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Fashion's World Cities

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Berg Fashion Library

FROM PARIS TO SHANGHAI

THE CHANGING GEOGRAPHIES OF FASHION'S WORLD CITIES

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At the opening of the Shanghai International Fashion Centre on 15 October 2000, the then mayor, Xu Kuangdi, pledged that one of the planning goals for the first decade of the twenty-first century was to build the city into the 'world's sixth fashion centre, alongside London, Paris, New York, Milan and Tokyo' (Xu 2003). Xu Kuangdi lost his job as mayor in 2002, and the annual Shanghai fashion festival that takes place each spring, intended to match the collections of the major fashion centres, has not been an instant success. In 2003 shows by Givenchy, Vivienne Tam, Vivienne Westwood and Ferragamo were all cancelled because of SARS, and the 2004 collections were threatened by scares associated with the avian influenza outbreak. Nonetheless, the idea of Shanghai as a new centre in the global order remains a significant strand of urban policy. Recently, discussing preparations for the World Expo due in the city in 2010, Professor Chu Yunmao, Director of the City Image Institute of Donghua University argued that:

Fashion is an impulse that leads the trends of the times, a banner of the cultural image of an international metropolis. In the world today, the vanguard of fashion is a city's symbol of dynamism. There are five major cities of fashion in the world. They are New York, Paris, London, Milan and Tokyo. ... Given its hard work and opportunities, Shanghai will surely be able to establish its own image as a city of fashion and culture.

(Zhang 2005: 87)

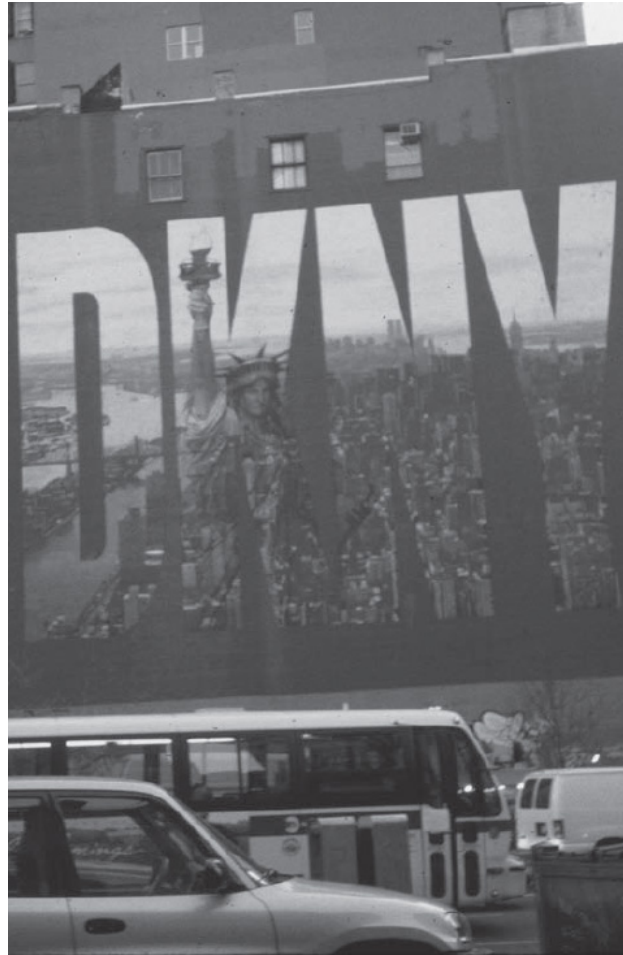
The new China is most often interpreted as a potentially dominant player in the global garment industry, undercutting producers elsewhere, particularly in Europe and the United States. This was highlighted by the so-called 'Bra Wars' of 2005 after the mismanaged end of the Multifibre Agreement between the European Union and China. Southern European producers called for emergency quotas on cheap Chinese imports, while major retailers lobbied hard for free trade. The campaigns to promote Shanghai as a fashion capital demonstrate wider aspirations for the Chinese industry, going much further than just consolidating the city's position as a key centre for the trading and sale of Chinese-made goods. Like the recent construction of giant skyscrapers in the city, fashion is being used as a signifier of urban modernity and of world status (Yusuf and Wu 2002: 1227).

The idea of the fashion city is now a feature of the global competition between cities, and has become a part of broader strategies of metropolitan boosterism that give prominence to what have become known as the 'cultural industries'. Shanghai's plans have drawn on specific characteristics of the Chinese garment industry, but the attempts to create the institutions of metropolitan fashion culture (particularly 'collections' on the model of Paris, New York and Milan, and a locally centred fashion press) have parallels in developments from Manchester to Melbourne, and Los Angeles to Lisbon. Such strategies draw upon a long-established popular understanding of a certain urban hierarchy, and particularly of the existence of certain cities with global status in the geographies of fashion. City image-makers often draw upon local traditions and histories, but have also played upon connections or comparisons with established centres. One of the rhetorical goals of Xu Kuangdi's policy was to return Shanghai to its position prior to the Second World War and the Chinese revolution as the 'Paris of the East' (Xu 2003).

Both Mayor Xu and Professor Chu repeat with unquestioning certainty a familiar mantra of fashion's world cities – 'London, Paris, New York, Milan and Tokyo'. Permutations of these cities and a few others have been routinely incorporated into the advertising of high fashion, after the name of a designer or brand, or etched into the glass of a shop window. In some cases the name of the fashion capital is incorporated into a brand name itself (as perhaps most famously in the case of DKNY – Donna Karan New York; see [Figure 1.1](#)). The list of cities is an almost transparent sign, only noticed when disrupted. In 2004 as part of an advertising campaign to market itself as 'the Fashion Capital' for the Melbourne metropolitan area, a suburban mall covered the city's billboards, trams and buses with the slogan 'New York, Paris, London, Rome, Chadstone.' This book is intended to have the same disturbing effect on taken-for-granted assumptions about fashion's world cities, though hopefully with rather more analytical force. Despite the widespread use of the term 'fashion capital' in academic work as well as in the fashion press, it has attracted little serious consideration.

The explicit conjunction of major cities and fashion, and claims for the global status of certain cities are of course not new. For example, the concept of 'Paris fashion' must represent one of the most powerful and long-running reifications of place in modern history. But even a cursory examination of the way the term has been used draws attention to the complexity of the notion of the fashion capital, and to the complexity of the fashion process itself. The routine description of the city over the past 200 years as the capital of world fashion disguises the ways in which different aspects of the city's relationship with fashion contribute to this understanding. A dominant representation of Paris has emphasized the clustering of elite designers, the structure of the couture system, and the power of the Paris fashion industry to direct fashion styles far beyond the limits of the city. However Paris's role as fashion capital has also been related to its industrial structure, particularly to the long-term survival of a production sector of specialist workshops and individual craft workers, concentrated in the Sentier district of the city. As Nancy Green has suggested in her comparative study of Paris and New York, both cities had 'flexible specialisation before the term was coined' (1997: 4). Elaborate contracting and subcontracting systems in the apparel industries have been a vital element in sustaining a rapid turnover and adaptation of styles. At other times Paris has been interpreted as a world centre of fashion because of its distinctive metropolitan cultures of consumption, both in the narrow sense of shops and shopping, and in a broader sense of the practices associated with the wearing of fashionable dress in the spaces of the city. Agnès Rocamora shows in her chapter here that Paris has also had a long history of representation, particularly in the fashion press, as the first city in an almost free-floating symbolic order of fashionability. There has been something approaching a naturalization of Paris's relationship with fashion, often around the elevation of a certain construction of fashionable femininity to a symbol of Parisian superiority.

Figure 1.1



The city as fashion brand. Advertising for DKNY at Houston Street, New York City. Photograph taken by Noah Najarian.

Many of the chapters in this book deal with these dimensions of major fashion cities, as centres of a culture of design, as central points in production networks, as examples of distinctive consumption cultures, or as the subjects of representation in film or the fashion press. The last part of this introductory chapter returns to this question of the multidimensional character of the fashion capital or fashion world city. However this book is not intended as a straightforward exercise in typology or definition. The concern is not to provide a simple list of key characteristics by which a fashion capital can be identified, or a straightforward metric to rate a city's global fashion status. Neither are we seeking to provide a toolkit for city managers or urban boosters looking to make a world fashion city. Instead the concern is to explore the idea of the fashion capital both as a changing historical formation, and relationally as a form of urban ordering or hierarchy. This is significant, as while there have been many excellent studies of the development of individual major fashion cities, much less attention has been given to what might be described as the historical geography of fashion's world cities – the processes by which some cities become identified as central sites of global significance in fashion culture, and the competition and interconnections between those cities.

Fashion and the Geographies of Urban Modernity

For too long fashion has been peripheral in study of the modern city. Yet as Elizabeth Wilson suggests in her chapter in this collection, thinking about fashion takes us to the heart of key questions about the nature of urban modernity, in particular its double-sided character, characterized simultaneously by new forms of constraint and commodification in everyday life, but also by new possibilities for active experimentation and identity formation. Wilson's work (1985; 1991) has been at the forefront in shifting the understanding of fashion from a superficial symptom of modernity to a much more active and creative practice. Fashion's complexity matches that of the modern metropolis itself, and the study of fashion has very many direct points of contact with the study of the city. Christopher Breward has argued that fashion is, like the city, multi-layered, making any attempt at analysis especially fraught:

[Fashion] 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 of objects and beliefs; and it is an event, both spectacular and routine, cyclical in its adherence to the natural and commercial seasons, innovative in its bursts of avant-gardism, and sequential in its guise as a palimpsest of memories and traditions.

