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# FASHION STATEMENTS

ON STYLE, APPEARANCE,  
AND REALITY



EDITED BY  
RON SCAPP  
AND  
BRIAN SEITZ



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## Fashion Statements

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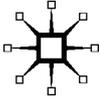
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*Edited by*  
Ron Scapp  
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FASHION STATEMENTS

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## INTRODUCTION

### *Just Looks*

RON SCAPP AND BRIAN SEITZ

Sometimes the way things look is just the way things are. Sometimes looks don't count for much, but sometimes the way a thing or a person looks accounts for just about everything. Sometimes looks are utterly unique, sometimes not—think here of the distinction between fashion and style, not to mention the complicated, if somewhat arbitrary, split between chic and hip? Sometimes, ironically, “tradition” itself is fashionable, that is, of the moment: on the streets of London and Paris, for example, one observes not only vogues for traditional bourgeoisie clothes but also second- and third-generation Anglo-Pakistani and Franco-Algerian youth who were raised in contemporary households but have adopted, with a certain self-conscious swagger, the garb of “traditional” Islam.

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What is the difference or connection between fashion designed and fashion worn? What is fashion? Or more precisely, to ask an old question, what is “it” all about? Nothing relative in our opinion; no so-called social constructs at work here.

Ontological by design, maybe fashion is simply one way that self-consciousness addresses or manifests itself, particularly in the modern period.<sup>1</sup> But in recent years self-consciousness has acquired a wildly accelerated and fetishistic profile, one draped, as it were, on the glossy armature that fashion displays: not just bodies but billboards, magazines,

reality TV, films, and others—an entire system, one might say, reinforced and shadowed by the ever increasing legitimacy of popular culture as a domain for serious theoretical investigation and philosophical consideration. Of obvious note, for example, are Gilles Lipovetsky's *The Empire of Fashion*, Lars Svendsen's *Fashion: A Philosophy*, Malcolm Barnard's *Fashion as Communication*,<sup>2</sup> and then the staggering array of books published by Valerie Steele alone!<sup>3</sup>

No longer, for instance, do men and women simply admire, buy, and wear suits, but theoreticians (both men and women) write books about suits,<sup>4</sup> and analyses of those who bought them. Meanwhile, just as academia takes up fashion ("fashion studies"), its well-worn disciplines get transformed into brand names for fashion products: Philosophy, Theory, and Anthropologie. No longer do corporations simply market fashion products; they now generate high-profile controversies with their marketing designs rather than the designs of their product. Stated differently, "branding" circumnavigates and simultaneously bridges what was once the difference between marketing and the product, the difference, that is, between showing and wearing.

Top female fashion models—supermodels—have been associated with certain *looks* and have held celebrity status for some time (Twiggy was the "original" waif). But now there are entire magazines devoted to the models themselves, a celebration not just of what is being worn on the runways, but of the individuals who wear what is being worn. And who in some cases in fact get worn out: career casualties—wearing thin, here, is not just an expression but a state of being. For example, take Kate Moss, who's had her episodes and recoveries, and yet who now fronts her own collection at Topshop.

Here, where the individuality on display in magazines is supposed to really matter, it appears that at the height of fashion, individuality can paradoxically be produced and reproduced ad nauseum and, therefore, erased at the very moment of its appearance. This wildly ambiguous repetition and erasure occurs from the standpoint of the fashion follower as well as of the model whose body gets overexposed (a body that is by definition always apparently *just so*). There's *Top Model* (published by *Elle*), but then there's also *America's Next Top Model* (hosted by the "fierce" Tyra Banks), and BBC3's *Missing Top Model*, a show in which disabled women compete with ambitions of glamor. Neither of these is as interesting as *Project Runway*, where the focus is on the drama and melodrama of creation. Then, of course, there is the plethora of films about fashion, from *The Devil Wears Prada* to *Valentino: The Last*

*Emperor* and *The September Issue*, not to mention the now historically and stylistically trailblazing *Unzipped*.

