



FASHION
AND
EVERYDAY
LIFE
LONDON
AND
NEW YORK

CHERYL
BUCKLEY
& HAZEL
CLARK

BLOOMSBURY

FASHION AND EVERYDAY LIFE

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**CHERYL BUCKLEY AND
HAZEL CLARK**

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For our parents,

June Buckley and Derrick Buckley

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INTRODUCTION

This book aims to establish a new critical framework for the study of fashion and its history by examining its role in urban everyday life from the late nineteenth century to the early twenty-first century. In doing so, it recognizes how both 'fashion' and 'everyday life' are somewhat troubled terms: their definitions fluid and changing across the period under consideration. 'Everyday life' can refer to the experiential, and to synchronicity, as 'everyday experience is what happens in typical form today as it has done yesterday and will do tomorrow'; what constitutes everyday life also changes according to time and place.¹ The changes can be subtle and often go unnoticed, and unless they are consciously brought into view they can be overlooked or derided as being too 'ordinary'. Yet the 'ordinary' is an important component of the everyday, which must be investigated pragmatically through the vehicle of lived human experience, and through things or usable products. We propose in this book that fashion is an (increasingly) integral part of everyday life in the long twentieth century. Fashion had an impact on the everyday lives of more people as the century progressed, through improved buying power, greater availability, increased knowledge and the lower prices of goods, particularly those that clothed the human body. Fashion, as visual spectacle and material object, also offered the potential for the extraordinary to occur in the context of the everyday, thus enabling transformations in appearance and identities.

As we will demonstrate, the role of fashion in everyday life is not just determined by the 'fashion system', which evolved as a gradually more global and commodity-driven set of processes. Fashion must also be recognized as a cultural phenomenon that facilitates embodied identity, in other words, how individuals and groups of people present themselves in and for the world. Fashion parallels everyday life in creating, visually, materially and in writing 'a reality readily available for scrutiny'.² It is that reality which this book explores, as well as aspects of fashion that typically have been hidden or obscured. 'Hidden' in a number of ways, including what has not yet been researched, which has been overlooked as being too mundane or ordinary, as well as the less apparent aspects of fashion, including the daily work of ordinary people in its creation, production, consumption and use. Doing this facilitates a re-focusing of fashion

discourse away from the well-trodden and power-laden dynamics, towards a re-evaluation of time, memory and, above all, history, and their relationships to fashion and everyday life. Emphasizing the importance of place and space provides the broader framework for the book, as well as issues of gender, race and social class. Across the long twentieth century, fashion contributed to an imaginary world, captured by still and moving image and in text, as well as in its material form as clothes worn by real people. While our focus is more on the role of fashion in the lives of women, we acknowledge the relationship of men to fashion in everyday life as being an area still in need of greater investigation and understanding (Breward; Cole; Edwards; McNeil and Karaminas). Ours is a story of fashion constructed through usable things and social relations, uncovered in two of the world's major urban centres: London and New York.

Conceptualizing fashion in everyday life

In this book, we want to consider some of the spaces and places in which fashion as everyday has been constituted in London and New York particularly with regard to the production of clothing, looks, styles, and to examine how these have also been constitutive of both as fashion cities. In revealing the complexity of fashion in the modern period, recent historians and theorists have examined fashion beyond specific designs, collections or garments, as a myriad of related cultural practices involving representation, promotion, performance and embodiment (Craik; Entwistle). Recognizing the diverse ways in which fashion intersects with everyday life, Elizabeth Wilson wrote of fashion 'as one of the most immediate and everyday cultural manifestations and one which we neglect at our peril'.³ In such a context, fashion has been 'a technique of acculturation ... and [g]iven the local character of fashion milieux, it is subject to different codes of behaviour and rules of ceremony and social position'.⁴ In a similar vein, when discussing fashion practices outside such large centres as well as on their peripheral streets, Gilbert suggested that the inhabitants of provincial cities and marginal areas may be fluent in the 'Esperanto of high fashion', but that this is mixed with 'a local dialect of (often affordable) street labels and locally derived brands'.⁵ Such ideas have particular worth for understanding fashion as part of everyday life in London and New York.

Space/place

In discussing the historiography of urban change, Mort and Ogborn proposed that space and place have been understood as largely constituted by, but not constitutive of, historical processes. With London as their example, they argued

'urban social historians have not viewed the geography of London as an active agent in the processes of modern historical change'.⁶ Acknowledging that these accounts have offered enviable detail that has allowed a conception of 'the modern metropolis as a social totality, capable of analysis as a complex entity', recent work by cultural historians and historical geographers has taken a micro-history approach examining 'specific streets and thoroughfares, monuments, buildings, and even distinctive interiors'.⁷ In these histories, London's geographies 'become the active sites for examining the competing uses, social meanings, and power relations that have structured the development of the city'.⁸ In light of this, both London and New York were not simply 'World Fashion Cities' of the first order contingent upon a handful of special events, places and subjects, but also a series of historical landscapes and particular places and spaces in which fashion and its associated 'cultures' are axiomatically part of everyday lives that have been ordinary. Several historians have already begun to map the shifting geographies of London fashion in particular (Breward; Gilbert; Rappaport; Edwards; Ashmore) but, in doing this, they have mainly considered Fashion (in the upper case): major brands, iconic department stores, pre-eminent streets and designers. A similar process has yet to take place in terms of New York's fashion geographies as what has been published concentrates mostly on design (Rennolds Millbank; Arnold; Stanfill) and on specific features of clothing production (Goldstein and Greenberg; Rantisi; Moon).