(Breward 2004: 11)

A reassessment of fashion's significance has been encouraged by moves within urban studies that have emphasized characteristics of the city that meet these qualities directly. Recent work in urban theory has called for an understanding of the urban that prioritizes embodied experience and treats the city as a haptic, sensory environment, just as work in fashion theory has prioritized the relationship between clothing and the body (Pile 1996; Entwistle 2000; Thrift 2004). Fashion has also been a central focus of a new emphasis on the cultural economies and creative industries of cities – while historians of the fashion industry have been at pains to show that such developments are not late twentieth-century novelties, but have developed from earlier formations particularly in major fashion centres (Green 1997; Jackson, Lowe, Miller and Mort 2000; Scott 2000a; Amin

and Thrift 2002; [Breward 2004](#)). Studies of urban culture have moved beyond a narrow concern for literary or fine art representations of the city, towards an engagement with other ways in which the city is expressed and performed. This turn has also increased the appreciation of the fashion traditions of great cities as an alternative, more demotic and fragmentary form of urban expression.

These connections between specific city histories and fashion cultures have marked some of the best recent work in both urban history and fashion history (see, for example, [Mort 1996](#); [Steele 1998](#); [Breward 1999](#); [Nead 2000](#); [Rappaport 2000](#)). Such work, however, has tended to concentrate on individual cities and on certain defining historical periods. Sometimes this has made for rather inward-looking studies of the fashion city, but there has also been significant work that has sought to think about the wider global position of particular urban fashion cultures. This is the explicit focus of Miles Ogborn's illuminating study of the spatiality of modernity in eighteenth-century London. Ogborn argues that our understanding of modernity is transformed through attention to its geographies. Thus studies of modernity need to acknowledge 'the ways in which there are different modernities in different places', and conceptualize 'modernity as a matter of the hybrid relationships and connections between places' (1998: 17). Ogborn's study of the figure of the 'Macaroni', the ultra-dandy of the period, concentrates both on his territories and routes within London, but also on the way that the Macaroni's fashionable consumption drew upon London's position at the centre of a much wider web of trading and cultural relations. The Macaroni was 'understood within the international chains of commodities that made London itself a dangerous place through the ways in which its endless varieties of consumption brought together the produce of the world' ([Ogborn 1998](#): 139).

Ogborn's comments on the geographies of modernity and his focus on the relations between the urban fashion culture of London and the emergent economic geography of the British Empire are important for the wider study of fashion's world cities. There are a number of responses to this challenge, all of which take us beyond studies of the single fashion city. The first of these takes seriously the idea of different modernities in different places. In Ogborn's study of London this refers primarily to the ways that a range of sites in the city expressed different articulations of the modern. This is an approach that may usefully be taken to other cities at other times, extending our sense of the spaces of fashion culture beyond the salon, designer studio, boutique or department store. But it also invites us to think about the particularities of different urban fashion cultures, even in the same historical period. Nancy Green's comparison of the Parisian and New York fashion industries in the twentieth century is instructive here. She points to similarities in industrial structures and in the general pressures created by the development of new mass markets for fashion, but shows the ways in which the fashion system worked quite differently in the two cities. Such different responses drew upon local fashion cultures and modes of organization, but licensing arrangements and copying also meant that there could be a synergistic relationship between these distinctive urban fashion formations.

Second, our understanding of major fashion cities also needs to think of them as constituted 'through hybrid relationships and connections with other places.' This is a major theme in this volume. Both Sonia Ashmore and Claire Dwyer concentrate specifically on these kinds of connections in their contributions. Ashmore's discussion of the so-called cosmopolitan fashions of 1960s London shows how they were part of a much longer tradition of exoticism and orientalism in the city. For example, the department store of Liberty's in Regent Street opened in 1875, selling Indian silks and Japanese goods, and had an immense influence on late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century taste. The success of Liberty's and its lasting influence on London style drew upon the city's imperial position and culture – Arthur Liberty was said to have taken inspiration for his shop from the displays of Indian fabrics at the 1862 International Exhibition. Mica Nava has suggested that a crucial aspect of modern consumption cultures has been the way that exoticism has been constructed and staged in cities like London and Paris, as part of an imaginative geography that set the imperial cities at the centre and the colonized at the margins ([Nava 1996](#)).

Ashmore and Dwyer explore later examples of the consumption of cultural diversity and the marketing of versions of the exotic, addressing London's changing position in what Žižek (1997) has described as 'multicultural capitalism'. There are marked differences between the two periods under consideration, indicating different forms of hybridity and connection, and pointing to wider changes in the city's fashion culture. Ashmore's account of the late 1960s indicates a strong lineage between the fashions for 'ethnic' dress of hippy culture, and earlier forms of imperial orientalism. Although the fashion had strong counter-cultural associations, it was promoted by a young urban elite, many with old family connections to the empire. As fashions like the kaftan moved into the mainstream in the early 1970s, they rapidly lost their specific orientalist meanings, becoming instead rather weakly exotic.

Dwyer's study of contemporary fashion networks between London and India also recognizes the importance of the imperial past. However, she argues that the conventional constructions of 'West' and 'East', of modernity and tradition, and of metropole and periphery have been complicated and disrupted by the emergence of transnational commodity cultures that link London and Mumbai. London's 'Indian Summer' of 2000, marked by mainstream catwalk shows of South Asian influenced designs and by 'Indian' fashions in high street stores, has been seen as just a passing phase in multicultural capitalism's appropriation of cultures, objects and styles with a marketable patina of difference. For Nirmla Puwar, 'those who saunter on Kensington High Street with their pashminas and mojay are playing with the East' in a way that 'refuses to see the power of whiteness as an empty privileged space' (2002: 71). While acknowledging that such neo-orientalism remains a feature of fashion culture, Dwyer also points to the ways in which new transnational connections complicate the imaginative geographies of fashion, challenging established signifiers of 'West' and 'East'.

Dwyer's study of the complexities of diasporic and transnational fashion cultures highlights more general ways that major cities have drawn upon their privileged positions in wider networks. Fashion in such centres has been shaped by flows of people (as cheap skilled labour, designers, entrepreneurs and consumers), materials, capital and ideas. Even Paris, so often represented in the mythologies of fashion as a closed and self-sufficient fashion centre, can only be understood in these terms. (Ironically, as Pamela Church Gibson discusses in her chapter, the representation of Paris as an autarkic citadel of fashion has often been promoted with great vigour from outside of France, particularly in Hollywood's constructions of the city, and in the international fashion press.) From top to bottom, the Parisian industry has been shaped by migration. Charles Worth, Elsa Schiaparelli, Christóbal Balenciaga and Alexander McQueen are all examples of Paris's place in the life-journeys of major designers.

Equally the labour force of the Parisian garment industry has been largely immigrant for over a century. Immigrants to the city have come 'in overlapping succession, from Germany and Belgium, from Eastern Europe, from the ex-Ottoman Empire, from North Africa, and more recently from Yugoslavia, Turkey, South-East Asia and mainland China' ([Green 2002](#): 35). Such immigration has been a feature of the development of most major fashion centres, particularly London, New York and Los Angeles. As Lesley Rabine and Susan Kaiser suggest here, immigrant labour in fashion's world cities has usually been concentrated in small workshops, often at or beyond the margins of legal employment, characterized by poor physical conditions, long hours and low wages. Yet Rabine and Kaiser also suggest that migrants are more than the passive victims of the exploitations of the garment industry. Through the direct participation of migrant entrepreneurs, given opportunities through the complex subcontracting networks, and through a more general influence on the culture of cities, these movements of people have played a vital role in transforming and renewing metropolitan fashion cultures. (See [Rath 2002](#).)

This emphasis on fashion's flows and connections chimes with Amin and Thrift's observation that much recent work on urbanism more generally has had 'a strong emphasis on understanding cities as spatially open and cross-cut by many different kinds of mobilities, from flows of people to commodities and information' (2002:3). However, Ogborn's observations about the geographies of modernity indicate that this is not enough. London's fashion culture in the eighteenth century and after was also critically shaped by the structured spatialities of imperialism, and particularly by London's position as the imperial capital. In thinking about the nature of fashion's world cities we need to address such networks of power, as expressed in a range of registers from the economic to the cultural. Too often studies in fashion history have taken for granted the wider structures

of imperialism or globalizing capitalism, and their consequence for fashion's key urban centres. And, to paraphrase the geographer John Agnew, we also need to think about fashion's active role in actively 'spatializing' the world – dividing, labelling and sorting it into a hierarchy of places of greater or lesser 'importance' (Agnew 1998: 2).

