THE CAMBRIDGE GLOBAL HISTORY OF FASHION

VOLUME II

From the Nineteenth Century to the Present

EDITED BY CHRISTOPHER BREWARD, BEVERLY LEMIRE AND GIORGIO RIELLO

THE CAMBRIDGE GLOBAL HISTORY OF FASHION

Volume II

Volume II surveys the history of fashion from the nineteenth century to the present day. Covering the period beginning with mass production and ending with calls for sustainability, this volume challenges the meaning of modernity and modernism from a global perspective and reflects on important scholarship that has changed our understanding of the relationship between fashion and colonialism. Empires shifted and new powers rose, with fashion marking and contending with this change. The volume concludes with a critical view of fashion and globalisation, and explores the deep connections between the fashion industry, the global economy, and the politics of production and wearing in the contemporary world.

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The Cambridge Global History of Fashion

Split across two volumes, *The Cambridge Global History of Fashion* provides timely critical analyses of key topics and themes in the history of fashion, dress, and clothing. It foregrounds the trajectories of material and aesthetic transformation, as well as the thematic commonalities across time and space. Featuring over forty essays from experts across the field, the volumes unveil new perspectives on cultural, social, and economic change, and how these changes were expressed through fashion practice. The first volume presents a tight but comprehensive assessment of fashion from antiquity, through the early modern global era to c. 1800, engaging with colonial and imperial themes, as well as race and gender. The second volume advances the critique of 'modernity' from the nineteenth century through the twenty-first century, providing analyses of the impact globalisation had on contemporary dress. This global perspective stands as a landmark work in the history of fashion.

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From Antiquity to the Nineteenth Century
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Volume II
From the Nineteenth Century to the Present
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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi – 110025, India

103 Penang Road, #05–06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment, a department of the University of Cambridge.

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www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108495554

DOI: 10.1017/9781108862349

First published 2023

Printed in the United Kingdom by TJ Books Limited, Padstow Cornwall

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

A Cataloging-in-Publication data record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

ISBN - Set 978 1 108 75265 7 Hardback
ISBN - Volume I 978 1 108 49556 1 Hardback
ISBN - Volume II 978 1 108 49555 4 Hardback

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PREFACE

The Cambridge Global History of Fashion is a collective endeavour. The project was conceived by the editors in 2016 and developed over several years. It started as a conversation on the ways in which a history of fashion unbound from Eurocentric precepts should be framed. Forty-five international authors accepted our invitation to undertake a journey that has seen them exchanging ideas, reading each other's drafts, and sometimes reframing their initial interpretations. We are extremely grateful to all authors and to colleagues who have helped us by reading and commenting on individual chapters.

A work of this size would have been inconceivable without the support of Cambridge University Press whose expertise has been invaluable in shaping these volumes. Yet, the ambition for the publication of a Global History of Fashion is born out of the commitment of the Pasold Research Fund, an institution that in the past sixty years has had a fundamental role in shaping research on the history of textiles, dress, and fashion internationally. This has been achieved through financial support, conferences, a book series in the history of textiles and dress, and – perhaps best known to most – the publication of the journal *Textile History*. These volumes are published as a collaboration between Cambridge University Press and the Pasold Research Fund and follow, after an interval of twenty years, the much-celebrated *Cambridge History of Western Textiles* edited by David Jenkins and published in 2003. *The Cambridge History of Global Fashion* progresses the

Fund's research agenda and marks the sixtieth anniversary of the Pasold Research Fund.

The Cambridge History of Global Fashion is divided into two volumes surveying respectively the period from ancient history to *c.* 1800 (including the European middle ages and the so-called early modern period, *c.* 1500–1800) in volume I, and the period from *c.* 1800 to the present in volume II. Each volume is formed of three parts. Volume I considers the fundamental question of the origins of fashion, challenging Eurocentric explanations that make claims for fashion's emergence in Europe. It shows instead that fashion, in its many variations, finds early expressions in different areas of the world well before the age of European colonialism and imperialism. This is evidenced in chapters that underline the connected nature of fashion and the material and conceptual dialogue between people and regions which were often geographically distant or entangled in complex geo-political events. The volume also considers the plurality of fashion as experienced in different premodern areas of the world and most especially in Afro-Eurasia, including among colonized and subaltern peoples. Volume II moves to the period post-1800, often characterized by narratives of modernity and European dominance. Contributions to this volume challenge such accounts, questioning in the first instance the meaning of modernity and modernism when considered on a global canvas. Secondly, the volume reflects on important scholarship that has changed our understanding of the relationship between fashion and colonialism and promoted decolonized readings of fashion itself. The volume concludes with a critical view of fashion and globalization, and explores the deep connections between the fashion industry, the global economy, and the politics of production and wearing in the contemporary world.

We conceived these two volumes as one work with chapters that should be read in conversation with each other. We decided to connect the volumes visually and conceptually via their covers by using a historical work of art and a contemporary artist's reinterpretation. The re-reading of the past in light of the present and of the present in light of the past is at the core of our work.

Our thanks go to Stana Nenadic (Director), Pat Hudson and Donald Anderson (Chairs) of the Pasold Research Fund, and

Michael Watson and Liz Hanlon at Cambridge University Press. We also thank Helen Clifford without whose editorial expertise this work would not have been completed, and Möira Dato for her assistance in liaising with authors. We also acknowledge the financial assistance of the University of Alberta and the European University Institute.

The editors' collaboration with 45 contributors has been the greatest pleasure of this work. Sadly Djurdja Bartlett, contributor, friend, and fashion scholar well known to many, died suddenly after completing her chapter for this publication. This work is in her memory.

PART IV

Fashion, Modernism, and Modernity

21

FASHIONABLE MASCULINITIES IN ENGLAND AND BEYOND

Renunciation and Dandyism, 1800–1939

CHRISTOPHER BREWARD

The design, production, selling, and wearing of men's clothing through the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries has had a significant impact on the visual culture and social experience of the modern world. It has also determined many of the underlying influences that have contributed to the development and expansion of fashion more generally, not just in terms of the shaping of men's bodies, but also in relation to the dress of women and children.[1] Yet its examination has been relatively neglected for most of the period we might associate with the rise of dress and fashion history as a serious focus of scholarship. It is only over the course of the past two decades that we have seen a flowering of journals, exhibitions, and monographs addressing the role played by the male wardrobe in the fashioning of social relations, taste, and the experience of modernity. My own doctoral work in the 1990s and related publications at the time drew on the 'cultural turn' and a re-focusing of the history of gender to consider the formation of masculinities in relation to patriarchy in a more nuanced way, revealing overlooked patterns of masculine consumption.[2]

[1] Clare Rose, *Making, Selling and Wearing Boys' Clothes in Late Victorian England* (London: Routledge, 2016).

[2] Farid Chenoune, *A History of Men's Fashion* (Paris: Flammarion, 1993); John Harvey, *Men in Black* (London: Reaktion Books, 1995); Christopher Breward, *The Hidden Consumer: Masculinities, Fashion and City Life 1860–1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999); *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body & Culture*, 4/4 (2000); David Kuchta, *The Three-Piece Suit and Modern Masculinity: England, 1550–1850* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Michael Zakim, *Ready-Made Democracy: A History of Men's Dress in the American*

Previous to this, the properties of masculine dress had remained the specialist preserve of economic and business historians (the history of modern industrialization is, after all, a history of the production and distribution of textiles destined, in large part, for military uniforms, workwear, and suits). Art and literary critics, and some designers and curators were likewise engaged in assessments of male dress (sartorial decoration held a special attraction for a generation of commentators in the 1960s and 1970s interested in the formal, aesthetic, and psychological aspects of male costume), but in general the study of men's clothing and the motivations of male consumers were considered a minor aspect of the wider history of fashion.[3]

This chapter draws on the advance in scholarship of the past three decades to consider the arguments around the material, philosophical, and political qualities of men's dress as a fundamental armature for the description and experience of fashion itself. It will trace its status as a vessel for local tradition, trade, and global connection in an age of competing empires; and it will investigate the adaptability of male clothing as an instrument of style and oppositional statement in relation to cultural identity. The functional and symbolic meanings of masculine fashionability are varied and complex. Its forms, particularly that of the English business suit, which over the course of the nineteenth century

Republic, 1760–1860 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); Brent Shannon, *The Cut of His Coat: Men, Dress, and Consumer Culture in Britain, 1860–1914* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2006); Laura Ugolini, *Men and Menswear: Sartorial Consumption in Britain 1880–1939* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2007); Peter McNeil and Vicki Karaminas (eds.), *The Men's Fashion Reader* (Oxford: Berg, 2009); Kate Irwin and Laurie Anne Brewer, *Artist, Rebel, Dandy* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press and Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, 2013); Christopher Breward, *The Suit: Form, Function & Style* (London: Reaktion Books, 2016); Shaun Cole and Miles Lambert, *Dandy Style: 250 Years of British Men's Fashion* (New Haven and London: Manchester Art Gallery and Yale University Press, 2021).

[3] Ellen Moers, *The Dandy: Brummell to Beerbohm* (New York: Viking Press, 1960); Norah Waugh, *The Cut of Men's Clothes 1600–1900* (London: Faber and Faber, 1964); Hardy Amies, *ABC of Men's Fashion* (London: Newnes, 1964); James Laver, *Dandies* (London: Routledge, 1968); David T. Jenkins and Kenneth G. Ponting, *The British Wool Textile Industry, 1770–1914* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1987).

came to concretize a widely shared (and often contested) understanding of 'normative' masculine behaviour, have bequeathed a stubborn lexicon for modern sartorialism which leaves a legacy even in the early twenty-first century (Figure 21.1).

For the century and a half covered here, the narratives within the fashionable male wardrobe of metropolitan Europe and North America, as it was understood in a vastly expanding field of fashion's visual and material culture, illustrate a dynamic tension between seeming continuity and even ossification, and a surprising element of change and adaptation. The evolution of style was often captured in the detail of clothing rather than in radical shifts of form or silhouette, and can be reconstructed through representations including portrait and modern history

Figure 21.1 Eugène Atget, *The Window of a Parisian Men's Outfitters*, photograph, 1926. From *The Studio*, vol. 98, London Offices of the Studio, London, 1929. Hulton Archive: Getty Images 2619192.

painting and graphic art, commercial and amateur photography, fashion plates produced for the trade, literary description in diaries, biographies, travel writing, and novels, and its survival as items in museum collections. On the streets and in the clubrooms of London (the city most closely associated with setting trends in male fashion throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries), early nineteenth-century aristocratic dress was cut close to the body, heavily influenced by military uniform and sporting (particularly equestrian) dress, and already anticipating the rigorous simplification of dark woollen coat, waistcoat and trousers over white linen or cotton shirt that would signify the suit of business attire by the end of the century.[4] The style of the 1810s and 1820s, however, prioritized calf-enhancing and full-length pantaloons (a bridge from the knee-length breeches of the late eighteenth century), swallow and tailcoats shaped to a slim waist, and elaborate neckties around high collars, all in a range of white, buff, blue, and black tones.

