body? Turner makes this point emphatically, arguing that Foucault's notion of the body as the most material thing is 'transparently spurious. Foucault's body has no flesh; it is begotten out of discourse by power (itself an immaterial, *manna*-like force)' (1996: 36).

Foucault's approach denies the fact that, however difficult it might be to access the body as an independent realm, we are nonetheless embodied and contained within the parameters of a biological entity and that this experience, however culturally mediated, is fundamental to our very existence. Bodies are not simply representations; they have a concrete, material reality, a biology that is in part determined by nature. Bodies are the product of a dialectic between nature and culture. Such an acknowledgement of the body as a natural object does not automatically result in biologism and indeed, a number of social constructivist accounts recognize the body as a biological entity but consider how it is subject to social construction (Douglas 1973, 1979a, 1979b, 1984; Elias 1978, Mauss 1973). However, if the body has its own physical reality outside or beyond discourse, how can we theorize this experience?

With these issues in mind, Thomas Csordas (1993, 1996) details the way forward for what he calls a 'paradigm of embodiment', posed as an alternative to the 'paradigm of the body' that characterizes the

structuralist approach. His express aim is to counter-balance the 'strong representational bias' of the semiotic/textual paradigm found in works such as that of Douglas (1979a), Foucault (1977) and Derrida (1976). Csordas calls for a shift away from a semiotic/textualist framework to a notion of embodiment and 'being in the world' drawn from phenomenology. A similar distinction is drawn by Nick Crossley, who argues that the 'sociology of the body' is concerned with 'what is done to the body', while 'carnal sociology' examines 'what the body does' (1995b: 43). The methodological shift for which both argue 'requires that the body be understood as the existential ground of culture – not an object that is "good to think with" but as a subject that is "necessary to be" ' (Csordas 1993: 135). Csordas argues for a study of embodiment that draws on the phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1976, 1981) as well as Pierre Bourdieu's 'theory of practice' (1989). His paradigm of embodiment thus marks a shift away from a concern with texts to a concern with *bodily experience* and *social practice*. Crossley also identifies the concern with bodily experience with both Merleau-Ponty and Erving Goffman. I now go on to detail the theoretical and methodological assumptions underlying a 'paradigm of embodiment', looking first at phenomenology and focusing on the work of Merleau-Ponty (1976, 1981), then at Goffman (1971 1972, 1976) and finally at Bourdieu (1989), whose concepts are especially useful for developing a *sociological* account of embodiment.

Merleau-Ponty and embodiment

Merleau-Ponty (1976, 1981) places the body at the centre of his analysis of perception. He argues that the world comes to us via perceptive awareness, that is from the place of our body in the world. Merleau-Ponty stresses the simple fact that the mind is situated in the body and comes to know the world through what he calls 'corporeal or postural schema': in other words we grasp external space, relationships between objects and our relationship to them through our position in, and movement through, the world. Thus the aim of his work on perception, as he points out in *The Primacy of Perception*, is to 're-establish the roots of the mind in its body and in its world, going against doctrines which treat perception as a simple result of the action of external things on our body as well as against those which insist on the autonomy of consciousness' (1976: 3–4).

As a result of Merleau-Ponty's emphasis on perception and experience, subjects are reinstated as temporal and spatial beings. Rather

than being 'an object in the world' the body forms our 'point of view on the world' (1976: 5). The tendency in Foucault to see the body as a passive object is thus counteracted. According to Merleau-Ponty, we come to understand our relation in the world via the positioning of our bodies physically and historically in space. 'Far from being merely an instrument or object in the world our bodies are what give us our expression in the world, the *visible form of our intentions*' (1976: 5, emphasis added). In other words, our bodies are not just the place from which we come to experience the world, but it is through our bodies that we come to be seen in the world. The body forms the envelope of our being in the world; selfhood comes from this location in the body. Therefore, for Merleau-Ponty, subjectivity is not essential and transcendental: the self is located in a body, which in turn is located in time and space.

The notion of space is for Merleau-Ponty crucial to lived experience, since the movement of bodies through space is an important feature of people's perception of the world and their relationship to others and objects in the world. This concern with space is also apparent in Foucault's work, as discussed above. Foucault brings to his account of space an acknowledgement of its social and political dimensions, the way in which space is infused with power relations, something Merleau-Ponty overlooks. However, Foucault's work lacks any sense of how people experience space, how they use it and move through it; this can be found in phenomenology. For Merleau-Ponty, we are always subjects in space but our experience of it comes from our movement around the world and our grasping of objects in that space through perceptual awareness.

