SHOES
A HISTORY FROM SANDALS TO SNEAKERS
EDITED BY GIORGIO RIELLO AND PETER MCNEIL

"AT LAST A WORK THAT DEALS NOT ONLY WITH THE HISTORY OF FOOTWEAR, BUT ALSO WITH ITS CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE"
MANOLO BLAHNIK
I did not have three thousand pairs of shoes.
I had one thousand and sixty.

Imelda Marcos

Shoes are ever present, with a long and complex history. *Shoes: A History from Sandals to Sneakers* is the first book to present a global history of shoes from ancient times to the present. In revealing the complex and intricate world of shoes, the chapters here draw on examples from Europe, America, Asia and Africa. Our book will present you with fine examples of Western and non-Western shoe fashions, as well as explaining some of the mysteries of your favorite object. We will also show you some of the types of banal, occupational, military and mass-produced footwear, which used to be much more common before twentieth-century production transformed the range of shoe possibilities. The ordinary shoe can inspire your favorite designer today, or transport you to another sense of yourself.
Within these pages is pretty much everything you ever wanted to know about shoes – the eroticism of ancient shoe lacing, medieval moral panic about long-toed shoes, the role of shoes in religious rituals, the infamous woman’s chopine, with its twenty-three-inch platform heel, eighteenth-century male show-offs, from red-heeled courtiers to flashy macaronis, to austere dandies. We will explore the creation of the Wellington for war, the cruel and utilitarian boots of the First World War, the rise of men’s shoes as symbols of conservatism, and the shoe in fairy tales, both splendid and ghoulish. Finally, we examine the story of the high heel, the sexualization of the shoe after Freud, the meaning of the “gay shoe,” shoes in gallery art, the extraordinary rise of the sneaker, and the cult of shoe designers themselves. Throughout our book, contributors consider the shoe from a variety of perspectives. Without losing sight of the aesthetics – the potential sheer beauty and sculpture of the shoe, from delicate satin to glossy black leather, our writers help you understand how your shoes have reached your closet and your foot. Perhaps for the first time, thoughts about making, designing, distributing, promoting and disseminating fashion ideas for shoes are brought together, for a wide historical period, across cultures. We hope we have done so without diminishing the magic or mystery of shoes, in which we now believe more firmly than when we commenced our long trek.

THE MEANING OF SHOES

Footwear is more than a simple wrapping or protection for the foot. The notion that shoes indicate a great deal about a person’s taste (or disdain for such things) and identity – national, regional, professional – class status and gender, is not an invention of modernity. Shoes have, for centuries, given hints about a person’s character, social and cultural place, even sexual preference.¹ Shoes are powerful “things,” as they take control over the physical and human space in which we live. They allow us to move in and experience the environment. They are the principal intersection between body and physical space. The psychologist Nicola Squirciarino has called this “extensions on the corporeal ego.” Shoes, then, are always more than simple garments allowing us to walk, stroll and run on streets, parks and fields. They are tools that amplify our bodies’ capacities. Everyday shoes allow us to walk to work, to run for the bus, to look smart at a party. High-tech shoes have permitted the demonstrable improvement of the world record for the 100 meters during the last hundred years (in conjunction with training and nutritional regimes). Shoes thus extend our social and emotional capacities, as well as our physical capacity.²

Navigating between the ground and one “edge” of the body, i.e. the foot, footwear acquires different meanings related to sex, attractiveness, group membership and power.³ Such meanings appear in different ways through time from ancient Greece to premodern Japan and present-day Western societies. A case in point is the theme of identity, be it personal or collective (Figure I.1).
To wear white sneakers in present-day northern Europe is a signifier of membership of a specific type of youth culture: "trainers," kept rigorously white and spotless, are used by working-class youngsters. This means resorting to blacking and painting. An unexpected parallelism can be demonstrated in late eighteenth-century Europe, where the bleaching of boots was part of the ritual of a gentleman’s behavior (Figure 1.2).