In the backdrop of this ubiquitous dynamic, one of the fundamental tensions of fashion is generated by the paradox encased in two contrary yet intimately related desires: the will to look special—unique—and the need to look special in a recognizably attractive way (i.e., affirmed as accepted). Or at least this is the case for anyone with fashion anxieties (which we understand, by definition, cannot be universal), and this *is* a universal fashion conflict. While designers endeavor to churn out a “look” if not a brand, they themselves will seldom be caught dead (Alexander McQueen notwithstanding) wearing anything a civilian might be able to identify; they want to represent themselves as *individuals*, a dream ideal of singularity being Adele’s gold dress in Gustav Klimt’s “Portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer” (1907).

Fashion, of course, continues to reflect and project a broad range of social values—it reflects and signals, in our research-driven opinion, the sum total of the aesthetics of social and existential identity: that is, of power, of class, gender, racial and ethnic affiliation, not to mention sex per se. Put another way, fashion reflects all of work and play, what for many amounts to acts of being dressed down or, preferably, of dressing up. It also seems increasingly more and more about itself, just itself. On one level, it is not “about” anything other than what it is. And yet, insofar as it clings to the surfaces of life, fashion is by necessity about everything else. In a word—and words are cover—fashion pretty much covers everything. In fact, for some, fashion might be everything, pure and simple. Whatever it is, fashion is not a metonym, but the thing itself. It is, after all, the way things look and get looked at, the way things appear. As the phenomenologist Edmund Husserl, bolstered by Maurice Merleau-Ponty might put it, we gaze at “the things themselves” precisely because *there is nothing else* (thanks to Jean-Paul Sartre).

Long before phenomenology made its splash and became fashionable, the ridiculously mustachioed Nietzsche eviscerated the opposition between appearance and reality, and there we still are, mask to masks, garment to naked garments (and bodies). Our central philosophical axiom here is that the literal-mindedness of that time-honored opposition between reality and appearance—a product of a confused fantasy—is readily exposed by fashion, itself a product of the play of reality and appearance.

To illustrate, consider the following: there was once a cocaine distributor who sometimes wore a fine Italian suit and tied his long hair

neatly back. When asked about this lifestyle choice, the smartly clad salesman replied, “Hey, I walk into a bank and I wear my Metallica t-shirt, I look like a drug dealer but if I wear a suit, I instantly become a citizen.” No one asked whether he was familiar with Machiavelli’s dictum that “...A prudent man must always follow in the footsteps of great men and imitate those who have been outstanding.”<sup>5</sup> Appear “great,” and it seems that one will be perceived as great: appearances are sometimes the risky armature of effective reality, which runs just as slim as it runs deep. For many contemporary philosophers, “Is that really who you are?” becomes an irrelevant or imprecise metaphysical question—but in the domain of fashion, that same question becomes a profound assertion of one’s state of being: “*That’s so you!*” Thankfully, some philosophers still see this (and for the record, philosophers tend to dress better than they once did).

From modest attempts at being presentable to extravagant endeavors of self-expression cast as style, fashion is thus perhaps the paradigmatic venue by and through which some thing becomes something noticeable or worth noticing, not to mention worth recognizing. And then because of its apparent value—if worn properly—if, in fact, properly signifying, it is how someone becomes noticed by others.

But what about being noticed by one’s self? Isn’t that also enmeshed in the dynamics of *just* being noticed—of possibly, for example, being visually consumed by an other with one eye in the ubiquitous mirror that is life? (Suddenly, Lacan can be understood as part of some full-scale fashion manifesto, maybe the mirror is all that remains of his arcane theoretic acrobatics.) Think for a moment of the convolutions associated with the thought that women “dress” for other women, which, according to some, is to say for themselves—“this is what distinguishes me.” This is why it is always disconcerting or even humiliating to see the woman across the room wearing the same dress as me(!), especially when it is an occasion fueled by fashion, as most are—the surface serving as subtext (vanity of vanities, life does not run very deep). Here, understood within the context of the power of self-presentation, the double appears in the form of replication, and consequently I am simultaneously no longer glowing but merely reilluminated and thus stripped of the visage’s value, and ultimately devastated by this particular fashion disaster. This dynamic is fascinating not only from an anthropological perspective but also reveals much about the constitution of modern subjectivity. Neither the role of recognition in Hegel’s Master/Slave “dialectic” nor the objectification of the Sartrean gaze comes close to capturing the nuances of self-constitution

