

# **AN ANALYSIS OF SHOE WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF SOCIAL HISTORY OF FASHION**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This research explores the many paradoxes inherent in shoes in collecting, consuming, fashioning, representing, and wearing them. It aims to capture the cultural significance of shoes in history, fashion, sociology, psychology, sexuality and dance.

## ÖZET

Bu tez ayakkabı koleksiyonu yapmanın, satın almanın, biçimlerinin, ifadelerinin ve onları giymenin, yani ayakkabının doğasında bulunan çeşitli paradoxların araştırmasını yapmaktadır. Bu çalışma, ayakkabının, tarihte, modada, sosyolojide, psikolojide, cinsellikte ve dansdaki kültürel anlamını bulmayı ve ayrıca ayakkabının tarihsel ve kültürel evrimini geçmişten 21 inci yüzyıla kadar bazı özel referanslarla ve son trendlerle incelemeyi amaçlar.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. The Aim of the Study

The varied styles of ladies' footwear in the nineteenth century were heavily influenced by the more active lifestyle. Women began to adopt and the increasing mechanisation of the shoe industry making high quality footwear available to a much wider population. In the early years of the nineteenth century, light weight slip-on shoes were popular among women, which though impractical for outdoor wear were suitable for dancing. Their design reflected the popularity of balls in social life at the beginning of the century.

For much of history, women shoes were kept in the dark, concealed beneath a froth of petticoats or a ballooning crinoline. But while they were one of the most closeted parts of a woman's attire, ironically they were and are one of the most revealing. Shoes conserve the past and project the future. From this point, firstly, this study aims to make the first definitive social history of fashion and society's obsession with a shoe that is loved and loathed in equal measures.

Shoe design is a twentieth-century innovation. And without a doubt, there is a strong relationship between the birth of shoe as a fashion accessory and the rise of couture. A fine shoe was an essential part of a fashionable dress. The beginning of this century saw an enormous increase in styles and colours in women's shoes. The bar shoe which fastened with a strap and a single button became the most popular during the 1920s. It was worn with the new short skirts and was practical for their vigorous style of dancing.

World War Two had a huge impact on shoe production. Shoes were made to last and stylistic changes were dictated by shortages – only materials that were not essential to the war effort could be used and wood became popular for the soles and heels of shoes. The New Look of the 1950s, popularised by designer Christian Dior, was accessorised with shoes by Roger Vivier. His shoes were noted for their innovation and seasonal changes in toe and heel shapes. He is credited with inventing the stiletto, which

was worn with matching gloves, hat, handbag and even umbrella. Assertively modern, stilettos released women from the utilitarian wartime fashion of the 1940s, offering streamlined sophistication and glamour to women the world over. As the decade progressed the heel became saucier and higher, worn by starlets like Marilyn Monroe and Sophia Loren. By the end of the 1950s the heel was being worn by “bad girls” and had become a weapon of female power. The stiletto was seen as a symbol of post-war modernity but as early as the decade-end some were starting to regard it as a symbol of oppression for women. The 1970s took the stiletto’s associations with sex and death and turned it into a fetish object. 1980s power dressers brought the stiletto back into the fashion arena, and today heels designed by Manolo Blahnik, Christian Louboutin, Jimmy Choo, and Gina are the badge of celebrity status and fashion savvy. Stilettos become an expression of women’s “new feelings of sexual freedom and power”. Distinctive new fashions led by the Teddy Boys in the late 40s and Mods in the late 50s were completed by brothel creepers with their crepe platform soles or winkle-pickers which in contrast had elongated pointed toes.

The post-war baby boomers dominated fashion in the 1960s and dazzling new clothes were created for a new generation of young people. Boots and shoes were often made of synthetic materials with technological advances and the space race influenced footwear design. By the late 60s disillusioned with new technology and increasingly anxious about the future, retro fashion and the ethnic look took off with Hippy culture. The platform shoe was worn by men and women in increasingly brighter colours and heights throughout the 70s.

The second aim of this study is, as it was mentioned briefly above, making a detailed analysis of the ‘shoe’ in a historical context. Although, it traces the history of shoes, does not aim to be an ordinary, chronologically arranged history of shoes. Focusing on the attitudes towards shoes, it explores the historical and cultural evolution of them from the aspect of life culture, different times and places. This entails exploring the fashion history, psychology, sociology, sexuality – considering the shoes can function as an important marker of a culture’s sexual politics – and feminism.

Thirdly, this research aims to explore the relationship between fashion, shoes and culture, and also, the meaning of shoes within different countries and different life cultures and the changes, transformations and cycles of their meaning and significance, throughout history and within the context of ‘social history of fashion’.

The idea of piecing ourselves together with our things can be applied to any accessory or article of clothing, but this research's aims to argue that shoes are more than that. Quoting from Christian Louboutin, it can be claimed that, "shoes are not an accessory; they're an attribute." Beside their obvious function – to protect the feet – shoes serve a variety of other functions as well. They convey status, enhance sex appeal or indicate membership in a particular "style tribe". We perform a variety of daily activities, all of which require different footwear. Boots, sneakers, pumps — and sneaker-pumps — mules, sandals, and flats. The shoe choices – high heels, sandals, boots or sneakers – express social status, gender identity, sexuality, or conformity. It is undeniable that "women express themselves through their shoes".

This study presents the social story of the high heeled shoes, stiletto in particular, into historical perspective, for the first time, and explores the long relationship with sex, power femininity, fashion, and fetishism.

Finally, most of this research interests are centered around gender roles as they are constructed through shoes. This study includes numerous pictures of ancient and contemporary shoes, from Renaissance platforms to sneakers. However, generally, it will be focused on various kind of modern shoes, their times, places and their social and psychological significances in our lives.

## **1.2. The Method of the Study**

Throughout this thesis study, the concept of the social history of "the shoe" is attempted to be elucidated via literature review and in a theoretical corpus structured in "The Fashion System" and the main purpose and sub-purposes of the study are supported by the findings acquired from this theoretical corpus.

A chronological order was evaded in the analyses and explanations related to different periods of the historical process. Instead, different approaches to the concept of "the shoe" are examined in different periods of time. In this way, it was ensured that the study focused more on the sociological dimensions of "the shoe" than its technical or anatomical dimensions.

This thesis consists of six chapters including the introduction part.

In the first chapter, information on the aim and the method of the study is given.