These social rituals related to the wearing of footwear are apparent in different cultures over time, although they take myriad forms. In many instances, social rituals can assume religious connotations, as in the case of premodern Japan, where shoes were, on the one hand, polluting agents but also at the center stage of rituals of purification. In other societies, it is religious and moral values that shape footwear. In medieval Europe, for instance, moral precepts formulated from the Bible were used to limit the height of shoes and the wearing of footwear made of luxurious materials such as silk, embroidery and pearls. A tension is present, through history, between the power of shoes as tools of self-presentation and their persistent sociocultural nature. On the one hand, shoes are very personal garments. A pair of red stiletto shoes is quite different, in every way, from a pair of boots. An attractive young lady can decide that her ankles look better in stilettos than in boots. But her choice is rather more sympathetic for a smart party than a rock concert. The issue of the appropriateness of shoes reminds us that they must always adapt not only to the physical terrain but also to the social one.

Shoes differ not only according to their use, but also according to their wearer. Several chapters in this volume touch on the fact that shoes are used not only to differentiate between the sexes but also as tools in gender relations. The smallness of women’s feet, for instance, is a feature emphasized by many cultures over time. If the most classic example is premodern China, where women’s feet were bound to limit their growth, the use of small shoes was also common in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe. The smallness of the foot made walking more sinuous, but also more difficult. It clearly inferred that feet were organs of locomotion for men, but part of the sensual appeal of women. A man’s boot, however, in creating the sense of the extension of calf and encasing the lower leg in glistening leather, was just as erotic as any slipper worn by a woman. Several chapters in this book thus consider the very act of walking in socially defined space. Mobility within space is in part connected to the nature and quality of shoes. But it would be a mistake to think that this relationship is just about the physical. As previous writers have demonstrated, the role of the shoe in slave and other enslaved communities, such as the prisoners of the Nazis, was central to their ability to survive, escape, and stay alive. If women in society encountered barriers against free movement, such barriers often had little to do with real bodily limits. The limits were social, and shoes played their role in constructing and reinscribing these roles.

Figure 1.1 (facing page): Roman shoes from an eighteenth-century print. Private collection.
Figure 1.2 (above): The Supreme Bon Ton No. 5: Les dévôeux en boutique. Hand-colored etching, London, published by Martinet, c. 1802. British Museum, 1856-7-12-596.

Figure 1.3 (below): Shoes and Violence: a man threatens to hit a woman with a strap if she does not pick up a last. Lithograph by A. D. Laou, Paris, c. 1815–25. Bata Shoe Museum, Toronto, P79.586. Reproduced by kind permission of Bata Shoe Museum.
Figure I.4A (above): The Macaroni Shoe Maker. Engraving, c. 1770, published by M. Darly. By kind permission of the British Museum, London.

Ah!

WREN'S

WREN'S
the Man's Polish

SUPER WAX SHOE POLISH

Figure 1.5. Wren's: The Man's Polish. Advertisement, 1950s. Northampton Museums and Art Gallery, Boot and Shoe Collection, BC14329. Reproduced by permission of Northampton Museums and Art Gallery.
The examples so far have concerned the wearing of shoes. But shoes are also commodities. They are objects that are produced, exchanged and eventually worn. They can be used as tools of self-defense or violence and they appear in endless narratives of marital bliss as well as unhappiness (Figure 1.3). This book also engages with shoes “behind the scenes.” Several chapters purposefully address the relationship between making and consuming. Shoes are not just “packages” of signs, meanings and messages. They are products that acquire certain shapes, colors and forms through a process of creation (creativity), application of technologies, choice of materials and the understanding of consumer markets. Shoes, more than any other realms of sartorial taste, have produced global names and international brands. As shoes are recognizably one of the most powerful but also most complex items of apparel, the relationship between wearer and producer is often portrayed as an intimate one (Figures 1.4a and b). Carrie Bradshaw, the heroine of the series Sex and the City, is a case in point. Although her relationship with world-famous shoe designer Manolo Blahnik is surely not a personal one, her passion for Blahnik shoes makes the designer an intimate character in the series. Jimmy Choo also appears in her imagination as the type we have coined the “male Cinderella” maker, explored in the concluding chapter of this book.

