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Alison L Goodrum, Ph.D., is a fashion theorist and dress historian specializing in sports- and leisure-wear of the Interwar Era. She is most known for her work on Britishness (see *The National Fabric*, Bloomsbury), the history of American sportswear, traditional rural dress, and equestrian material culture including the side-saddle habit. She blogs about her research at: www.stylestakesproject.wordpress.com

The dress issue part two: Introduction

It is my pleasure to introduce this, the second of two parts, which together comprise the *Annals of Leisure Research* special on dress. The very fact that this special issue runs to two instalments is worth noting since it suggests a field of scholarship that is as vibrant as it is fertile. If strength comes in numbers, then the articles comprising *The Dress Issue* collectively stake a firm claim to the territory concerned with the leisuring of dress and the dressing of leisure. The ten research articles that form *The Dress Issue* (the sum of both parts one and two) lay testimony to this. They traverse all manner of subjects, examples and approaches as well as all manner of dress. For example, part one assembled articles on the dress of *sporting* leisure and featured critical discourses on dress objects as far ranging as Victorian swimming costumes, contemporary branded yoga pants, high performance wetsuits, novelty tie dyed t-shirts and traditional equestrian turn out. Part two of *The Dress Issue* is equally as diverse in its offerings and is themed, for want of a better way of putting it, around dress and non-sporting recreation. Additionally, part two includes – indeed, is headed up by – a critical commentary essay authored by Steven Miles on the ‘age of presumption’. Miles’s stimulating contribution sets the pace for this instalment of the special issue.

My intention is not to repeat everything from my previous, extended, introductory essay that served as an opener to part one. In that essay I laid out some of the touch points that dress and leisure seem to have shared, or share, in common (such as the body and industry) and I went on to offer up some suggestions for future areas of research (for example the sensorial and experiential). My intention with this editorial essay is to draw attention not only to the vibrancy and range of dress topics and dress types represented in the articles but also to highlight the vibrancy and range of methods taken by the authors in researching them. Showcased here are scholarly approaches drawn from, and inspired by, design practice,

ethnography, cultural geography and social psychology, all of which promote the possibilities in, and for, ‘the doing’ of dress research in leisure studies as an interdisciplinary canon. I am especially pleased that this part of the special issue includes two articles (by Twigger Holroyd and Hindle *et al*) grounded in creative co-production and the experience of making. Projects built around the study of dress (as both a material and cultural form) lend themselves readily to the use and application of such creative methods of critical exploration. It makes sound sense to use the creative process as a conduit for researching a creative field. Germane is the proposition (the provocation, perhaps?) from Ingold (2007, 3) on the value of making in, and as, knowledge production. He asks:

might we not learn more about the material composition of the inhabited world by engaging quite directly with the stuff we want to understand...could not such engagement – working practically *with* materials – offer a more powerful procedure of discovery than an approach bent on the abstract analysis of things already made?

Making things as a mode of discovery and the use of creative research methods in social enquiry is championed, too, by Gauntlett (2007, 2011). He explains that these methods, on which he has drawn extensively in his own studies of media audiences and users of digital technology, involve participants (posited as active collaborators rather than passive respondents) being asked to make something as part of the research process so that ‘an individual is given the opportunity to reflect, and to make their thoughts, feelings or experiences manifest and tangible’ (2011, 3). He goes on to supply the following, insightful, explanation on the synergy between doing and knowing:

...thinking and making are aspects of the same process. Typically, people mess around with materials, select things, experimentally put parts together, rearrange, play, throw bits away, and generally manipulate the thing in question until it approaches something that seems to communicate meanings in a satisfying manner. This rarely seems to be a matter of ‘making what I thought at the start,’ but rather a process of discovery and having ideas *through* the process of making. In particular, taking *time* to make something, using the hands, g[ives] people the opportunity to clarify thoughts or feelings, and to see the subject-matter in a new light.

In the first of the research articles featured in this part of the special issue, Amy Twigger Holroyd uses making to explore the sometimes overlooked, mundane, clothing habits of seven women with a shared interest in knitting as a leisure practice. Her study is driven by an action research agenda and a desire to respond to the ‘grand challenge’ of sustainability (and, specifically, the reduction of waste through recycling and re-using) in the clothing industry’s supply chain. Along with qualitative research methods, the design of Twigger Holroyd’s study includes an experimental, practice-based, element in which participants are introduced to the process of re-knitting (the repairing and reworking of garments). The transformation of garments through re-knitting techniques is intended both to promote mending as a pleasurable activity rather than a chore and to offer alternative ways of engaging with fashion other than through the purchase of new clothing. The results of the experiment, along with a discussion of shopping, sorting, making and mending, are detailed in Twigger Holroyd’s fascinating article.