While the main focus of this research is the social history of “shoes”, chapter two begins with a brief description of ‘fashion system’ for better understanding of the meaning of ‘shoes’ and their place in ‘this system’, as a fashion accessory. It was included a section on general fashion theory; this segment deals directly with studies of fashion in relation to culture and communication and attempts to show that fashion, clothing and shoes, in particular, are forms of communication and enable individuals to construct an identity by means of communication. In the section called, “What a Shoe Says” will be examined what sorts of statements shoes make, and what kinds of communication are involved.

In the third chapter, it is aimed to clarify the logic of the life cycle of fashion and the revival of the certain shoe styles at a certain time and the concepts; ‘nostalgia’ and ‘retro’.

In chapter four, a variety of countries and their cultures in terms of their shoe histories will be analyzed, considering shoe as a cultural phenomenon. Shoes, in each culture may be considered as a signifying system, as the ways in which a society’s experiences, values and beliefs are communicated through practices, artefacts and institutions. The shoes are the incarnation of cultures.

Chapter five centering around gender roles of shoes, will be completely devoted to high heels. Physically and psychologically, high heeled shoes, and specifically the stiletto, are the source of much debate. It must be noted that, heels are not something one simply wears on his/her feet, but a passion, hobby, personal expression, source of authority, sexual independence, staple of gendered feminine culture, mark of flaunted femininity, psychologically empowering, and joy.

The last chapter, will continue the exploring gender life of shoes in terms of other types of shoes, such as sandals, boots and sneakers.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE FASHION SYSTEM

#### 2.1. The Meaning of Fashion

Fashion is a billion dollar industry employing millions of people around the world, and affects almost all consumers in society today more than ever before. (Solomon and Rabolt 2004, p.4) The study of fashion is an outstanding example of interdisciplinary collaboration, such as, economics, psychology, sociology, social psychology, anthropology, because of this, it is not surprising when fashion and clothing present different profiles. For example Braudel stresses the relevance of fashion and clothing to the economic and social sciences. (Braudel 1981) Tickner argues that fashion is ‘a rich and multidisciplinary subject, and a point at which history, economics, anthropology, sociology and psychology could be said to meet’.

Fashion is a term that rustles up many different definitions, the great majority of which are personal and generalizing. There is diversity in expressions and understandings of fashion activity; and people of varying ethnic, class, national, and religious backgrounds undoubtedly draw different experiences from their own fashion systems. (WEB\_1 2000)

The etymology of the meaning of the word ‘fashion’ derives from Latin *factio*, which means making or doing, to *facere*, which means to make or to do. The original sense of fashion also refers to the idea of a fetish, or of fetish objects, *facere* also being the root of the word ‘fetish’. And it may be that items of fashion and clothing are the most fetishised commodities produced and consumed within capitalist society. (Barnard 1996, p.7)

Wilson points out, quoting Martin, that “It may well be true that fashion is like all “cultural phenomena, especially of a symbolic or mythic kind which are curiously resistant to being imprisoned in one ... ‘meaning’”. (Wilson 1985)

Fashion and clothing can be seen or valued in two ways: they can be given a positive value and be seen as attractive and useful, or they can be given a negative value and be seen as trivial and deceptive. (Barnard 1996, p. 43) According to Simmel, two

social tendencies are essential to the establishment of fashion and should either of these tendencies be absent from or lacking in a society, fashion will not formed. (Simmel 1971) The first of these tendencies is the need for union and the second is the need for isolation. People appear to need to be social and individual at the same time, and fashion and clothing are ways in which this complex set of desires or demands may be negotiated. (Barnard 1996, p. 11) This is the paradox which Wilson points out when she writes that ‘we want to look like our friends but not to be clones’. According to her, the need to distinguish oneself from everyone else is perhaps strongest with regard to the group.

Thus Simmel argues that, societies in which the ‘socialising impulse’ is more powerfully developed than the ‘differentiating impulse’. (Simmel 1971)

What people wear can be used to express individuality, difference from others and other groups within society. As Simmel says, ‘segregation by means of differences in clothing ... is expedient only where the danger of absorption and obliteration exists, as is the case among highly civilised nations’. (Simmel 1971)

According to Steele fashion is just dripping with meaning. But with a speed that is either enjoyed as part of its charm or invoked as evidence of its depravity the meaning of fashion never stays the same for long. “The meaning of fashion is totally dependent on context.” Indeed, the very dynamics of fashion change – where changes start, what sets them in motion, how they spread, and what that reveals about aesthetics, psychology, the social order, the economy – are worth studying. Fashion is also dismissed because of the “almost philosophical idea that clothing is material.” In other words, it is not spiritual or intellectual. (Steele 1996)

What’s more, Steele cites “a moralistic subtext” in which clothing is associated not only with vanity but with duplicitousness. In this way of thinking, fashion comes under attack as a way of validating class distinctions and as a slyly crafted means of enslaving the consumer.

And last but not least is a kind of abdication of all responsibility or concern about fashion--even though most of us participate in the fashion system every single day.

In reality, one of the most outstanding features of fashion is that “it’s not some terrible, monolithic thing,” insists Steele. “There’s no monster of fashion oppressing women.” Nor is there a single meaning to it. It’s complex, embodying clashing viewpoints.

Polhemus and Procter point out that in the contemporary Western society, the term fashion is often used as synonym of the terms “adornment”, “style” and “dress”. (Polhemus and Procter 1978) There are those who use the word as a synonym of the terms ‘clothes’ or ‘clothing’. Many people also use the terms fashion and style interchangeably although there is a difference in meaning. (Solomon-Rabolt 1996, p. 6) Even it is not used as a synonym of these words, the word “fashion” exists within a network of relations to these words, and to other words. It can not be denied that there is something akin to what Wittgenstein calls a ‘family resemblance’ between these words. Barnard points out, there is no single sense or meaning that is common to all of the words used, in the same way that there is no one single feature that is shared by all members of a family. The differences existing between those family resemblances, which Wittgenstein neglects, prevent any simple or straightforward substitution of one of the words for another, and oblige us to investigate the context in which a word is being used before ascribing it a meaning. (Barnard 1996, p. 10)

A *style* is a particular combination of attributes that distinguishes it from others in its category. Think about a style as having a characteristic that does not change; however, new styles are created and styles can be adapted. From time to time a style can become a fashion if it is accepted by enough consumers. (Solomon-Rabolt 2004, p. 8)

The word ‘style’ derives from the Latin *stilus*, meaning ‘a writing implement’, hence the idea of handwriting as the direct expression of individual character. (Walker 1990) The implication here is that one can not help but reveal oneself in writing and thus handwriting can be used to detect the identity of the author: ‘the style is the man’.