and deconstruction embodied in the example of—the still historically valid, however embarrassing, phrase—“women’s relation to other women,” and then to themselves through their looks. Even if devoid of almost all of its old meaning, the exclamation “I could just die” still remains part of the currently vexed lexicon of and about women (there is no symmetrical male analogue for this experience, yet).

At the moment of the judgment of the dead depicted toward the end of his *Gorgias*, Plato’s thinking naked. What if, as Nick Pappas intimates in this volume, the antifashion of nudity is dedicated fashion taken to the extreme, the contours of bare skin being the most advanced, seamless garment, animated truth?

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*Fashion Statements* is an attempt to address some of the peculiarities that unfold within the fabric of the domain of appearance(s). At least that’s how it looks to us, as fashionistas and observers of things as yet unaddressed, underdressed, or simply undressed. Take the split that has come to define “west coast versus east coast,” otherwise understood as Hollywood and the rest of the world; but the interesting thing about, for instance, New York City, San Francisco, and Austin is that it really doesn’t matter how you look. Or, rather, it totally matters how *you* look—a distinction apparently lost on those from Century City (the site where Hollywood produces itself, often in unfortunate garments posing as athletic). As noted here by Erin Norris, ultraurban indulgence means you can look *however* you want—you can get by with anything—however, you risk the chance that maybe no one will look at you, or see you the way you long to be seen; maybe you might as well be dead. Pushing further, people who neglect their looks are dead people anyway (professionally, romantically, and existentially, or so we are to infer from the numerous style commentators who make such pronouncements in print and on the air waves—radio and TV, and online) everyone is *looking* now.

After all, looks are life. What else could there be? This question might not always have made sense, but it does now, and so does its opposite. That’s because we also know that looks can kill, and these days having killer looks has grown from idiosyncratic obsessions into a zillion dollar enterprise (the price of jeans and the hegemony of detail!). Thanks to, for example, Argentina and plastic surgery,<sup>6</sup> individuality has been fashioned and refashioned, reborn and killed off—picture a planet on which everyone has the same, perfect nose, and no one dares

to look otherwise, or picture a cyberpunk world in which anyone with the desire can look exactly like a favored celebrity, an image of particularity imploding. The question remains: what else could there be, a nation of unstylish people? It's possible but no longer plausible—the cosmetic knife has already cut that deep. Thanks to television and the Internet, teenagers in Havre, Montana, could *pass* in Seattle since they wear pretty much the same sneakers, jeans, t-shirts, and hairstyles as teens do in Atlanta or DC (but what does pretty much the same mean?). However, this observation does not work when it comes to Bozeman, since women there—nuanced fusion fashion style—tend to dress with more specific flare than they do in northern Montana (the same hot jeans as in any big city yet details frequently include western belt buckles, located just above where it all counts). Women in cities generally and elsewhere (actually just about anywhere according to the fashion industry) dress well and look desirable, an observation that typically does not translate for most men—the patriarchal gaze remains short sighted and distorted, misogynistic and homophobic, redundant and reductive.

All due respects to *GQ*, the gender asymmetry in play is stunning. On the one hand, we know a man who broke up with a woman because he didn't like her taste in shoes. To us, this seems like a very sensible reason, since sensible shoes are not always that enticing. But at the same time—part of the same story—when a women's footwear designer says without hesitation that it doesn't really matter that much what shoes men wear as long as they're nice, the world might as well go into a tailspin, particularly since this position is premised implicitly on the condition that men must nevertheless have some sense of style. Yet let's observe that aside from shifting lapels, buttons, vents, a narrow range of fabrics and the minor yet decisive drama associated with these variations, the basic man's suit has hardly changed in one hundred and fifty years; check out the pinstripes on *Deadwood*; again, it's all in the details, like everything else all there is, details and surfaces. And then when a man wears a tuxedo, he's a double of every other man there, which no inspired woman ever wants to get caught being.