Both London and New York were unquestionably 'World Cities', but there is a particularity and diversity about both cities that is perhaps distinctive. They are a different kind of fashion capital, 'not [only] the source of authoritative edicts on "the look" ... but a place where high fashion reinvigorates and renews itself, as it bumps up against the rawness of the real city'.⁹ This 'rawness' draws from everyday lives that are permeated by fashion not only in the elite 'front regions' of the city 'where it was displayed, purchased and worn, but also in the "back regions" where it was made, finished and often copied'.¹⁰ We owe to Goffman this conception of the 'front' and 'back' regions in everyday life. And while fashion or dress was not part of his 'presentation of self in everyday life', his ideas are nevertheless of value in informing our thinking.¹¹ While the front and back regions are characteristic of fashion's world cities, Gilbert observed the overlapping geographies of these two that 'can produce unexpected crossings and blurrings of the boundaries between different social worlds'.¹² In recognizing this, we begin to write the everyday into the fashion histories of these important cities. Also, rather than the binaries of 'high' and 'low' fashion or the 'front' and 'back' regions, by looking at the trajectories of fashion in everyday life, it is possible to explore the fault lines or intersections of ordinary fashion with ongoing lives. Perhaps due to the very nature of fashion, these ordinary narratives of fashion will 'cross' over and rub up against fashion's extraordinary cultures, particularly in the cities of London and New York.

Developing a critical framework for the study of fashion in everyday life in twentieth-century London and New York involves appraisal of the fashion system's over-emphasis on modernity by drawing on theories of everyday life.¹³ In undertaking such a task, we utilize theories of everyday life so as to explore the routine elements of fashion. Integral to this is a re-consideration of the relationships between fashion and the modern world, and a re-thinking of the assumption that fashion is implicitly modern: symbolic and intrinsic to modernity. Prompted by new technologies, including the sewing machine, paper patterns, machine-made textiles, ready-to-wear systems, improved methods of distribution, dissemination and retailing, and shifting social and economic structures, fashionable dress permeated ordinary, everyday lives as never before in the period c.1900 to 2000.¹⁴ Nonetheless, scholarship in fashion has tended to focus on the avant-garde, the extraordinary and the unusual. Indeed, within fashion's discourses, the truly 'ordinary' remains elusive. In part, this has been due to the positioning of fashion in relation to modernity by writers such as Thorstein Veblen, Charles Baudelaire and Georg Simmel;¹⁵ as the latter put it, 'fashion increasingly sharpens our sense of the present'.¹⁶ Indicative of modernity, it was to paraphrase Baudelaire: fashion's transitory, fugitive and contingent qualities, rather than its adaptability and longevity that attracted the interest of these early theorists of modern life. Aiming to unsettle these dominant views by understanding fashion as a manifestation of routine daily lives that remains with people over time, this book examines the ways in which the everyday use, appropriation, circulation, re-making and constant re-modelling of fashionable clothes over time by diverse social groups can be anti-modern and non-progressive; exemplify continuity and tradition; responsive to local, regional and national subtleties as well as global ones and disruptive of fashion's structures and systems as well as its visual codes and norms of consumption.

Fashion: Visual and material

Various writers and historians have touched upon aspects of fashion as part of day-to-day lives.¹⁷ Some have reassessed fashion's multiplicity and the re-circulation of styles since the 1970s, while others have shown that one person's 'everyday' is part of another's fashion statement.¹⁸ However, there remains a predominant interest in the fashion 'syntaxes' of the young, the novelty of the 'look', and the currency of the latest style – whether re-cycled, second-hand, revivalist, or new – without doubt an important part of what constitutes fashion; there still remains a vast swathe of fashionable dressing outside of these categories. This fashion – 'design in the lower case' – to quote Judy Attfield, comprises the ordinary and mundane practices of wearing that draws items from the personal wardrobe in a routine manner.¹⁹ Accumulated over time, such

fashion can encapsulate at least one lifetime particularly as clothes are handed down, recycled or re-modelled.²⁰ Writing about fashion as part of her study of celebrity, Pamela Church Gibson observed that it has been characterized by 'the two ends of the spectrum: high fashion on the one hand, street style and youth culture at their most confrontational on the other'.²¹ In contrast, the ordinary is in the 'hinterlands beyond scholarship', where 'cheap, ubiquitous clothes which lack artistic merit of any kind are consigned ... to the landfills'.²² Significant here is Church Gibson's observation that particularly during the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries the impact of celebrity culture had repercussions for what is meant by fashion; and the converse of this, for what constitutes the ordinary. But glamour and celebrity were not late twentieth-century inventions. As music hall stars, dancers and actresses dazzled on the stage and in the dance-halls, seduced us in the movies and intrigued us with their public personas and private lives from the late nineteenth century through the twentieth century, ordinary men and women interacted with these images of celebrity to a lesser or greater degree. At the same time, the fashion system (manufacturers, designers, journalists, retailers, magazines) played an important part in capturing and commercializing this. As Entwistle has noted, 'Different situations impose different ways of dressing, sometimes by imposing "rules" or codes of dress or sometimes simply through conventions that most people adhere to most of the time'.²³ Those conventions reference and also alter over time and in space, as social and cultural changes occur.