Shoes have both a personal and private nature, which has been preserved even in a global media society like ours. Shoes, like handbags, do not generally look good in advertisements, unless they are manipulated through artful lighting and digital means (Figure 1.5). They are far too small, near to the ground and difficult to set in a stage-like way. By themselves they are, in many ways, too prosaic. It was perhaps for this reason that many shoe advertisements were drawn, such as Roger Vivier shoes for Dior and the famous torn-style motifs of Andy Warhol. Some of the most visually successful campaigns for shoes, such as Serge Lutens’ photographs, distort the appearance of shoes to underline their fantastical possibilities.

Shoes are a nightmare for museum curators and provide a challenging experience for window dressers (Figure 1.6). As worn shoes soil very easily, and as their materials (such as leather) tend to corrode more swiftly than woven textiles, the “worn” shoe in the museum can tend to have a slightly forlorn appearance. Even when their provenance is famous, such as the shoes in the Marlene Dietrich Archive in Berlin, they will most likely be abject items of clothing. Note here that the current trade in retro and secondhand clothes often does not extend to shoes, as they cannot be dry-cleaned or washed, and customer resistance to the secondhand shoe is palpable. It was a sign of poverty for children in the West to wear hand-me-down shoes.

Their difficult character is not just the result of their size or spatial position. Of all garments, shoes are uniquely independent from the physical body. They have a shape that they keep even when the wearer is absent. Most clothes can only be displayed through the use of props such mannequins, but shoes are “self-standing.” This peculiar nature explains why they often stand for something else
Figure 1.6 (above): Pocock Bros., shoemaker's shop in Brighton, c. 1909. Northampton Museums and Art Gallery, Boot and Shoe Collection, BC16229/8. Reproduced by permission of Northampton Museums and Art Gallery.

Figure 1.7 (below): The family of Styles Uchun, Amanda and their three daughters. January 2011. Gender, age and familial relations are expressed through shoes.
Figure 1.8: Cover of De Calceo Antiquo, 1667.
that is not physically present. Piles of shoes were one tragic reminder of the millions of Jews who perished in concentration camps. But a group of shoes can also symbolize the comfortable presence of a family unit with gender and age divisions, conspicuous consumption, or an interest in a complex range of garment choices and image types (Figure 1.7).

The very presence or absence of shoes is one of the most recorded facts in history. The Musée International de la Chaussure in Romans (France) includes a kurdaite (kadaite) feather, fur and twine shoe from Australia, giving a lie to the myth that the indigenous Australians were everywhere naked on their feet. Many of the chapters included here rely on the testimony of people through the ages commenting on how shoes appeared and were used. Until recent times, a lack of shoes could be a fact of life even in the relatively prosperous Western world. And to be barefoot meant that all avenues of life were closed. “The boy is barefoot,” wrote a certain Thomas Cleare from Braintree (England) to the Parish authorities in 1829, seeking financial support, “if he can get work & find him Shoes it is not in my Power for I Cannot get any for myself.” One can say that the association between bare feet and poverty has entered our genetic code in such a way as to inform new notions of acquisitiveness through shoes. The cliché wants women to be “mad for shoes.” The Imelda Marcos inside seems to burst out in front of the shoemaker’s window. This has often been taken as one of the best examples of the irrational (female) consumer. But is it really so? The inferior social and cultural position imposed on women for centuries is refused by engaging with the acquisition of one of the most important symbols of movement, richness and worth: shoes.