By the 1830s, 1840s, and 1850s, the attenuated elegance of the Regency had given way to a more ebullient sense of Romanticism. The fashionable male figure in the first part of Queen Victoria's reign celebrated a relative 'loudness' in pattern, texture, and colour which translated into a greater use of checks and plaids, velvets, furs, and brocades in the trimmings and accessories, and greens, browns, and maroons in the dyes. The latter half of the century, by contrast, saw a retrenchment through the 1860s and 1870s into concealment and constraint: high-buttoning collars at the neck, lowering and capacious waistlines on enveloping frock coats, fuller sleeves and straight stove-pipe trousers echoing cylindrical top hats, all in more subdued tones and dulled surfaces. From the 1880s to the first decade of the twentieth century and beyond into the 1920s and 1930s a sense of finesse and diversification and a return to more flattering fits made deliberate reference back to that earlier age of elegance. Morning coats and lounge suits, together with a proliferation of garments designed for travelling, sporting, and leisure pursuits, marked a commercialization of fashionable masculinity that saw many of these styles adapted for the

[4] Christopher Breward, *Fashioning London: Clothing and the Modern Metropolis* (Oxford: Berg, 2004).

mass market and for womenswear. As some fashion theorists have claimed, this broader democratization of a set of garments originally designed for aristocratic lifestyles unlocked the essence of modern fashion itself (Figure 21.2).[5]

This linear-style trajectory is of course reductive, judged by the terms of contemporary fashion historiography and method. But it is also instructive and deeply woven into the very warp of masculine fashionability as a particular phenomenon of late modernity. It is reductive because it aligns to that earlier moment of costume history when what was considered distinctive about fashion was the nature and manifestation of change itself, and because it chooses to focus on change as it was experienced at the centre of the colonial project, at the heart of the British Empire, rather than among its subjects or elsewhere. It is instructive because through such changes in shape and silhouette, broader structures of racial, sexual, and

Figure 21.2 James Tissot, *The Circle of the Rue Royale*, oil on canvas, 1868. Found in the collection of the Musée d'Orsay, Paris. Fine Art Images / Heritage Images / Getty Images 2610290.

[5] Anne Hollander, *Sex and Suits: The Evolution of Modern Dress* (New York: Kodansha, 1994).

social power have been widely inscribed, revealed, and understood, and because its lexicon established a language that both the menswear industry (particularly its distribution, advertising, and retail aspects), and critics and theorists of modern culture could profit from and adapt. Thus, more recent published research has moved on from the study of these dominant sartorial codes to consider, for example, the articulation of masculine style in the context of historical Black or queer cultures, or to re-focus away from London to consider the discourse of male fashion in New York, Shanghai, or Paris.[6] Similarly, the territory of male sartorialism, taken up as a metaphor throughout its development by adjacent disciplines from political economy to art and architectural theory, continues to attract attention from writers and curators as an ideal vehicle for exploring wider social themes.[7] We will explore some of these more complex, and global perspectives in the remainder of the chapter.

CODES OF RENUNCIATION AND DANDYISM

> Men may be said to have suffered a great defeat in the sudden reduction of . . . sartorial decorativeness which took place at the end of the eighteenth century . . . Men gave up their right to all the brighter, gayer, more elaborate, and more varied forms of ornamentation, leaving these entirely to the use of women, and thereby making their own tailoring the most austere and ascetic of the arts . . . Man abandoned his claim to be considered beautiful. He henceforth aimed at being only useful.[8]

[6] Shaun Cole, *Don We Now Our Gay Apparel: Gay Men's Dress in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Berg, 2000); Monica L. Miller, *Slaves to Fashion: Black Dandyism and the Styling of Black Diasporic Identity* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2009); Valerie Steele, *A Queer History of Fashion: From the Closet to the Catwalk* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press and the Fashion Institute of New York, 2013); John Potvin, *Deco Dandy: Designing Masculinity in 1920s Paris* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020).

[7] *Vestoj: The Journal of Sartorial Matters*, 7 (2016).

[8] John Carl Flügel, *The Psychology of Clothes* (London: Hogarth Press, 1930), 110–11.

In 1930 the London-based psychologist John Carl Flügel produced what has been perhaps one of the most influential of twentieth-century fashion ideas. In his concept of 'the great masculine renunciation' he described a subconscious rejection of 'ostentatious' dressing by late eighteenth-century men of taste in England. Brought about by the rise of industrialization, late capitalism, and a Protestant work ethic in an age of revolution, he suggested that this shift towards sartorial sobriety was a reflection of a more serious, and a more morally repressive society. This was perhaps an unsurprising conclusion for a pioneering Freudian and advocate of moves towards freedom of expression in the design and choice of male attire to reach. Flügel was a founder of the Men's Dress Reform Party in 1930s Britain, which championed 'unisex' garments and a progressive sexual morality, and born to a generation of new thinkers who rejected many of the principles of 'Victorianism'.[9]

More recently, the social historian David Kuchta has suggested an earlier simplification of the elite male wardrobe, less a reflection of the growing influence of the sober values of a rising mercantile class, than a consequence of the philosophical and religious debates around the divine right of kings and aristocratic duty that had begun in the 1630s. Flügel had suggested that 'as commercial and industrial ideals conquered class after class, until they finally became accepted even by the aristocracies of all the more progressive countries, the plain and uniform costume associated with such ideals has, more and more, ousted the gorgeous and varied garments associated with the older order'.[10] Kuchta makes counter-claims for the replacement of what he has termed 'the old sartorial regime' (or courtly discourse of 'magnificence' and conspicuous consumption) in England, with the deliberate redefinition of the construct of responsible governance, clothed, quite literally, in the gentleman's suit by the restored Stuart monarchy: a smart uniform of modern political manners.[11]

Whether one takes Flügel's later chronology and psychoanalytical emphasis as a guide or Kuchta's rooting of change in the political

[9] Barbara Burman and Melissa Leventon, 'The Men's Dress Reform Party 1929–37', *Costume*, 21/1 (1987), 75–87.
[10] Flügel, *The Psychology of Clothes*, 113.
[11] Kuchta, *The Three-Piece Suit*, 17–50.

theory of an earlier historical moment, the concept of 'renunciation' is in many ways an attractive and compelling idea, essentially binding sartorial developments to the emerging political values of modern Western democracies. But as a universal argument for the genesis of a particular style of dressing, both interpretations fall a little short. They are perhaps too Anglo-centric and overarching. The simple reformative idea of uniformity in modern men's dress, encapsulated by the introduction of the suit, also arose at various times across Europe and beyond, for example in Mughal India, the Dutch Republic, Gustavian Sweden, tsarist Russia, Directoire France, King Radama's Madagascar, late imperial China, Edo Japan, and Atatürk's Turkey.[12] Reformed British aristocrats and newly emancipated gentleman capitalists may well have adapted the dark suit as an appropriate badge at particular moments of rapid societal and sartorial change. But prioritizing this at the expense of a more complex understanding of the opportunities and motivations driving men to acquire and wear fashionable clothes, or the many material possibilities residing in the design and reception of dress itself, is to narrow the range of possible interpretations.

Despite these limitations, if English renunciatory dressing, in its denoting of revised but essentially entrenched social hierarchies, signified an essential adherence to a sense of political order in radically changed times, by the turn of the nineteenth century a new cult of Romanticism and individualism that raged across Europe set masculine fashion at the centre of an entirely new and revolutionary set of moral, artistic, and sartorial codes, which fashion and literary historians have embraced within the wide-ranging concept of 'dandyism'.[13] It was a liberating 'whiggish' phenomenon that stood rather in opposition to the conservative notion of renunciation and proved to be equally long-lasting and pervasive in terms of its cultural reach. The English novelist Bulwer Lytton captured the early spirit in his novel *Pelham* of

[12] Sarah Fee, 'The King's New Clothing: Redressing the Body Politic in Madagascar 1815–1861', in Beverly Lemire and Giorgio Riello (eds.), *Dressing Global Bodies: The Political Power of Dress in World History* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020), 153–81.

[13] Rhonda K. Garelick, *Rising Star: Dandyism, Gender, and Performance in the Fin de Siècle* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

1828, where the eponymous hero sets down some instructions for modern self-presentation:

> Keep your mind free from all violent affections at the hour of the toilet. A philosophical severity is perfectly necessary for success . . .
>
> A man must be a profound calculator to be a consummate dresser . . . there is no diplomacy more subtle than dress . . .
>
> The most graceful principle of dress is neatness – the most vulgar is preciseness . . .
>
> Dress contains the two codes of morality – private and public. Attention is the duty we owe to others – cleanliness that which we owe to ourselves . . .
>
> Avoid many colours and seek by one prevalent and quiet tint to sober down the others. Apelles used only four colours, and always subdued those which were florid by a darkening varnish . . .
>
> Inventions in dressing should resemble Addison's definition of fine writing, and consist of 'refinements which are natural, without being obvious'.[14]

Fictional characters like Pelham abound in the novels, satires, and plays of the early nineteenth century. Elegant, elite, and exclusive, and most often represented dressed in exquisite black and white, they intensified the magnificent exuberance of the old-style courtier, refashioning it for a more democratic age: more a refinement perhaps, than a renunciation? Loosely based on the habits of just a few metropolitan men made famous through their collective tendency to promote their celebrity through the singular arrangement of their costumes and manners, these cyphers of modernity, styled 'dandy' in contemporary satirical and popular terminology, stood as a new and controversial code of fashionable behaviour.[15] The idea of dandyism, though perhaps trivial in itself, revealed in its broader cultural agency the ways in which urbanism, capitalism, industrialization, colonialism, and Enlightenment theories of

[14] Edward Bulwer Lytton, *Pelham, Or the Adventures of a Gentleman* (Leipzig: B. Tauchnitz Jr, 1842), 180–2.

[15] Dominic James, *Oscar Wilde Prefigured: Queer Fashioning and British Caricature 1750–1900* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016).

truth, were dissolving older sureties around the commonweal and 'droit de seigneur' in favour of the individualistic credo associated with the heroism of modern life (Figure 21.3).[16]

The idiomatic English socialite, George Bryan 'Beau' Brummell, stood out as a 'semi-fictional' exemplar of the dandy attitude (semi-fictional because although history records that he was born in London in 1778 and died in Caen, France, in 1840, the facts of his life are fairly obscure and survive as a palimpsest of myths and

Figure 21.3 Richard Dighton, *A Portrait of George 'Beau' Brummell*, colour lithograph, later coloration, 1805. Art Images / Getty Images 256514.

[16] Elizabeth Amann, *Dandyism in the Age of Revolution: The Art of the Cut* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015).

anecdotes re-told in subsequent fashion biographies).[17] The son of a minor equerry at Court, through wit, sheer force of personality, and the ability to make social connections, Brummell established himself as an expert in etiquette and a master of the art of dressing whose opinions influenced fashionable life from the top of London Society down. During the 1810s he cultivated a personal sartorial signature that drew on aristocratic tailoring styles evolved to suit sporting pursuits, court ceremonial, club-land business, and the whirl of salons and balls that constituted the London season. Brummell's genius lay in reconfiguring these staples as a revolutionary costume for modern times, establishing a rule of taste based on subjective aesthetic criteria and the careful exercise of personal choice, rather than deference to status earned through family lineage or traditional forms of power exchange.

The most striking thing about the new wardrobe was its relative subtlety: spotless white linen, expertly tailored dark blue swallow tailcoat, buff waistcoat and breeches and polished riding boots for the morning, and a more severe arrangement of black silk, fine wool, and velvet for evening wear. Fashion plates of the era, produced for the journals and shop displays of the burgeoning tailoring and menswear industries, record a fairly stable fashionable ensemble for men designed along these lines that, as we have seen, remained dominant templates well into the nineteenth century. Similarly, portraits produced for Britain's landowners, politicians, colonial adventurers, and industrial entrepreneurs by Sir Thomas Lawrence (1769–1830) and other leading painters during the final years of the Hanoverian reign fell back on the same pattern. Lawrence's sumptuous painterly shorthand was particularly well suited to delineating the elongated black silhouettes of an elite generation of sitters, most often shown against a sweep of red velvet curtain. Some art critics praised a style of dressing and representation that was 'simple, natural and unostentatious . . . an air of courteous suavity pervades the whole'.[18]

[17] Hubert Cole, *Beau Brummell* (Newton Abbot: Readers Union, 1978); George Walden, *Who Is a Dandy?* (London: Gibson Square Books, 2002); Ian Kelly, *Beau Brummell: The Ultimate Man of Style* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2005).