There is another view of style which can be called ‘the rhetorical’. This is the idea that in any complex society various styles of writing, speaking and living exist and can be learnt or imitated. So style in this sense is very artificial; it is public and social not private and personal. It is also self-conscious not unconscious as in the case of the signature theory. Self-consciousness is particularly evident in the cases of stylization and styling (car styling, hair styling, and so on).



It is sometimes said of a person that she or he ‘has style’. This implies there are others who do not. Is it really possible for people not to have style? From the anthropological point of view, everyone has a style because no one can stand outside it. Though it is possible to say that some people have a flamboyant style and others a discreet style, that some are elegant and others inelegant. It is also possible to say that some individuals are extremely style-conscious, while others are careless of their appearance. Given that everyone is subject to style, then a whole society can be analysed in terms of the spectrum of styles from which it is composed.

Styles are generally regarded as having life-cycles – birth, youth/decline and death – and therefore characterized as ‘early’, ‘middle’, and ‘late’.

Looking back, it has seemed to some observers that there were long periods in history when whole cultures were sufficiently homogeneous as to exhibit a major unitary style, a *Zeitstil* or style of the age. For instance, the Greek of the Archaic and later periods wore complicated draped garments that played an important role in Greek art and are found duplicated in Greek architecture. Gothic clothing and decoration were based on doting attention to delicate detail as revealed in the period’s tapestries and jewelry. The length of Gothic clothing corresponds in form and spirit to heights of Gothic architecture. The vertical lines and the pointed arch were the distinctive decorative characteristics of the Gothic period. The pointed arches of doors and windows were echoed in the pointed toes of shoes called poulaine and pointed sleeves; the slim, soaring rib of the Gothic cathedral found a counterpart in the narrow, tightly covered human body; and the magnificent beauty of stained-glass windows compared to the finely set Gothic jewelry. (Marshall, Jackson, Stanley, Kefgen, Touchie 2004: p. 26)



Figure 2.1. Unity between Gothic furniture, architecture and shoe

(Source: WEB\_9 2005)

Likewise, in the sixteenth century, the Renaissance brought many fashion modifications. In the Renaissance period clothing was to broaden the body. Lines and shapes changed from vertical to horizontal. The wide, rectangular necklines, padded

shoulders, the wide-toed shoes and bulky shapes of short cloaks echoed the massive forms of Renaissance architecture.

According to McDowell, all art forms reflect the thoughts of their time. None are created in a vacuum. They interact to produce a spirit of the age which manifests itself with remarkable similarity across various creative fields. Visually, there is frequently a considerable conformity of thought between architects and clothes makers concerning shape, scale and proportion. (McDowell 1989, p. 50)

Many writers claimed to detect a common spirit of the age – *Zeitgeist* – underpinning all the different spheres of social life. It is certainly true that over the centuries there has been a succession of different styles but the false impression may have been created that only one style existed per age – *Zeitstil* – and that this style exemplified the spirit of age: *Zeitgeist*. *Zeitgeist* is a concept of Hegelian idealist philosophy intended to explain the ideological and stylistic unity of a given period. Modern scholars, however, argue that in all but the most monolithic of states there have been several styles coexisting at the same time; so, if one wanted to speak about ‘spirit’ one would have to refer to several spirits of the age.

Is there such a unitary style for our own age? Most would argue ‘no’ because what we witness is a plurality of styles, a culture of fragments. Some scholars have argued that the great unitary styles of the past are no longer possible because of the ever-increasing complexity of modern society, the differentiation and desire for autonomy manifested by the separate arts. (Walker 1990) The British art critic Peter Fuller has also pointed to the lack of a ‘shared symbolic order’ which could serve as the basis for a common style. Our age is typified not only by stylistic diversity but also by stylistic eclecticism. From the vantage point of postmodernism it is clear that the international style of modern architecture and design was the last attempt to forge a universal style. For example, Perugia’s aerodynamic heel of steel alloy can be seen to embody something of the spirit of the new age of engineering exemplified by the Brooklyn Bridge.

Bevis Hillier’s *The Style of the Century 1900-1980*, for instance, includes examples of posters, paintings, shoes, furniture, dress, vehicles, buildings, textiles, pop music, pottery and interior decor. Hillier argues that humble objects can in fact convey the spirit of the time more effectively than masterpieces. His aim, he declares, has been to illustrate the pervasiveness of style and also to reveal its close relation to modes of life: ‘style and lifestyle are indivisible.’ (Hillier 1983)

A plurality of styles does not mean they all exist on the same plane of equality. It is possible to identify dominant and subordinate styles. Style is a marker of social difference and witnesses the conflicts between subcultural groups such as mods and rockers, punks and skinheads.

In Hedbige's book, *Subculture: the Meaning of Style*, subcultures locate styles in the lives and habits of particular social groups and consider their social functions: it is argued that styles are symbolic or magical resolutions of conflicts which can not be solved directly; for example, an expression of strenght and aggression by a group with little political or economic power. (Walker 1990)

In this respect, cultural theorists follow the lead of art historians who argued that the existence of several styles in the same place at the same time could only be explained by the presence of several different social classes or class fractions who felt the need to distinguish themselves from each other. (Walker 1990)

Finally, as noted above, distinguishing between the concepts of style and fashion is somewhat difficult because in everyday use the words are interchangeable: one dictionary defines 'style' as 'a mode of fashion' and 'fashion' as 'a prevailing custom or style of dress'.

A fashion is really a short-lived enthusiasm – a vogue, craze or fad – for something, whereas a style is a form of design with a distinct character. A style may well be fashionable but it can also be unfashionable. Fashions come and go with great speed; there is also a turnover of styles but styles can persist long after being fashionable.

Since, in the case of clothing, style and fashion are so intimately connected to people's appearance and behaviour, design historians can not limit themselves to questions of designing and production; they must also address themselves to issues of consumption, reception and taste.

### **2.1.1. Lifestyle**

A visual style can be integral to a way of life. In the past, divisions between ranks and classes tended to be much more sharply defined and cross-class mobility far more restricted than today, so the visual styles associated with particular classes were exclusive and remained unchanged for long periods.

In recent years the word 'lifestyle' has become extremely popular. While it has the virtue of stressing the link between a style and a way of life, it also implies that this link is no longer organic and unconscious but artificial and self-conscious. The major difference between the past and the present is that lifestyles have become more numerous, varied and, above all, free-floating, that is, they are no longer exclusive to particular classes (or at least not to the same extent). Increased affluence and social mobility has enabled whole sectors of society to purchase lifestyles off the peg.