SHOES, HISTORIES AND STORIES

These introductory remarks serve to contextualize shoes within a long history stretching over several centuries. As far back as 1667, De Calcio Antiquo, written in Latin, was the first book dedicated entirely to shoes (Figure 1.8). It was published jointly by the breccmacker turned scholar Benoît Baudouin and Giulio Negrone, a Jesuit and instructor in rhetoric and theology. This early interest in the lineage or history of shoes was continued in the Enlightenment. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, shoes circulated in popular culture through stories, visual imagery and health advice. As shoemaking was one of the most common occupations in towns and villages, the shoemaker was a principal character in many stories of everyday life in pre-industrial Europe. As late as the 1960s, mechanical tin toys for children included the by-then archaic figure of the cobbler. In children’s literature there seems to be something reassuring about the repetition of comforting and rhythmic work effected by the shoemaker. Illustrations of the two patron saints of shoemakers, St Crispin and St Crispianus, were accompanied by entertaining ballads such as The Gentle Craftsman’s Complaint: Or, The Jolly Shoe-makers Humble Petition to the Queen and
Figure 1.9 (above): A shoemaker's workshop. Reproduction from Melchior Tavernier's copperplate etching, 1640–70. Bata Shoe Museum, Toronto, P97.140. Reproduced by kind permission of Bata Shoe Museum.

Figure 1.10a (left): Rare French woodcut print of two shoemakers, probably the patron saints of the trade, c. 1500. Bata Shoe Museum, Toronto, P87.161. Reproduced by kind permission of Bata Shoe Museum.

Figure 1.10b (right): A popular image of St. Crispin and Crispianus. Colored lithograph, 1875. Bata Shoe Museum, Toronto, P83.0289. Reproduced by kind permission of Bata Shoe Museum.
Parliament (1710) mocking the frequent petitions sent by the guild of shoemakers (the so-called Cordwainers) to the authorities (Figures I.9 and I.10a and b).

John Gay’s Trivia, or, The Art of Walking, first published in 1716, became a well-known poem of the very act of moving within the physical and social world of the eighteenth-century metropolis, a genre that inspired the later social commentary of Louis-Sébastien Mercier’s Tableau de Paris (1783) and Nouveau de Paris (1790), and Rétif de la Bretonne’s Nuits de Paris (1786–8). But perhaps the most endearing of all popular narratives on shoes is The History of Goody Two-Shoes, which is thought to have been written by Oliver Goldsmith, first published in 1765. It is the story of a poor young woman who manages to make it through life with only one shoe and is finally rewarded with another. Shoes, as a chapter by Hilary Davidson in this volume argues, appear frequently in fairy tales, from Andersen’s famous The Red Shoes to Perrault’s Cinderella and popular stories such as The Old Woman Who Lived in a Shoe (Figure I.11).11

The popular tradition of storytelling using shoes, shoemakers and walking as the pretext for social commentary, and the comparison between the good old days and the displeasures of the modern world, is accompanied by two other more scientific strands of literary production considering the history of shoemaking. From the second half of the eighteenth century, the “gentle craft” became the subject of “scientific” investigation. Diderot and D’Alembert’s Encyclopédie (1751–65) dedicated a chapter to the productive methods used in shoemaking and a few years later, an entire volume entitled the Art du Cordonnier (1767) was published by François Alexandre de Garsault (Figure I.12). Both books provided visual as well as written information on shoemaking and neatly described the productive processes adopted in the craft.13

During the same years, another strand of polemic discussion was concentrating on shoes. A new type of medical literature was analyzing the shape of footwear and its suitability for healthy living. Books like Andry de Bois-Regard’s Orthopaedia (1743), Camper’s Abhandlung über die beste Form der Schuhe (1783), Sokosky’s Imperfections de la Chaussure (1811), and the anonymous Art of Preserving the Feet (1818) are just a few of the works examining the relationship between footwear and wearer in present and past times. This strand of research warned against the evil outcomes of debauchery and heavy drinking and eating, such as gout or frequent bunions (Figures I.13a and b).

It was, however, only in the nineteenth century that the significance of shoes came to the fore. Crispin Anecdotes (1827) was – as the title said – a collection of “interesting notices of shoemakers who have been distinguished for genius, enterprise, or eccentricity.” Shoemakers and wearers, rather than shoes, were the center of stories suitable for entertaining the whole family in

Figure I.11 (facing page) Earthenware tile, painted in blue, gold and white depicting Cinderella and the two ugly sisters, probably by Edward Borne Jones, c. 1862. By kind permission of the British Museum, London.
Figure 1.12: Plate, Alexandre de Garsault's *Art du Cordonnier*, 1767.