[18] Peter Funnell, 'Lawrence among Men Friends, Patrons and the Male Portrait', in A. Cassandra Albinson, Peter Funnell, and Lucy Pelz (eds.),

Figure 21.4 Thomas Lawrence, *Lord Granville Leveson-Gower*, oil on canvas, 1804–9. 235 × 130.8 cm. Sepia Times / Universal Images Group via Getty Images 981_06_ql_c201210_23318.

For others, the artist's talent was 'thrown around the representations of the most ordinary things, and in his hands, the un-picturesque costume of modern times – the coats and waistcoats of modern man – lose their commonplace appearance' (Figure 21.4).[19]

Critics of the 1820s were well ahead of their time in drawing attention to the quotidian, and intrinsically modern aspects of the

Thomas Lawrence: Regency Power and Brilliance (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011), 23.

[19] Ibid.

dandy's monochrome suit. Four decades later, the Paris art world of the 1860s and 1870s was divided in its debates on the merits of contemporary dress as represented in the work of the Impressionists and their associates. Dress historian Aileen Ribeiro cites the writer Charles Blanc, whose reflections on modern fashion in *Art in Ornament and Dress* of 1875 seem to find echoes in the work of painters including Gustave Caillebotte, George Tissot, and Édouard Manet. Blanc 'claimed that both architecture and dress ... were governed by similar rules, such as symmetry, repetition (variety had charm but "repetition has more grandeur") and economy of decoration. These features of modern life, however, often created a sense of alienation ... The predominant darkness of outdoor clothing was linked to the greyness of buildings and streets, and created a tendency for people to ... lose their individuality, and retreat into their own private worlds.'[20] The great poet of Parisian modernity, Charles Baudelaire, had observed the attendant melancholy and ennui induced by such atmospherics in the revolutionary 1840s. His radical biographer, Walter Benjamin, notes:

> With the July Monarchy, blacks and greys began to predominate in men's clothes. Baudelaire concerned himself with this innovation in his 'Salon de 1845'. In the conclusion of his first work he wrote: 'More than anyone else ... the true painter, will be the man who extracts from present-day life its epic aspects and teaches us in lines and colours to understand how great and poetic we are in our patent-leather shoes and neckties ...'. One year later he wrote: 'Regarding the attire, the covering of the modern hero, does it not have a beauty and charm of its own? ... Is this not an attire that is needed by our epoch, suffering and dressed up to its thin black narrow shoulders in the symbol of constant mourning? The black suit and the frock coat not only have their political beauty as an expression of general equality, but also their poetic beauty as an expression of the public mentality ... We all observe some sort of funeral. The unvarying livery of hopelessness is proof of the equality ... And haven't the folds in the material, which make grimaces and drape

[20] Aileen Ribeiro, 'Gustave Caillebotte: Paris Street; Rainy Day', in Gloria Groom (ed.), *Impressionism, Fashion & Modernity* (Chicago and New Haven: Art Institute of Chicago, 2012), 186.

> themselves around mortified flesh like snakes, their secret charm?'[21]

Certainly, the dark wool frock and lounge coats and glossy beaver skin top hats of the 1860s, 1870s, and 1880s that have survived the pawnbrokers, thrift merchants, and theatrical costumiers of the intervening years to enter museum collections, bear witness to Baudelaire's splenetic lamentations. And yet, while their monochrome uniformity seems to speak to visions of sooty mill chimneys and funereal protocol, there is also something in their sharp seriality that suggests the beauty of an affecting and artificial minimalist aesthetic. Contemporaries recognized the harmonious role that a controlled and subdued palette might have as part of the broader social milieu, particularly when it came to considering menswear as a foil for the more colourful excesses of women's dress. As one author of a guide for enjoying the night life of Paris noted in 1878: 'We are the lining of the jewelry box against which the eternal diamond stands out . . . Civilized man, from the point of view of his clothing, is nothing more than the accompanist of woman, he allows her to sing the symphony of white, pink and green as a solo.'[22] The inverse of such restraint was decadence. By the end of the century, the symbolism of heroic dandyism had taken on other, more sinister associations, as novelist J. K. Huysmans' notorious anti-hero Des Esseintes set out to prove in the novel *A Rebours* of 1884:

> He won a considerable reputation as an eccentric – a reputation which he crowned by wearing suits of white velvet with gold-laced waistcoats, by sticking a bunch of Parma violets in his shirt front in lieu of a cravat, and by entertaining men of letters to dinners . . . One of these means . . . had been a funeral feast to mark the most ludicrous of personal misfortunes. The dining-room, draped in black, opened out onto a garden . . . the paths being strewn with charcoal, the ornamental pond edged with black basalt and filled with ink . . . The dinner itself was served on

[21] Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1989), 76–7.

[22] Philippe Thiebaut, 'An Ideal of Virile Urbanity', in Groom (ed.), *Impressionism*, 136.

> a black cloth adorned with baskets of violets and scabious … The guests were waited on by naked negresses wearing only slippers and stockings in cloth of silver embroidered with tears. Dining off black bordered plates, the company had enjoyed … Russian rye bread, ripe olives from Turkey, caviar, mullet botargo, black puddings from Frankfurt, game served in sauces the colour of liquorice and boot-polish, truffle jellies, chocolate creams, plum puddings … and black-heart cherries … And after coffee and walnut cordial, they rounded off the evening with kvass, porter and stout.[23]

This decadence and its reception by journalists, moral commentators, and society at large had a profound effect on the discourse of masculine fashionability through almost the whole of the succeeding century. Dandyism, from the 1890s, came to be associated with sexual dissidence, corruption, and excess, and its outward manifestation through clothing and other forms of material culture, including interior design, was generally identified as the preserve of homosexual, artistic, and bohemian subcultures. In the spectacular and very singular figure of Irish playwright Oscar Wilde, whose 1895 imprisonment and public disgrace is widely quoted by cultural historians as precipitating the crisis over masculinity that informed confused twentieth-century attitudes to manliness and its association with fashion, the two models of dandy and gentleman are seen to have become dangerously conflated (Figure 21.5).[24]

During the time of his fame and then notoriety (from his return from the transatlantic promotion of 'aesthetic' dressing in the early 1880s to his trial), Wilde had adopted the refined wardrobe of the English upper-middle classes. To quote literary historian Regenia Gagnier, he 'appear[ed] as a gentleman … In a manner which had been perfected by a dandy.'[25] In this garb he seemed to mock the renunciatory ideals of Victorian gentlemanliness with ultimately disastrous results, for himself and, in the short term, for the open

[23] Joris Karl Huysmans, *Against Nature* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1959), 27.
[24] Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin-de-Siècle* (London: Virago, 1992); Ed Cohen, *Talk on the Wilde Side* (London: Routledge, 1993); Alan Sinfield, *The Wilde Century: Effeminacy, Oscar Wilde and the Queer Moment* (London: Cassell, 1994).
[25] Regenia A. Gagnier, *Idylls of the Marketplace: Oscar Wilde and the Victorian Public* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1986), 67.

Figure 21.5 W. & D. Downey, *Oscar Wilde*, photograph, 1889. W. & D. Downey / Hulton Archive / Getty Images 3274674.

representation of masculine fashionability as a creative or personal endeavour. Dandyism in the following decades found refuge in the more liminal, subcultural spaces of Bloomsbury, Harlem, Paris, Moscow, and other artists' cities of the 1920s and 1930s.[26] Where his attenuated figure graced the pages of mainstream fashion journals and advertising hoardings, as in the chic illustrations of Joseph

[26] Alexandra Harris, *Romantic Moderns: English Writers, Artists and the Imagination from Virginia Woolf to John Piper* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2010); Wendy Hitchmough, *The Bloomsbury Look* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2020); Carol Tulloch, *The Birth of Cool: Style Narratives of the African Diaspora* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016); Potvin, *Deco Dandy*; Olga Vainshtein, 'Russian Dandyism: Constructing a Man of Fashion', in B. Evans Clements, R. Friedman, and D. Healey (eds.), *Russian Masculinities in History and Culture* (London: Routledge, 2002), 51–76.

Figure 21.6 Joseph Christian Leyendecker, *Advertisement for Arrow Collars & Shirts*, *c.* 1925–30. Library of Congress: Corbin Historical: Getty Images IH168950.

Christian Leyendecker for Arrow Collars in the United States, or Ashley Havinden's for British menswear giants Moss Bros and Austin Reed, it seemed somehow leached of controversy by the cool imperatives of commerce (Figure 21.6).[27]

[27] Carole Turbin, 'Fashioning the American Man: The Arrow Collar Man 1907–1931', in Barbara Burman and Carole Turbin (eds.), *Material Strategies: Dress and Gender in Historical Perspective* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), 100–21. Paul Jobling, 'Virility in Design: Advertising Austin Reed and the "New Tailoring" during the Interwar Period in Britain', *Fashion Theory*, 9/1 (2005), 57–84.

DANDYISM AND THE FOREIGN ENCOUNTER

Besides their role in defining gendered and sexual identity and the hierarchies of social class, the constructs of fashionable masculinities also contributed towards an understanding of national belonging and ethnic distinction in an age of empire and international connection. London's fashionable menswear emporia were not only involved in selling the latest accoutrements to the habitués of Hyde Park and Piccadilly, but their services also provided wardrobes suited to colonial service in the dominions and English gentlemanly style designed in lighter weaves and colours for varied climates became a highly exportable commodity.[28] Similarly influences from colonized nations also accented the wardrobe of men in the imperial metropolis. The romanticism of Indian dress sustained a lasting appeal to many early and mid-nineteenth-century Britons (Figure 21.7).

In the mid-1840s the Edinburgh photographic pioneers Octavius Hill and Robert Adamson produced a calotype of a *Mr Lane in Indian Dress* (possibly the Arabic scholar and travel writer Edward William Lane), posing, as many middle-class and aristocratic men with colonial connections did, as a Maharaja in turban, jewellery, slippers, and heavily embroidered sash and gown, clasping looted ceremonial weaponry. Such appropriations were not confined to the performative spaces of the photographic studio, they also pervaded elements of everyday dressing from the 1830s to the 1860s. Silk waistcoats, such as the striking red and blue Spitalfields silk example (V&A: T.1-1954) held at the Victoria and Albert Museum, were often embellished with boteh (paisley), peacock feather and palm frond designs and traditional Kashmiri patterns. By the 1880s such details were more often confined to garments designed for private comfort as opposed to public display. Smoking caps and jackets, dressing gowns and pyjamas sat well among the colonial clutter of gentlemen's clubs and studies; a counterfoil perhaps to the more formal imperial approach to racial demarcation that followed Queen Victoria's naming as

[28] Helen Callaway, 'Dressing for Dinner in the Bush: Rituals of Self-Definition and British Imperial Authority', in Ruth Barnes and Joanne B. Eicher (eds.), *Dress and Gender: Making and Meaning* (Oxford: Berg, 1992), 232–47.

Figure 21.7 Man's waistcoat, Spitalfields silk, London, 1830s. Victoria and Albert Museum: Given by Mr H. Arnold Ovenden T.1-1954.