Contemporary sociologists and market researchers take a close interest in lifestyles. Market researchers are particularly interested because they want to understand the behaviour and psychology of social groups better in order to design and target advertising at appropriate segments of the market. Much advice is purveyed via newspapers and magazines encouraging people to live in specific ways and the mass media of cinema, TV and pop music offer potent role models. And as said Walker, it would seem that lifestyle is almost as much a consequence of commercial calculation and design as any other product. (Walker 1990) For example, a pair of Nike shoe is not only a walking or running device or the protection for the feet. It is an index of personal status and position in the society. Thus by receiving those attributes a product achieves a position in culture and society which is strengthened even further by the application of advertising and other media representations of products. In advertising it is always stressed that when we make a purchase, we do not buy just a product, we buy a lifestyle that has been embedded into it. An interview made with the Nike customers obviously proves this approach. A large amount of their consumers respond: "I don't buy their runners. I buy the brand; the Nike lifestyle. The brand that tells me that I have made it and that I have some security now. My ideals have a price and they sold out for me to be closer to Michael Jordan, Bo Jackson, Tiger Woods, and the feeling of making it big that I get every time I slip on my Nike runners." Today, words are designed to add sign value to the commodity, such as Nike's "Just Do it".

One of the fundamental premises of the modern field of consumer behaviour is that people often buy products not for what they do, but for what they mean. (Solomon-Rabolt 2004, p. 27) Quality is now measured in terms of want and desire, rather than need. This principle does not imply that a product's basic function is unimportant, but rather that the roles products play in our lives go well beyond the tasks they perform. For example, while most people probably couldn't run faster or jump higher if they were wearing Nikes instead of Reeboks, many die-hard loyalists swear by their favorite

brand. These archivals are largely marketed in terms of their images – meanings that have been carefully crafted with the help of legions of rock stars, athletes, and slickly produced commercials – and many millions of dollars. It can be seen obviously, Nike stopped selling shoes for only conformity and durability, and started selling lifestyle. When we buy a pair of Nike shoes for 200 euro, we know only too well that we are paying only 20 euro for the footwear and rest for the brand, for the identification with the name and with the success stories on other users of Nike shoes.

It is a well-known fact that social groups still differ in their possession of economic and cultural capital. Crudely, the range of choice available to the rich. Whether or not the issue of class is still relevant to the new consumer culture. “The new conception of lifestyle can be best understood in relation to the habitus of the new petite bourgeoisie, who, as an expanding class fraction centrally concerned with the production and dissemination of consumer culture imagery and information, is concerned to expand and legitimate its own particular dispositions and lifestyle.” (Featherstone 1987)

## **2.2. Fashion as a Mirror of Social Communication**

Visuals are pervasive as metaphor in society. Davis argues that clothing being the visual metaphor for our social identity functions in fashion as a work of ambivalence management as much as any other self communicative device. (Davis 1992, p. 25)

Fashion and clothing, that is, may be the most significant ways in which social relations between people are constructed, experienced and understood. The things that people wear give shape and colour to social distinctions and inequalities, thereby legitimating and naturalizing those social distinctions and inequalities. (Barnard 1996, p. 7) Although Davis considers that the statement that ‘the clothes we wear make a statement to be a cliché’, it is not literally true. Fashion and clothing may be treated as being some way analogous to spoken or written language. (Barnard 1996, p. 26) In *The Language of Clothes*, Lurie appears to believe that there is a direct analogy. She says that there are many different languages of dress, each having its own vocabulary and

grammar. She is of the opinion that these languages consist of words, grammar and syntax and these languages are only there to express concepts and meanings. (Lurie 1992) Also when Umberto Eco claims to be ‘speaking through’ his clothes, presumably means that he is using clothes to do the same sorts of things as he uses the spoken word to do in other contexts. The related point, noted by Davis, that while fashion and clothing may be said to speak, they do not appear to engage in anything resembling a dialogue (Davis 1992, p. 8), is also telling against this account of fashion as language: “There is reason to be cautious about ascribing precise meanings to most clothing. The very same apparel ensemble that “said” one thing last year will “say” something quite different today and yet another thing next year.” (Davis 1992, p. 6)

Following Eco, then Davis hold that clothing styles and the fashions that influence them over time constitute something approximating a code. (Davis 1992, p. 5) In semiotics terms, the meaning of clothes often is under-coded – that is, there is no one precise meaning, but rather plenty of room for interpretation among perceivers. In other words, clothing codes are not static and all fashions are ambivalent because the question of whether they are meant to be confrontational or affirmational is indeterminate. (Finkelstein 1991) Schier states the matter nicely in his criticism of Roland Barthes’s *The Fashion System*: “There is certainly something to the idea that we say things with what we choose to wear, though we must not press too hard to find a set of rules encoded in every choice.” (Davis 1992, p. 6)

Fiske points out, there are two main models in the study of communication, while each would subscribe to a general definition of communication as ‘social interaction through messages’, each understands that definition in a slightly different way. (Fiske 1990, p. 2) The first of these two models may be referred to as the ‘process’ model, as communication is conceived of as a process in which someone says something to someone else in one or other medium or channel with some or other effect. On this account, a garment, an item of fashion or clothing, would be the medium or channel in which one person would ‘say’ something to another person with the intention of effecting some change in that other person. (Barnard 1996, p. 28) It is by means of the fashion item that one person intends to communicate their message to another person. On this account the sender’s intention, what is received by the receiver and the effect on the receiver are important. “The second model of communication may be called ‘semiotic’ or ‘structuralist’.” (Barnard 1996, p. 28)

“Semiotics ... defines social interaction as that which constitutes the individual as a member of a particular culture or society.” (Fiske 1990, p. 2-3)

Douglas and Isherwood add, man needs goods for communicating with others and for making sense of what is going on around him. The two needs are but one, for communication can only be formed in a structured system of meanings. (Douglas and Isherwood 1979, p. 95)

Wright implies, first, the fashion, fashion items and clothing are communicative phenomena. Secondly, the structured system of meanings, a culture, enables individuals to construct an identity by means of communication.

In terms of fashion and clothing, this second model seems to possess some plausibility. For example, taking the point concerning communication as social interaction constituting an individual as a member of a cultural group, rather than that individual being a member of a group and then interacting socially, it seems clear that wearing ‘cropped hair, braces, Levi’s jeans or highly polished Doctor Marten boots’ (Hedbigge 1979, p. 55) constitute one as a late 1960s skinhead. (Barnard 1996, p. 30)

In the case of the sociological interest in clothing and fashion, through clothes people communicate somethings about their persons, and at the collective level this result typically in locating them symbolically in some structured universe of status claims and life style attachments. (Davis 1992, p. 12) In other words, fashion reflects society and its culture; as a symbolic innovation, it reflects how people define themselves.