This is one peculiarity of fashion: some are inclined to suggest that fashion has not always been around, that it's a "modern" phenomenon. Of course, we get the necessary sophistication of that fancy theoretical move, but Foucault—we're picturing his ghost talking—might oddly enough disagree since this perspective might implode insofar as it is itself reflective of the necessity of change at the heart of fashion and snags not on a discourse but on a word, "fashion," everyone always

having worn something whether they're pondering it much or not—who has time?—and then on another word, “modern,” which might have appeared many times throughout history. One day people are thinking nothing of wearing sandals made from the skin of stingrays or ostrich by Tony Lamas, the next day Isaac Mizrahi is bitching, “What do they want, a longer short skirt or something? Sorry, we did that last year.”<sup>7</sup> If fashion has become a form of self-consciousness, it was always synonymous with specific forms of subjectivity, even before *it* existed. As soon as people were wearing something, and they have in fact been wearing something ever since, they (we) could *choose* colors, furs, fabrics, decorations, that is, could recognize seasons (like forever!). The Inuit traditionally had no choice but to wear furs, but they did choose how to decorate and wear them. Then, on the other hand, regarding the distinction between spring and summer lines, Nadia Tarr (*Butter by Nadia*) says, “same fabric, different silhouette,” and if that's not nuance who knows what is?

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Long ago, Hippias showed up at the Olympics clothed, so this story goes, in garments all made by his lovely self: his fabrics woven by him, his chiton stitched by him, his sandals threaded together by him, probably his jewelry too. This is a utopian vision, a beauty clothed by himself—beauty clothes itself—clothed to be seen by all others. They—the others—must have appreciated him since otherwise we wouldn't today be imagining what he was wearing, wouldn't be imagining the profile he was cutting that day, that time—not the fashion—a rare revelation of the universal, the glory of the individual busting via style and beauty through the fashion system, neither *Elle* nor *Vogue*, that unique note between the expected and the usual dressed best. At that moment, Hippias must have been more beautiful than anything or anyone.

Nowadays, the beauties are all just looking at each other, some might call it thieving. But in Tokyo, Milan, Paris, St. Petersburg, London, New York, we have come to expect nothing less of beauty (of beauties). It is not a case of stealing per se, instead it is a question of just looking and of taking images away, knowing full well that others are doing the same. Whether it is stealing a look from across a table or the length of a room, the act of taking is a necessary dynamic: the fashion exchange, the glance. We are guilty of nothing more, and nothing less, than a prurient trespassing, an ocular retrieval of the very make up and fabric of another's way of being, crossing the threshold.

So, how do we look today? By 1979 Dick Hebdige had already documented, in his now classic semiology, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*,<sup>8</sup> the sense in which punk had become “just a look,” one that endures in the twenty-first century in the form of business executives and newscasters globally sporting spiky haircuts—and yet the question remains. For some the question is never really answered—cannot be answered—the result of the very dynamic of fashion itself. We are left with little else than fashion statements. Thus these *Fashion Statements* are just one more look at the play between the historical interaction of appearance and reality, in this case of the codes and conventions that state just how things look. We hope that the essays included in *Fashion Statements* provide the reader with yet another look at an intriguing philosophical question, one that refuses to be merely looked at or framed by the traditional oppositions that have adorned the history of philosophy so far.