The highly original article by Sian Hindle, Rachael Colley and Anne Boulton examines the little researched topic of art jewellery: a striking form of conceptual adornment that is

radically different in both appearance and purpose to the pretty, precious, traditional items of jewellery most commonly worn by women in Anglo-European culture. In their article, they present the findings of their *Strange Pleasures* project, which sought to explore the ways in which a group of women responded to the embodied and performative experience of trying on art jewellery. The article supplies a detailed account of the creative research methods used in the *Strange Pleasures* study, capturing the women's responses in an interactive manner through a novel 'annotated silhouette drawing' technique and the collaborative production of photographic portraits and self-portraits. The playfulness implicit to art jewellery and the fun to be enacted when, and through, wearing it, are used by Hindle *et al* to set up an argument around adornment as a leisure experience - one in which women may explore and construct new, if fleeting, self-identities and behaviours.

Shifting focus, Emma Spence transports us through her article to the rarefied world of the superrich and the selling of luxury yachts in the exclusive environs of West Palm Beach, Florida. Drawing on auto-ethnographic and participatory techniques, Spence delivers a richly textured account of her time as a broker's assistant at a high end boat show. We share in Spence's dilemmas over how to identify and socially classify the many visitors to the event, seeking out potential wealthy purchasers from the crowds of tourists, locals and enthusiasts. Spence adopts Bourdieuan theory to frame her observations, teasing out the significance of certain status-enhancing adornments and material goods worn on the bodies of potential clients in the mobilization of cultural capital. Much of Spence's account is reflective and critically considers her own positionality across a range of class and cultural encounters. These challenges in reading and interpreting the appearance of others appropriately and of having the requisite knowledge of material and sartorial signifiers to do so invokes some

classic themes in dress studies concerning clothing as non-verbal language and, relatedly, the embodied performance of status.

Michael O'Regan's insightful discussion picks up on, and complements, several of the points made by Spence. For example, both articles explore the idea of the dressed body as a text that communicates messages, to be read and re-read, about the wearer's (fluid and malleable) identity. Both articles, too, are influenced by, and endorse, the work of Bourdieu and both articles also present 'thick' descriptions of particular leisure cultures and their associated style tribes based on sustained periods of participatory fieldwork. However, in sharp contrast to Spence's offering, O'Regan's focus is on the low budget, counter-cultural clothing of the Western backpacker on the trail through Nepal. Using what he describes as a form of 'methodological bricolage', O'Regan mixes his own first hand experiences with colorful case studies of those he encountered *en route*. He unpicks the subtle nuances of backpackers' clothing codes, illustrating how the extent of assimilation – of belonging - both to backpacker culture and to local culture is signalled through embodied and material cues.

Finally, Dina Smith and José Blanco introduce us to what they term as 'historically-inspired dress' and they discuss the experiences and motivations of a number of its wearers. Their article is informed by sociological and symbolic interactionist stances and seeks to establish the motivations for wearing garments such as, say, Victorian waistcoats or 1950s sweaters as a form of dress in contemporary, everyday, leisure settings and on a near-daily basis (rather than at historical re-enactment events or on special occasions). Smith and Blanco supply a rigorous and finely-granulated analysis of case studies from twelve participants. The findings of their study suggest that wearers of historically-inspired dress are driven by a complexity of motivations that run the gamut from a love of history through to the pursuit of a flattering

body shape. In turn, and more broadly, Smith and Blanco's study serves to underscore the complexity of the relationship between dress, social identity, leisure and the communication of self.

Despite its wide and varied subject coverage, *The Dress Issue* makes no claim to be definitive in its consideration of the connections between dress and leisure mapped in its pages. Rather, and as I noted in my previous editorial essay, the aim of this special issue is to stimulate enthusiasm about, to exhibit the potential in, and to call for a consolidation of, research on dress as a rich trajectory for leisure studies. There remains plenty more to consider, especially as dress, just like leisure, is posited here as an irreducible socio-cultural system: dynamic and changing constantly in definition, form and function. As Harvey (1995, 17) puts it, dress may be appreciated as 'the complication of social life made visible.'

References

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