Empress of India in 1876 and a relief from the pressed khaki uniforms and topee helmets that signified power on the colonial parade ground (Figure 21.8).[29]

Closer to home, even the basic fabrics of the fashionable man's wardrobe seemed to evoke memories of distant landscapes in their texture, tones, and even scent, embodying a sense of nationhood in their weave. Following Walter Scott's popularization of Scotland's romantic past through the Waverley novels of the 1810s and 1820s, and the royal family's endorsement of the Highlands as a centre for hunting and holidays, tartans and tweeds enjoyed an enduring

[29] Thomas S. Abler, *Hinterland Warriors and Military Dress: European Empires and Exotic Uniforms* (Oxford: Berg, 1999); Christopher Breward, Philip Crang, and Rosemary Crill (eds.), *British Asian Style: Fashion & Textiles Past and Present* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 2010).

Figure 21.8 David Hill and Robert Adamson, *Mr Lane in Indian Dress*, calotype, *c.* 1845. 19.50 × 14.40 cm. Scottish National Portrait Gallery PGP HA 1273.

popularity as a staple of informal dressing.[30] Such was the degree of its naturalization into the routines of homosocial middle-class life by 1900 that popular men's fashion journal *The Major* could wax lyrical on its peculiar but distinctive properties in a manner that suggests it formed a virtual second skin for the hearty 'true-born' Briton (and, presumably, an antidote to dandyism's emasculating tendencies) (Figure 21.9):

> There is a kind of rough and ready look about the pattern which you cannot help liking when you get used to it, and there is this advantage about the Harris tweed – each pattern is distinctive from the rest. You could always tell [it] by the peculiar peaty smell attached to it, but . . .

[30] Fiona Anderson, *Tweed* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 41–62, 81–102.

Figure 21.9 *The Duke of York with the Earl of Strathmore's Shooting Party, Glamis Castle, Scotland*, 1921. From *London Illustrated News, Royal Wedding Number,* 28 April 1923. Hulton Archive: Getty Images 2321799.

> if you want a material that will last you, with fair wear, until you get absolutely tired of it, buy Harris tweed. I knew a man once who had a suit for eleven years, and then didn't wear it out.[31]

But it was perhaps the form of the English suit itself which imparted the most profound and enduring influence on the modern wardrobe beyond the shores of Britain during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This was a period in which several nations across the world adapted the suit in the context of local cultures. In China, for example, reformist calls for the modernization of society along Western lines were accelerated by its defeat in the Sino-Japanese war of 1894 and changes were swiftly imposed in line with the militarization of the population and updating of public institutions. The consequences in terms of material and sartorial culture were profound and inspired by Japanese precedent,

[31] Cited in Breward, *Hidden Consumer*, 51.

a popular emphasis on improving physical and moral strength saw a renewed focus on clothing, particularly the military uniform, as the vanguard for vestimentary and societal change.[32]

Besides a trend towards the adoption of uniforms, it is also significant that much discussion on the implication of reform in the popular media focused on the increasing visibility of the European three-piece suit on the streets of China's cities, particularly its most cosmopolitan city Shanghai, where the proximity of British and American fashionable styles was ever present. Indeed, the fashioning of men's bodies became a topic of intense debate at the forefront of political transformation in military and civil contexts simultaneously. As several scholars have noted, a familiarity with, and interest in foreign clothing was well established in China, but its deliberate mobilization as a tool for wider change was something new and radical, evoking strong feelings, replaying those debates around renunciatory manliness and dandyism that had provoked reflection in mid-nineteenth-century European cities.[33]

Chinese elites had enjoyed dressing up in what they termed 'barbarian' European styles since the Tang dynasty. In some ways this resembled the way that nineteenth-century Englishmen like Edward William Lane (1801–1876) proudly displayed trophy items from India and the Arab world on their bodies as signifiers of travel or orientalist scholarship, or the manner in which their diplomat predecessors in the early days of the East India Company often adopted local dress traditions as a matter of politesse and comfort. Following the increasing incursion of missionaries and traders into China through the seventeenth century, the identification of synergies and differences between styles and systems of dress led to a sophisticated understanding of sartorial semiotics. However, the psychological impacts of European imperialism and the economic

[32] Antonia Finnane, *Changing Clothes in China: Fashion, History, Nation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 71.

[33] Robert E. Harris, 'Clothes Make the Man: Dress, Modernity and Masculinity in China 1912–1937', in Wu Hing and K. R. Tsiang (eds.), *Body and Face in Chinese Visual Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005); Verity Wilson, 'Western Modes and Asian Clothing', in Giorgio Riello and Peter McNeil (eds.), *The Fashion History Reader: Global Perspectives* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010).

effects of colonialism sharpened distinctions and encouraged a division in the way respective codes of fashionability were interpreted. In the eyes of Chinese reformers, the overtly 'modern' suits of the British, French, German, American, and Japanese adventurers and businessmen drawn to the concessions of Shanghai in the early twentieth century offered a contrasting model of progress to the elegant historicism of *caizi* (scholarly) historicist taste (which held sway in elite intellectual circles, as something akin to the decadent aestheticism of European dandyism), one whose 'virile' *wu* (martial) associations were worthy of emulation. In 1908, the reformer Kang Youwei was emphatic in his endorsement of the suit:

> Today in the intercourse of the ten thousand nations, all are inclining toward a greater unity. It is only our nation whose dress is different, and they do not feel close to us, and friendly relations with them have not been secured . . . Today's is a mechanized world. With many machines there is strength . . . But to be bound by the thousands of years of the . . . long-sleeved and broad-sashed Confucian scholar's robe, and with a long robe and elegant gait to enter the world of competition with the ten thousand nations, this would be like wearing tinkling jade pendants to put out a fire, and truly is not appropriate.[34]

The arising debates about dressing for modern life were passionate and often self-contradictory. Chinese commentators recognized something novel and exciting in the bifurcated, tailored suit, but also cleaved to historical and spiritual precedent in favouring traditional robes, more suited to established Chinese attitudes to the body – all the while acknowledging that such styles appeared to emphasize all the problems endemic in the society they wished to change.[35] The difference was an essentialist one, summed up by the novelist Lin Yutang (1895–1976) who stated that 'the philosophy behind Chinese and Western dress is that the latter tries to reveal the human form, while the former tries to conceal it. But as

[34] Harris, 'Clothes Make the Man', 180.

[35] Hissako Anjo and Antonia Finnane, 'Tailoring in China and Japan: Cultural Transfer and Cutting Techniques in the Early Twentieth Century', in Lemire and Riello (eds.), *Dressing Global Bodies*, 263–88.

the human body is essentially like the monkey's ... the less of it revealed the better!'[36]

This uncomfortable meeting of cloth, body, and cultures produced material anomalies and representational anxieties in Shanghai's streets and on the pages of its press. The physical effect and unaccustomed freedom of wearing tailored trousers like those of the 'straight long leg' foreigners appeared to change the posture of those Chinese men who dared adopt them in the first wave, propelling them with literal speed into the new century. But the risk was a worthy one. Indeed, Mao Zedong himself lay the blame for national inertia and inequality on the scholar's robe in an essay promoting physical culture in 1917. He argued that the habitual and misplaced honour bestowed on scholarly attributes and attire had led to a situation whereby for Chinese intellectual elites 'to stick out their arms and expose their feet, to extend their limbs and bend their bodies' would be shameful, and yet in Mao's opinion a necessary sacrifice.[37] Regardless of the political arguments, the kinetic confusions of dressing across boundaries were disorientating and Shanghai's status as an international entrepôt magnified them. This fluidity of meaning attached to the new fashions and items of clothing meant that familiar signifiers of race, social caste, age, and gender were becoming unacceptably blurred for some and productively provocative for others. In 1912 the *Shen Bao* newspaper lamented, 'Chinese people are wearing foreign clothes, foreigners are wearing Chinese clothes, men are wearing female adornments, prostitutes are imitating schoolgirls, schoolgirls are imitating prostitutes, common people are dressing like officials, officials are dressing like commoners.'[38]

Yet by the 1920s and 1930s, glamorous images of the suit (alongside tango dresses and shingled hair for women) prevailed in Shanghai's thriving film and advertising industry and its figure-fitting lines increasingly graced the lithe bodies of Chinese movie stars, singers, and athletes in the pages of glamour magazines.[39] Such was the demand for clothes capturing the modern spirit that Shanghai soon became associated with a particular expertise in

[36] Harris, 'Clothes Make the Man', 175. [37] Ibid., 181. [38] Ibid., 188.
[39] Christopher Breward and Juliette MacDonald (eds.), *Styling Shanghai* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020).

modern tailoring techniques, so much so that it might be argued that it was commercial imperatives, alongside political pressure, that saw the English-style suit first cautiously adopted and then profitably adapted in the region. In common with many other Chinese towns and indeed with cities in the rest of the world, tailoring formed an important occupation and contributor to the local economy, supplying a basic need to the market and straddling traditional forms of hand-wrought production that had remained unchanged for centuries, alongside newer practices enabled by the technology of the sewing machine, the retail innovations of the department store, and the wider promotion of modern advertising techniques. The same was true for tailors in nineteenth-century London, New York, Vienna, and Paris, and like them, Shanghai also benefited from a large, cosmopolitan population supplying skilled artisans and eager and enlightened customers (Figure 21.10).

In a manner not dissimilar to Savile Row, Shanghai traded on pioneer myths of founding entrepreneurs and the existence of

Figure 21.10 *A Scene from a Shanghai Dance Club*, photograph, 1926. Bettmann and Getty Images U345012INP.

long-standing tailoring traditions and districts which went on to fuel the success of dynastic enterprises and the expansion of profitable industrial sectors through the first half of the twentieth century. The father of tailoring here was Zhao Chunlan who had established the 'first' Western-style tailor's shop in the 1850s, following a visit to the United States. By 1920 thousands of tailors served a population of three million Shanghainese and supported sophisticated retail empires in the city's best shopping streets: Hongxiang Fashion Store and Rongchangxiang Tailors in the Nanjing Road and the Yungshang Fashion Company near Jing'an Temple Road.[40] Out of these beginnings Shanghai also became associated with a distinctive regional tailoring style alternatively named the Ningbo or Red Gang (*Hongbang*) style in homage either to the nearby port city of Ningbo which supplied much of the skilled labour for Shanghai's luxury menswear trade, or to the red hair and pink complexions of Caucasian clients. Ningbo tailors had also established networks in Dongbei in the north of China which some claimed brought a Russian influence into their work, but it is more likely that their reputation for finely detailed finishing had been honed in the overseas branches of British menswear companies trading in the concessions to expatriates.

Whatever the origins of their approach, Ningbo tailors became famous for a process combining the skills of the engineer and the sculptor, based on more than forty body measurements and the precise steaming of seams, in which wearer and cloth seemed to become one.[41] The 1930s were the style's golden age, bolstered through the foundation of the Shanghai Cutting and Tailoring College and the city's international reputation for glamour, but the political and economic turmoil of the 1940s and 1950s led to the migration of most Ningbo tailors to Hong Kong (where they thrived in Britain's off-shore post-war clothing industries), a rejection of European sartorial values in mainland China, and the wilful destruction of Shanghai's textile and garment manufacturing base by the Communist regime.

[40] Finnane, *Changing Clothes*, 111.
[41] Christopher Breward, 'The Shanghai Dandy', in Breward and MacDonald (eds.), *Styling Shanghai*, 252–3.