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front of a fireplace. In a similar vein, although autobiographical in nature, was John Brown's *Sixty Years' Gleanings from Life's Harvest* (1858), concerning the life of a shoemaker during the first half of the nineteenth century. The hard life of a boot- and shoemaker in the nineteenth century is also the biography of one of the most prolific writers on shoes, the London bootmaker James Dacres Devlin. For many years, he wrote about the meager salaries of shoemakers in London and the deterioration of their professional and personal standards of living in the transition of shoemaking from "gentle craft" to "sweated trade" (Figure 1.14). His books, reminiscent of the interviews by Henry Mayhew with the "London poor" are a touching reminder of the author's tragic death in utter poverty in mid-Victorian London.

Devlin's sad end contrasts with the meteoric success of another Victorian bootmaker, Joseph Sparkes Hall. In 1846 he published his *Book of the Feet*, which in just over a hundred pages collected all available information about boots and shoes from ancient Egypt to the mid-nineteenth century. This was neither an academic exercise nor an in-depth analysis of footwear. As in his later *History and Manufacture of Boots and Shoes* (1853), Hall's historical analyses ended with his own triumphal invention of the elastic-side boot. In the same years, monthly journals (the *Innovator*, also called the *Boot-and-Shoemakers Monitor*, and later the *St. Crispin*) discussed technical, commercial and productive issues, but did not deign to amuse their audience with histori
cized stories. This tradition of the analysis of shoes and shoemaking, mixing history and inventions, productive traditions and new industrial ways of production, was further developed in the second half of the nineteenth century both in England and France by books such as Horlock's *A Few Words to Journeymen Shoemakers* (1851), Sensfelder's *Histoire de la Cordonnerie* (1856), Ratouis's *Théorie et Pratique de la Fabrication et du Commerce des Chaussures* (1866) and his later *Histoire de la Cordonnerie* (1886).

**COLLECTING AND STUDYING SHOES**

Shoes have not only been the center of attention of academic and literary scholars. In the last two centuries they have been also avidly collected. Most of what we know about shoes today is the result of the painstaking research by museum curators who have discovered precious information about footwear of different periods and cultures and, over the years, have collected an impressive number of examples. One of the most prolific collectors and scholars of shoes was the Scottish photographer T. Watson Greig. He published precise drawings of his collection of shoes in two volumes entitled respectively *Ladies' Old-fashioned Shoes* (1889) and *Ladies' Dress Shoes of the Nineteenth Century* (1900). The importance of his collection lies in the fact that it has survived to the present day and is now available to scholars at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London and the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto. Each of these two museums owns half of a vast collection.
Figure 1.3a: The Modern Job! Or John Bull and his Comforts! Hand-colored etching, London, F. Johnston, 1816. Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, PC 1 - 12798.
Figure 1.13b: The Gout by James Gellatly, hand-colored etching, published by Hannah Humphrey, London, 1799. By kind permission of the British Museum, London.
Figure I.14: Shoemaker. Late seventeenth-century, Bunjon. Northampton Museums and Art Gallery, Boot and Shoe Collection, BC16177. Reproduced by permission of Northampton Museums and Art Gallery.
that constitutes the core of their shoe collection, now including several extra-European and
twentieth-century pairs of shoes, boots, sandals, slippers and clogs (Figures 1.15 and 1.16).

Specialized museums of shoes and shoemaking now receive the interest of thousands of vis-
itors. The Boot and Shoe Collection at the Northampton Art Gallery in England is the oldest
museum of shoes in the world, dating back to 1865. Its collection includes over 30,000 objects
and extends into material culture associated with shoes, such as pottery and domestic instruments
representing shoes. The more recent Musée International de la Chaussure in Romans in the
South of France (opened in the late 1960s) and the Bata Shoe Museum in Toronto (opened in
1995) are the other two most important shoe museums in the world, both of which aim to pro-
vide an understanding of shoes from antiquity to the present day (Figure 1.17).