It may seem difficult at first to apply these phenomenological concepts, as a philosophical method, to the analysis of the dressed body. However, in bringing embodiment to the fore and emphasizing that all human experience comes out of our bodily position, Merleau-Ponty offers some very useful insights for the analysis of dress as situated bodily practice. Dress in everyday life is always located spatially and temporally: when getting dressed one orientates oneself to the situation, acting in particular ways upon the body. However, one does not act upon the body as if it were an inert object but as the envelope of the self. Instead, our bodies are, in Merleau-Ponty's words quoted above, 'the visible form of our intentions', indivisible from a sense of self. What, therefore, could be more visible an aspect of the body/self than dress? In unifying body/self and in focusing on the experiential dimensions of being located in a body, Merleau-Ponty's analysis demonstrates how the body is not merely a textual entity produced by discursive practices but is the active and perceptive vehicle of being.

There are, however, a number of problems with Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology. First, he neglects gender. The body moves through time and space with a sense of itself as gendered and this is the reason why the spaces of the public realm of work are experienced differently by women and men and why the presentation of the body through dress is also experientially different. Furthermore, as argued earlier, women are more likely to be identified with the body than men and this may generate differential experiences of embodiment: it could be argued that women are more likely to develop greater body consciousness and greater awareness of themselves as embodied than men whose identity is less situated in the body. Second, Merleau-Ponty's approach remains philosophical: as a method, it cannot be easily applied to the analysis of the social world.

Despite these problems, however, both Crossley (1995a) and Csordas (1993) see much potential in Merleau-Ponty's approach and look to the works of Goffman and Bourdieu respectively; the latter two draw some inspiration from phenomenology but develop approaches to embodiment which are sociological rather than philosophical in that they are grounded in empirical evidence of practice. The following discussion applies phenomenological concepts to the study of dress and draws not only on Merleau-Ponty but the work of these two sociologists in order to suggest some of the ways in which the study of dress might approach it as an embodied practice.

Dress and embodiment The phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty provides one way of understanding the operations of dress as it is constituted and practised in everyday life. The experience of dress is a subjective act of attending *to* one's body and making the body an object of consciousness and is also an act of attention *with* the body. Understanding dress then means understanding this constant dialectic between body and self: it requires, as Merleau-Ponty suggests, recognizing that 'The body is the vehicle of being in the world, and having a body is, for a living creature to be involved in a definite environment, to identify oneself with certain projects and to be continually committed to them' (1981: 82).

By adopting Merleau-Ponty's notion of the dialectical nature of body/self, it is possible to examine the *unity* of the body and the self and to explore how these constitute each other. Getting dressed involves different levels of consciousness in terms of how one thinks about the body and how to present it. We are sometimes aware of our bodies as objects to be looked at, if entering particular social spaces, while at other times and in other spaces, such as at home, we do not tune into our bodies as objects to be looked at. This tuning into the

body and awareness of the body as an object when in public spaces is similar to Goffman's notion of 'front stage' (1971): in public spaces we may feel ourselves to be on view, while when alone at home we are 'back stage'. In certain circumstances one might also be made self-conscious of appearance and dress if, say, dressed inappropriately. If dress is varied and always 'situated' (i.e. directed towards very different situations), then it might be that there are some moments when the act of getting dressed constitutes an unreflective act – analogous with grocery shopping or picking up children from school – and others when the act of dressing is brought to consciousness and reflected upon – such as dressing for a job interview or important meeting. The different practices of dress therefore raise phenomenological questions about the nature of consciousness of self, for example about how one makes oneself an object of attention. Tseëlon's (1997) study seems to confirm that there are different states of attending to dress and appearance. Asked to describe their dress for different occasions, the women she interviewed identified a range of situations which varied according to the degree to which they attend to and are aware of their dress: the highest degree of self-consciousness of appearance was manifest in very formal occasions such as weddings or job interviews, while moving around the home, or doing the weekly shopping, had rather lower levels of attention. Although she does not draw on phenomenology to articulate an analysis of body consciousness, her findings can be used to demonstrate how appearance and thus dress are subject to varying degrees of consciousness according to the situation. Consciousness of bodily appearance is gendered: Berger (1972) has suggested that women more than men view their bodies as objects 'to be looked at' and this may indeed inform the choices women make when getting dressed for some situations. Tseëlon's (1997) analysis of women's relationships to their appearance would also seem to illustrate the different levels of body consciousness that inform women's dress choices. The women she interviewed indicate that they are conscious of self and appearance in complex ways: tuning in and out of consciousness, they are at times lost in the temporality of the action and at other times acutely aware of the action.