Polhemus gives an account of fashion similar to that offered by the novelist Alison Lurie, “Fashion is an inherent feature of human sociality, it is a means of securing a social identity.” (Polhemus 1978)

To map personal identity and values onto physical appearances in Lurie’s somewhat unmediated manner seems simplistic, yet it is a widespread cultural practice. Physiognomists from Aristotle to the twentieth century have argued along similar lines that character is immanent in appearance, that the physical is highly legible as a form of embodied subjectivity. The association between appearance and character remains so

common, for instance, in our stereotyping of race and gender, that its ubiquity naturalises it. (Finkelstein 1991, p. 49)

Personal identity is one of the problems of modernity, then it is equally true that the fashion industries are deeply implicated in the manufacture of 'personality'. Fashion provides a short cut by which we enter another identity and join a subculture that insulates us from contamination by other styles. Historically, the linkage of character and morality with physical appearance was significantly strengthened when modern societies eliminated rigid codes of dress and sumptuary laws and created opportunities for individuals to construct or fashion themselves as they pleased. Such flexibility of self-representation, which has been a driving force in the rapid development of the fashion industries, is also an acclaimed defining feature of modernity in the West.

When casual street-wear was first smothered in logos it could be read as mockery of the fashion label but as the inscriptions and insignia on such items of clothing became more prominent, the iconoclasm lost its impact. Parading the label no longer exposes the middle-class fetish of buying symbolic power; it merely announces a new consumer aesthetic. Much the same can be said of hair-styles. The shaved head may allude to a military-style puritanism, and parody of the institutionalised look, or gesture ambivalently toward the victims of war. Body-piercing and tattooing can be seen to recuperate the practices of 'primitive' peoples, but they also evoke a technoculture in which semi-criminalised individuals are identified by numbers and body-brandings. From these examples, it is apparent that reading appearances to identify human character remains a dangerous, popular, and cross-cultural practice. (Finkelstein 1991)

It must be noted that, authenticity and sense of subcultural identity which is symbolized in streetstyle is lost when it becomes 'this year's latest fashion', something which can be purchased and worn without reference to its original subcultural meaning. In other words, whenever a distinctive look, culture, or type of music becomes marketed on a mass level, it loses its impact. By its very nature, mass marketing mutes complexities. When we appropriate the styles of classes or cultures other than our own, respect and understanding are rarely part of the exchange. Today, one can dress up like part of a rebellious group without taking any of the risks or truly understanding its mindset. Polhemus notes that, it is more than the price tag which distinguishes the



genuine article from its chic reinterpretation. It's a question of context point and when fashion sticks its metaphorical gilt frame around a leather motorbike jacket, a Hippy Kaftan, a pair of trainers, or a pair of Doctor Martens, it transforms an emblem of subcultural identity into something which anyone with enough money can acquire and wear with pride. (Polhemus 1994, p. 8)

### **2.3. The Functions of Fashion**

The fashion and clothing, in addition to being forms of cultural production and communication, are ideological phenomena involved in the establishing and reproduction of positions and relations of power. To see the fashion and clothing solely in terms of their being communicative or cultural phenomena is to limit one's perspective to that of structuralism or semiology. Fashion and clothing are part of the process in which social groups establish, sustain and reproduce positions of power, relations of dominance and subservience.

From this point of view, this section will be concentrated on what fashion and clothing might be for and also on the different functions that fashion and clothing might have.

In *Sartor Resartus*, which was originally published periodically between 1833 and 1834, Thomas Carlyle imagines that the 'first purpose of Clothes... was not warmth or decency, but ornament'. (Barnard 1996, p. 48)

In *Language of Clothes*, from the point of view of Alison Lurie, 'we put on clothing for some of the same reasons as we speak'; these are to make life easier, to 'proclaim or disguise' our identity and to attract sexual attention. (Lurie 1992, p. 27) While other chapters in the book deal with 'fashion and status' and 'fashion and sex', the section on 'why we wear clothes' considers the idea of utility solely in terms of protective clothing. No attempt is made to account for how clothing communicates or disguises identity.

Like Lurie's, Rouse's account of why people wear clothes in *Understanding Fashion* (1989) refers to protection, modesty and attraction, but Rouse also includes communication as a major function of clothing, offering more detail and more analysis.

Rouse realises, however, there are various problems involved in saying that there are basic human needs to which clothing is the cultural response. One problem is that different cultures make different responses to those needs. It might also be worth pointing out that it is not only between different societies and cultures that the response to the need for protection from the weather will vary: variation can be found, even within the same culture, in response to the 'need' for protection.

Lurie, has no trouble with the idea that when we encounter one another in the anonymous sphere of the public domain, our clothes become garrulous and disclose desires, beliefs, even secrets. It makes sense to her to use appearances to mark, social class, occupation, wealth and group affiliation (ethnic and religious), culture, marital status, sexual proclivities, gender, religion, rank, generation, geography, and locality. (Finkelstein 1991)

● ***Individualistic Expression:*** It can not be denied that clothing and fashion may be used to 'reflect...reinforce, disguise or create mood'. The wearing of what are perceived as happy, joyous lines and colours may be used in the attempt to change a person's mood, from down-hearted and melancholic, for example. The purchasing and wearing of new clothes or a fashion item, shoes in particular, is an increasingly well-documented way in which some people attempt to alter their mood. A pair of new shoes "might not cure a broken heart or soothe a tension headache," writes fashion critic Holly Brubach, "but they will relieve the symptoms and chase away the blues."

Fashion and clothing are ways in which individuals can differentiate themselves as individuals and declare some form of uniqueness, 'creating personal display' or from appreciating that of others although these aesthetic qualities will inevitably be given non-aesthetic meanings. (Barnard 1996, p. 57) Throughout history, different colours of body paint, different designs, different adornments or accessories provide an immediately recognizable visual guide as to who is a member of which tribal group. For example, the history of streetstyle is a history of 'tribes'. Zooties, Beats, Rockers, Hippies, Punks... are all subcultures which use a distinctive style of dress, decoration

and accessories to draw a line between 'normal society' and 'them'. All these became the symbol of rebellious youth and their garment and accessories embodied an attitude and a lifestyle which directly challenged 'normal society'.

The desire to 'get away from it all' is unique to the Surfers. The Surfer wanted to live within and according to the rhythms of nature – to go with the flow. Such attunement to and sympathy with nature has today become fashionable but in the 1950s it was out of step with an era which arrogantly assumed that science was destined to 'triumph' over nature.