Gender/race/class and body

Considerations of gender, class and race are central to the study of fashion and everyday life, and take particular prominence in our period. The long twentieth century was a time of social struggle, which can be bracketed in many ways, for instance by women seeking human rights at the end of the late nineteenth century and by transgender people doing the same in the early twenty-first century. In between substantial social and cultural shifts occurred which challenged the location of power and created new narratives of gender, race, identity, sexuality, national identity, age and generation. Singly and together they impacted 'style-fashion-dress', an articulation coined by fashion scholar Carol Tulloch and highlighted by Kaiser in her discussion of fashion and cultural studies.²⁴ Kaiser also advocates an 'intersectional' approach to scholarship that recognizes that subject positions of race, class and gender are not independent in the lived experience of individuals or in the way that they choose to dress, style and fashion themselves.²⁵ We acknowledge and respect the particular and overlapping subjectivities, which were especially evident in the urban centres of London and New York, and we highlight them throughout the text at the

historical moments when social change was taking place, such as the American civil rights movement, second-wave feminism and gay and lesbian rights in the 1960s. We do, nevertheless, focus our attention more on the everyday lives of women more than men, in London and New York during our period. In doing so, we also recognise the growing body of research and publications, which is expanding our knowledge, and understanding of menswear and the fashioning of masculinity.²⁶ Such developments also underpin Elizabeth Wilson's reminder that contemporary interest in fashion is consistent with the postmodern shift from an emphasis on knowledge to one on being, 'from knowledge to experience, from theory to practice, from mind to body'.²⁷

The body must be acknowledged properly in the study of fashion and in particular in its everyday existence and experience. As Kaiser has stated succinctly, 'Fashion matters in everyday life; it becomes embodied'.²⁸ Joanne Entwistle noted how 'Understanding dress in everyday life requires understanding not just of how the body is represented within the fashion system and its discourses on dress, but also how the body is experienced and lived and the role dress plays in the presentation of the body/self'.²⁹ Entwistle's work has drawn on, among others, Foucault, Merleau-Ponty and Bourdieu. While not without criticism, such work highlights issues that are significant to fashion in everyday life. Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* (1977) charts the growth of surveillance, as well as different ways of disciplining the body, through actions or materials. Influenced by Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, the importance is highlighted by the experience of the body, which is typically clothed and likely fashioned in the course of its day-to-day existence. Bourdieu assists with the conceptual framework for understanding fashion and dress as a situated practice for the body seen as a container of the self.³⁰ Entwistle too draws upon the work of Goffman, and highlights our own concern with location, being that, 'the spaces of the street, the office, the shopping mall, operate with different rules and determine how we present ourselves and how we react with others'.³¹ Thus in everyday life in the extended twentieth-century London and New York, the body was not just dressed, but fashioned, in time and space.

The conceptual framework of this book then derives from ideas developed within fashion studies, and also draws upon the theories of everyday life articulated by social theorists and reinterpreted by subsequent writers. In the former category are Michel de Certeau, Henri Lefebvre and Walter Benjamin, while Ben Highmore, Barry Sandywell and Michael Sheringham have offered useful insights into the application of such ideas in a variety of domains.³² Alongside this, in attempting to 'write the real', the book draws on the work of social, cultural and feminist historians such as E. P. Thompson, Sally Alexander and Carol Steedman, who have grappled with the everyday experiences, actions and habits of ordinary people.³³ Both Benjamin and Lefebvre were drawn to fashion as they explored the ordinary, mundane aspects of life, while De Certeau

in studying the everyday exposed the ‘instruments of analysis’ that underpin specific disciplines.

Everyday life theories and fashion

In *Critique of Everyday Life*, Henri Lefebvre argued that everyday life is ‘defined by “what is left over” after all distinct, superior, specialized, structured activities have been singled out for analysis’.³⁴ Fashion – as typically studied through the fashion system – has comprised the ‘distinct, superior, specialized, and structured’. It is not ‘what is left over’; rather it ‘refers to regular (conventionally bi-annual) stylistic innovation, and a production system that is geared to making and distributing clothes’.³⁵ Nonetheless, everyday clothes as routinely worn by people in the West in the twentieth century reveal an ongoing engagement with fashion on a scale from extraordinary through to ordinary; indeed ‘where the ordinary is exemplified by commonplace phenomena that are taken for granted and unnoticed, the extraordinary marks the disturbing eruption of the rare and the highly valued. Like other forms of *extravagant* experience, the extraordinary exceeds the limits and boundaries of ordinariness’.³⁶ While the extraordinariness of ‘high fashion’ has been clearly visible, ‘ordinary’ fashion has been resolutely invisible. Yet visual sources that depict people going about their daily routines show how they have interpreted fashion’s cycles even if these were not always the latest nor articulated as a coherent ‘look’. Such fashion was heterogeneous and represented a bringing together of familiar garments accumulated in closets and wardrobes over time. To these might be added something modern: a new coat or the latest hat, but most often they would remain ensembles of clothes acquired during a number of years. Arguably this complex relationship between everyday fashion and modernity was sharpened after 1970 by the impact of post-structuralist and post-modern discourses particularly the reassessment of modernism’s progressive, technological agenda. Some theorists argued that the ordinary was representative of tradition; in effect, these were the mundane practices that ‘predate the differentiated idioms of modernity’.³⁷ In this context, the ordinary was indicative of a pre-modern world, whereas in contrast, the extraordinary was what characterized modernity, representing the ordinary punctuated by ‘the “effervescence” of social orders rendered fluid and mobile’.³⁸ Importantly, these terms, ‘ordinary’ and ‘everyday’, have different meanings that are usefully exposed when thinking of fashion. An item of clothing may have once been extraordinary or part of an ensemble that was extraordinary, but over time, regular use, or a changed context, it has become ordinary, or routine. Indeed, it might be argued that changes in fashion render the extraordinary, ordinary. In contrast, fashion that is everyday is embedded and undistinguishable: part of an ongoing repetition and routine that was never extraordinary. Instead it was

resolutely and always ordinary in character. Nevertheless, writers have remained entranced by fashion that is extraordinary due to its technical and visual innovation, seasonal change, and its pivotal role in capturing the zeitgeist: 'of its time'.³⁹ Coupled with a zealous commitment to fashion's spectacular, though frequently transitory qualities, many writers cannot conceive of fashion as part of the everyday. Without ignoring these fundamental qualities of fashion and its historically close relationship to the wealthier sections of society (via one-off luxury items, couture and designer fashion), this book proposes that fashion can be ordinary as well as extraordinary, and it can be indicative of the everyday.