CONCLUSION

In a century and a half then, since the advent of modern tailoring techniques and the establishment of nineteenth-century imperial networks, writers, artists, tailors, and consumers have grappled with the registers of masculine style across distant but connected cities and regions. It is perhaps no surprise that those twin tenets of English sartorialism, renunciation and dandyism, have found fertile ground for adaptation. The rhetorical 'knowingness' of the language of masculine fashionability, part satire, part serious political commentary, has found itself ideally suited to dressing bodies in flux while critiquing the circumstances in which fashion (and the power structures of gender, race, and social class) is produced and consumed. Karen Transberg Hansen in her chapter 'Colonial Fashion Histories' in this volume provides a striking example in her opening description of a ballroom dance championship in Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia) in 1940, where local male participants strike a defiant note in their adoption of sunglasses, green pork-pie hats, and white cotton trousers in combination with tailcoats and white silk scarves: an echo of the assertive and refined elegance of the jazz scene in 1920s Chicago, zoot-suit subversion in 1940s California, or twenty-first-century Sapeur elegance in post-colonial Brazzaville and Kinshasa (Figure 21.11).

Max Beerbohm, one of the great English writers on dandyism, who authored the definitive essay 'Dandies and Dandies' in the 1890s, showed how 'Dandies make themselves. Whatever they may be by birth and nurture, dandies are born anew as dandies when they dress themselves according to the dandy code. The dandy self, naked and fresh, is a figure in black and white. Completely dressed, almost completely monochrome, he is, to put it simply, a written thing.'[42] While the very different post-war status quo and re-focusing of the menswear industry towards the mass youth market after 1945 may have made nineteenth-century debates on dandyism seem nostalgic or even irrelevant, its underlying effects continue to cast shadows

[42] Robert Viscusi, *Max Beerbohm, or the Dandy Dante Re-reading with Mirrors* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 28.

Figure 21.11 *Jelly Roll Morton, Chicago, c.* 1923. Photo by Michael Ochs Archives / Getty Images 74284677.

and inscribe meaning.[43] Historians of the future may even find its grammar a useful way in to explaining contemporary debates on non-binary identification, 'toxic masculinity', or the struggle for racial equality – so far as they relate to the clothes we wear and our performance of self.

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[43] Christopher Breward, 'The Dandy Laid Bare: Embodying Practices and Fashion for Men', in Stella Bruzzi and Pamela Church Gibson (eds.), *Fashion Cultures: Theories, Explorations and Analysis* (London: Routledge, 2000), 221–38.

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22

FASHION IN CAPITALISM

Another Modernity, 1800 to the Present

ULRICH LEHMANN

INTRODUCTION

Whereas textiles, cloth, garments, and dress are seen as anthropological, supra-historical terms for concrete material covers of the human body, the more abstract term 'fashion' is defined in economic terms through its central place within the capitalist mode of production. This definition emerges from a historically and geographically particular nexus within Western industrialization and expands to fashion's constituent role in capitalist socio-economic systems wherein social relations are based on commodities for exchange, private ownership of the means of production, and the exploitation of wage labour. Enshrined in bourgeois ideologies, capitalism has been flaunted, at least since the eighteenth century in the globalized North, as the dominant socio-economic form of production, established within a monetary system, and exported through colonialism and imperialism across the world.[1]

Situating fashion within capitalism allows for two distinct yet connected interpretations. The first considers the meaning of the word fashion – in generic terms emerging from the Romanic *mode*,

[1] In this definition there is a distinct echo of Immanuel Wallerstein's analysis of 'world-systems' that sought to provide an alternative to positivist modernization and globalization theories in capitalism, for instance in his tenet of a world system as a set of mechanisms that redistributes surplus value from the raw materials-producing and cheap labour periphery to the industrialized core. See Immanuel Wallerstein, *Historical Capitalism with Capitalist Civilization* (London: Verso, 1996) and *World-System Analysis: An Introduction* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004).

denoting 'manner of' or 'ways of'[2] – as the constant renewal of commodities, initially within set time periods and social performances (seasonal dress, leisure activities, display in gendered bourgeois rituals, etc.), that now has accelerated in tempo and diffused in direction, to determine a general mode of globalized consumption across post-industrial as well as industrializing societies. A pattern of renewed consumption within greatly reduced timespans determines the exploitative and wasteful production of commodities that rightly brands the fashion industry, particularly in its production of garments and accessories.[3]

The second interpretation concerns the concrete production of fashion through textiles, garments, accessories, and make-up/hair, where the social conditions of labour determine the abstraction, reification, and alienation that the body experiences in capitalism. This move from the concrete to the abstract is materially very present in fashion production where a piece of clothing develops from functional cover with use value to a surplus value-generating commodity, whose social and cultural evaluation occurs independent of the exchange value of its material and labour. 'The mystical character of commodities does not originate, therefore, in their use value',[4] wrote Karl Marx in the first chapter of *Capital* that famously explains the value of the commodity through the fashion-equation of twenty yards of linen with one coat. In clothing, especially, the commodity envelops the body of the subject and imprints it with the labour that is required to produce it.[5] This leads to the subject's body carrying, literally, alienating labour in capitalism as its outer, social

[2] For an etymology of 'fashion', see Ulrich Lehmann, *Tigersprung: Fashion in Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), 18–28.

[3] See for example recent popular polemics on fashion's impact on socio-economic and natural environments, by Lucy Siegle, *To Die For: Is Fashion Wearing out the World?* (London: Fourth Estate, 2011); and Tansy E. Hoskins, *Stitched Up: The Anti-Capitalist Book of Fashion* (London: Pluto Press, 2014).

[4] Karl Marx, *Capital* [1867/1873], Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1996), XXXV, 71.

[5] Arguably, the labour to maintain clothing, repair, repurpose, and recycle/refashion clothes or accessories becomes part of the economic process. Such labour occupies an ambiguous position vis-à-vis the present dominance of globalized fast fashion: it can be seen as an oppositional gesture to find sustainable and cost-saving solutions by reinforcing, over-stitching, or patching up textiles and garments (cf. Japanese *sashiko*) but, in consequence, is

form that is visible to all. Marx's analysis of commodity fetishism opens thus:

> A commodity is therefore a mysterious thing, simply because in it the social character of men's labour appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labour; because the relation of the producers to the sum total of their own labour is presented to them as a social relation, existing not between themselves, but between the products of their labour.[6]

In fashion, the clothes that are worn cease to exist as things that have an essential use value, for instance protecting from rain or insulating us against cold, and come to reproduce social relations between commodities. Very few people around the globe today wear continuously one type of garment whose pattern has been optimized to allow for habitual physical movement and is cut from a material that responds to the climate they find themselves in. Most consumers wear clothing or accessories that stand in a particular relation to other fashion commodities – for example, being perceived as different from clothing styles that are prevalent in their immediate environment or allowing them to play with pre-existing class affiliation or gender roles. It is important to understand fashion in capitalism not simply as indicative of the social relation between subjects but of the social relation between products of labour and forms of value.

The next pages trace fashion as it has been interpreted within analyses of capitalism. Yet not by recapitulating its positivist role in the progress of capitalist economies, as constant renewal of commodity consumption and thereby objectifying the performance of class, race, and gender, but, dialectically: fashion as examples in exposing capitalism's ills. By tracing ways in which fashion has been used in the fundamental and universal critique of capitalism, most notably through the Marxist approach to political economy and its theoretical developments, it emerges as simultaneously constituting and contradicting capitalism.

often relegated in the fashion media to an individual, craft-based terrain that is deemed to have only tenuous connections with fashion's economic cycles.

[6] Marx, *Capital*, 82–3.

And although the following historiography of fashion within capitalism proceeds more or less chronologically, it is not to be read as linear, teleological history towards a 'goal' (i.e. the 'democratization' of global luxury through increased availability or technological progress). It rather shows patterns across time and space that repeat themselves – much like fashionable styles return in clothing and accessories – in the form of contradictions within social relations or conflicts of gender and race, and through key terms like 'value' and 'reproduction'. The historiographies demonstrate fashion's dialectical function within capitalism: it can be seen as its thesis in exemplifying the production–consumption relation that explains the creation of value in capitalist economies; equally, it can be seen as its antithesis by revealing how the subject is materialized in objects (clothing, accessories, hairstyles, make-up, diet, and the representation of gestures and postures), which provokes social consciousness and political action that oppose capitalist alienation of the people.

Marxist political economy is a method which asks that observation and theoretical analysis are put into practice. Historical materialism as a principal part of this political-economic thought progressively understands phenomena as concretely material as much as actively social. It thereby focuses on production as determining consumption (and vice versa) and analyses the making of fashion, before it engages with its reproduction (as our post-industrial age supremely does[7]) in order to obscure from consumers the reality of producing goods behind a mirage of simulated images and fictional narratives. In this context, the study of fashion theory and history had shown itself in the past complicit in perpetuating myths of fashion's origin and dissemination (cf. the once dominant hypothesis of the trickle-down effect or of the stylistic centrality of haute couture), without much questioning of the economic reality behind the making of clothes and the impact that, for instance, seasonal cycles, the move from the functional to the commodified, or the objectification of the subject, have on structures in social and cultural life. Such myths have been critiqued substantially for

[7] The term post-industrial denotes here economic growth within industrialized countries when manufacturing is less of a 'driver' compared to information technology and the service sector.

contemporary fashion in recent years, yet persist in analyses of its history.

Fashion appears in the capitalist production process as embodied materialism: it creates an outer shell, a second skin for the body that becomes marked by socio-cultural structures, in particular within the system of corporeal commodification (into class, sex, gender, race, etc.) that is prevalent in capitalism. The concrete construction of a surface around the subject through materials and technologies is fused with its changing relationship to the object, and this generates fashion's singular position. Fashion is both material cover and materialist representation of the subject beneath it, which defines itself through the consumption of particular apparels. To explain this double effect, political economy is the best fit, I believe, for fashion's analysis as abstract concept and concrete industry.

ORIGINS: A CRITIQUE OF LUXURY

I would like to begin with Marx as the original thinker to bring together economic and philosophical thought, to arrive at an expansive analysis of capitalism and its impact on the social, material/physical, and ontological (self-)perception of modern woman and man. Fashion occurs in Marx's writing from the very start, as combination of material and philosophical consideration, rendering the topic a highly potent indicator for life in capitalism. In the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, Marx's earliest thoughts on the intersection of Hegelian heritage and economic research, he critiques the 'Say–Ricardo school' in the context of the luxury debate that, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, had revealed exemplary positions within bourgeois political economy.[8]

[8] For a concise study of the historical place of Say's economic analysis of luxury, see Philippe Steiner, 'Jean-Baptiste Say: The Entrepreneur, the Free Trade Doctrine and the Theory of Income Distribution', in Gilbert Faccarello (ed.), *Studies in the History of French Political Economy: From Bodin to Walras* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 196–228.