Fashion and the 'World City Hypothesis'

Approaching fashion's world cities from a perspective that emphasizes their position within wider structures of economic and political power draws us towards the literature in urban studies that has focused on 'world cities' or 'global cities'. In 1986, John Friedmann put forward what he described as 'the world city hypothesis' (see Friedmann and Wolff 1982 for an earlier version of these ideas). Friedmann's ideas were less a formal hypothesis than an agenda for research concerning the relationship of cities to the development of the world economy. Friedmann argued that increasing economic globalization had shifted the balance between major cities' roles as centres of territorially bounded political states and as sites for the management of global capital. Increasingly the decisive variable in explaining the nature of key 'world cities' was 'the mode of their integration with the global economy' over and above 'their own historical past, national policies, and cultural influences' (1986: 69). This claim had several consequences for the analysis of cities. First, Friedmann suggested that structural changes in the economies of such world cities (and consequent changes in their physical forms, social composition and urban cultures) were dependent on the form and extent of their integration into the world economy. Second, Friedmann argued that it was necessary to understand cities as part of a world system, thus emphasizing both the significance of connections and interdependencies between major cities, but also their positions within a structured hierarchy.

Friedmann paid particular attention to those cities at the very top of his hierarchy, what he described as 'primary core cities'. In the mid 1980s he suggested that these were London, Paris, New York, Chicago, Los Angeles and Tokyo. Here there is significant overlap with what Saskia Sassen has described as 'global cities' (1991, 2001). In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries these cities have developed intense concentrations of 'advanced producer services', typically in sectors such as banking, accountancy, advertising, insurance, commercial law and management consultancy. Sassen argues that financial deregulation and the development of new forms of telecommunications, media and information technology, far from dispersing economic activities as some predicted, has created an aggressive new logic for their concentration of these activities in a few great cities. Sassen further argues that the global cities, particularly London and New York, have been marked by increasing economic and social polarization. Alongside the development of advanced producer services has been a parallel development of a low-paid service sector, often characterized by a casualized labour force with a high proportion of immigrants. In Sassen's account of the distinctive characteristics of the global city, fashion appears only in the guise of the sweatshops of the garment industry.

One response to this emphasis on 'world cities' and 'global cities' has focused on the significance of urban hierarchies, and has attempted to produce different taxonomic strategies for ordering and categorizing cities. At its worst this work has descended into a fixation with league tables and debates about the best way to measure the worldliness of a world city. Beyond consideration of the location of the corporate headquarters of fashion and luxury goods conglomerates like LVMH (Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton), fashion has rarely been factored into such urban ranking schemes. These have been dominated by analyses of advanced producer services, which have been used to measure the 'global capacity' of various cities. (See, for recent examples of such work, Beaverstock, [Smith and Taylor 1999a](#), [1999b](#) and [2000](#); [Taylor 2004](#).) Following Friedmann's original arguments such advanced producer services (and financial services in particular) are seen as the primary driving forces of the global urban order. While other activities may demonstrate different kinds of urban networks and hierarchies (see, for example, [Taylor 2004](#) on the global urban geographies of NGOs), these are very much seen as secondary features of the global urban system.

There is clearly a significant overlap between the cities routinely described as world fashion cities, and those identified by Friedmann, Sassen and their followers as primary world cities or global cities. Given, in Friedmann's terminology, the embeddedness of a 'transnational capitalist class' whose 'ideology is consumerist' in such world cities, and given fashion's inherent elitism and consumerism, it would be very surprising if this were not the case ([Friedmann 1995](#): 26). The emergence of New York as a world city of fashion in the early twentieth century, or Tokyo's rise as an international fashion centre from the early 1980s were not unrelated to the position of those cities in rising economic superpowers (see Kawamura and Rantisi in this collection). However, the major centres of world fashion cannot be simply read off from a list of the main world business centres. For example, within Western Europe, Frankfurt and Milan can be taken as contrasting examples. While the financial centre of Frankfurt has a range of elite designer stores, catering to an affluent, international population, it hardly registers in the wider symbolic or economic geographies of fashion. By contrast, Milan, although certainly one of the most significant business command and control centres in the European Union, has been regarded since the 1970s at least as one of fashion's four or five front-rank world centres (see Simona Segre Reinach's discussions of the development of Milan as a fashion capital in this collection). Viewed historically, there are also significant discontinuities between the development of fashion's ordering of world centres and the urban geographies of global finance, demonstrated most clearly in Paris's long history as the claimed centre of the world fashion industry, despite the vicissitudes of the French economy and catastrophic interruptions by war. The argument here is not that analysis of fashion culture's fixation with urban orderings and world centres can produce a more accurate overall metric of the global significance of certain cities. There are, however, a number of potential insights that can come from bringing the perspectives of the world cities literature together with consideration of the geographies of fashion.

Clearly themes taken from the world cities literature can inform studies of the organization of the contemporary fashion industry. This has underpinned some recent work on fashion that has talked of a historic shift in the balance of power between New York and Paris as fashion capitals. (See for very different examples of this work [Agins 1999](#) and [Rantisi 2004a](#).) This work has argued that the fashion industry has become more locked into the concentration and centralization of advanced capitalism, developing characteristics that make it increasingly like an advanced producer service. In this view, the new fashion world city is less significant as a centre of a design tradition or a cluster of highly skilled manufacturing, than as the organizational headquarters of a global branding industry. Terry Agins has described this as the 'end of fashion' and the 'death of couture' (a demise proclaimed pretty regularly over the past hundred years). This transformation has a number of elements, all of which have altered fashion's relationship with major urban centres, and, Agins argues, has seen New York usurp Paris's position as the dominant fashion centre. The development of American 'designer' sportswear and leisurewear brands in the 1980s and 1990s (such as Calvin Klein, DKNY and Tommy Hilfiger) disrupted the connection between design and skilled, locally based manufacturing. Since the time of Charles Worth modern fashion has always been about the creation of brand identities and the complex relationship between haute couture and the industrial production of copies. But recent developments seem to mark a profound change in the balance between brands and the significance of actual garments, with most production moving to offshore suppliers. In the new organizational order of the fashion industry most elite designers, and certainly most of those shown in the main seasonal collections, are first and foremost global brand identities, part of the portfolio of powerful conglomerates like LVMH, PPR (Pinault Printemps Redoute) or the Prada group. In her chapter here, Norma Rantisi, writes of New York's emergent ascendance in the geography of fashion's world centres, but also of how that shift simultaneously seems to threaten the diversity and vibrancy of the New York fashion scene.

The development of this fashion oligarchy has strengthened the connections between the networks of fashion and corporate finance. At the same time, the primary importance of branding has strengthened the importance of connections with activities like advertising, management consultancy and corporate law. Perhaps the most symbolic site in the development of fashion's recent geography is not a designer shop or department store, but the new American corporate headquarters for LVMH, a spectacular skyscraping office on East 57th Street in Manhattan. This symbol of the increasing corporate control of high fashion is indicative of tensions between the development of global cities (as understood by Sassen) and previously established formations of the fashion industry in its world centres. The overall decline of manufacturing (including with some exceptions, the rag trade) in most major world cities is a well-established feature of their development. Some have described this as a shift towards a post-

industrial city characterized not just by the growth of corporate command centres, but also by the emergence of clusters of smaller firms in the 'creative industries', typically in sectors like film, television, music and particularly advertising (Hall 2000). While high-end fashion design working for major corporations is sometimes included in discussions of such clusters, the smaller scale independent sector has suffered significantly from the escalation of property costs in major world cities.

The best work on world cities addresses not just the position of cities in a rank order, but also analyses the nature of connections between cities, and the institutions and processes that work to include, exclude and position cities in the hierarchy (Taylor 2004). Recent work has involved mapping the intercity structures of multinational corporations or the contractual networks of firms in different sectors. Clearly one task for research into the geographies of fashion is to map these kinds of connection. This work has also emphasized the way that even in a world with massive capacity for instantaneous long-distance communication and financial transfer, the relationship between cities is shaped by very basic constraints of time and space. The most common example given is the way that 24-hour trading of shares, currency and commodities has strengthened the position of primary financial markets in different time zones. Fashion's urban world order has worked in different ways, with seasonality as an important factor. As the Australian geographer Sally Weller has noted, all of the conventional world fashion cities, Paris, New York, London, Milan and Tokyo, are situated between 35° and 52° latitude, in the northern hemisphere (Weller 2004: 109). This is not to suggest, like some early twentieth-century proponents of Paris's natural fashion superiority, that the fashion capitals are determined by climate. (Writing in 1908, Edouard Debect argued that France's fashion success came from its perfect climatic position somewhere between the 'cold countries' and the 'blazing'. Quoted in Green 1997: 108.) What it does mean is that the operation of global fashion has become locked into the seasonal rhythms of the temperate northern hemisphere. The major fashion collections are constrained by this seasonality. Given the need to place collections at strategic points in the year, avoiding clashes, there is probably time for no more than three or four collections that can guarantee global media attention, and which can work as part of the travelling circus of the controlling elites of fashion culture.