These patterns of body consciousness and dress practice are not individualistic, although they may be experienced acutely by individuals. However, as Tseëlon (1997) identifies, there are practices of dressing that operate above the level of the individual and must be seen as social and cultural. As I argued at the beginning of this chapter, dress is a technical and practical accomplishment which draws on accumulated social and cultural knowledge. In my analysis

of power-dressing (Entwistle 1997b, 2000) I argue that it is a practice of dress that has to be learnt, sometimes from experiences of the workplace, sometimes explicitly through courses offered by image consultants. Many professions and careers are still male dominated and, for some women attempting to climb the ladder in particular institutions, it is important to attend to the body and dress very carefully so as to 'manage' or limit the potential sexuality of their bodies.

Understanding dress in everyday life requires a consideration of the socially constructed categories of experience, namely time and space. Both time and space order our sense of self in the world, our relationships and encounters with others, and indeed our mode of attending to our bodies and the bodies of others through dress. When getting dressed, whether unreflective or not, one constitutes self as a series of continuous 'nows'. The everyday practice of getting dressed involves conscious awareness of time because to engage with the experience of dress (in the west at least) one cannot usually avoid the temporal constraints of fashion. The experience of fashion imposes an external sense of time: fashion changes, indeed fashion is by definition temporal. Time is socially constructed by the fashion system through the circle of collections, shows and seasons which serve to halt the flow of 'now' by means of projections into the future. Fashion orders the experience of self and the body in time, and this ordering of time must be accounted for in the consideration of subjective modes of attending to one's body through clothing and style. The fashion system, particularly fashion journalism, constantly freezes the flow of everyday practices of dress and orders it into distinct entities of past, present and future ('this winter, brown is the new black', or 'forget last year's lime-green, cool beige is the colour to wear this summer'). The self, while experiencing an undifferentiated internal time, is also forever being 'caught', frozen, temporally fixed by fashion. One only has to think of the discomfort which is commonly felt when looking at old photographs of oneself in clothes which are no longer fashionable to see how fashion imposes a sense of time onto the experience of the adorned self. This moment of reflection on the presentation of self is a moment when the internal *durée*, the internal flow of time, is halted or disrupted and the self as experienced in the 'now' has to reflect upon the 'old' presented self. In this way, then, a sociology of dress and the practices of the fashion industry could use these phenomenological terms to look at how the experience of attending to and expressing the body is socially and temporally constituted.

Space is the other crucial dimension of our experience of our bodies and identity. While Foucault's analysis looks at space in

relation to social order and, ultimately, power, a phenomenological analysis of space such as that offered by Merleau-Ponty considers how we grasp external space via our bodily situation or 'corporeal or postural schema'; thus, 'our body is not in space like things; it inhabits or haunts space' (1976: 5). The concern with space in the work of both Foucault and Merleau-Ponty, albeit different in methodological viewpoint, is one of the points of contact Crossley (1996) identifies between the two theorists. One could argue that in terms of dress both conceptions of space – how it is ordered and how it is experienced – need to be acknowledged and here Goffman's work is particularly useful. Space is both external to individuals, in that it imposes particular rules and norms upon them, and internal to individuals, in that it is experienced and indeed transformed by them. There is a moral order to the social world that imposes itself upon individuals who generally come to recognize that there are 'right' and 'wrong' ways of being in a space, 'correct' and 'incorrect' ways of appearing (and dressing). In this respect, Goffman's work owes much to the ideas of Emile Durkheim, who argued that social life is not only functionally ordered but morally regulated too. To be a 'good' person requires conformity to this moral order: when dressing, we have to orientate ourselves to different spaces which impose particular sorts of rules on how to present ourselves. When we fail to conform we risk censure or disapproval: the female guest at a wedding so daring as to wear white is often met with the disapproving eye of relatives who regard this as rude or blatantly disregarding to the bride. In his acknowledgement of the moral and experiential dimensions of space, Crossley (1995a) argues that Goffman takes the analysis of bodily demeanour in social situations further than either Mauss or Merleau-Ponty. He notes that Goffman develops Mauss's idea of techniques of the body, not only recognizing that such things as walking are socially structured, but considering the situation in which an activity such as walking takes place and how walking is not only a part of the interaction order, but serves also to reproduce it. Thus, for Goffman, the spaces of the street, the office, the shopping mall, operate with different rules and determine how we present ourselves and how we interact with others. Space is also experientially different according to the time of day: at night the street is threatening and our perceptual awareness is sharper than in the daytime and the zone around our bodies is widened and monitored more closely. Goffman reminds us of the territorial nature of space and describes how we have to negotiate crowds, dark quiet spaces and so on. Another important point to bear in mind is that action transforms space: encountering