### Notes

1. The *forms* of the self-consciousness of fashion may change, but it should be noted that consciousness of fashion predates modernity and “modernism” by centuries (cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*).
2. Gilles Lipovetsky, *The Empire of Fashion: Dressing Modern Democracy*, trans. Catherine Porter (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002); Lars Svendsen, *Fashion: A Philosophy* (London: Reaktion Books, 2006), and Malcolm Barnard, *Fashion as Communication* (London: Routledge, 2002).
3. In addition to editing the journal, *Fashion Theory*, Steele has authored and edited, among other books, *The Black Dress* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), *The Red Dress* (New York: Rizzoli, 2001), *The Corset* (Yale University Press, 2004), *The Fan: Fashion and Femininity* (New York: Rizzoli, 2003), with Jennifer Park, *Gothic: Dark Glamour* (Yale, 2008), *Shoes: A Lexicon of Style* (New York: Rizzoli, 2009), and the three-volume *Encyclopedia of Clothing and Fashion* (New York: Scribners, 2004).
4. Anne Hollander, *Sex and Suits: The Evolution of Modern Dress* (Tokyo and New York: Kodansha Globe, 1995).
5. Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. George Bull (New York: Penguin Books, 1982), 9. Cf. also, Nicholas Antongiavanni, *The Suit: A Machiavellian Approach to Men's Style* (HarperBusiness, 2006).
6. Argentina has the highest per capita rate of cosmetic surgery.
7. Douglas Keeve, dir. *Unzipped* (1995).
8. Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London: Routledge, 1981).

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P A R T 1

*New Look*

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C H A P T E R   O N E

*You Cannes Come In Here Dressed Like That:  
A True Story in Two Shoes*

ERIN NORRIS

**I Am a Grown Woman, I Cannes Wear**

**What I Want**

*(Ass to crotch zippered leather pants, wife beater,  
gold shoes, usually.)*

New York Fucking City. A place where you can follow your own rules and dress like a fool if you so choose. You can wear last week's threads with a maxi pad on your head and someone might even press a dollar in your palm for doing so. You can choose to pick from fashion magazines or wear whatever happens to be on top of the clean pile. I have never subscribed to the tribe mentality nor did it have anything to do with the nonchalance that comes with every bag of heroin—but it was exactly that attitude that got me a lead role in Amir Naderi's film "A,B,C... Manhattan" and into the 1997 Cannes Film Festival where my lifelong indifference toward fashion was forever sewn up in one red carpet moment.

**Nice Customs**

*(See-thru child size sleeveless thermal shirt and my most washed  
pair of jeans and rotten Converse.)*

I arrived at the Nice airport alone and was beginning to feel the effects of having snorted my last bag of dope in the taxi en route to JFK.

Copious amounts of airplane booze and an attempt to nap seemed like the only way to forget I would be more than a casual observer in a living edition of Entertainment Tonight. Upon arriving in Nice, I was told I would be picked up upon arrival but was unaware that I was to be whisked away in the official car of the 1997 Cannes Film Festival; a gold Mercedes Benz, festooned with flags and a sharply dressed man servant. I, on the other hand, was in my junkie finest: an airplane ride approved threadbare number begging to be put out of its misery. A garish purple hickey and a halo of filth were my only accessories unwittingly jazzing up my Alphabet City Do-I-really-look-like-I-give-a-fuck?-ness. I needed drugs. Pronto. Along with the fluke of having snagged a lead role in one of the flicks being shown, I was given a few dirty glances but full clearance to slip through customs without a pat down or check. Had I known of this courtesy extended to my decrepit thespian corpse, I certainly would have taken full advantage of being my own mule, ensuring the ensuing big tit comedy of the Cote d'Azur is painless and funny for the full ten days. It was anything but.

### **Croissants and Blisters**

*(One piece tea stained catsuit, most debilitating leopard print heels.)*

Flaky and painful are two choice words to describe the entire Festival du Cannes. The producers procured us a charming villa atop a hill just about a hair too far from the Croisette where all the action was to take place. We were a dirty dozen of East Village denizens thus taking cars like the A-listers was out of the question and, since you couldn't get near the center with one, entirely impractical. So we walked. Down the hill, up the hill—dressed to the nines. For. Every. Function. Since the “secretary on the run” look was one I could never work, or work out, I wore heels (strappy ones) and boots (tall ones) and shoes (hurty ones). All crowd pleasers but foot squeezers and this sister got blisters. Agony was my passenger on a torturous ride to Crippledom via Hobbleville. It was bad enough I had to “look presentable” every waking minute but I wasn't sure how much more I could take before my feet gave out. Hmmm. A little hitlet of dope, the pain would vanish. Scoring was just not going to happen as I was the only junkie in the bunch and I had to figure out how I was going to make it to our premiere a couple more painful days away.