If the literature on world cities can inform an understanding about fashion's urban ordering, there are also important lessons that travel in the opposite direction, deepening these explorations of urban centrality and ordering. Fashion's slippery character is key to this, stretching standard categories of analysis. Fashion works through a 'never-ceasing play between the processes of production and consumption', it involves both the sale of commodities and the exercise of the creative imagination, and it is at once highly symbolic and yet an intimate part of embodied, everyday experience (Breward 2003: 21). As such it helps us to think about other ways that cities and the spaces within them are ordered and connected. Arjun Appadurai has famously argued that globalization needs to be understood not as a singular process but as multiple and differentiated, working through a series of overlaid 'scapes' or morphologies of flow and movement (Appadurai 1990; 1996). Alongside a 'finanscape' shaped by the shifting global disposition of capital, are other global geographies that he describes variously as ethnoscaping, mediascapes, technoscapes and ideoscapes. Commenting directly on the world city literature, Anthony King uses these ideas to point to different dimensions of the ways that certain cities constitute central places of global significance. For King, 'the problem with the term "world" or "global city" is that it has been appropriated, perhaps hijacked, to represent and also reify not only just one part of a city's activity ... but also has been put at the service of only one representation of "the world" – the world economy' (King 1995: 217). Even within the economic realm, the conventional world city literature gives precedence to one particular dimension, with activities such as consumption and tourism relegated to secondary considerations, although both are economic activities with distinctive geographies of flows and central places.

There are other kinds of urban centrality that are highlighted by King's comments. It has already been noted that one important aspect of fashion's world cities has been their positioning in flows of people, what Appadurai terms movement in the 'ethnoscape'. King also argues that alongside the political economy approach of the world city literature, the nature of urban power and centrality has to be understood within the historical, political and cultural framework of post-imperialism or post-colonialism. The idea of fashion authority, of certain specific urban milieux as the sources of style, has been a powerful form of cultural imperialism. While fashion's world cities have often been examined in terms of distinctive national and metropolitan cultures – in terms of the 'Frenchness' of Parisian fashions, or the edginess of a distinctively London look – they have also worked as a key element of a wider long-running discourse that divided the world into forward and backward regions.

Every bit as much as imperial monuments or the great exhibitions, fashion was used as a means of expressing the superiority of certain places in the world order. (Indeed, the 1900 Exposition Universelle in Paris included twenty displays by couture houses. Lipovetsky 1994: 57.) Versions of 'Parisian' fashions had an extraordinary reach in the late nineteenth century, available to elites in urban contexts as different as Meiji Tokyo, gold-rush Melbourne, and the newly prosperous and expanding South American capitals of Montevideo and Buenos Aires. In these contexts, such fashions were understood as expressions of modernity, and their consumption as a marker of belonging and status in a world order centred in the great European capitals. This relationship extended (and indeed still extends) beyond the direct consumption of clothes with some lingering connection with Paris, or the vicarious consumption of the fashion capital in novels, film or the fashion press. Just as more official town planning and architecture attempted to map European modernity into the urban fabric of colonial cities, so the examples of the fashion capitals provided models for the spaces of elite consumption. Shanghai's claims to be the 'Paris of the East' worked through fashions and attitudes towards consumption, but also in the design and culture of the shops and shopping environment of the Bund. In Melbourne, locals have talked of the 'Paris end of Collins Street' for over a century. Both the revived Bund and contemporary Collins Street retain this mimetic relationship with Paris, indicating its continuing force as a symbolic marker of high fashion. (See Figures 1.2 and 1.3.) Clearly this kind of relationship is embedded within the geography of Appadurai's mediascape, dependent on long-running tropes promoted by the fashion press, films and elsewhere that have sustained a powerful imaginative geography of style and sophistication. But it is also possible to stretch Appadurai's concept of globally dispersed ideoscapes to encompass fashion as a particular commercialized expression of the Enlightenment 'image-idea' of progress.

This idea of the continuing cultural significance of certain key cities in a world fashion order is a theme that runs through many of the chapters in this collection. In her chapter, Yuniya Kawamura, argues that the emergence of world-ranked Japanese designers during the 1970s and 1980s placed Tokyo on the fashion map as a significant centre. However their particular career paths via the institutions of Paris, 'the imperial fashion city', locked Tokyo into a subordinate position in the fashion hierarchy, in the opinions of both Japanese designers and consumers. Kawamura notes both the Japanese fixation with Western luxury goods, and the ways that Japanese brands have often adopted French names. Hudita Nura Mustafa charts a more complex response to the cultural hierarchies of cities in Dakar, sometimes given the soubriquet 'Paris of Africa'. Mustafa argues that the mimicry implied in this comparison legitimizes Dakar as a modern cultural centre, but at the same time reinforces constructions of Africa as a culturally regressive space that required the 'progressive' influence of French high fashion. In her account, Mustafa recognizes the pervasive power of the mythologies of Paris in Africa, and the importance of connections between African cities and migrants in the French capital. Nonetheless she interprets *la Mode Dakaroise*, and particularly the complex sartorial performances of middle-class women in Dakar, not as simple emulation of Paris fashions, but as an actively crafted, cosmopolitan urban style, with a 'remarkable capacity to hybridize, reinvent and resist global hegemonies.'

Figure 1.2



Shanghai's Bund restored and reinvented. Elite shopping in historic architecture at Bund 18 in 2005. Photograph © Wen-I Lin.

Fashion's World Cities: The Historical Geography of an Urban Ordering

In its famous 'Swinging London' edition of April 1966, *Time* magazine seemed to suggest that there was a fashion cycle for cities as well as clothes:

Every decade has its city. During the shell-shocked 1940s thrusting New York led the way, and in the uneasy 50s it was the easy Rome of *La Dolce Vita*. Today it is London, a city steeped in tradition, seized by change, liberated by affluence.... In a decade dominated by youth, London has burst into bloom. It swings, it is the scene. (*Time* 15 April 1966: 32)

Figure 1.3



Designer brands at Bund 18 in 2005. Photograph © Wen-I Lin.

Although the *Time* article was picking up on significant changes in London during the 1960s, its tone and style are representative of a common form of fashion journalism, identifying the latest 'hot' place. In its April 2005 edition, British *Vogue* published a new fashion map of the world, subtitled 'Hot in the City', that included São Paulo, Antwerp, Copenhagen, Kuwait City, Moscow, Delhi and Melbourne alongside the usual suspects. Despite its claims to be the fashion Bible, one piece of editorial filler in *Vogue* does not amount to a definitive list of fashion's current world cities. What it does indicate is the expanding range of places that now might be considered as significant fashion centres. A similar map published twenty years earlier would have been much more focused on the conventional list of fashion cities, concentrated in Western Europe and North America.

Like the *Time* article, *Vogue's* map was predicated on wider changes in the world order. Fashion's ordering does not operate in a vacuum, but instead is shaped by broader economic, cultural and even geopolitical factors. At first sight *Time's* article reads as the most diaphanous hype. It took the format of a storyboard for an imaginary film. Different 'scenes' took the readers out with an aristocratic party at Annabel's nightclub in Mayfair, then, the next day, off shopping in Chelsea, with a coffee bar stop with Mick Jagger, television presenter Cathy McGowan and a teenager in a black and yellow PVC mini-skirt thrown in. This London 'film' was completed with further glamorous lunch parties and art gallery receptions, before a final dinner party with Marlon Brando, Roddy McDowell, Barbra Streisand, Margot Fonteyn, Warren Beatty and other stars in the Kensington home of the actress Leslie Caron (Breward 2006). Yet behind this confection of a city peopled by the famous and beautiful, all dressed in the latest cutting-edge fashions, was a sense that the new London was a key site in much broader changes taking place across the Western world: increasing consumer affluence, particularly among teenagers and young adults, changing intergenerational relationships, and new attitudes towards popular culture, leisure and the body.

Vogue's 2005 map is a similarly superficial indicator of major changes in the contexts of urban fashion, drawing attention particularly to the emergent economies in South America, East Asia and the Gulf, or the resurgence of high-end fashion in post-communist cities. Olga Vainshtein in her chapter here points to the re-emergence of Moscow as a fashion city. This 'wild' stage of capitalism in Moscow focuses on the conspicuous consumption of luxury goods in a city marked by staggering inequalities of wealth. While the majority of the population struggle to make ends meet, Moscow now boasts the biggest Armani store in Europe, and the boutiques in Tretyakovsky Proezd shift Gucci, Dolce e Gabbana and Prada by the lorry-load. This new Moscow looks not to Paris as its exemplar, but to an imagined Milan characterized by the kind of ostentatious vulgarity most often associated with the excesses of Gianni and Donatella Versace.

Such connections between 1960s London, contemporary Moscow and wider changes in the economic and political contexts of major cities are indicative of a much longer interplay between fashion and urban ordering. Although much of the world and global city literature has focused on recent developments in capitalism, others such as Peter Taylor (2004) and Anthony King (1990) have pointed to the significance of the long-term development of a network of key cities. Elsewhere I have argued that the continuing status of London, New York and particularly Paris has to be

understood through just such a long-term history, which places fashion at the intersection of key cultural and economic processes that shaped the urban order (Gilbert 2000: 15). Put in very broad historical terms, the development of the major fashion centres before the mid twentieth century was shaped in turn by the urban consumer revolution of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, by the economic and symbolic systems of European imperialism, by the development of rivalries between European fashion cities, by the growing influence of an American engagement with European fashion, and finally by the emergence of a distinctively modern fashion media system, that was focused on a few key urban centres.