objects and others is about the negotiation of space. Because his sense of space is both social and perceptual, Goffman (1972) provides a link between the structuralist/post-structuralist analysis of space delineated by Douglas (1979a) and Foucault (1977) in terms of social order and regulation and the phenomenological analysis of space as experiential. Crossley (1995b) suggests that while Merleau-Ponty is good at articulating spatiality and the perception of it, Goffman provides concrete accounts of how this occurs in the social world.

This account of space as structuring movement and presentation of self and as something that individuals have to grasp and interpret is valuable to an account of dress as a situated bodily practice. Dress forms part of the micro-social order of most social spaces and when we dress we have to orientate ourselves to the implicit norms of these spaces: is there a code of dress we have to abide by? who are we likely to meet? what activities are we likely to perform? how visible do we want to be? (do we want to stand out in the crowd or blend in?) and so on. We may not always be aware of all these issues consciously; indeed only some circumstances, such as formal situations, demand a high degree of body/dress consciousness. However, even when not attending to these issues consciously, we internalize particular rules or norms of dress which we routinely employ unconsciously. Spaces are also gendered: women may have to think more carefully about how they appear in public than men, at least in some situations; and how women experience public spaces such as offices, boardrooms, quiet streets at night, is likely to be different to how men experience them. I have argued elsewhere (Entwistle 1997a) that the professional woman is more likely to be conscious of her body and dress in public spaces of work than at home or even in her private office. Space is experienced territorially by professional women who routinely talk of putting on their jacket to go to meetings and when walking around their workplace, but taking it off when in the privacy of their office (the reason being to cover the breasts so as to avoid sexual glances from men). As this example illustrates, spaces at work carry different meanings for women and they have developed particular strategies of dress for managing the gaze of others, especially men, in public spaces at work. In a similar way, women dressing up for a night out might wear a coat to cover up an outfit that might otherwise make them feel vulnerable on the street. In a night-club, short skirts and skimpy tops might be perfectly appropriate (depending on the wearer's confidence and/or intentions), but on a quiet street late at night, the same clothing might be experienced differently and make one feel vulnerable. The space imposes its own structures onto the individual who, in her turn, may come up with strategies of dress aimed at managing this space.

Crossley (1995a) suggests that there are many other fruitful connections to be made between Goffman and Merleau-Ponty. He suggests that both depart from the Cartesian dualism central to much classical sociological thought. Goffman's analysis (1971) examines the crucial role the body plays in social interaction. His work (1971, 1972, 1979) highlights how 'presentation of self in everyday life' is embodied. The body as the vehicle of the self has to be 'managed' in daily interaction and failure to manage one's body appropriately can result in embarrassment, ridicule and/or stigma. This performative aspect of self is particularly useful for understanding and interpreting dress practice. Davis argues that dress frames the embodied self, serving as 'a kind of visual metaphor for identity and, as pertains in particular to the open society of the west, for registering the culturally anchored ambivalence that resonates within and among identities' (1992: 25). In other words, not only is our dress the visible form of our intentions, but in everyday life dress is the insignia by which we are read and come to read others. Dress is part of the presentation of self; ideas of embarrassment and stigma play an important part in the experience of dress in everyday life and can be applied to discuss the ways in which dress has to 'manage' these as well as the way dress may sometimes be the source of our shame. However, the ridicule is not simply that of personal *faux pas*, but the shame of failing to meet the standards required of one by the moral order of the social space. A commonly cited dream for many people is the experience of suddenly finding oneself naked in a public place: dress, or the lack of it in this case, serves as a metaphor for feelings of shame, embarrassment and vulnerability in our culture as well as indicating the way in which the moral order demands that the body be covered in some way. Dressed inappropriately, we feel vulnerable and embarrassed, as is the case when our dress 'fails' us on finding that in a public place we've lost a button, stained our clothes or that our flies are undone. These examples illustrate the way in which dress is part of the micro-order of social interaction and intimately connected to a (rather fragile) sense of self. Dress is therefore a crucial dimension in the articulation of personal identity (a theme explored in more detail in chapter 4). Understanding dress in everyday life requires, therefore, looking not only at how individuals turn to their bodies but how dress operates between individuals as an inter-subjective experience as well as a subjective one. This returns me to the theme with which I opened this chapter, namely that dress is both a social and an intimate activity.