They chose a style of dress that was appropriately loose and casual. Energized by the intensity of their experience, they used bold strips and slashes of colour in a way which set them apart from the drab Beats. Tanned skin, sun-bleached hair and barefeet or minimal sandals completed the original look – one which would remain fundamentally unchanged over many decades and which would influence millions of non-Surfers.

• ***Social worth or status:*** As said Barnard, clothing and fashion are often used to indicate social worth or status and people often make judgements concerning other people's social worth or status on the basis of what those people are wearing. Status may result or accrue from various sources, from occupation, the family, sex, gender, age or race, for example. It may be fixed or it may be changeable. One's occupational status may be that of a refuse collector, a local government officer or an university lecturer. Family status is a result of being brother, or a mother, for example. Status that is the result of one's age may be gauged by whether one is over or under the age of eighteen, or whether one is an old age pensioner, for example. Clearly, status that is the result of one's sex, race or family position can not be changed, easily and is fixed or 'ascribed'. Occupational or marital status are more easily changed and are therefore 'achieved' nor changeable. (Barnard 1996, p. 58)

One of the most favoured forms of semiotic distinction is fashion, because fashionable clothes, accessories and body adornment are easy for others to observe at glance. In modern times, incidental items, particularly branded specific handbags, footwear, jewellery, accessories and new hairstyles act also as important status symbols.

For example, in 200 A.D. Roman emperor Aurelius proclaimed that only he and his successors might wear red sandals. Colour was specific to rank and privilege. Today

in many societies, no laws prohibit lower-status people wearing high status garments, but the high cost of status garments effectively limits purchase and display. In current Western society, only the rich can afford haute couture.

● **Occupation:** As it said above, occupational status can be easily changed.

Fashion and clothing may also be used to indicate or define the social occupational role that people have. Military, police, firefighters usually wear uniforms, as do workers in many industries. School-children often wear school uniforms. Nurses and doctors wear uniforms. Members of religious orders may wear uniforms known as “habits”. Sometimes a single item of clothing or a single accessory can declare one’s occupational status, for example, the high toque or chef’s hat worn by a chief cook.

● **Ethnic, political, and religious affiliation:** In many regions of the world, styles in clothing and ornament declare membership in a certain village, caste, religion, etc. A Scotsman declares his clan with his tartan; an Orthodox Jew his religion with his (non-clothing) sidelocks; a French peasant woman her village with her cap or coif.

Polhemus claims, the old groupings of class, region, religion and ethnic background have decreased in importance, leaving the individual free to pursue life as he or she personally chooses. (Polhemus 1994, p. 14) According to him, it is no coincidence that the decline of traditional social groupings which has intensified so markedly since Second World War precisely parallels the rise of a new type of social group, the *styletribe*. Teddy Boys, Mods and Rockers arose to satisfy that need for a sense of community and common purpose which is so lacking in modern life. Quoting from Margaret Thatcher, it may be said that, ‘Today, there is no such thing as society. There are just individuals and their families.’

● Clothes can also proclaim dissent from cultural norms and mainstream beliefs, as well as personal independence. In 19th century Europe, artists and writers lived *la vie de Bohème* and dressed to shock: George Sand in men’s clothing, female emancipationists in bloomers, male artists in velvet waistcoats and gaudy neckcloths. Beatniks, hippies, Goths, and punks continued the (counter-cultural) tradition in the 20th century West. There were many similarities between the lifestyles of bohemians and hippies. Both bohemians and hippies...

- left their middle-class lives to live with others who shared the same beliefs.
- felt the need to rebel against authority: Just as Bohemians used art and writing, hippies used their distinct music to rebel against authority and define a whole generation.

- felt a certain lack of purpose in their lives.
- expressed their disapproval of authority by wearing distinct clothing: It must be said that in general most hippies were anti-fashion. That is they rejected the corporate nature of the fashion industry as well as the power of individuals to dictate the way others should dress or conform to a set standard. The fashion industry was seen as part of the Capitalist propaganda machine that kept them slaving to consume the latest fashions.

Hippies borrowed many of their fashion ideas from the bohemians, wearing brightly colored clothes and styles that originated not only from the Parisian bohemians, but also with the gypsies of the Czech Republic. Footwear of the hippies' ranged from the basic sandal and Birkenstocks to zippered boots, platforms and bright patent leather shoes. The act of going barefoot is revolutionary for most of them. According to hippies "walking barefoot puts you in direct touch with the world around you. You're more sensitive and aware. You're more vulnerable, but more open."

- **Marital status:** Like occupational status, marital status can be easily changed. Hindu women, once married, "wear" sindoor, a red powder, in the parting of their hair; if widowed, they abandon sindoor and jewelry and wear simple white clothing. Men and women of the Western world may wear wedding rings to indicate their marital status.

- **Sexual proclivities:** Some clothing indicates the modesty of the wearer. For example, many Muslim women wear a head or body covering (hijab, burqa or burka, chador, abaya) that proclaims their status as respectable women. Other clothing may indicate flirtatious intent. For example, a Western woman might wear extreme stiletto heels, close-fitting and body-revealing black or red clothing, exaggerated make-up, flashy jewelry and perfume to show sexual *proclivity*. What constitutes modesty and allurements varies radically from culture to culture, within different contexts in the same culture, and over time as different fashions rise and fall. Moreover, a person may choose to display a mixed message. For example, a Saudi Arabian woman may wear an abaya to proclaim her respectability, but choose an abaya of luxurious material cut close to the body and then accessorize with high heels and a fashionable purse. All the details proclaim sexual desirability, despite the ostensible message of respectability.

## 2.4. What a Shoe Says?

“The objects are radically undecidable in terms of their meanings”. (Derrida 1978: 99)

The meaning of signs is both produced and destroyed by its relations to all other signs and by its place in different discourses. The ambivalent character of postmodern fashion which Derrida defined as undecidability remarks the object’s intertextuality. The object exists within a structure, or a series of structures, of other objects and discourses means that the meaning of that object is essentially ambiguous. Ambiguity means the co-existence of more than one meaning and may be seen as a characteristic feature of modernist works. According to Barnard, meaning is always a product of a relation to things which are not simply present and, to that extent, unambiguous or simple meaning is dissipated or dissolved. (Barnard 1996, p. 160) It is claimed that it is this phenomenon that is a postmodern characteristic or feature, and which determines that elements are radically undecidable in terms of their meanings.

In this section, it will be argued the meaning of shoes on different levels, focusing on three types of shoes; stiletto, Mary Janes and sneakers. It will be attempted at explaining the approach, “shoe itself as a symbol” and “what kind a symbol a shoe represents?”