**A Leg and an Armani**

*(Two piece midriff bearing brown number with 8 feet of straps  
to tie any which way and beige ankle boots.)*

I decided to check out the fashion emporiums dominating the High Street. Armed only with a barf bag, some credit cards and not much cash, I hobbled along in search of a shoe of some sort that would allow me to walk, not crawl *le carpet rouge*. I needed something that would strategically slip around the network of raw skin and pus bubbles. Since my once flawless feet now resembled a topographical map of Good Fucking Luck, bejeweled strappy numbers would leave the crowd horrified, wanting more skin coverage, not less for once. I was beginning to think I was destined to crawl, or crawl under a rock with withdrawal symptoms and skip the whole premiere pomp and circumstance when a wedged angel in pale yellow silk beamed from a low plexi shelf in some nondescript shop. Like that moment out of Cinderella, one slip on and magic happened—except “happily ever after” was more like not “hobble for an hour” in my reality. The slope of this Armani wedge shoe felt gentle and stable, the front strap generous enough to cover bandages, yet soft enough to not chafe any more and apparently Courtney Love had a pair in black, I was told, BFD. Yes, this would work indeed not because of Ms. Love but solely because of the love they showed my grieving peds. Even if they cost 700 fucking dollars. This was an indie film, there was no money in it for me ever but thankfully my Publicist/dominatrix careers back home allowed me not to care (too much) and plunk down the plastic, even going for the matching bag for an additional 400 fucking dollars. And I wore them out the store.

**Clothes Make the Man? I Beg to Differ,****Mr. Twain, Unless You Are a Celebrity**

*(“Floating” silver velvet dress with fishing line strap by Elisa Jiminez,  
Yellow silk Armani wedge sandals.)*

The day of our premiere, the villa was all atwitter with nerves; clothes being put on, clothes being discarded. Some had planned for days what they would be wearing, others panicked and got testy with each other. I couldn't give a shit. There were only a couple of options left that I had not worn yet that did not reek of yesterday's boulliabaisse and a night inhaling other peoples' Galoises. Being a realist, I also knew that this fashion

thing really didn't matter—well, at least not to me. Nicole Kidmans we were not, so why kid ourselves like anyone really cares. No one was being hounded by the fashion houses, bribed to wear the latest Dolce or Prada. Not one stylist even knew we existed. Just put something on to cover up your frank and beans and back hair and let's get a move on. I quietly slipped into my little number wishing this would all be over with already. The easy frock was made for me, on me, by a designer friend who hooked me up with everything nice I had for the week. She knew I preferred comfort over style but she excelled in both and happened to give me a great deal on her handiwork as well, so she won.

We were allowed to ride in cars for this evening's event. A good thing, since there would still be time for the shoes to begin to fail me if we were forced to walk to our gala affair. The crowds would part as our flagged car came squeezing through to the theater. Onlookers banged on the cars quickly looking away heartbroken as we were most definitely *not* Catherine Deneuve, Ewan MacGregor, or some other actual person to them. I couldn't resist giving the finger ever other block. I cackled in the absurdity if it all and I forgot for a moment how much I had been shivering from "the sickness."