Other shoe museums are located in Europe. The Deutsches Ledermuseum in Offenbach
(Germany) opened as early as 1917, and owns a remarkable collection of shoes as well as leather
goods. In Switzerland, the Bally Shoe Museum in Schönenthal has been open for several
decades, whilst in Spain the Museo del Calzado at Elda near Alicante is active in both the historical
and critical understanding of shoes. The Ferragamo Museum in Florence opened in 1995
and is the most important collection with regard to the relationship between the design process
and footwear. Other museums that attract visitors from all over the world are the Shoe Museum
in Street, Somerset, England owned by the shoe producer C. and J. Clark Ltd., the Museo della
Calzatura “Bertolini” in Vigevano (Lombardy) and the Museo della Calzatura of the A.C.Ri.B.
at Villa Pisani in Dolo near Venice.

In the twentieth century, and more specifically in the last twenty-five years, there has been
a tremendous change in the research carried out on shoes. Footwear is no longer the forgotten
Cinderella of dress, but an integral part of the study of fashion. This is the result of wider research
on the topic, but also of important changes in the way shoes are understood. Since the 1980s,
postmodernism and minimalism have proposed new visions of fashion and the body. They have underlined
the fragmentary nature of fashion. The international catwalk has been subjected to new ideas based on the “disintegration” of dress, unusual and clashing combinations, and the conception of the body as composed of single “body parts” or details, rather than as a figure or silhouette. These theoretical changes have a profound impact on the way footwear is represented in the media, and very often on how it is advertised. Emerging designers sometimes eschew shoes altogether, as they are a major expense for fashion shows, sending models down the runway in
socks or bare feet. Lifestyle magazines, arch comedies and cable television programs have in recent
years created a new awareness of the cultural importance of shoes as elements of consumption and
identity in contemporary society.
Figure I.15: Page from T. Watson Greig's *Ladies' Dress Shoes of the Nineteenth Century* (Edinburgh, 1900). Courtesy of the Veronica Gevers Fellowship and the Royal Ontario Museum.
Figure 1.16. Three pairs of women's shoes from the T. Watson Greer collection, Royal Ontario Museum, 921.2.82 A-B, 923.30.4 A-B and 923.30.7. Courtesy of the Veronica Gervers Fellowship.
From a historical perspective, the theories of social and psychological behavior which have informed the recent attention paid to shoes suffer from a lack of historical specificity and tend to be atemporal. The focus on the twentieth century makes it difficult to fully appreciate the dynamic relationship between footwear, culture and society within much of fashion history. History adds at least one important dimension to our understanding of the role played by clothes in contemporary societies. It not only focuses on the way in which people relate to their clothes and express particular choices in a world full of goods, signs and meanings; history also deals with constraints imposed culturally or socially, or created economically. The classic fashion theory that sees "fashion leaders" being imitated by "fashion followers" becomes, in the context of the early modern, modern and postmodern societies, a theory limited by social rank, wealth, strategies for saving, composition of households, costs of textiles and the availability of ready-made garments. Several chapters in this book thus refer to groundbreaking research by Eunice Wilson, Iris Brooke, Florence Ledger, Francis Grew, Margrethe de Neergaard and, in particular, June Swann, whose analyses have provided a great deal of crucial information about the history of shoes. This book attempts to integrate in-depth analysis of footwear and recent scholarship on the cultural, social, economic and personal meanings of shoes. It is unfortunate that analyses of the object or artifact, and social theory, have tended to become so specialized and polarized that these communities no longer communicate effectively.