According to Barnard, the problem with this account is that the use of the words ‘symbolising’ and ‘representing’ are part of the modernist account of the modern object. They explain the meaning of the object in terms of stable and fixed relations to identities of class and gender, for example. The account of the postmodern object explains the meaning of an object in terms of the object’s relations to the other objects and in terms of its place in various different texts or discourses. (Barnard 1996, p. 162)

Roger Vivier is quoted on shoe, which he considers to be “a sculptural problem in which the center is always void.” Another designer see them as our “spiritual contact with the earth.” Trasko herself calls shoes “capable of inspiring imaginative caprice and private longing on an extravagant and exultant scale.” (Trasko 1989) Also it can be noted that, for centuries women’s feet and their coverings have held an “oddly exalted position” and that psychologists maintain a fascination with feet and shoes is the most common form of sexual fetishism in Western society.

Shoes mean so many different things to so many people. For some, the primary consideration is style. For some, it's function. And for others it may be comfort. Shoes originally served as a "need" for protecting. However, it is obvious that they don't have only utilitarian value.

What we call "needs" are produced as a force of consumption. According to Galbraith, "needs" only exist in order to increase the pace of consumption and adds, "needs are nothing but the most advanced form of the rational systematization of productive forces at the individual level, one in which 'consumption' takes up the logical and necessary relay from production." (Baudrillard 1970, p. 43) "Consumption is seen today as being based increasingly on desires, not simply on need". (Baudrillard 1981, p. 10)

Symbolic interactions and meaning of sneakers, there is no doubt that they denote an active lifestyle. According to sneaker fans; "the sneaker holds memories. Growing up, it becomes part of who you were" and they believe the sneakers should be the center of an outfit and the clothes are meant to compliment the sneakers.

As an example, rap is style of music which emerged in hip hop culture in the New York City ghettos. Rap is an expression of struggle, economic hardship, racism, police brutality, and the socio-historical conditions of ghettoized Afro-Americans. Signifiers of the ghetto such as rap, basketball courts surrounded by chain link fences, and slam dunks are used in a Reebok's commercial for a basketball shoe named Blacktops. The function of these signifiers is to increase the value of the commodity. In the process rap as well as other signifiers were separated from actual time and from their site of production. Moreover, by using the product we appropriate the meanings associated with these signifiers; coolness, hipness, resistance. It means, commodity signs are used to construct an identity. Featherstone points out, postmodern social theory argues that our identities are nothing more than the ensemble of commodity signs which we consume, the sum of the labels and logos which cover our bodies. (Featherstone 1991)

Solomon claims, our allegiances to sneakers, help us define our place in modern society, and these choices also help each of us form bonds with others who share similar preferences. (Solomon-Rabolt 2004, p. 27)

Stiletto heel of 60s is one of the most appropriate objects to make an analysis about "what a shoe says?" or explaining "the meaning of shoes". According to Wright

stiletto heel is a good example for analysis of the undecidability of the object. Its meaning as either an object of enslavement or an item of liberation is undecidable.

Wright points out, stiletto is seen as being exclusively female, even when worn by men, and has been seen by feminists as ‘inherently feminine’. (Wright 1989, p. 7) The stiletto has also, she points out, ‘been widely accepted as symbolising female subordination’. (Wright 1989, p. 8) The meaning of the stiletto has been reduced to a determination of social relations and it has been assumed to be inherently anti-feminist. This sort of determination supported by many people like David Bailey, the photographer, who said; “I like high heels- I know it is chauvinistic. It means girls can’t run away from me.”

The meaning of the stiletto is seen here to be constituted intertextually, then; it is the object’s relation to all of these different discourses that generates the meanings, not the fixed relation to sex or gender. (Barnard 1996, p. 162) The stiletto should not be seen as inherently or naturally female or feminine. Nor should it be associated with any particular version of femininity. Wright says that it might be more accurate to suggest that it ‘symbolised liberation rather than subordination’.

On the other hand according to Wright, stiletto has another alternative meaning:

“Stiletto may be explained as a means of rebellion rather than as an object of enslavement.”

It is suggested that extreme stilettos were often worn as a gesture of defiance against the establishment; female youth culture is said to be ‘redefining itself on its differences rather than its similarities’. (Wright 1989, p. 14) This type of shoe is selected to be worn because it is not associated with or worn by ‘housewives’, for example. As Wright says, the heel was used to represent ‘dissatisfaction with the conventional female image’; women sought to ‘replace’ that image with a different image.

Mobility is not the point of high heels. In Allison Pearson’s bestselling novel, *I Don’t Know How She Does*, the protagonist is a professional woman who continually refers to the “armor” she wears into the office. When she has a particular need to impress, her suits get more expensive and her heels get higher. When asked how she can even walk she bluntly says, “Walking is not the point.” (Pearson 2003)

The question remains; what is the point of high heels? Their very existence and women’s dedication to them is full of complicated innuendos, infused with meanings, drenched in politics and striking to the heart of what it is to be “feminine.” High heels



speak to women and society. They refuse to be considered just another accessory, but demand recognition of their complexity and power and feminine construction.

The other example for understanding the undecidable meanings of shoes is 'Mary Jane' shoes. In contrast to the stiletto heel, traditional criteria of Mary Janes are: a flat, single strap, blunt toed shoe that "signals a child's transition from baby to little girl or boy." (O'Keeffe 1996, p. 234) However, this definition is not all encompassing. Mary Janes have hundreds of variations from the traditional T-strap Mary Janes made of shiny black, red, white patent leather with basic variations to Calvin Klein's 1996 Mary Janes set on high, with a chunky heel and a thin strap (O'Keeffe 1996, p. 234) to slip-ons and mules with a T-strap.

Mary Janes are not only worn by children in the twentieth century; but are now worn by just about everyone: children women, men, celebrities, and models. This could be attributed to the ability of Mary Janes to lend themselves to an individual style. A perfect example is this woman who prides herself in establishing the "kinder-whore" fashion. (Thompson 2002)

Courtney Love used this kiddy-based fashion to send an entirely different message. By reusing these little-girl images, she and other celebrities have turned them into an ironic symbol of post-feminist empowerment. (O'Keeffe 1996, p. 237) Perhaps it is this type of anti-fashion sub-culture promoted by Courtney Love that has taken Mary Janes into its reincarnated state.