### **Fuck tha (Fashion)Police**

*(Same outfit as above.)*

We arrive at our corral in front of the theater and are told to wait. Apparently at this point in the carpet hoo-ha, even the Catherine Deneuves and the Ewan MacGregors of the world are told to wait as well. My we have a lot in common! I am getting antsy wondering what the big deal is all about but apparently there is something called "red carpet control," where, like an enema, the intake flow is regulated, lest too many stars flow in at once. They need to savor their moments, smile for the camera, give the obligatory coy pose, the show of the freebie gown and perhaps a practiced wave before being ushered in by their "people." This takes time. My feet were beginning to hurt from simply being told to wait on them for too long and I just wanted in so I could sit and shiver in peace. Finally I get closer to Mr. In Control, an overzealous soldier wannabe outfitted more like a crossing guard than a production assistant. As I approach the carpet's edge, I am given a flick of a white gloved hand. Now "Billie Jean" is not my lover nor booming out of the ether, and I understand this sign to be something more "Stop in the Name of I Have a Problem with the Likes of You" than

“Love.” The Carpet Keeper mutters something in French, which I do not understand. Our French-speaking assistant director at my side quietly leans over and informs me that this man, outfitted from a children’s book, has a problem with my shoes and would prefer if I enter around the side. She explains to him that I have a lead role in the film and we all go in together. If the side door were right there and saved me footsteps, I would gladly have done so even if it meant giving in to some warped Cannes version of “authority.” But it was further, much further and fuck it, I’ve come this far, I am pressing on. He gives me a tooth sucking “tsk” and a wag of his finger and points to my selection of footwear. Realizing what this crap town had been all about all week long, I reached down and flicked the shoe off my foot, thrusting it label up into his flared nostrils, screaming, “They’re FUCKING ARMANI, asshole!” Convinced that I was going to get beaten with a baguette and escorted to the Hospital for Fashion Faux Pas for my outburst, I was shocked when the reaction was, “Oh, Pardon, Pardon,” as the crossing guard bowed and gestured his gloved hand for me to go right ahead and enjoy my subtitled film. Hastily putting the shoe back on, ripping open earlier wounds, I held my head high (and wished I were) and only slightly hobbled up the red carpet toward our first viewing of our film.

### **Back in the New York Groove**

*(Ass to crotch zippered camouflage pants, wife beater,  
yellow Armani wedges.)*

Upon returning home, everyone expected stories of fabulousness, celebrity sightings and shaggings. I could only show them my battle scars on my feet and sum it up with my run in with the Fashion Police. That’s all it was. From time to time, I run into our director, Amir, and being a man in a hurry all of the time, he will rush past me miming a shoe being thrust my way and in his adorable broken English will scream “Fucking Armani!” as he darts off in his comfortable running sneakers looking for his next story. In Cannes, fashion was the law but I fought it with the help of two yellow shoes and continued to proudly wear my heroic foot soldiers here until they died a noble death.

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C H A P T E R   T W O

*The Head Monkey at Paris: Henry David  
Thoreau on Fashion*

DAVID FARRELL KRELL

Thoreau's critique of fashion has always been one of my favorite parts of the *Walden*.<sup>1</sup> Beware of all enterprises that require new clothes! he admonishes, and I have always responded fervently to his admonition—by looking like a slob. Correction: philosopher. Yet something has happened to me, or several things. For one, I fell in love with someone who cared about clothes and had exquisite style and taste. She determined to dress me up and take me out. Had I persisted in my slovenliness, she would have dressed me down. The terrible thing is that I myself began to notice what people were wearing, and now I am ashamed. Why? Puritanism. I was raised to feel contempt for fashion, and whereas other portions of the Puritan program did not take with me that one did. Puritanism and an undeniable sexism. I always felt that a man who paid attention to fashion wasn't much of one. With a woman it was different, of course: a woman could have style—indeed, was expected to have style—along with brains. A woman could have and be everything; indeed, she was expected to be and have it all. She was both object and subject—the philosopher's dream, if the philosopher was a guy. That has not changed much, in spite of feminism. Yet the number of men who have aesthetic intelligence is growing, an intelligence that shapes their sense of beauty and the beauty of their senses. I fear I will never be one of them. The Puritans will laugh over my grave and try to reclaim all of me, but I'll see to it I'm laid out in *FCUK* and not in Land's End, just to give them a hard time. Do clothes

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