A WALK THROUGH THE BOOK

Shoes, perhaps more than other objects or items of dress, have a history or "life" of their own, which we have tried to capture in the initial part of this book. The book is divided into four "steps," the first of which is dedicated to "A Foot in the Past." Six chapters in this section chart the history of shoes from ancient Greece to the beginning of the twentieth century. Sue Blundell's chapter introduces the reader to the footwear used in the ancient world. It examines the role of women's footwear in ancient Greece through the analysis of sculpture, vase paintings and literature. Giuseppina Muzzarelli also uses a wide variety of sources in her analysis of medieval footwear. She shows how, during the later Middle Ages and the Renaissance, shoes were the center of attention of a public authority keen to curb conspicuous consumption and exaggerated spending (Figure I.18).

Andrea Vianello investigates further the theme of Renaissance shoes by showing how women, in particular, were subjected to close scrutiny. This was not just the scrutiny of the state, but also of religious leaders who frowned upon the high heels used by Venetian women. The fair sex seemed to have enjoyed as little freedom of expression as they had freedom of movement. When the tall pianelle used in the sixteenth century were replaced by shoes similar to modern
footwear, women still faced severe obstacles limiting their mobility. A chapter by Peter McNeil and Giorgio Riello investigates eighteenth-century shoe fashions, examining the impact of changes in the artifacts themselves and shifts in the ideas surrounding shoes. The rise of the modern city, as chapters by Alison Matthews David and Nancy Rexford show, meant a separation between male and female spheres of action. Men walked freely in town and country by wearing sturdy boots, whose military image contributed to reinforce the notion of male power (Figure 1.19). In contrast, as Nancy Rexford shows, women only slowly adopted practical boots. In nineteenth-century America, women continued to wear flimsy shoes in town and country, thus following European fashion, but also reinforcing a perceived inferior role.

The second “step” in the long walk of this book is dedicated to “Encounters and Cultural Interactions.” Three chapters by established scholars of extra-European dress illuminate the way in which shoes appear as symbols of cultural understanding, in particular in the relationship between the West and other major civilizations such as Japan, China and West Africa. A chapter by Martha Chaiklin provides a sharp analysis of the role of footwear in premodern Japan. In a society dominated by symbolic associations, shoes were tokens of material culture embodying the spiritual, but also physical principles of cleanliness and dirt. Established categories of thought on the use of footwear are also the subject of a chapter by Tunde M. Akinwumi, examining the way in which Africa’s cultural, social and political position was influenced by European nations in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Shoes, the prerogative of the emperor and his court, became widely available and much sought after by the rising Europeanized elite. The “English” shoe was a tool of social competition within African social hierarchies, but also a symbol of cultural oppression in its more global context. A final chapter by Paola Zamperini connects past and present in Chinese footwear by analyzing the links between established moral and social views on shoes and the challenge of the global market for footwear in which China is imposing itself as the major producer of cheaper types of products and imitations.

The English shoe, as the modern man’s shoe, is the topic of the first chapter of “step” three of this book, “Shoes, Bodies and Identities.” Christopher Breward shows how early twentieth-century men’s shoes were taken as examples of “good design” in opposition to women’s shoes, whose abundance of decoration was abhorred by modernist architects such as Adolf Loos and Le Corbusier. Elizabeth Semmelhack further develops the topic of female extravagance in a chapter on the history of high heels. She shows how, in the last five centuries, high heels have been integral to the formation of bodily appearance and, in the twentieth century, have created specific social and cultural constructions of femininity, from the pinup to the “girl power” of the 1990s.

Bodily appearance has also been central to the way eroticism has been conceptualized and performed in the twentieth century. A chapter by Valerie Steele details the way in which sexuality,
Figure 1.17 (top left): Eighteenth-century snuffboxes in the shape of a shoe and a boot. Two of the many examples of the material culture of footwear at Bata Shoe Museum, P84.97 and P84.176 (dated 1740). Reproduced by kind permission of Bata Shoe Museum.

Figure 1.18 (top right): Women have often been portrayed as conspicuous consumers. The Dialogue Between a Shoemaker and a Woman, French engraving, seventeenth century. Bata Shoe Museum, Toronto, P79.0588. Reproduced by kind permission of Bata Shoe Museum.