Gilles Lipovetsky (1994: 20) argues that modern fashion, in the sense of the 'systematic reign of the ephemeral', was a European invention 'scarcely existing before the mid fourteenth century'. Early innovations in European fashion anticipated the development of later fashion systems in the great metropolises. The fashion cultures of early modern Italy were closely associated with the rise of cities – Milan, Florence and Venice – and with the complicated politics of status and display that came with a growing merchant class. These Italian cities, like later centres of mercantile capitalism in the Low Countries, were characterized by concentrations of commercial activity, and by public areas that promoted the spectacle of fashionable consumption, encouraging the demand for novelty. 'Streets, squares, arcades, and promenades offered places where crowds might congregate, classes intermingle, and individuals compete for attention' (Breward 2003: 169).

However, the geography of fashion in Europe worked not just through this emergence of a bourgeois 'city' system, but also through a 'courtly' system of royal and aristocratic display that was concentrated in the great national capitals. These 'dual paths' of fashion converged in late seventeenth-century Paris. A standard interpretation of the long-term development of French fashion emphasizes the power and prestige of the court at Versailles under Louis XIV, operating as the centre of a system of instruction and emulation (Roche 1994: 48). However in part through the demands created by the court, and in part through Colbert's deliberate strategy of import substitution (aimed particularly at excluding Italian luxury goods in favour of French products), the Parisian economy was transformed. By the beginning of the eighteenth century, thousands of tailors, dressmakers and milliners were producing not just for courtiers, but also for a new Parisian bourgeoisie, and for an increasing number of French and foreign visitors to the city (Steele 1988: 25). In terms of fashion culture at least, Paris was becoming a more open society, characterized by trends that emerged from different strata of its urban culture, rather than trickling down from the court (Steele 1988: 27).

Put in the broadest of terms, there was a long-term shift in the locus of fashion between court and city. In Norbert Elias's terms, the 'civilising and cultural physiognomy' of aristocratic court society 'was taken over by professional-bourgeois society, partly as a heritage' (1987: 40). Buckley and Gundle (2000: 335) indicate that a key element of this 'heritage' was the continuing importance of conspicuous consumption, its association with status, and its increasingly widespread use as a marker of consumer sophistication. Discussions of the emergence of modern consumption patterns now conventionally stress the importance of an urban renaissance and 'consumer revolution' of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, rather than the later industrial revolution. Glennie and Thrift (1992) suggest that European and new North American urban contexts were central both to the learning of new consumption practices and to their pursuit.

Yet not all cities were equally suited to the development of the fashion process. If, as Glennie and Thrift argue, knowledge of consumption was essentially practical, acquired less through instruction or advertising, as through 'quasi-personal contact and observation in the urban throng', then some cities (particularly London and Paris) were more thronging than others (1992: 430). And if the rise of fashion was dependent on the prioritization of novelty, then some cities (and again particularly London and Paris) were in positions in the networks of world trade that enhanced the supply of novel experiences, and encouraged the acceleration of the fashion cycle. Albeit in rather different ways, eighteenth and early nineteenth-century London and Paris were both sites that combined long traditions of elite fashion (and associated specialist urban producers of fashionable goods), strongly growing 'professional-bourgeois' markets, and increasingly significant central roles in imperial structures of political control and trade.

As has already been argued here, the growth and systemization of European imperialism was an important phase in the development of fashion's world cities. Most obviously this worked in terms of the relationship between the great metropolises and the colonized world, especially the world of the settler colonies. London and Paris came to be understood as sites of both innovation and of fashion authority. This worked through the actual export of clothes and designs, but also through the symbolic projection of these cities as avatars of fashionable modernity. Other kinds of flow and connection between the colonies and the imperial metropolises also reinforced their status. The new department stores of London, Paris and other European capitals promoted themselves through a rhetoric and performance of world significance and centrality. Guidebooks and other promotional literature for those arriving from the colonies stressed the significance of London as a capital of style and luxury (Gilbert 1999). The spheres of influence of imperial fashion trade were of lasting significance for the major fashion cities. While the international sale and licensing of haute couture designs underpinned Paris's reputation as the predominant fashion capital, the French colonies formed an important market for its ready-made clothes from the late nineteenth century until decolonization in the 1950s and 1960s (Green 2002: 32).

The age of Empire was marked not only by highly unequal relations between Europe and the rest of the world, but also by intense economic, political and cultural competition between the European powers. High fashion became another of the ways that European national cultures could measure themselves against each other. Berlin, Brussels, Vienna and Milan all combined significant local fashion production, distinctive design traditions and spectacular shops with the public display of fashion among the crowds in their streets, squares and arcades. However, even within Europe, such competition took place within a developing hierarchy of fashion cities, in which Paris was increasingly best able to position itself as the world capital of fashion. Anticipating the twentieth-century relationship between the French and American industries, from its origins the European fashion system was marked by an uneasy mixture of competition and synergy between its major centres. Neil McKendrick has argued that the veneration of Paris was a significant dimension of the consumer revolution centred on eighteenth-century London. Fashion that was 'expensive, exclusive and Paris-based' was translated into something that was 'cheap, popular and London-based' (McKendrick 1983: 43). It was vital that the process of translation from exclusive Parisian fashion to popular London fashion was incomplete, and that a residue of Parisian origins remained on clothes that were intended for consumption outside the traditional elites.

Despite London's incontrovertible economic and political supremacy, it is Paris that is remembered, in Walter Benjamin's phrase, as the 'capital of the nineteenth century', not least because its cityscape was remade as a global object of desire and consumption (Hancock 1999: 75). The 'Haussmannization' of Paris changed more than its street pattern and its architecture; it also altered the imagined geography of the city, locking together a strong visual trope of the material city with ideas about its cultural life, in which the consumption and public display of high fashion were key elements. London and Paris represented different sides of the modern city, with the feminized 'capital of pleasure' routinely contrasted with a more masculine city of work and business. This gendering of urban identities corresponded with a division in the dominant characterizations of the cities as fashion centres, with London associated with elite male tailoring, and Paris the dominant centre for women's fashion.

By the late nineteenth century, tourism was an increasingly significant element in fashion's urban order. European and North American cities promoted themselves as centres for luxury shopping, and magazines and tourist guides were increasingly significant in the production of international understandings of the fashion cultures of major cities. International tourism was one of the growth industries of Second Empire Paris, and by the end of the nineteenth century developments in transatlantic travel helped to turn the city into the hub of the European tour for thousands of upper- and middle-class Americans. More than the clothes of particular designers, the fashion object that was being consumed was the city itself, and the spectacle of high fashion *in situ*. Those Americans who travelled to experience Paris were just part of the wider popular consumption of the idea of the city as an elite space.

The development of the international fashion system in the early twentieth century was marked both by an unprecedented democratization as more and more people had access to fashion clothing and fashion imagery, and also by a concentration of the control of style and design (Craik 1994: 74). Lipovetsky (1994: 50) may be guilty of polemical exaggeration in suggesting that 'with the hegemony of haute couture, a hypercentralized

fashion appeared, entirely indigenous to Paris and yet at the same time international: Parisian fashion was followed by all the "up-to-date" women in the world.' Other fashion centres did retain independent significance, and the geographies of male fashions were always more complex. Nonetheless, the institutionalization of the couture system strongly reinforced Paris's claims to be the world's capital of fashion. In the second half of the nineteenth century, Charles Frederick Worth particularly had reinvented the role of the couturier, placing it at the core of the Parisian fashion system. Worth inaugurated the cult of the designer, producing a figure that was seen as the author of new styles. This owed something to Worth's design talents, but much more to his innovations in marketing and business organization, effectively creating the first designer brand (see [De Marly 1980](#)). The same period saw the development of strongly enforced systems of licensing and legal restrictions on copying in France that further concentrated the industry in Paris and enhanced the sense that fashion was something that was diffused from the city's designers.

In the early twentieth century there was a formal institutionalization of the distinction between couturiers and other fashion professionals with the establishment of La Chambre Syndicale de la Couture Parisienne in 1910. Organized fashion shows and seasonal collections also began in this period. These developments had a number of implications for fashion's geographies. The first shows with live models and music were criticized in *L'Illustration* as part of a 'hideous crisis of bad taste' (quoted in [Steele 1988: 228](#)). However, what seemed likely to be a short lived gimmick became an integral element of modern fashion promotion, turning the launch of new fashions into a focused performance. The fashion show worked both to focus attention on key spaces within the city, but was also a perfect fit for the requirements of the new fashion and news media. The Paris fashion system became more structured in its annual timetable in this period. After the First World War, seasonal shows presenting the new collections of the major couture houses were organized at more or less fixed dates in the calendar. This new systematized haute couture system regularized the rhythms of fashion, with a normalization of change brought about at fixed dates by specialized groups ([Lipovetsky 1994: 58](#)). The biannual collections gave precedence to foreign agents and buyers, who were able to purchase reproduction rights.