***Dress, embodiment and* habitus** Bourdieu's work (1984, 1989, 1994) offers another potentially useful sociological analysis of embodiment, which not only builds a bridge between approaches that prioritize either objective structures or subjective meanings, but provides a way of thinking through dress as a situated practice. Bourdieu is critical of approaches that do not acknowledge the dialectic relationship between social structures on the one hand and agency on the other. Objectivists, he argues, impose upon the world reified structures and rules which are seen to be independent from agency and practice, but breaking from these structures should not result in subjectivism 'which is quite incapable of giving an account of the necessity of the social world' (1994: 96). His 'theory of practice' is an attempt to develop a dialectic between these two.

His notion of the *habitus* marks an attempt to overcome the either/or of objectivism and subjectivism. The *habitus* is 'a system of durable, transposable dispositions' that are produced by the particular conditions of a class grouping (1994: 95). These dispositions are embodied: they relate to the way in which bodies operate in the social world. All class groupings have their own *habitus*, their own dispositions which are acquired through education, both formal and informal (through family, schooling and the like). The *habitus* is therefore a concept that links the individual to social structures: the way we come to live in our bodies is structured by our social position in the world, in particular for Bourdieu, our class position. Taste is one obvious manifestation of the *habitus* and, as the word taste itself would seem to indicate, it is a highly embodied experience. Taste forms part of the bodily dispositions of a class grouping: tastes for particular foods, for example caviar, are said to be 'acquired' (i.e. they are learnt, developed or nurtured) and are indicative of class position. In this way, the *habitus* is the objective outcome of particular social conditions, 'structured structures', but these structures cannot be known in advance of their lived practice. Thus, the notion of lived practice is not individualistic, it is more than 'simply the aggregate of individual behaviour' (Jenkins 1992). According to McNay (1999), in foregrounding embodiment in his notion of the *habitus* and in arguing that power is actively reproduced through it, Bourdieu provides for a more complex and nuanced analysis of the body than Foucault, whose 'passive body' is inscribed with power and an effect of it. The potential of the *habitus* as a concept for thinking through embodiment is that it provides a link between the individual and the social: the way we come to live in our bodies is structured by our social position in the world but these structures are reproduced only through the embodied actions of individuals. Once acquired, the *habitus* enables the generation of practices that are constantly adaptable to the conditions it meets.

Bourdieu's theoretical and methodological perspective is useful for overcoming the bias towards texts but not practices which, as I argue in chapter 2, runs through much of the literature on fashion. His work also sets out concepts useful for a study of dress as situated bodily practice: dress in everyday life cannot be known in advance of practice by examination of the fashion industry or fashion texts alone. Choices over dress are always defined within a particular context: the fashion system provides the 'raw material' of our choices but these are adapted within the context of the lived experience of the woman, her class, race, age, occupation and so on. Dress in everyday life is a practical negotiation between the fashion system as a structured system, the social conditions of everyday life such as class, gender and the like as well as the 'rules' or norms governing particular social situations. The outcome of this complex interaction cannot be known in advance precisely because the *habitus* will improvise and adapt to these conditions. The notion of the *habitus* as a durable and transposable set of dispositions allows some sense of agency: it enables us to talk about dress as a personal attempt to orientate ourselves to particular circumstances and thus recognizes the structuring influences of the social world on the one hand, and the agency of individuals who make choices as to what to wear on the other.

The *habitus* is useful for understanding how dress styles are gendered and how gender is actively reproduced through dress. However much gendered identity has been problematized and however much gender roles may have changed, gender remains entrenched within the body styles of men and women or, as McNay puts it, 'embedded in inculcated, bodily dispositions' which are 'relatively involuntary, pre-reflexive' (1999: 98). To return to the issue of dress at work, it is apparent that there are gendered styles of dress within the workplace, especially the white collar and professional workplace. Here we find that the suit is the standard 'masculine' dress and, while women have adopted suits in recent years, theirs differ in many respects from men's. Women have more choices of dress in that they can, in most workplaces, wear various skirts or trousers with their jackets; there is also a wider range of colour than the usual black, grey, navy of most male suits for the conventional office and a wider range still of jewellery and other decorative accessories (Molloy 1980; Entwistle 1997a, 1997b, 2000).