The *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* were drafted in Paris, where Marx had immigrated between 1843 and 1844. The place is significant for a number of reasons. First, Marx began his sustained analysis of classical economic thought while experiencing directly the struggles of an organized French working class and its consciousness, being forced therefore to reconcile his rather elitist studies of materialist philosophy with contemporary revolutionary practice – the combined demand for which would set up his *Communist Manifesto*. Second, the city of Paris in the early stirrings of yet another revolution provided him with the spatial and structural notion of recurring historical patterns – a key element of historical materialism – in particular with the unfulfilled ideal of the first French Revolution that had to be repeated and recast across Marx's life (in Paris, for instance, in 1830, 1848, and 1871), to advocate Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's famous historical 'leap' from quantitative development to qualitative change.[9] Repetition would become a key parameter for the (historical) materialist reading of fashion, when old styles are resurrected in the guise of the new. Third, in the spring of 1844 Marx first met Friedrich Engels, who had been working across the previous couple of years on behalf of his family's textile company in Manchester, where he was confronted with the social conditions of labour, in particular the astute deprivation and alienation brought on by mechanized textile production. Engel's first-hand, practical knowledge of fashion production, for instance the dependence of textile weaving on forecasting seasonal trends and the accumulation of value across steps within the making of mass-produced garments, would prove instrumental for the examples that inform Marx's *Grundrisse* and *Capital*. Fourth, Marx's focus of his critique on the luxury analyses by liberal economists during the first phase of French industrialization like Jean-Baptiste Say,[10] Antoine Destutt

[9] See Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, 2 vols. (London: Allen & Unwin, 1929), vol. 1 [1812–13], 219–20, 367–9, and 388; and, for its discussion within fashion, Lehmann, *Tigersprung*, 241–7 and Ulrich Lehmann, *Fashion and Materialism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), 52–5.

[10] Jean-Baptiste Say (1767–1832) was a French *laissez-faire* economist and businessman who promoted free trade, free-market structures, and entrepreneurship.

de Tracy,[11] and David Ricardo[12] led directly into the investigation of the relationship between production and consumption that is critical for his subsequent analysis of the role of value in capitalism. Finally, Paris had been established for a long time as the main site of producing 'fashion' in Europe, in the sense of innovating stylistic trends as much as in the actual making of textiles and garments, therefore an ever-present reminder for Marx of the double materialism that fashion furthers within the production–consumption relation: the materiality of weaving, spinning, dressmaking, tailoring, etc., and generating a society of commodity fetishes.

In the *Manuscripts* Marx ascribed to Say and Ricardo a tendency that 'recommends thrift and execrates luxury'. But:

> The Say–Ricardo school is hypocritical in not admitting that it is precisely whim and caprice which determine production. It forgets the 'refined needs', it forgets that there would be no production without consumption; it forgets that as a result of competition production can only become more extensive and luxurious. It forgets that, according to its views, a thing's value is determined by use, and that use is determined by fashion. It wishes to see only 'useful things' produced, but it forgets that production of too many useful things produces too large a *useless* population. Both sides forget that extravagance and thrift, luxury and privation, wealth and poverty are equal.[13]

The context for the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* renders fundamental its placement of fashion: the dictum that 'there would be no production without consumption' is followed by denoting a progressive tendency, 'production can only become more extensive and luxurious', that culminates in 'a thing's

[11] Antoine-Louis-Claude Destutt de Tracy (1754–1836) was a liberal French aristocrat and social theorist who analysed economies in terms of action and exchange.

[12] David Ricardo (1772–1823) was an English banker, parliamentarian, and classical economist who developed a one-dimensional labour theory of value.

[13] Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, 'Third Manuscript: Human Requirements and Division of Labour Under the Rule of Private Property', in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1975), III, 310.

value' as being 'determined by use, and that use is determined by fashion'. The value resides not in the material function of a thing but in its place as commodity in the production–consumption relationship. It seems simplistic to ascribe fashion's ceaseless promotion of production to the fact that it is encouraging people to acquire commodities anew each season, yet in capitalism 'use' is as abstracted and distant from the subject as 'exchange'. It constitutes the objectified relation between commodities that stands in for the relation between subject and object. Correspondingly, production in capitalism must follow an internal logic of material 'thing'-relations that replace social relations. Fashion indeed determines 'use', when 'use' is constantly intensified consumption, but it also generates production of new objectified relations in industry and society alike. Commodity fetishism 'assumes' in the eyes of subjects 'the fantastic form of a relation between objects',[14] and in capitalism this fantasy is fuelled by fashion in determining the interaction of outer social forms.

The relationship between production and consumption in fashion becomes central to defining value. In his *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy* (*c.* 1858), Marx used the example of an itinerant tailor, who visits a client in his home, to initiate an analysis of the relation between 'objectified labour' and 'living labour' within an initial system of 'simple circulation'.

> Both [the client and the artisan] in fact exchange only use values with one another; one exchanges necessaries, the other labour, a service which the other wants to consume, either directly – personal service – or he furnishes him the material etc. from which, with his labour, with the objectification of his labour, he makes a use value, a use value designed for A's consumption. For example, when the peasant takes a wandering tailor, the kind that existed in times past, into his house, and gives him the material to make clothes with … The man who takes the cloth I supplied to him and makes me an article of clothing out of it gives me a use value. But instead of giving it directly in objective form, he gives it in the form of activity.[15]

[14] Marx, *Capital*, 83 (translation modified).
[15] Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy (Rough Draft)* [1857–8] (London: Allen Lane, 1973), 465.

At first, there appears a rather straightforward materialist presentation of labour and consumption: the materiality of the clothing is infused with labour, not only as an economic fact but also as a social instance of activity. In the scenario of the wandering tailor and his working-class client, the cloth or garment is not only an objectification of labour arising from material production but one that is born from consumption. Value is expressed first as use value, but it is not perceived by the consumer as equivalent value to labour. In clothing for fashion, the use value is subordinate to another form of value, namely surplus value. The 'process of utilizing or exploiting [*Verwertungsprozess*]' becomes one of 'appropriation', especially within the cadre of contemporary consumption.[16]

The modern, industrialized making of clothing becomes a primary example of objectifying living labour through means and processes of production. Although Marx did not furnish this de facto cultural denotation of economic transformation, objectification provides the foundation for fashion as such, since fashion unites a particular group of commodities that objectifies simultaneously the labour within them and their consumers. Marx alerted his reader to the fundamental dialectic of production: 'the person objectifies himself in production, the thing subjectifies itself in the person'.[17] This dialectic is expressed in fashion through the material value, which finds its antithesis in the surplus value. The material value of the object resides in the price of the fabric, the wages for the labourer to make the garment, the cost of the facilities for production, etc., which is negated by the surplus value of the finished fashion commodity that is consumed by the wearer within a social context. The surplus value abstracts the material value, and without this abstraction the production of the material object could not exist, since its economic viability can only be guaranteed by the volatile, seasonal, and social consumption of trends.[18] 'When cotton becomes yarn', wrote Marx,

[16] Ibid., 469. [17] Ibid., 89.

[18] In chapter 16 of *Capital*, Marx distinguishes further between absolute and relative surplus value; whereby the former is constituted by '[t]he prolongation of the working-day beyond the point at which the labourer would have produced just an equivalent for the value of his labour-power, and the appropriation of that surplus-labour by capital, this is production of absolute surplus-value'; whereas the latter is originally defined as follows: 'the

> yarn becomes fabric, fabric becomes printed etc. or dyed etc. fabric, and this becomes, say, a garment, then ... in each of these subsequent processes, the material has obtained a more useful form, a form more appropriate for consumption; until it has obtained at the end the form in which it can directly become an object of consumption, when, therefore, the consumption of the material and the suspension of its form satisfies a human need, and the transformation is the same as its use. The substance of cotton preserves itself in all of these processes; it becomes extinct in one form of use value in order *to make way for a higher one, until the object exists as an object of direct consumption*.[19]

Here, the significance of materialism as being attuned simultaneously to concrete production and to the abstract, social conditions of labour and the resulting value of objects is very apparent indeed. The actual fibres of the cloth remain fundamental to the process of making the garment, yet they are abstracted into a value that is expressed only in consumption. 'Labour', says Marx, 'is the living, form-giving fire; it is the transitoriness of things, their temporality, as their formation by living time.'[20] The temporality and transitoriness in fashion, based on the transformation of the labour process and on the activity of the worker, can be observed in the mode of living, the changing style of objects, as well as the new words that writers who were contemporary to Marx's political economy, like Honoré de Balzac, Théophile Gautier, or Charles Baudelaire would coin to describe clothes on display in the streets and salons of the French capital.[21]

production of relative surplus-value, revolutionises out and out the technical processes of labour, and the composition of society'. For fashion this is historically evidenced, too, in the move from handicraft (cf. itinerant tailor) to mechanized and standardized production of garments that reflects in its changed methods the changed forms for the (social) consumption of fashion. See Marx, *Capital*, 509ff.

[19] Marx, *Grundrisse*, 360. [20] Ibid., 360–1.

[21] See for example the dresses of 'La Duchesse de Langeais', written by Balzac in 1833 as part of his *Histoire de Treize*, in *La Comédie humaine*, vol. v (Paris: Gallimard, 1977); Théophile Gautier's essay *De la mode* (Paris: Poulet-Malassi & de Broise, 1858); and Baudelaire's feuilletons of 1863, collected as *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays* (London: Phaidon, 1995).

PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION

Clothes and accessories would be observed by male authors principally on women's bodies. The oppression of women within the nexus of capitalism and fashion appears in multi-form: within an exploitative industry of female labour as much as through the commodification of women's bodies for social relations. Since the 1600s in parts of Europe and Asia and, progressively, after 1800, working-class as well as peasant women made up the majority of the global industrial labour force for textile production and for mass-produced clothing as well.[22] During the same period, commodity fetishism resulting from industrial capitalism reifies, objectifies, and alienates women's bodies through clothing and accessories.

Alexandra Kollontai, in the sixth of her lectures on *The Woman's Place in Social Development*, which she gave to working-class women at Sverdlov University in 1921, spoke about the impact of industrialization on women's labour.[23] In line with the historical materialist approach to history she defined 'the social position of women through her role in production. As long as the majority of women were tied in rather unproductive domestic labour, all women's attempts and initiatives for equality and independence had to fail.'[24] Advances in the mass production of textiles since at least the end of the eighteenth century led to the growth of a female

[22] See Claudia Jones, *An End to the Neglect of the Problems of the Negro Woman* (New York: National Women's Commission, Communist Party of the USA, 1949), 6; Mariarosa Dalla Costa, 'Reproduction and Emigration' [1974], in Camille Barbagallo (ed.), *Women and the Subversion of the Community: A Mariarosa Dalla Costa Reader* (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2019), 93; Angela Davis, 'The Approaching Obsolescence of Housework: A Working-Class Perspective', in *Women, Race & Class* (New York: Vintage, 1983), 227; and Silvia Federici, 'Marx and Feminism', 'Über Marx hinaus: Feminismus, Marxismus und die Frage der Reproduktion', *LuXemburg*, 2/3 (2017), 4.

[23] Alexandra Kollontai (1872–1952) was a socialist feminist politician and theoretician, who was elected to the Central Committee in 1917 and became Commissar for Social Welfare in the Soviet government.

[24] Alexandra Kollontai, *Die Situation der Frau in der gesellschaftlichen Entwicklung* (Vierzehn Vorlesungen vor Arbeiterinnen und Bäuerinnen an der Swerdlow-Universität, April bis Juni 1921; 6. Vorlesung: 'Die Frauenarbeit in der Entwicklungsperiode der kapitalistischen Großindustrie'), www.marxists.org/deutsch/archiv/kollontai/1921/frau/index.html (accessed 5 January 2021).

industrial workforce and allowed women to emancipate themselves through work.