In this new formation of the international fashion system there was a strong interdependence between Parisian and American fashion. The American film industry recast the mythologies of Paris for a global audience (see Church Gibson's chapter in this collection). However, Paris, or more accurately the aura of Parisian fashion authority, was also a critical feature in the systematization of the American fashion cycle, used to organize seasons into particular looks and colours. The sale of patterns to foreign ready-to-wear companies (illegal in France itself) underpinned the mythology of Paris as the authoritative source of fashion edicts. This system reached a high point in the post-war accommodation between the French and American fashion industries that was aggressively promoted in American *Vogue*. The period after Christian Dior's 'New Look' of 1947 was marked by an unprecedented penetration of Parisian designs and influences into the American market. At the top end these were officially licensed copies, but the rapidly expanding American middle market was dominated by copies of the season's Parisian looks, taking advantage of the USA's more liberal laws on style copyright ([Green 1997: 120](#)). As the Broadway musical *Sweet Charity* put it, what many American women wanted was a 'copy of a copy of a copy of Dior.' As the designs were copied and recopied, making their way down the social hierarchy, the patina of Parisian design became thinner and thinner, but what was important was that there was still some lingering connection to the authentic original in the Paris collections.

In the early twentieth century, New York City became established as another place that existed both as an actual site of elite fashion consumption and as an imagined space of fashion fantasy (see Rantisi's chapter in this collection). Since the late eighteenth century New York had been the dominant economic city of the United States, and a public culture of socially choreographed displays of fashion, taste and difference on Broadway and Fifth Avenue was well developed by the 1860s ([Domosh 1998](#)). By the late nineteenth century, the city was the match of London and Paris in both its scale and its 'intensely urban qualities', which stimulated the development of a vibrant commercial culture ([Hammack 1991: 37](#)). Like the great European capitals, it also possessed a highly flexible local manufacturing sector able to respond rapidly to changes of style, at least in part due to the heterogeneity of a population in which immigrants were a majority.

A number of factors pushed New York into the front rank of fashion cities in the early twentieth century. To some extent, this was a direct reflection of the rise of American political and economic power. The development of New York's international fashion prestige depended on the development of a class of the super-rich resident in the apartments and hotels of the city. As the novels of Edith Wharton and Henry James indicate, this new elite often sought to validate and consolidate their status through connections with established European aristocratic families. High fashion formed part of the performance of this new status; but what was significant was that this performance was increasingly one with a global audience. The image of elite New York consumption was one element in an unprecedented promotion of a city as a spectacle of commercial culture. Alongside the emerging vertical city of skyscrapers, and Broadway's 'great white way', the high fashion shops of Fifth Avenue became a familiar part of a cityscape that was celebrated in film, song, literature and indeed in tourist literature for those now making the journey across the Atlantic from East to West ([Gilbert and Hancock 2006](#)).

In the twentieth century, the hierarchy of fashion cities was mediated particularly through the fashion press. Although fashion's metropolitan centres had long been consumed vicariously through magazines and other forms of publicity, the development of the modern fashion press reinforced the idea that a very few cities had a distinctive global importance. The *Vogue* titles were particularly important in this respect. American *Vogue* USA was founded in 1892, but was only dedicated to fashion from 1909. It was followed by London and Paris editions in 1916 and 1920 respectively. It was not until after the Second World War that other international editions appeared, for example in Italy in 1950, and in Australia the same year. Such magazines became desirable consumer objects in their own right, disseminating knowledge about elite design far beyond the elite customers of Paris, London and New York. However the world represented in *Vogue* was tightly constrained. Not only were readers shown designs and collections that came almost exclusively from the main fashion centres, they were taught about the detailed shopping geographies of those cities, through columns like British *Vogue*'s 'Shophound' ([Edwards 2006](#)). Newer fashion and lifestyle magazines, like *Elle* published in France from 1945 or *Cosmopolitan* (UK 1963), may have had a more democratic view of affordable fashion, but still retained a fixation with certain key sites in fashion's world order. Agnès Rocamora's study in this collection shows the remarkable consistency in the ways that cities and their fashion cultures have been represented in magazines and other parts of the media. In the case of Paris, the city has long been naturalized as a place where style and creativity are in the atmosphere, or even anthropomorphized as a sentient force, the ultimate creator of fashion.

The post-war period saw significant shifts in fashion's ordering of cities, both in the institutional organization of the industry, and in the symbolic promotion and understanding of fashion capitals. For some, the international success of the 'New Look' seemed to presage a lasting return to Parisian domination of the international fashion system. However, a number of changes were undermining the long-defended division between couture and ready-made copies. During the 1950s, Parisian originated fashions came under sustained competition from Italian fashions, also targeted at the lucrative American market. Italian style, as Pamela Church Gibson argues in this volume, was well suited to the mythologizings of Hollywood and the fashion press, and an imagined Rome played an important part in its promotion. The structure of the Italian industry was distinctively different, with its cutting edge consisting not of handmade couture, but designed ready-to-wear fashions. In the 1960s, London was the locus of a different kind of challenge to the established order that drew on a newly affluent youth market. The significance of designers like Mary Quant was that they showed that cutting-edge fashion could be very different from the Parisian model. In place of the wealthy, elite and mature couture customer, Quant promoted the Chelsea Girl, a figure defined by her youth (and her skinny body shape), her casual confidence in the city, and her willingness to experiment with a rapid succession of new looks. London fashion in the 1960s, while still in part about the work of a group of designers identified with the city, was as much about the development of a distinctive urban fashion culture, seemingly more spontaneous, and associated with the boutique, street and club.

The post-war period, and particularly the period from the 1960s onwards, was therefore characterized by a less concentrated and more differentiated ordering of fashion's major centres. The Parisian collections were joined by others, and the biannual journeys of international buyers turned into a moving road show of events. The first shows in Florence were organized in 1951, and 1958 saw the first London fashion weeks. Other

cities formed organizations to protect and promote local design traditions, such as the Council of Fashion Designers of America founded in New York in 1963. However what was taking place was not that other cities were threatening to usurp Paris's established position, but that the whole geometry of fashion's urban ordering was changing. For a time in the 1960s, particularly when viewed through developments in London or the West Coast of the USA, it looked as if this might see a transition to a new fashion order that was less controlled and hierarchical (see Kaiser and Rabine in this collection). However, what did take place between the late 1950s and the 1980s was a reconfiguration of the relationship between elite fashion and mass-market clothes that redefined the role of key cities.

[Sally Weller \(2004\)](#) has suggested that the crisis in the couture system brought about responses that reconfigured the global geographies of the fashion system in the second half of the twentieth century. These she argues marked a fundamental break in the relationship between fashion design as a form of commodified knowledge and the actual production of clothes. The first major development was the expansion of licensing and branding. There is a long association between couture houses and licensed perfumes and accessories; Ernest Beaux developed the 'No. 5' fragrance for Chanel in 1921. However, the 1950s and 1960s saw a significant extension of perfume ranges, and of the direct licensing of ready-to-wear fashions marked with designer names. Weller argues that licensing is a commodification of elite designers' reputations, and that its viability 'depends on continued public recognition of designers' names and the maintenance of designers' elite status in the public arena, through the media and through events that create media interest' (2004: 97). This development placed even greater emphasis (and clear economic value) on the constructed traditions and mythologies of the great fashion cities: 'It is hardly a criticism to say that Paris is but a myth, because this in fact is one of its strongest selling points... fashion houses make their money on perfumes, cosmetics and accessory items that sell precisely because the mythical place of their origin, 'Paris' is part of their logo' ([Skov 1996](#): 133).

Fashion's world order was also transformed by the international restructuring of elite garment production. As Simona Segre Reinach argues in her chapter here, the rapid rise of Milan as a fashion capital in the 1970s was due to its position in this process. Between 1971 and 1978, established Italian fashion designers abandoned the Florence shows to display their work in Milan. At the same time a new generation of entrepreneur designers who had trained in the industrial and commercial enterprises of Northern Italy became established in Milan. Milan's position as a fashion city drew upon its established traditions in design, and the developing 'flexible specialization' and 'vertical integration' of the industrial regions of Northern Italy. Segre Reinach suggests that Milan's position in fashion's world order was as the central city for prêt-à-porter. However, the 1970s and early 1980s also saw a broader shift in the geographies of production of elite fashions. Italian manufacturers, particularly the giant Gruppo GFT, contracted major French designers to produce ready-to-wear fashions, alongside the emerging Italian names. While the fashion press emphasized the rivalries between Paris and Milan, this new prêt-à-porter system of internationalized production networks drew upon the design reputations and symbolic power of both cities.

The creation of this new axis between Paris and Milan was part of a wider late twentieth-century reordering of fashion's world cities. As Norma Rantisi and Sonnet Stanfill argue in this volume, a more general shift towards ready-to-wear fashions converged with an increasing demand for a more 'American sensibility' in high-end fashion, and increased New York's significance as a centre of design ([Rantisi 2004a](#): 103). Tokyo's rise to prominence, and London's continuing status as a significant centre of fashion innovation, underpinned the contemporary cliché of the five great fashion capitals. Yet hidden behind the routine recitation of this list of five cities are significant changes in fashion's urban order.

Fashion's World Cities in the Twenty-First Century

Throughout this history of their development, the nature of fashion's world centres has been complex, cutting across boundaries of the categories cultural, social and economic, combining both consumption and production, and fusing the material and the symbolic. The most systematic work on their contemporary characteristics that attempts to encompass these dimensions comes from those focusing on the 'cultural economy' of cities (see, for example, [Lash and Urry 1994](#); [Scott 1997](#); [2000a](#); [G. Evans 2003](#)). This approach concentrates on the growing significance of sectors concerned with 'goods and services that are infused in one way or another with broadly aesthetic or semiotic attributes' ([Scott 1997](#): 323). The cultural economy approach to cities emphasizes precisely the kinds of cultural connections between place and goods that has been a feature of the long-term history of fashion's central places. Molotch indicates the way that the 'positive connection of product image to place yields a kind of monopoly rent that adheres to places, their insignia, and the brand names that may attach to them ... Favourable images create entry barriers for products from competing places' (1996: 229).