A central problematic of the everyday, the relationship between the latest styles, on the one hand, and tradition, on the other, is nevertheless intrinsic to it, as Sheringham argued: 'what sets the tone is without doubt the newest, but only where it emerges in the medium of the oldest, the longest past, the most ingrained'.⁴⁰ Observing that typically 'the everyday' is antithetical to the modern in that 'everyday experience is what happens in typical form today as it has done yesterday and will do tomorrow', some theorists of the everyday have proposed that in the first part of the twentieth century, there was a conjunction of modernity and everydayness around the notion of consumption.⁴¹ Responding to this, Highmore proposed the notion of 'everyday modernity': 'Everyday life registers the process of modernization as an incessant accumulation of debris: modernity produces obsolescence as part of its continual demand for the new (the latest version becomes last year's model with increasing frequency)'.⁴² From the beginning of the nineteenth century, with seasonal regularity, fashion complied with this regime; but typically these cyclical acquisitions were discarded only by those with the wealth or cultural capital to do so. Inspired in part by Baudelaire's observations about the crowd, Walter Benjamin saw the modern city as a place for 'increased accumulation and intensified sensation'.⁴³ This understanding of increased acquisition as a key feature of 'everyday modernity' is crucial for this discussion as the capacity to consume fashion grew exponentially as the twentieth century progressed. It is only in the last twenty years that the price accessibility of fashionable clothes in the West (the likes of Primark in Britain and Forever 21 in the United States) has enabled those on low incomes to regularly and routinely consume and discard clothing. Nevertheless, commonality, mass-experience and accelerated consumption developed as the twentieth century progressed, and fashion has played a key part in this: consider for example female mass magazine readership in the 1920s and 1930s, Hollywood cinema in the 1930s, men's magazines in the 1980s and 1990s, and internet shopping in the 2000s.⁴⁴ Equally, Benjamin's interest in sensation and the haptic experiences of the modern city pinpoints an 'everyday modernity' shaped by 'feel' and 'touch' as well as sight. Indeed if touch and feel were as much indicative of everyday modernity as seeing, consider the experience of wearing rayon (artificial everywoman's silk) in 1930s' London and New York.⁴⁵ In some ways, therefore,

at the intersection of modernity and the everyday, mass-culture contributed to both the ordinariness and the extraordinariness of fashion.

In tracing fashion in everyday life, it may seem – as Highmore has argued – that what is everyday might be perceived to be obvious, readily exposed by searching out alternative sources (diaries, letters, and photographs, rather than, for example, Government papers).⁴⁶ In fact, it can be stubbornly invisible, difficult to interpret and as Lefebvre observed, ‘The *unrecognised*, that is, the everyday, still has some surprises in store for us’.⁴⁷ One, in particular, is that it is hard to know: ‘either way, you somehow have missed it because the everyday passes by, passes through’.⁴⁸ The ordinary escapes notice because it fails to stand out; here again fashion provides an exemplar. The clothes worn by most people going about their daily lives have been typically a synthesis of new and old, bold and mundane. This perception that the everyday is hard to locate, difficult to know and outside of traditional fields of knowledge demands an alternative approach when dealing with a subject such as fashion so as to sidestep fashion’s ‘distinct, superior, specialized, structured activities’.⁴⁹ By looking beyond fashion’s familiar terrain – the catwalk, the magazine, the boutique, the department store, the designer – a complementary fashion trajectory can be traced over the last hundred or so years. Indeed, we argue that fashion was embedded and contingent in the practices of people’s daily lives, and it was located in some familiar spaces such as the street, although not only the major thoroughfares of the modern city but also its margins and back streets. It took shape in some intimate places: the wardrobe or the sewing box as well as in the rituals and commonplace social interactions of weddings, going out on the town or to the dance.

While Gilbert has noted the symbolic ordering of cities such as Paris, New York and London by the fashion system, and the conjunction of designer names, famous brands and specific districts to create the identity of fashion’s world cities, he also pointed to the city as a place of ‘local taste constellations’ based around fashion, music, dance and clubs, but also family and work activities and events.⁵⁰ It is in these other city spaces – interstitial and peripheral to the city’s traditional fashion centres – that fashion in everyday life can be observed. These places were not only for the young; indeed one of the book’s aims is to question the generational, market-driven myth of fashion.