> It occurred in many working-class families that the wife went out to work while her husband stayed at home, cared for the children, and did the housework. At times, this was rather typical in areas of textile production in the USA. In certain towns manufacturers preferred to hire principally cheap labour and thus women were working in e.g. a weaving factory while her husband remained at home. Temporarily, these small towns were designated as 'she-towns'. The general recognition of women's labour forced the entire working class to check its hitherto existing position vis-à-vis women and accept them finally as comrades and equals in their proletarian fight.[25]

The emancipation of working-class women through production, that is, as acting subjects – albeit often exploited and alienated by the factory owner – rather than being aligned with the cliché of the *bourgeoise* as visible yet passive consumers of fashions, was logical for Kollontai, since her feminism was tied intimately to the reformation of labour in the burgeoning Soviet Republic. Six decades later the Marxist-feminist Angela Davis echoed Kollontai's findings about early industrialization in her essay 'The Approaching Obsolescence of Housework: A Working-Class Perspective'; yet she was compelled to add a pessimistic coda, reflective of the continuous pattern of women's economic discrimination.

> The postrevolutionary surge of industrialization resulted in a proliferation of factories in the northeastern section of the new

[25] Kollontai, 'Die Frauenarbeit in der Entwicklungsperiode der kapitalistischen Großindustrie'. An earlier socialist-feminist analysis can be found in Nadezhda Konstantinovna Krupskaya, *The Woman Worker* [1889/1905] (Croydon: Manifesto Press, 2017). As chair of the education committee in 1920 and deputy education commissar (government minister) from 1929 to 1939 Krupskaya would reform the Soviet education system and develop its librarianship. Together with Inessa Armand and Alexandra Kollontai, Krupskaya founded in 1919 the Women's Section of the Communist Party (the *zhenskii otdel*, or 'Zhenotdel' for short). Kollontai had worked also as an educator since 1894 and became a Marxist activist some four years later. In 1915, she undertook a four and one-half month speaking tour of the United States, where she gathered research on the local economy and labour relations.

> country. New England's textile mills were the factory system's successful pioneers. Since spinning and weaving were traditional female domestic occupations, women were the first workers recruited by the mill-owners to operate the new power looms. Considering the subsequent exclusion of women from industrial production in general, it is one of the great ironies of this country's economic history that the first industrial workers were women.
>
> As industrialization advanced, shifting economic production from the home to the factory, the importance of women's domestic work suffered a systematic erosion. Women were the losers in a double sense: as their traditional jobs were usurped by the burgeoning factories, the entire economy moved away from the home, leaving many women largely bereft of significant economic roles.[26]

The role of women in producing and consuming fashion turned doubly exploitative and twice as alienating within global capitalist economies since the early nineteenth century. Fashion plays a vital role in the ephemeral but also transformative character of this modernity, due to the confluence of a material given: a particular labour structure, which resulted from accelerated demand for fashionable goods, together with a sociological factor: the objectification of the subject through modern sartorial forms. The dialectic of such production expressed through its negation – that is, through consumption – animates the role of modern fashion. Marx developed in his *Grundrisse* a dialectic that is fundamental to capitalism and, again, fashion provides the prime example:

> Consumption produces production in a double way, (1) because a product becomes a real product only by being consumed. For example, a garment becomes a real garment only in the act of being worn … Only by disintegrating the product does consumption give the product the finishing stroke;[27] for the product is production not as objectified activity, but rather only as

[26] Davis, 'The Approaching Obsolescence of Housework', 277. Women continued, in rural New England as well as urban sectors, to work (often at home) as adjuncts of factory labour or industrial mass production well into the twentieth century. Davis' statement applies here especially for 'fashion' trades from millinery to shoes, embroidery and lace-making.

[27] In English in the original text.

> object for the active subject; (2) because consumption creates the need for *new* production, that is it creates the ideal, internally impelling cause for production, which is its presupposition. Consumption creates the motive for the production; it also creates the object which is active in production as determinant aim.[28]

In consuming fashion, the product of labour 'disintegrates': its use value and its direct equivalent value in the labour that had been required to produce it are abstracted. Abstracted insofar as its surplus value bears no relation to the material value of, for example, the raw fibres, the hours spent at the loom, seamstressing in garrets, or in garment sweatshops.[29] Equally, it is abstracted in the way clothes and accessories reify the wearer's body in modernity as a transitory social signifier and gendered object of exchange. With the advent of haute couture in nineteenth-century Paris, 'fashion leaders' became the extravagantly attired lovers and wives of politicians, industrial capitalists, and real estate speculators whose wardrobe and sexuality was paid for as part of a highly ritualized social exchange.[30] Thus, it was during the reign of Louis Napoléon III that French fashion design consolidated its role in Western markets, having expanded from the historical grounds of late seventeenth-century luxury production of textiles under royal patronage (e.g. silk weaving in Lyon) and the ambassadorial role of *pandoras* (model dolls in miniature couture) that Marie Antoinette's dressmaker Rose Bertin sent in the second half of the eighteenth century via carriages across Europe. The nephew of the first Napoléon ascended to power through his bloody *coup*

[28] Marx, *Grundrisse*, 91 (translation modified).

[29] The 'keystone mark-up' from wholesale to retail to consumer for mainstream clothes adds up to around 200–250 per cent; see for example Samantha Novick, 'How to Price Clothing', 11 December 2019, www.fundingcircle.com/us/resources/how-to-price-clothing/ (accessed 18 July 2020) or Emily Farra, 'What Is the Right Price for Fashion?', *Vogue*, 29 June 2020, www.vogue.com/article/what-is-the-right-price-for-fashion (accessed 18 July 2020).

[30] The objectification of affluent women as 'style-leaders' cannot be evidenced in innovative cuts or new designs for clothes and accessories that historically emerge most often from workwear or military apparel, yet this objectification continues to be purported in the fashion media to establish 'exclusivity', that is, extravagant prices for labelled 'designer fashion' that is often distributed first to the stylists of celebrities.

d'état in December 1851 and crowned himself emperor a year later.[31] His integration of a dynastic revival into free-market capitalism was reinforced by establishing a series of public engagements at court, where bourgeois nouveaux riches could mix with the re-established nobility. In this context the emphasis in modernity on the new as eternal recurrence, which was postulated by Baudelaire in the early 1850s, took on a decidedly political meaning, as old-fashioned imperialism was dressed up as contemporary constitutional monarchy.

It is only logical that this very period saw the expansion and consolidation of haute couture, when Charles Frederick Worth designed his first dresses for Louis Napoléon's wife, the Empress Eugénie, as a conduit of bourgeois aspiration to an aristocratic past. Worth's couture was traditional in its shapes, retaining at first crinolines and waistlines but, under the patronage of the empress, he proposed notable changes that ushered in simpler fabrics and decoration to emphasize and subsequently define the composition of pattern cut and silhouette. An approximation of bourgeois tastes to the representational simulacra of nobility can be found in this instance, when the new and the old fuse in the historicist designs of Worth, which were billed as the latest artistic creations to designate individual objectification of the prominent wearer. The story goes that Empress Eugénie had taken a liking to the young and vivacious Princess Pauline von Metternich, and on that night when the empress noticed her dress (so the princess recounts in her memoirs) the following conversation took place:

> 'May I ask you, Madam,' she enquired, 'who made you that dress, so marvellously elegant and simple?'
>
> 'An Englishman, Madam, a star who has arisen in the firmament of fashion,' the Princess replied.
>
> 'And what is his name?'
>
> 'Worth.'

[31] Marx provided a contemporary exposure of the way in which the arch-capitalist royal ascended to his bloodied throne, in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon* [1851–2], in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1979), XI, 137–47 and 164–81.

'Well,' concluded the Empress, 'please ask him to come and see me at ten o'clock tomorrow morning.'

'He was made, and I was lost,' quipped Princess Metternich, 'for from that moment there were no more dresses at 300 francs each.'[32]

As materialization of taste and sexual politics – both Eugénie de Montijo and Pauline von Metternich determined the marriages to their philandering husbands as 'alliances' – Worth's haute couture has to be designated a precise monetary value, the surplus of which ascends via the social relations it facilitates when worn in public. Disintegrating as 'finishing stroke' is the apotheosis of modern fashion: the instant objectification of the subject through sartorial commodities in set socio-economic systems that is elevated to a creative gesture and social signifier (taste), even an aesthetic concept (style).[33] Such gesture/signifier/style must be cut short, as its material base requires constant renewal, which, in turn, provides the merciless rhythm for the labour that produces the object for consumption. The ever-changing trends in capitalist cultures provide an abstract rationale that conceals the market behind repeatedly actualized and formalized aesthetics.

One might argue that in capitalism any commodity, as distinguished from an object of production, can move between concreteness and abstraction, but in fashion the designing of clothes – the tailoring of the coat – is uniquely placed to simultaneously determine labour as useful, in the abstract, to create a form, as well as transforming the labour incorporated in the woven linen fabric into the value of the coat, which is subjected to the recognition of value in its social form of labour. This, in turn, generates the equivalent value for the commodity vis-à-vis other commodities so that fashion can exist as a system of differentiated social values through the wearing of distinct clothing. Residual sumptuary laws for clothing and accessories (as

[32] Princesse de Metternich, *Souvenirs de la Princesse Pauline de Metternich (1859–1871)* (Paris: Plon, 1922), 136.

[33] A scathing satire of Worth's fashion design process can be found in the realism of Émile Zola's *La Curée*, in *Les Rougon-Macquart* (Paris: Lacroix, Verboeckhiven et Cie, 1871), I, 123–5; English translation by A. Goldhammer, *The Kill* (New York: The Modern Library, 2005); see Lehmann, *Fashion and Materialism*, 106–12.

well as hairstyles and make-up) and nineteenth-century class-based conventions of dress therefore only articulate in officious terms the social value of labour that distinguishes fashion commodities through processes of spinning, weaving, tailoring, and styling.

PATTERNS 1: VALUE, (IMMATERIAL) LABOUR, AND REPRODUCTION

The assessment of value, in particular that of surplus value, assumes a central role in feminist historical materialism after Marx, as it ties social and physical reproduction to production, and homes in on the forming of social relations. This leads to a processual understanding of political economy in which surplus value is not a quantifiable number but constitutes a relation that a subject embodies in real life at a particular point in time. Yet surplus value, adds Jared Sacks, 'can only exist as a relation to capital on the basis that it is eventually extracted and turned into capital through the sale of commodities. If this relation is disrupted at any point, surplus-value ceases to exist.'[34] Rosa Luxemburg's analysis of political economy originally veered between the definition of surplus value as value which extends beyond the measurable gain that covers the wage of labourer and value that is represented by consumption of goods that do not have primarily use value but are defined as luxuries. In *The Accumulation of Capital* of 1913 Luxemburg lampoons traditional political economists who believe that 'the surplus product in a concrete use-form is the reason why the surplus value cannot be usefully employed' and who tout as remedy for 'entrepreneurs to devote half of the social labour appropriated as surplus value to the production not of common goods but of luxuries'.[35] To today's readers this sounds eerily familiar, seeing that producers continue to torque their

[34] Jared Sacks, 'Rethinking Surplus-Value: Recentring Struggle at the Sphere of Reproduction', *Interface*, 11/1 (2019), 158.

[35] Rosa Luxemburg, *The Accumulation of Capital* [1913] (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1951), 235. These luxuries appear for Luxemburg 'in the form of laces, fashionable carriages and the like', i.e. fashion commodities targeted in the main at women.

turnovers to accelerated changes in fashion, reinventing the self-same commodities for ever more closely defined consumer groups who are identified and targeted by micro-economic trend reports and influencers. For Luxemburg the articulation of surplus value as social relation is profoundly unjust to women.