While this connection between the symbolic qualities of places and product is given primary significance in the cultural economy approach, it also recognizes the different ways that particular industries are embedded in particular urban contexts. Fashion's role as a creative industry has been addressed most explicitly by [Allen Scott \(2002\)](#), at the end of a discussion of the 'competitive dynamics' of the Southern Californian clothing industry, where he turns his attention to Los Angeles's position in fashion's world order. Scott asks whether Los Angeles can emerge as 'a credible and distinctive competitor, not only of New York, but also of other notable international centres of the fashion industry such as Paris, London and Milan' (2002: 1304). The main substantive interest of the paper is the potential development of a creative cluster of high status garment design in the Los Angeles area, but in his policy recommendations for the emergence of a new world fashion centre ('a policy imperative of the first order', no less), Scott shifts attention towards broader issues concerning the institutional organization and symbolic promotion of the city's fashion culture. He sets out a checklist of the characteristics required for southern California to move to the front rank of world fashion centres, competing directly with 'New York, Paris, Milan and London' (2002: 1304):

- a 'flexible' manufacturing basis (in the case of early twenty-first-century Los Angeles this is increasingly 'offshore', but with strong subcontracting networks centred in the region);
- a core cluster of specialist and skill-intensive subcontractors capable of high quality work on short turnaround times;
- a dense 'groundwork' of fashion training and research institutes in the city region;
- a new infrastructure of regionally based but internationally recognized publicity and promotional vehicles (these include the development of the fashion media, major fashion shows and other fashion events);
- an evolving fashion and design tradition with strong place-specific elements;
- formal and informal connections between the fashion industry and other cultural products industries of the region (in the case of Los Angeles, the relationship with Hollywood is particularly important).

What is remarkable about this list, for all the emphasis given to the newness of the cultural economy of cities, is the way it also seems to accord with the long-term characteristics of fashion's world cities. Indeed the combination of flexibility, spectacle and elite validation would certainly be understood by Charles Worth, and might even be recognized by Jean-Baptiste Colbert. Scott's analysis depends on a characterization of urban economic development – from an earlier era of mass consumerism to a post-1970s age of cultural or symbolic capitalism – that corresponds rather poorly to precisely those places that have long histories as major world centres of the fashion industry (notably Paris, London and New York). Instead we might think about the 'creative economy' as having a long-term history in such cities rather than something that emerged in the late twentieth century. As such, we need to think about Scott's list as a particular urban complex combining production, culture and consumption that has moved through a series of distinctive inflections in the modern histories of major metropolises. Some chapters in this volume develop and give

historical context to these themes of production flexibility, place-specific design traditions and the significance of the media and institutions in the promotion of particular urban cultures. However, other chapters also raise important alternative dimensions to our understandings of fashion's world cities.

One theme strongly present in the studies in this volume indicates the significance of world centres of consumption. In the cultural economy literature this is often treated as a rather passive consequence of the geographies of production, both in the conventional sense of the design and actual fabrication of clothing, and in the broader sense of the production of symbolic meanings of a city and its fashion culture. Many of the studies in this volume are concerned with what might be described as world cities of shopping. In a world of ever more similar shopping spaces, the traditions and symbolic significance of certain districts and streets become increasingly valuable. While the clothes sold in the shops may be available elsewhere in regional malls, or online, the practices of consumption are altered (and the prices of commodities raised) in a few key locations. One way of thinking about the long-term trajectory of the fashion capital explores the changing importance of the location of production, the location of design and the location of purchase. Fashion consumption – or perhaps more precisely the experience and consumption of places traditionally associated with elite fashion – has also made a significant contribution to the massive growth in urban tourism. Such sites of fashion work as tourist 'honey-pots' alongside galleries or historic landmarks.

As Bronwen Edwards suggests in her chapter in this volume, another significant dimension of the major fashion city is its distinctive built environment. This again is often seen as secondary to the design and production of clothes, but the physical nature of the buildings and streets of fashion culture have also contributed to the identification and understanding of the centrality of certain cities. There is a complex and long-standing relationship between architecture and fashion design. While Wigley has written of mid twentieth-century modern architecture's guilt-ridden relationship with fashion, recent times have seen a much more willing synergy between architecture and high status fashion (Wigley 1995). A special edition of *Architectural Design* on architecture and fashion in 2000 was dominated by commissions in a few global cities, with one article even introduced with a blunt reference to New York as 'a global fashion capital ... alongside London, Paris, Milan and Tokyo' (Merkel 2000: 63). New York has seen perhaps the most developed examples of the ways that fashion and architecture work in a symbiotic relationship of endorsement by association, notably in Richard Gluckman's work for YSL and Helmut Lang, John Pawson's design of the Calvin Klein flagship store on Madison Avenue, and indeed through the 1999 Armani retrospective held in the architectural 'holy of holies,' the Frank Lloyd Wright spiral gallery at the Guggenheim (Pawley 2000: 6; Merkel 2000). However Edwards's study of post-war London moves beyond this connection between architecture and fashion at certain flagship stores. Edwards's detailed analysis of the established micro-geographies and routes of fashion consumption in the city and of planning strategies, is suggestive of broader questions about the relations between fashion culture and urban space as experienced and imagined, planned and used.

Many of the studies in this volume also point to the complexity entailed in what Scott briefly describes as 'a design tradition with strong place-specific elements' (2002: 1304). There have been plenty of studies of the histories of individual cities that point to the difficulties of establishing new design traditions without such lineages (or as in the case of both Moscow and Shanghai, places with strong discontinuities in political and economic structures.) Sonnet Stanfill's chapter in this collection draws attention to another facet of the design tradition. From her perspective as a curator of fashion history, Stanfill discusses the way that London's Victoria and Albert Museum has represented the design tradition of another major fashion city, using a limited selection of garments to construct a narrative about a 'New York look'. As Fiona Anderson (2000) and Valerie Steele (1998) have argued, museums play an increasingly influential role in the construction of popular understandings of design traditions. We might think about the ways that museums of clothing, and indeed certain iconic garments, work as what Pierre Nora (1989) calls 'lieux de memoire', or as sites or realms of collective memory. Such collective memory works not just within national cultures, but also internationally. Unsurprisingly, it is the established fashion capitals that have the strongest cultural resources to elaborate and rework the invented traditions of their own design heritage. The recent major exhibition on 'the London Look' at the Museum of London worked in this way, reinforcing 'London's reputation as a guardian of the bespoke and the edgy' (Breward, Ehrman and Evans 2004: 5).

Scott's analysis of Los Angeles is written in part as a policy recommendation for the promotion of the city and its region – approaching the kind of city booster toolkit recognizable to Professor Chu at the Shanghai City Image Institute. As such it works within a resolutely top-down model of the fashion industry. As Kaiser and Rabine remind us in this collection there has been another dimension, more popular and less controlled, to the fashion cultures of California's cities with a global significance since the late twentieth century. As has been discussed above, a significant strand in the discussion of fashion and metropolitan modernity has stressed the importance of the vitality of urban life, the creativity arising from the intermixing and chaos of the city, the performance of fashion on the streets, and the position of great cities in wider flows of people, ideas and images. While it is easy to over-romanticize street style and more democratic influences on fashion innovation, these have clearly been significant in the story of major fashion centres. Angela McRobbie (1998) has pointed out in her study of the 'mixed economy' of fashion design in late twentieth-century London, that this has often involved crossovers between the subcultural consumption of fashion in the city and informally organized design and production sectors.

From the chapters in this volume therefore, we can supplement Scott's 'cultural economy' model of a fashion capital with a more active sense of the significance of sites of consumption, with an awareness of the distinctiveness of architecture and urban space in such cities, with a more sophisticated understanding of the construction of city-based fashion heritages, and with more attention to the creative potential of great cities. However, there is a sense in the early twenty-first century that this long-running conjunction of fashion and great city may be at a moment of crisis. Some of this comes from rather precise geopolitical circumstances of our times. The attacks on New York City in 2001 and the subsequent 'war on terror' have had their effects on the geography of fashion's world order, with US buyers in particular reducing their presence at the international collections in Paris, London and Milan. At the same time, a move to stricter immigration controls in Europe and the United States has effects on production sectors that have long been dependent on cheap migrant labour and the know-how of immigrant entrepreneurs.

However the fashion world city is also threatened by more fundamental changes in the world economic order. While Paris, London or New York retain their symbolic potency, there is a danger that the modern world fashion city formation – a combination of creative clustering, flexible production and vibrant consumption culture – is being replaced by new 'Potemkin cities' of fashion, characterized by little more than the corporatized surface sheen of fashion culture. Cities like London and New York are characterized by very high rents, right across their central districts. The intensification of property markets, brought about by the kinds of development discussed by Friedmann and Sassen has affected more and more spaces in the city. Not only have rents for prestige sites increased dramatically, but these cities have lost many of the more marginal sites that were important for innovation in design and retailing strategies. It is, for example, impossible to imagine the kind of fashion revolution that took place in London in the late 1950s and early 1960s in a city that has now lost the more affordable backspaces that operated as laboratories of style.