In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Michel de Certeau proposed everyday life as a set of practices that, although established, offer the potential for creativity. As well as ‘making do’ with this everyday culture, people have also been ‘making with’ it: transforming and inventing by appropriating and re-deploying; as he put it, ‘Creativity is the act of reusing and recombining heterogeneous materials’.⁵¹ Characteristic of self-fashioning and re-fashioning, this articulation of the everyday also recognizes the possibility of reinvention and resistance as the fashion system is refused, re-cycled and re-defined from within the realm of the everyday. At various points in the twentieth century, women re-cut

and re-made existing clothes for a variety of purposes including fashionability. Some groups of people – teenagers being an obvious example – refused fashion *per se* to create their own ‘identities’ in opposition to an increasingly homogeneous consumer marketplace, while in parallel the fashion system appropriated and re-defined the ordinary as extraordinary with the annexing of sub-cultural street styles. This dialectical relationship between the past and the present was observed by Benjamin: ‘Each time, what sets the tone is without doubt the newest, but only where it emerges in the medium of the oldest, the longest past, and the most ingrained. This spectacle, the unique self-construction of the newest in the medium of what has been, makes for the true dialectical theatre of fashion’.⁵²

Two cities: London and New York

Making, selling and wearing fashionable clothes has been a vital constituent of London and New York’s self-styling from the nineteenth through the twentieth centuries. As discourse, materiality and embodiment, fashion has been intrinsic to the identities of both as centres of modern metropolitan life and as the resort of the wealthy, but it has also been part of the everyday lives of their inhabitants. Fashion was flexible in its production and organization, heterogeneous as a commodity, and both cities functioned as a ‘factory’ and as a shop window.⁵³ In London and New York, the ‘factory’ was complex and diverse. It comprised the early tailoring trade that was dominated by skilled men; the ready-made clothing businesses established and run by immigrants and semi-skilled female outworkers in their homes and small workshops in the East End of London and the Lower East Side of Manhattan; and the up-market tailors, dress-makers and couturiers of London’s West End and Manhattan’s midtown. Dependent upon market and quality, fashion was also sold on London and New York’s finest streets. In London’s centre: Piccadilly, Regent St, Grosvenor Square and Bond St, and in its emergent suburbs: Bayswater, Kensington and Ealing, as well as in the small workshops, retail outlets and street markets in the predominantly working-class districts of Shoreditch, Spitalfields and Whitechapel. Fashion’s developing geography can also be traced on New York’s streets – from the street vendors on Hester Street on the Lower East Side to the department stores and specialist shops on Broadway, then up to the Ladies Mile, and finally to the grand retail edifices on Fifth Avenue. Fashion traversed London and New York’s streets as it was not only made and sold but also worn by the diverse populations. Ostensibly the domain of the wealthy, it nevertheless circulated through all spheres of society as its visual styles and material qualities were recognized, understood and deployed by the society hostess, the housewife, the man about town, the shop girl, the seamstress, the office clerk, the immigrant and the servant. Though rapid and continual change

helped to constitute fashion in these modern cities, it was nevertheless implicit and ongoing in everyday lives. Allowing the individual both 'to stand out and to merge with the crowd, to lay claim to the exclusive and to follow the herd',⁵⁴ fashion as part of everyday, personal narratives was intrinsic to the complex discourses of the modern city as it constantly formed and reformed due to the shifting social formations: class, race, migration, gender, sexuality, generation and place. Focusing on London and New York in the long twentieth century, this book offers a sketch of two cities by using fashion to 'trace the interlacings of a concrete sense of everyday life'.⁵⁵ The embodied ordinariness and everydayness of fashion is what preoccupies us; neither wilfully 'unfashionable' nor obsessively 'in' fashion, but rather fashion as seen in day-to-day lives, on the street, but not only as 'street style'. Typically fashion as a discourse of the exceptional has contributed to the elision of the everyday from memory as it privileges discreet modes of representation, particular historical moments and specific geographies: high-end magazines, the fashion shoot, and established shopping routes and districts. This focus on a handful of exceptional fashionable performances, sites and celebrities (models, designers, and consumers) has eclipsed the enormity, permeability and quotidian nature of fashion in these two metropolitan centres in the twentieth century. In order to map the apparent interlacing of fashion in everyday life in London and New York, we identify some of the qualities of these two cities and try to pinpoint the reasons for their comparative fashion geographies.

London

By 1900, London was unquestionably 'the richest, largest, most populous city' that the world had ever seen; an imperial city, 'immense... vast... endless'.⁵⁶ Drawing a comparison with his home city, the New Yorker W. D. Howells wrote in 1905,

we have as yet nothing to compare with at least a half of London's magnificence ... The sky-scrapers, Brooklyn Bridge, Madison Square Garden, and some vast rocketing hotels offer themselves rather shrinkingly for the contrast with those miles of imperial and municipal architecture which in London make you forget the leagues of mean little houses, and remember the palaces, the law-courts, the great private mansions, the dignified and shapely flats, the great department stores, the immense hotels, the bridges, the monuments of every kind.⁵⁷

It was also a city shaped by its Empire and its economic prosperity, attracting immigration from former colonies and internal migration from Britain's regions. These latter migrants coming from across Britain, but particularly the south and east, were typically young and in search of work. They were supplemented by

Irish migrants from the 1840s and 1850s, by Eastern European Jews from the 1880s escaping persecution, by West Indians from the 1950s, and Indian and Pakistanis from Britain's former Empire in the 1960s, and Eastern European migrants from the 1990s. These groups settled in different districts of the city: Irish migrants in Holborn, Camden Town, Camberwell; Jewish immigrants in Whitechapel, Spitalfields; West Indian, Pakistani and Indian immigrants in Brixton, Haringey and Southall; and Eastern Europeans in the prosperous towns and cities of the south east.