> As long as capitalism [*Kapitalherrschaft*] and its wage system rule, work is only seen as productive when it generates surplus value and capitalist profit. From this point of view the cabaret dancer who with her legs kicks profit into the pockets of the entrepreneur is a productive worker, whereas the vast labouring [*Mühsal*] of proletarian women and mothers inside the four walls of their homes is regarded as unproductive.[36]

Dancing, acting, modelling on the catwalk, and other performative labour that is determined through the codification of the subjective body within fashionable cultural expressions, provide here a significant conceptual foundation for the later term immaterial labour. The feminism of Luxemburg, Kollontai, Clara Zetkin, and others, in analysing the hitherto neglected structural distinctions of women's work (at home and in the workshop/factory) expanded significantly the social concept of labour to prefigure the 'immaterial' and 'affected' within post-war materialist economic analyses. Some eighty years later Maurizio Lazzarato brought together the feminist expansive definition of 'social labour' with the Italian *operaismo* (workerism) contribution to political economic thought. Lazzarato wrote in 1996:

> The role of immaterial labour is to promote continual innovation in the forms and conditions of communication (and thus in work and consumption). It gives form to and materializes needs, the imaginary, consumer tastes, and so forth, and these products in turn become powerful producers of needs, images, and tastes. The particularity of the commodity produced through immaterial labour ... does not produce the physical capacity of labour power; instead, it transforms the person who uses it. Immaterial labour produces first and foremost a 'social relationship' (a relationship of

[36] Rosa Luxemburg, 'Frauenwahlrecht und Klassenkampf', in Clara Zetkin (ed.), *"Frauenwahlrecht", Propagandaschrift zum II. sozialdemokratischen Frauentag*, Stuttgart, 12 May 1912 (Stuttgart: J. H. W. Dietz, 1912), 9.

> innovation, production, and consumption). Only if it succeeds in this production does its activity have an economic value. This activity makes immediately apparent something that material production had 'hidden', namely, that labour produces not only commodities, but first and foremost it produces the capital relation.[37]

In fashion 'the capital relation' objectifies the female body, by codifying its reproductive function especially through the physical expression thereof, through constantly renewed shapes, for instance padded-out forms, fabrics that cling to the body, decorated skin, exposed secondary sexual characteristics. Surplus value is understood as social relations that are capitalistic; they are produced and reproduced as labour power while referencing the commodity that ultimately determines the social relation. The extraction of the labour power works because the surplus as social relation is bound into the commodity fetishism promoted by fashion, where the exchange value between goods is determined by the way in which hairstyles, clothing or make-up position the wearer socially, culturally, in terms or race and gender.

Yet this extraction obfuscates an actual economic process. Catharine MacKinnon reveals it succinctly: 'Like the value of a commodity, women's sexual desirability is fetishized: it is made to appear a quality of the object itself, spontaneous and inherent, independent of the social relation which creates it, uncontrolled by the force that requires it.'[38] The display or, indeed, concealing of desirability, particularly in womenswear has a complex history in capitalism. On the one hand, as had been analysed by Luxemburg, Kollontai, and Davis, domestic labour remained concealed as 'unproductive' (while reproduction of the labour force through childbearing and childrearing was assumed into surplus value), and therefore clothing associated with it was defined by its use value: the aprons, roomy skirts, and flat shoes

[37] Maurizio Lazzarato, 'Immaterial Labour', in Paolo Virno and Michael Hardt (eds.), *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 137.

[38] Catharine A. MacKinnon, 'Feminism, Marxism, Method, and the State: An Agenda for Theory', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 7/3 (1982), 540.

worn by working-class housewives and parlour maids alike. On the other hand, as dominant narratives in costume history – within museum displays as much as illustrated volumes of preserved objects and images – had intended to show, the cultural significance of fashion apparently lay elsewhere: in the luxuries that objectify women for display – and mark them out as economically dependent on male capitalists who profit from the surplus value generated thereby – in economic terms as well as in social relations.

Such complicity between economic and cultural value systems is emphasized in feminism that combines historical materialism with (post)structuralist thought. These ideas, delineated by Elizabeth Armstrong in her recent survey on 'Marxist and Socialist Feminisms',

> stressed the necessary porousness of conceptual divisions between reproduction and production. Marxist feminists demanded a more careful analysis of how the affective, libidinal and moral realms functioned in the service of capitalism. They sought to clarify the relationship between value, particularly exchange value and surplus value, and values, including ethics and use value, in capitalism to better attend to the desires and needs beyond that system.[39]

Fashion assumes a complex position within this value-based nexus of morals, political economy, sexual roles, images, and reproductions of culture in capitalism, due to the aforementioned duality of a *mode of living*: the exposure to constantly renewed, desirous commodities, and a *mode of production*: the concrete making of textiles, garments, and accessories wherein functions of the sartorial cover or accessory are abstracted progressively to a cypher within social relations.

An 'etymological sanction' of *text as textile* can be found in weaving metaphors that animate canonical writing from Plato to Marcel Proust and beyond,[40] while the analysis of value in its

[39] Elisabeth Armstrong, 'Marxist and Socialist Feminisms', in Nancy Naples (ed.), *Companion to Feminist Studies* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2020), 43.

[40] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak wrote that 'it seems that cooking is a better figure than weaving when one speaks of the text, although the latter has etymological sanction. Lifting the lid, Marx discovers that the pot of the economic is forever on the boil. What cooks (in all senses of this enigmatic expression) is Value.' Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Scattered Speculations on the Question of Value', *Diacritics*, 15/4 (Marx after Derrida) (1985), 74. On weaving, see also Ulrich Lehmann, 'Making as Knowing: Epistemology and

connected contexts of political economy and culture points at the more abstract 'fashion' that needs to be returned to its materialist fabric, away from ontology or phenomenology, via political praxis.

Socialist feminists took the structural tenets of Marx, as well as Friedrich Engels' book on *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1884) as starting points to develop the required fusion of theory and praxis. Reproductive rights and suffrage – an applied practice of political economy – were combined with theoretical analysis, which was grounded in the role that unpaid labour (later, as we will see, finding its equivalent in the formulations of affected and immaterial labour) played in the political economy of capitalism. The combination of female factory labour in the textile and clothing industry (up to 70 per cent in industrialized countries at the end of the nineteenth century) and the social production of labour through the part that bourgeois women, especially, played in the performative consumption of fashions (luxury, semi-luxury, niceties), was mapped onto reproductive labour to arrive at an interplay between production and consumption that situated Marx's bilateral connection within the reification of the subject. This move, anticipating the later function of reification in critical theory and analyses of the culture industry in the 1940s and 1950s, expanded on the political aspect of economic thought by introducing emancipation as significant driving force of change.

PATTERNS 2: MATERIALISM AFTER MARX

Georgi Plekhanov,[41] an astute analyst and chronicler of materialism after Marx, opened his book on *Art and Social Life* (1912) thus: 'It should be observed, in general, that the effort to assume

Technique in Craft', *Journal of Modern Craft*, 5/2 (2012), 149–64; and Lehmann, *Tigersprung*, 207–11.

[41] Georgi Plekhanov (1856–1918) was the first Marxist theoretician to anticipate the emergence of the working class in Russia as a revolutionary social force; he raised critical questions about the relationship between the struggle for political democracy, the overthrow of the capitalist class, and the establishment of socialism. He was also the foremost defender of philosophical materialism, an expert on dialectic and post-Hegelian thought across Europe, and wrote extensively on the need to reconcile materialism as a philosophy with political praxis.

a definite outward appearance always reflects the social relationships of the given period. An interesting sociological inquiry could be written on this theme.'[42] Alas, Plekhanov did not find the time to undertake such an enquiry and it was left to bourgeois, anti-materialist (and exclusively male) sociologists like Gabriel Tarde, Herbert Spencer, Georg Simmel, or Émile Durkheim to follow into the terrain of fashion.[43] Yet the formalism of such late nineteenth-century sociology of clothing, in its ready acceptance of the economic system of capitalism, focused in the main on signifiers of class affiliation or on subjective gestures in modernity, and therefore could not hope to probe the structural significance of fashion.

The Italian Marxist Antoni Gramsci[44] developed the wide-ranging concept of hegemonies, founded in philosophical materialism and political economy, in order to determine power relations as spheres of ideological influence and pure social consent. '[T]hough hegemony is ethico-political', wrote Gramsci in his *Prison Notebooks* of 1932–4, 'it must also be economic, must necessarily be based on the decisive function exercised by the leading group in the decisive nucleus of economic activity'.[45] In this context social behaviour becomes a constituent for repeated historical divisions and class struggle – patterns within historical materialism – and fashion as its outward appearance can assume structural value. In his essay from the *Prison Notebooks* 'Sincerity (or Spontaneity) and

[42] Georgi Plekhanov, *Art and Social Life*, chapter 1, www.marxists.org/archive/plekhanov/1912/art/ch01.htm (accessed 5 January 2021).

[43] See for example Herbert Spencer, 'On Manners and Fashion' [1854], in *Essays: Scientific, Political, and Speculative* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1891), III, 1–31; George Darwin, 'Development in Dress', *Macmillan Magazine*, 26 (September 1872), 410–16; Rudolf von Jhering, 'Die Mode', in *Der Zweck im Recht* [1877/1883] (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1905), 180–9; Émile Durkheim, 'La Science positive de la morale en Allemagne' [pt. 1], *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger*, 12/24 (1887), 33–58; Gabriel Tarde, *The Laws of Imitation* (New York: Holt [orig. ed. 1890] 1903), 189–255; Georg Simmel, 'Fashion' [1904], in *On Individuality and Social Forms* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 317–18.

[44] Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937) was a neo-Marxist philosopher and Communist politician, who developed his ideas away from economic determinism towards sociological and cultural interpretations, linguistics, and education.

[45] Antonio Gramsci, 'Some Theoretical and Practical Aspects of "Economism"' [1932–4], in *The Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings 1916–1935* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 211–12.

Discipline', Gramsci used the dialectic of the 'objective and universal fact' as negating itself in diverse expressions of free will and conformism.

> What is 'real conformism', what is the most useful and freest form of behaviour that is 'rational' in that it obeys 'necessity'? In other words, what is 'necessity'? Everyone is led to make of himself the archetype of 'fashion' and 'sociality', to offer himself as the 'model'. Therefore, sociality or conformism is the result of a cultural (but not only cultural) struggle; it is an 'objective' or universal fact, just as the 'necessity' on which the edifice of liberty is built cannot but be objective and universal.[46]

Fashion constantly *becomes* yet always *is* a factor of socio-economic and political existence. As such it is objective, despite the apparent subjectivity of the people sporting the latest trend in hair, make-up, dress, food, or mode of transport, in order to distinguish themselves. It exists as the repetitive assertion of abstract value, born from commodity production in capitalist economies. Fashion's temporality therefore resides within its objective consistency as well as in its repeated renewal of styles to maintain elevated levels of consumption. Analysing fashion, the poet Baudelaire had issued thus a dialectic demand *avant la lettre*: 'to extract from fashion whatever element it may contain of poetry within history, to distil the eternal from the transitory'.[47]

Like Gramsci, the cultural critic Walter Benjamin would become a victim of fascism; not withered away in a prison cell but hunted across occupied France, to commit suicide at the foothill of the Pyrenees in 1940. Benjamin used Marx's left-Hegelian philosophy and dialectical materialism for a fragmented analysis of the culture of Paris in the latter half of the nineteenth century – for him the foundation and site of capitalist modernity. Historical repetition and Hegelian leap, Baudelaire's *La Passante* and the streetwalker, arcades and department stores, all conflated within Benjamin's research, and fashion provided the red thread that was running

[46] Antonio Gramsci, 'Sincerity (or Spontaneity) and Discipline' [1932–5], in *The Gramsci Reader*, 400.

[47] Charles Baudelaire, 'IV. Modernity' [1863], in *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, 12.