Figure 1.19 (right): A Pair of Polished Gentlemen by James Gillray. London, H. Humphrey, 1801. Print, 1849 version.
eroticism and fetishism interact and their representation through shoes in subcultures and also in mainstream cultural settings. Hilary Davidson explores the importance of shoes in the construction of sexual profiles, and also in the "performativity" of sex, in a chapter about the magic of red shoes. From a nineteenth-century literary construction, red shoes have become, in the twentieth century, iconic symbols of female "deviance" and have only been more positively interpreted in recent years (Figure 1.20). The concluding chapter, jointly written by Clare Lomas, Peter McNeil and Sally Gray, examines the notion of the "queer" dress of non-normative men and women, as well as gay and lesbian urban subcultures after the Second World War, and the interrelationship between the foot, footwear and sexual identity during the last fifty years.

The final "step" of this book is dedicated to what the shoe can affect and effect: "Representation and Self-Presentation." Stefania Ricci examines the life of Salvatore Ferragamo from his American period to his success in postwar Italy. Ferragamo was the father of the shoemaker-"célèbre" and constructed a myth of the diva in divine shoes through an interplay between the historical past of Florence and the new world of cinema and fashion. Ferragamo was central in putting Italy back on the map of fashion, with a continuing focus on footwear. Giovanni Luigi Fontana argues that Italy's success in footwear manufacturing in the last fifty years is the result of a notion and practice of good taste, but also good training in design and the recovery of the skills and talents in footwear production that Italy had held in the Renaissance.

Shoes are not just tools of personal or collective self-presentation. Julia Pine shows how shoes are widely present in conceptually sophisticated and avant-garde art from the eighteenth century to the present day. At times they have been used to signify sexual behavior and gender identity, but often they have become widely accepted ciphers for ideas about late-capitalist art and society, as in the case of Andy Warhol. As Benstock and Ferris have demonstrated, the power of shoes to suggest the nature of postmodern society, style and even modes of art practice is suggested in Warhol's gold-dust paintings of that banal object, the shoe. The mass nature of shoes in present-day societies is also the topic of Alison Gill's chapter on sneakers. Global shoe manufacturers sell the ideal of the athletic body through the use of well-known brands. Sneakers, trainers or "runners" are central to the construction of contemporary consumer identity and have become enduring symbols of affluence, youth and social mobility.

A STEP FORWARD

The editors have the privilege of concluding this volume by considering the various threads of the history of footwear. Shoes are peculiar objects. We believe this even more so at the end of the project than upon its commencement. We have been amazed at the large numbers of shoes, from the banal to the luxurious, stored in museum depositories and rarely displayed. We have been
astonished at the tenacity of a small group of researchers who for decades have argued for the significance of this essential but everyday object. We have been intrigued by the way discussion of the project raises, in all those who overhear it (from academic to generalist listeners), instant and passionate reactions, more marked than the general idea of "fashion." Few people have any idea of how or where their shoes are made, whereas these understandings are clearer in the labeling and purchasing of fashion. This tension is evident in the titles of numerous texts designed to explicate the "mystery" of shoemaking. Shoes are thus ubiquitous and mysterious.

The chapters gathered in this book show how shoes are far from the pedestrian level of the street that they are designed to navigate. They encapsulate a huge range of meanings, prejudices and tensions in society. Shoes are part of daily life – from the Manolo Blahnik exclusive dream of limousine shoes to the million of sneakers invading alleys, streets and squares all over the world. They are produced in large factories, artisan workshops and South Asian sweatshops. They are consumed by us all from the cradle to the grave. They are a necessity of life and the *necesseire* of social living.

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**Figure 1.20 (facing page): Madonna's shoes. Red satin platform d'Arley pumps, size 37½, made by Sergio Rossi, 1992. This pair of shoes was worn by Madonna in Rochester, Michigan during her Girlie Tour of 1993–94. Bata Shoe Museum, Toronto, P95.69.AB. Reproduced by kind permission of Bata Shoe Museum.**