Significantly, women's adoption of tailored clothes has to do with the orientation of women's bodies to the context of the male

workplace and its *habitus* which designates the suit as the standard 'uniform'. In this environment, the suit works to obscure the male body, hiding its sexed features, as Collier (1998) has argued. Women's movement into this sphere, as secretaries and later as professionals, required them to adopt a similar need for a uniform to designate them as workers and thus as public as opposed to private figures. However, as discussed in chapter 6, the feminine body is always, potentially at least, a sexual body and women have not been able to escape this association entirely, despite their challenge to tradition and the acquisition, in part, of sexual equality. In other words, women are still seen as located in the body, whereas men are seen as transcending it. Thus, while a woman can wear a tailored suit much the same as a man's, her identity will always be that of a 'female professional', her body, her gender being outside the norm 'masculine' (Sheppard 1989, 1993, Entwistle 2000). This is not to say that women are embodied and men are not, but that cultural associations do not see men embodied in the way that women are. Therefore, understanding women's dress for the professional workplace, how they come to wear the clothes they do, requires situating their bodies within a very particular social space and acknowledging the workings of a particular *habitus*.

As a theoretical and methodological perspective Bourdieu's *habitus* is useful for understanding the dressed body as the outcome of situated bodily practices. The strength of Bourdieu's account is that it does not see dress as the outcome of either oppressive social forces on the one hand, or agency on the other: instead it drives a steady course between determinism and voluntarism: as McNay argues, 'it yields a more dynamic theory of embodiment than Foucault's work which fails to think through the materiality of the body and thus vacillates between determinism and voluntarism' (1999: 95). Bourdieu provides an account of subjectivity which is both embodied, unlike Foucault's passive body and his 'technologies of the self', and which is active in its adaptation to the *habitus*. As such, it enables an account of dress which does not fall into voluntarism and assume that one is free to fashion oneself autonomously. Polhemus's analysis of 'streetstyle' (1994) is illustrative of such an approach to fashion and dress which has tended to define recent work in this area. In his idea of the 'supermarket of style', Polhemus argues that the mixing of youth culture 'tribes' in recent years has meant less clearly differentiated boundaries between groups, while his image of the supermarket suggests that young people are now free to choose from a range of styles as if they were displayed on supermarket shelves. However, such emphasis on free and creative expression glosses over the

structural constraints of class, gender, location and income that set material boundaries around young people, as well as the constraints at work in a variety of situations that serve to set parameters around dress choice.

This chapter has set out the theoretical framework for a sociology of dress as situated bodily practice. Such an approach requires acknowledging the body as a social entity and dress as the outcome both of social factors and individual actions. Foucault's work may contribute to a sociology of the body but is limited by its inattention to the lived body and its practices, and to the body as the site of the 'self'. Understanding dress in everyday life requires understanding not just how the body is represented within the fashion system and its discourses on dress, but also how the body is experienced and lived and the role dress plays in the presentation of the body/self. Abandoning Foucault's discursive model of the body does not, however, mean abandoning his entire thesis. This framework, as shown above, is useful for understanding the structuring influences on the body and the way in which bodies acquire meaning in particular contexts.

Dress involves practical actions directed by the body upon the body, resulting in ways of being and ways of dressing, for example ways of walking to accommodate high heels, ways of breathing to accommodate a corset, ways of bending in a short skirt and so on. In this way, the analysis of dress as embodied and situated practice enables us to see the operations of power in social spaces (and in particular how this power is gendered) and how power impacts upon the lived body and results in particular strategies on the part of individuals. I have attempted to provide such an account in my own research (Entwistle 1997a, 1997b, 2000), which examines the way in which power-dressing operates as a discourse on how the career woman should dress for the professional workplace and how such a discourse, with its array of 'rules', becomes translated into actual dress practice in the everyday life of a number of career women. In sum, the study of dress as situated practice requires moving between, on the one hand, the discursive and representational aspects of dress and the way the body/dress is caught up in relations of power, and on the other, the embodied experience of dress and the use of dress as a means by which individuals orientate themselves to the social world.