In late Victorian London, two-thirds of the labour force worked in the service industries (distribution, exchange, banking, insurance, the professions and domestic service), and the remaining third worked in manufacturing: 'it was still wide in range, mainly handicraft in its structure, and for the most part based on small workshops and much domestic outwork; but large firms were important in such fields as printing, shipbuilding, or brewing'.⁵⁸ While half of London's female labour force worked in domestic service,⁵⁹ by the mid-1850s the East End districts of Stepney, Whitechapel, St. Georges-in-the-East and Bethnal Green employed half of the tailoresses in England and Wales.⁶⁰ During the first half of the twentieth century, the manufacturing jobs that had developed in inner London still remained; in the City, south of the river Thames, around the docks and in the East End. Typically poorly paid, casual or home workers, working-class women and Jewish immigrants from Russia and Eastern Europe worked in the East End garment trade. Some skilled Jews worked in West End tailoring often in small workshops producing high-quality suits and related goods that contributed to the reputation of London's West End. In the 1920s, for example, 66 per cent of businesses on Soho's Berwick St were owned by Jewish immigrants; these made hats and underwear, and sold materials and trimmings and furs.⁶¹ Shifting over time, London's 'front and back regions' approximated with the West End and the East End at the start of the twentieth century. Arguing that this division originated in the separation of the court and its suburbs and the position of the ancient port of London below London Bridge, White commented: 'it was the Victorians who built the separation into a mystic divide between good and evil, civilisation and savagery. In between these two extremes was an infinity variegated identification of class or function with neighbourhoods, the distinctions so finely nuanced as to be almost invisible to the naked eye but real enough to Londoners all the same'.⁶² By the end of twentieth century, the spatial geographies of fashion and everyday life in London had been repositioned several times, catapulted by wartime bombing, slum clearance, suburbanization, modernization and gentrification. With 'bourgeois frontiersmen' moving in to Chelsea and Hampstead from the 1920s, Pimlico and Marylebone after 1945, Camden, Paddington, Battersea, Lambeth, Camberwell and Islington from the 1960s and 1970s by the first years of the new twenty-first century, even the old East End was being rehabilitated: Shoreditch, Hoxton, Whitechapel, Spitalfields.⁶³

In these areas and in the re-commercialized street markets – Portobello Road, Camden, Petticoat Lane, Brick Lane and Spitalfields – the dialectics of fashion and everyday life were repeatedly rehearsed. Street markets were particularly illustrative of this: in London, for example, Leather Lane, Berwick, Rye Lane, Watney Street, Portobello Road, Hoxton, and the Caledonian Market. At these ‘women who are dressed by Hartnell and Schiaparelli have owned to buying their stockings in Berwick Market’,⁶⁴ or similarly from the push cart vendors on Hester, Rivington and Orchard Street on Manhattan’s Lower East Side in the early twentieth century. In New York and in London, these were also part of a distinctive ‘Jewish economy [that] linked the Jewish tailors, the shopkeepers, the wholesalers, and the peddlers to each other’.⁶⁵

New York

In New York too, the spatial geographies of fashion and the relationships of these to the patterns of everyday life were being transformed. Fashion made the city just as much as the city made fashion. From its origins, European Jewish immigrants on the Lower East Side of Manhattan in the nineteenth century played a pivotal role. Through the gradual move up the island to the midtown garment district during the first half of the twentieth century, the production of garments has been a mainstay of the city. But not only production; fashion information was generated from the midtown locations of fashion media giants such as Condé Nast, publishers of influential magazines including *Vogue* and *Vanity Fair*, and latterly the trade journal *Women’s Wear Daily (WWD)*. For most of our period midtown was a major centre of fashion retailing in New York, where first department stores and later brand ‘flagships’ provide sources of fashion information, as well as items for consumption. In New York, fashion authority was not only construed through the channels of the fashion system, it was also generated within neighbourhoods, from the dress practices of communities and as elements of cultural practices and performances. Connections between fashion and music have been integral to the city’s culture, from the fashionable clubs and speakeasies of Harlem during the 1920s and 1930s to Hip Hop in the 1980s. Fashion has also been performed on the streets, from the dress of the ‘Matinee Girls’ at the beginning of the twentieth century, through the gay marches of the 1970s, and the Hipsters of the twenty-first century. Fashion has been and continues to be closely associated with the performance of identity in this major city comprising a vast diversity of individuals, generations, cultures, ethnicities and races.

New York was also a city of immigrants, which developed substantially at the beginning of our period and continued to do so throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century, a growth coupled with the city’s rapid modernization. Immigrants, first from Eastern Europe, then Italy and Ireland, plying different trades and holding diverse belief systems and religions, Judaism and

Catholicism especially, came together and lived in close quarters. All negotiated, some willingly, others not, the complex task of 'becoming American'. Dress and fashion figured significantly in the process of acculturation and assimilation, confirming the way that individuals and groups of people present themselves externally and identifying them in time and place. The production, consumption and appearance of fashionable clothes play important roles in New York during the long twentieth century for function, show and as part of the imaginary of the burgeoning modern city. As immigrants occupied increasingly more of Manhattan and the outer boroughs, they both assimilated into American culture 'while establishing neighbourhoods and communities often based on race and ethnicity'.⁶⁶ Distinguishing themselves with their clothing choices, which often developed into hybridized forms such as the Zoot suit, West Indian immigrants moved to Harlem in large numbers in the 1920s,⁶⁷ while Italians became a political force in 1930s, when Jews were also coming to seek refuge from Nazi Germany. After the Second World War, Puerto Ricans formed the majority of a growing population from Latin America. In 1980, immigrants made up 24 per cent of the city's population, most having settled there after 1965. Many were employed in factories that formerly employed native-born workers, even after the decline of manufacturing in the 1970s. 'Dominicans and Chinese opened small factories or became sub-contractors in the garment industry, and as more labour was needed, shops and homework became common'.⁶⁸ Sweatshops returned in the 1970s and 1980s in areas such as Chinatown, which employed a large undocumented labour force, whose number declined drastically after 11 September 2001.⁶⁹