In 1990s' London, Angela McRobbie's young independent designers found a precarious space for themselves in the interstices of the city, working part-time, selling in markets, and moving in and out of the formal fashion system. In the 2000s such opportunities seem much more limited, with many of the key markets replaced by more conventional commercial developments, with the continuing rise of global big-brand designer clothes, and with the strengthening grip on the mass market of major high street stores like Top Shop and H&M. In New York, Sharon Zukin (2003) makes parallel points about the growing corporatization of consumer culture, highlighting the loss of distinctive, independent shops alongside greater control and ordering of the spaces of the city. And in this volume, Simona Segre Reinach presents contemporary Milan as a city increasingly unsure of its place in fashion's world order. The specialist industrial clusters of Northern Italy that underpinned the city's rise as a centre of elite ready-to-wear are now threatened by cheaper imports, particularly from China.

In the twenty-first century the established fashion city formation seems endangered by both the globalization of the luxury goods sector, and by the emergence of new forms of fashion production, marketing and retailing, that have short-circuited the established structures and rhythms of the fashion system (Segre Reinach 2005a). While there were long-term shifts and synergies in the relationship between couture and prêt-à-porter systems that had ramifications for the ordering and internal structure of fashion's world cities, this 'fast fashion' system threatens more radical change. Companies like Zara, Mango and H&M work with flexible suppliers in China to produce rapidly changing ranges. These operate outside of the conventional patterns of the collections and seasons of the fashion establishment, but are also relatively independent of local urban cultures.

At the same time new technology also threatens to disrupt many of the significant institutions of fashion's world cities. Just as the production schedules of fast fashion seem to be breaking the rigid seasonal rhythms that were built into fashion's twentieth-century world order, with its controlling citadels in the capitals of the northern hemisphere, so the institutional apparatus of the fashion system is threatened with revolution. Perhaps the internet poses less threat to the major centres as spaces of consumption, than as spaces for the institutions of fashion. Recent times have shown that attendance at the Paris, Milan and London collections is not the sine qua non that it was in the twentieth-century fashion formation. Internet fashion portals, notably Worth Global Style Network (WGSN), currently operate as remote information sources. WGSN is still rooted in major fashion centres, with 'real' bureaux in London, New York, Milan, Paris, São Paulo, Hong Kong and Tokyo. Yet the network has the potential effectively to circumvent traditional fashion collections and shows, and to orchestrate simultaneous international launches of collections online.

Under such pressures, the tendency towards Potemkin fashion cities seems likely to strengthen, but there are potential sources of disruption. As Kawamura stresses here in her study of street fashion in Tokyo, even in the most seemingly contained and corporatized fashion environments there are possibilities for upwellings of independent, influential design. It would be dangerous to suggest that the current passivity of street fashion in London and New York will be permanent features of their fashion cultures. Another model for the fashion city has been pioneered in Antwerp, where increased state support for local designers has promoted fashion design not so much as a creative industry, as a part of the creative infrastructure of the city, with anticipated positive consequences for gentrification and urban regeneration. Maybe, as Mustafa and Dwyer suggest, this is an era where dynamism in fashion shifts to the margins of the corporate fashion system, to transnational populations in the established world cities, and to the hybridizations of local and global influences in emergent fashion centres.

But we must return to Shanghai to think about the possibilities for fashion's world cities in the twenty-first century. China possesses not only huge manufacturing capacity, but also the largest ever emerging market, with possibly 250 million luxury brand consumers by 2010 (Dodd 2005). Shanghai's position in one of the main manufacturing regions of the country suggests parallels with the transformation of Milan in the 1970s and 1980s. However the relations between the fashion culture of this rapidly growing city and the heartland of fast fashion manufacturing are likely to be very different. For all the efforts that its planners and politicians are taking to make Shanghai fit the mould of the fashion world city, this is the place where that mould is most likely to be broken.

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[Modernity—an onslaught on the eyes](#)

Book chapter

Vanessa Brown

Source: *Cool Shades. The History and Meaning of Sunglasses*, 2015, Berg Fashion Library

emotiondandyBefore the twentieth century, sunglasses as we think of them today were not in any kind of widespread use. Tinted glass (green or blue) had been recommended since the eighteenth century—but for correctivespectaclespectacles (Ayscough in Drewry 1994) intended to be worn indoors. Mid-eighteenth century Venice saw green tinted glasses used against glare from the water (the "Goldoni" type, worn by and named after the leader of the commedia dell' arte). At the turn of the nineteenth centu

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Fashion is haughty, trifling, affected, servile, despotic, mean and ambitious, precise and fantastical, all in a breath – tied to no rule, and bound to conform to every whim of the minute.

[Fashion: From Class Differentiation to Collective Selection](#)

Book chapter

Herbert Blumer

Source: *Classic and Modern Writings on Fashion*, 2nd Edition, 2009, Berg Fashion Library

This paper is an invitation to sociologists to take seriously the topic of fashion. Only a handful of scholars, such as Simmel (1904), Sapir (1931), and the Langs (1961), have given more than casual concern to the topic. Their individual analyses of it, while illuminating in several respects, have been limited in scope, and within the chosen limits very sketchy. The treatment of the topic by sociologists in general, such as we find it in textbooks and in occasional pieces of scholarly writing, is

[Fashion and the Time of Modern Femininity](#)

Book chapter

Ilya Parkins

Source: *Poiret, Dior and Schiaparelli. Fashion, Femininity and Modernity*, 2012, Berg Fashion Library

Peter Osborne asks, 'What kind of time does modernity inscribe?' Osborne, *The Politics of Time*, p. 5. His book-length answer is foundational in a small but crucial body of literature about the temporal character of modernity. This literature establishes that the basic challenge of modern temporal consciousness is its reflexivity: modernity becomes the first era equipped to recognize itself as an era, and to distinguish itself from earlier eras—the past—while opening toward the future. In discussing

[Paul Poiret: Classic and New in the Struggle for Designer Mastery](#)

Book chapter

Ilya Parkins

Source: *Poiret, Dior and Schiaparelli. Fashion, Femininity and Modernity*, 2012, Berg Fashion Library

In a meditation on the accumulation of symbolic capital in the fields of cultural production, Bourdieu, who views fashion as one among many such fields, explains that the production of time is central to the work of distinguishing the artists: 'To "make one's name" (faire date) means making one's mark, achieving recognition (in both senses) of one's difference from other producers; at the same time, it means creating a new position beyond the positions presently occupied, ahead of them, in the av

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Ilya Parkins

Source: *Poiret, Dior and Schiaparelli. Fashion, Femininity and Modernity*, 2012, Berg Fashion Library

The opening lines of Schiaparelli's 1954 autobiography, *Shocking Life*, are curious. Referring to herself in the third person, as she does intermittently throughout the text, Schiaparelli writes, 'I merely know Schiap by hearsay. I have only seen her in a mirror.' Elsa Schiaparelli, *Shocking Life* (1954; reprint, V&A Publications, 2007), p. vii. Here, with surprising bluntness, she sets herself up as someone who is 'split', having a rich inner

life characterized by multiple visions of self. For a tho

Christian Dior: Nostalgia and the Economy of Feminine Beauty

■ Book chapter

Ilya Parkins

Source: *Poiret, Dior and Schiaparelli. Fashion, Femininity and Modernity*, 2012, Berg Fashion Library

Dior's initial stylistic 'innovation', though, had a complex temporal logic. As the strong reactions to it—both favourable and unfavourable—testified, it undeniably represented a return of a much older, if not precisely historically definable, silhouette. Its temporality was captured in an apparent contradiction: embraced as 'revolutionary', the New Look's groundbreaking quality derived from its unabashed reclaiming of what might be read as a more conservative, older ideal of feminine beauty. Jus

Vintage: Fashioning Time

■ Book chapter

Heike Jenss

Source: *Fashioning Memory. Vintage Style and Youth Culture*, 2015, Berg Fashion Library

vintage clothes An early usage of the word vintage in the context of clothing can be found in American Vogue (magazine) Vogue. In the rubric "Smart Fashions for Limited Incomes" in the September 1913 issue, the writer offers "Several Ruses for Disguising the Vintage of Last Year's Wardrobe," to make an up-to-date appearance with clothes that survive from past seasons. This includes hands-on advice on updating the "tailoringtailor suit of last year's vintage" with a "new, upsloping belt" so the suit

Icons of Modernity: Sixties Fashion and Youth Culture

■ Book chapter

Heike Jenss

Source: *Fashioning Memory. Vintage Style and Youth Culture*, 2015, Berg Fashion Library

One of the first media reports on mods, under the headline "Faces without Shadows" and published in Town Magazine in September 1962, provides insight into the consumer practices of these youths (see partial reprint in Rawlings 2000: 42–7). The article revolves around the fifteen-year-old Feld, MarkMark Feld (later, Marc Bolan of the band T-Rex) and his twenty-year-old friends Sugar, PeterPeter Sugar and Simmonds, MichaelMichael Simmonds living in the London neighborhood Stoke Newington. They desc

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