Fashion: History and methods

If fashion is 'a kind of contemporary Esperanto, immediately accessible across social and geographical boundaries',⁷⁰ and also 'a technique of acculturation – a means by which individuals and groups learn to be visually at home with themselves in their culture', it both accelerated and proliferated during the twentieth century as various social groups (shaped by race, class, gender, age and geography) perpetually utilized and re-utilized fashion's past and present languages in their everyday lives.⁷¹ Equally fashion can be both the 'overarching structure' that articulates an aesthetic or 'look' and an 'accumulation of particularity'.⁷² By this, we mean that fashion as a practice of everyday life involves the acquisition of single garments that add to a wardrobe and help to reconfigure it, but at the same time, it can mean the purchase of a complete outfit that encapsulates 'a look'. Attempting to define fashion, Breward wrote:

It is a bounded thing, fixed and experienced in space – an amalgamation of seams and textiles, an interface between the body and its environment. It is a

practice, a fulcrum for the display of taste and status, a site for the production and consumption of objects and beliefs; *and it is an event, both spectacular and routine, cyclical in its adherence to the natural and commercial seasons, innovatory in its bursts of avant-gardism, and sequential in its guise as a palimpsest of memories and traditions.*⁷³ (Our emphasis.)

In recognizing the routine as well as the spectacular, Breward also points to fashion as a site for the accumulated layers and traces of preceding looks. This is vital, as on close inspection, certain fashions have had a particular resilience and resistance over time; certain garments, shapes, fabrics and styles persist and are re-circulated and re-framed within different contexts. This can be unintentional: representing 'the unmanaged construction of the past in the present'.⁷⁴ But at the same time, in creating a 'look', fashion provided a means to 'go from one configuration of daily existence to another'.⁷⁵ This configuration can be and has been a subversive act that defines agency, it can be avowedly 'fashionable', 'of the time' and constructing 'a look' that refuses the everyday and it can be an 'accidental heterology' where the past coalesces with the present and strongly connects to the everyday.

Significantly, the study of fashion as part of routine, mundane life remains uneven; to be examined largely when the ordinary impinges upon the extraordinary, a good example is when fashion from the 'street' – influenced by popular cultures – impacts on designer-led fashion. In contrast, by probing fashion's multi-layered complexities, this book helps to unearth the 'never quite heard' or 'inner speech' of identity and everyday life that de Certeau tried to describe in *The Practice of Everyday Life*.⁷⁶ Indeed by examining fashion as a practice of everyday life, the networks of power and the repetitive practices that permeate fashion's broader discourses are thrown into sharp relief. In the final chapter of *The Practice of Everyday Life Vol 2*, de Certeau wrote: 'We know poorly the types of operations at stake in ordinary practices, their registers and their combinations, because our instruments of analysis, modelling and formalization were constructed for other objects and with other aims'.⁷⁷ Due to the proliferation of production, distribution, marketing and retailing, particularly after 1900 (initially in the West, but later globally), the impact of fashion on people's lives has been difficult for historians to ignore. Mass-production and mass-consumption meant that an array of goods – including clothes – were more visible, as a result of being made in factories, sold in retail stores, promoted and advertised in magazines, newspapers, at the cinema, on TV and the internet and worn by people on the street. In response, histories of fashion have been produced by writers from different but adjacent fields adding to the richness and complexity of discussion. By drawing on this work and that of key theorists, we aim to develop a robust critical framework that allows an interrogation of such ideas. Equally by deploying appropriate research methods, we can begin to explore fashion in everyday life.

Historical focus and theoretical priorities are interdependent with research methods. To study the ordinary, mundane practices of fashion requires a different set of procedures or methods than those that provide a 'single, superior point of view'.⁷⁸ Raphael Samuel described history as 'a social form of knowledge... the ensemble of activities and practices in which ideas of history are embedded or a dialectic of past-present relations rehearsed'.⁷⁹ This is exemplified by fashion. What people wore constituted an ongoing practice that rehearsed, among many things, the complexities of modernity and tradition, progress and stasis. One method that allows a focused discussion of these practices is the case study. Writing on histories of everyday life, John Brewer outlined two approaches: 'prospect history' so named because it looks down from above and surveys a broad scene, and 'refuge history', which is 'close-up and on the small scale'.⁸⁰ Those adopting this latter method look at 'place' not 'space'; they emphasize 'interiority and intimacy rather than surface and distance'.⁸¹ In proposing histories that are focused and small-scale, and by critically examining historical meta-narratives, particularly those that privilege modernity and modernization, Brewer's ideas illuminate our study. Rejecting the prerogative of modernization that depends upon 'a single, linear progressive model of time against which all societies are measured', he draws on the work of social historians and micro-historians who have proposed that 'inexorable modernisation' has been univocal both in its exclusion of different voices and in its failure to recognize the contradictions and conflicts of modernization.⁸² Such ideas have a bearing on this study by providing the theoretical and methodological tools that allow the reconceptualization of fashion's relationship to modernization; in particular, to question the assumption that the drive of modernity was progressive, consistent and pervasive. In so far as much of this design – in 'the lower case' – has remained 'hidden' in the domestic and private spheres, there is a parallel here with the work of feminist historians such as Sally Alexander and Sheila Rowbotham who mapped that which was 'hidden from history'.⁸³

The methodological challenge then is to find the means to research those things, people and ideas that have remained unobserved, to locate and interpret the intimate, rather than to take a 'prospect' approach that delineates the surface and distance of fashion. The case study offers one such method that allows a consideration of fashion's everyday practices that can include dressing-up for one-off celebrations as well as routine activities. These reveal the way that fashion articulates particular moments in people's lives, representing life transitions – entering adulthood and marriage, for example, or highlighting corporate or professional affiliations, or familial responsibilities. Such events and celebrations have their own particular cultural codes, temporal and generational variations, which simultaneously cut across and acknowledge fashion. In a similar way, focusing on 'going out' allows us to examine the regular occasions that people participate in: going out clubbing, to the dance or to the cinema.

Fashion is powerfully visual: at its core is the desire to see and be seen, which has provided the means to lift people from the ordinary and everyday paradoxically via commonplace activities.

Using a case-study approach to explore the specific *practices* of fashion at key historical moments, we are keen to discern how people *practised* fashion; in effect how they performed socially constructed identities via fashion. Material culture and designed things such as clothes have often represented episodes and stages in individual lives. Explaining how 'gendered objects' can clarify one's thoughts (in this case about memory and bereavement), the design historian Pat Kirkham described how one particular black velvet coat, bought second-hand by her mother in the 1940s, was 'redolent of memories so powerful of the gutsy ways in which one woman negotiated enjoying life to the full, being glamorous, working in a factory, being a mother, holding to socialist and feminist principles and strong personal ethics, that wearing it almost makes her "real" and almost makes me her'.⁸⁴ Ilene Beckerman's *Love, Loss and What I Wore* attempted something similar, but in a popular format as she described different stages in her own and her family's life through particular ensembles of clothing.⁸⁵ Why are some things held onto and others thrown away, and how has a contemporary concern for sustainability impacted on personal wardrobes, on the preservation, repair and methods for the eventual disposal of items of clothing? By asking such questions we can remind ourselves that 'the past, like the present, is the result of negotiated *versions* of what happened, why it happened, with what consequence'.⁸⁶

The sources of this study are visual, literary and material including everyday dress (collected by museum curators); family photographs that allow the archaeological excavation of aspects of everyday life within the family; documentary photographs that depict everyday life in the city (giving insights into the performance of everyday life within the public sphere); fashion and non-fashion specific journals, print media and fiction. Our study draws its methods from different disciplines (design history, social history, visual culture, urban studies and gender studies), but proposes a micro-history approach, based on archival investigation and visual and textual analysis.⁸⁷

Archival research remains a valuable method for this study, but our interest is in archives that are less visible and informal as well as those already established. Utilizing archival sources that are more ephemeral – magazines, newspapers, catalogues and advertisements, film footage and photographic archives – we explore local libraries, archives and study centres in London and New York's districts and boroughs as well as those in their metropolitan cores. It is in these that we locate the stuff of everyday life, as museum curators and archivists have collected and acquired objects and photographs that speak to the particularities of place. Alert to 'memory's shadows – those sleeping images which spring to life unbidden, and serve as ghostly sentinels of our thought', Raphael Samuel

proposed that historians take care to recognize the ‘visual’ which provides ‘subliminal points of reference, our unspoken points of reference’ particularly photographs and ephemeral graphic material.⁸⁸ As fashion and design historians, the visual and material is part of our stock in trade, but perhaps we have sustained a hierarchy of images and things that are held in the public domain, rather than those to be found in the routine places of everyday lives? In response to this, one of our research methods is the use of photographs of everyday life in the city. These proliferated particularly from the turn of the nineteenth century onwards with the growth of street photographers, the production of post-cards, and the greater availability of cheap cameras. Latterly personal glimpses of our teenage children captured by iPhone and posted on Facebook prompt some understanding of young men and women’s ongoing engagement with fashion at the level of the everyday. The artifice of these self-images exposes the power of a specific ‘look’ or preferred way of being seen at a particular historical moment especially in the image-saturated domain of fashion. Drawing attention to the use of photographs as research tools, various writers have pointed to how photographs work in particular ways: in this study, they orchestrate space and place in the cities of London and New York, not only in the streets but also at home.⁸⁹ Many of the photographs that we have used actively ‘produce’ the city: reiterating particular sites, capturing specific streets, shops and markets, highlighting key landmark sites and buildings, and celebrating distinctive views and activities. Not only do they ‘work’ in a variety of ways, but they also do so for specific purposes. Mainly they depict people at leisure or posing in a ‘staged’ work context; few capture a whole workforce or those actively engaged in work. While some are posed, others record a passing moment as people walk, sit, talk or gaze in and around the city. Others, particularly those using social media (Instagram, Snapchat), will capture a moment – with friends, at an event, getting ready to go out. The representation of fashion and dress in these differs too, depending on the purpose of the photograph and who took it – amateur snap, professional street photograph, art photograph, official or semi-official document/record of an event, or a WhatsApp or iPhone photo. Indeed it is important to remember that the meaning of these photographs is complex with no singular understanding, but rather they are contingent upon time, place and viewer – including our own viewing. Nevertheless, these photographs have proved essential to our study as they offer a set of images of fashion and fashionable dressing worn in and about both cities that provide a counterpoint – in effect a different set of representations – to the fashion shoots, the high-end magazine spreads, and the runway shows. They enable us to explicate and document the diverse practices of fashion in everyday life as they allow us to glimpse the ordinary.

One of the outcomes of researching fashion in everyday life is to become keenly aware of the paucity of the ordinary not just in fashion’s historical discourses but also in museum collections. The dress collection at Gunnersbury Park Museum,