"Isolated worlds have always given their styles to mainstream fashion...The marginal groups -blacks, gays- are barred from conventional culture, and so they develop their own unique look. At that point you can say it's progressive, it's authentic, and it has an historical edge." (Davis 1992, p. 176)

They have been popular for little girls and boys, punk rockers, alternative dressers, the high fashion elite, the average stay at home mothers; and, in the gay community. Perhaps these shoes are so popular because any culture can adapt this look to the image they are trying to achieve and still maintain some sort of storybook innocence.

"Perhaps women like the way that Mary Janes allow them to feel like a little girl again. Mary Janes are the quickest way to telegraph a feeling best understood by little women: 'I enjoy being a girl'". (Harpers Bazaar 1994, p. 82)

Possibly women that wear Mary Janes feel compelled to wear them, because they are trying to send a message to the world. "Could it be that adults in Mary Janes

are all sending the same message? With an emphatic stamp of their Mary Janed feet, they seem to be saying: Life is my party and I'll wear pretty shoes every day if I want to." (Harpers Bazaar 1994, p. 82) Women today are contradicting those images by pairing today's styles with the innocence and simplicity of the Mary Janes. Therefore, they are sending the message that they are no longer being repressed by yesteryear's female implications. (Thompson 2002)

Isaac Mizrahi, fashion designer, says about Mary Janes, "I adore that there's this incredible innocence about them. There are so few innocent things around that suddenly it's a big surprise."(Harpers Bazaar 1994, p. 82)

Finally, it is no doubt that, Mary Janes have a surprisingly long history as part of western dress, and have been worn by all people: male, female, young, old, rich, and poor. They are a universal symbol of innocence and youth in a post-modern society that appears to not be losing any momentum. Mary Janes in a nonverbal way create attributes often associated with the young: children, childlike, innocent/innocence, religious, straight, gentle and carefree. These same nonverbal cues seem to have the same effect on the adult women who wear these shoes that are associated with children.

Consequently, there is no doubt that, shoes have great potential to create communicative values. They play a role in a non-verbal communication act, just like signals, signs and symbols. In addition, with these symbols, an individual is able to define his or her own identity. However, it must be kept in mind that, all types of shoes, from the stiletto heel to Mary Janes or to sneakers, may be considered as the undecidable objects in terms of meaning, like all items of fashion and clothing or dress.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE FASHION AND TIME

#### 3.1. Lifecycle of Fashion

The fashion cycle, or fashion life cycle, comprises the introduction, acceptance, culmination, and decline of the acceptance of a certain style. (Solomon-Rabolt 2004, p. 12) Fashion is fuelled by conversion.

Mere descriptions of the fashion cycle however do little to explain exactly why successful designers' ideas typically rise and fall in popularity. What is the motivating force behind such changes in fashion? What causes the cycle to move from one phase to the next? Perhaps sheer boredom inspires the continual search for something new. Or can novelty be related to ideas of sexual allure and attraction? Do competing market interests in the fashion industry play a role in animating the cycle?

These factors and more have been variously proposed and analysed by researchers into the sociology of fashion. Bernard Barber (1957) depicted a 'trickle-down' theory of fashion as a symbol of social class whilst Gabriel Tarde (1903) outlined a theory of imitation. René König (1973) emphasised the displacement of sexual urge and Herbert Blumer (1969) formulated a theory of collective selection. However, each of these theories ultimately fails to provide a definitive account of the processes shaping the many vicissitudes and disparate progressions of contemporary fashion innovation.

Changes in the fashion cycle since the end of World War II therefore indicate an interweaving of complex and multiple processes. A uniform acceptance of single fashionable styles across the class structures of society has been replaced by a rapidly-changing, many-faced, identity-defining drive. It remains to be seen whether these phenomena signal the eventual disintegration of fashion's long-enduring cycle.

The apparently random, rapid overlapping of new fashions is not restricted to changes in dress, but can also be noted in areas of modern culture as diverse as painting, music, architecture, entertainment and systems of health care. In Western society's media-based culture of mass consumerism and against a background of globalisation,

fashion appears to serve reactionary purposes that both structure and affirm the identities of groups and individuals. From surfers and students to alienated middle-class youths and married working women, weekly changes in fadlike styles give a sense of belonging whilst also distinguishing them from the masses.

Birgit Richard points out, youth fashions both accelerate and slow down the business cycle for fashion. The half-life of fashion vanishes with the interconnection with digital media. It decreases corresponding to the half-life of computer systems and software solutions. The reproducibility and creation of variants by pressing a button contradicts a potential perpetuity of a product. It is replaced sooner, has a shorter life-span, but there is a certain probability that it will re-enter the system. (WEB\_3 2005)

The incessant shifting of fashion has enormous aesthetic and psychological value. “Change makes you see anew,” notes Steele. It removes the “eye dust” that tends to settle over us.

Fashion brings a great deal of pleasure that makes it valuable to lots of people. That’s why it’s lasted and even flourished despite many attacks.

### **3.2. Nostalgia, Retro and Revivals in Fashion**

The lifecycle of fashion repeats itself by either historical continuity and dialectical thinking or by the mythical effect of nostalgia and retrogressive implements. (Kipöz 2005)

“Nostalgia inevitably reappears as a defense mechanism in a time of accelerated rhythms of life and historical upheavals”. (Boym 2001)

Nostalgia as a Latin word derived from ‘nostus’ meaning homeland and ‘algia’ meaning a type of pain mainly stands for being separated from one’s homeland. The condition of nostalgia is usually taken to refer to loss of home in the sense of physical locale. But in addition to this ‘homesickness’, it has also been used to point to a more general loss of wholeness, moral certainty, genuine social relationship, spontaneity and expressiveness. (Turner 1987)

The attraction of nostalgia in the contemporary consumer culture comes of the confidence of returning the past, besides the utopic hope of finding something that is lost. (Kipöz 2005, p. 2-3) The past ‘re-creates’ the present. In the use of flexible time

sequence or non-chronological time or the fragmentary use of time we often face a kind of post-modern nostalgia.

In late 20th century popular culture, nostalgia became a common everyday experience as history and tradition began to play a crucial role in consumer culture. In popular culture, nostalgia's appeals to continuity of identity proved popular in the face of the various forms of discontinuity inherent in the upheavals of modernization and its program of rapid change. For Fred Davis: "The nagging sense of the absence of a future undercuts what is perhaps the chief unspoken aim of nostalgia's exercise, that is, to assuage apprehension of the future by retrieving the worth of the past."

According to Ackbar Abbas, nostalgia is "not the return of past memory: it is the return of memory of the past. Nostalgia is déjà vu without the uncanny." (WEB\_7 1997)

This sense of a generalized nostalgia without a clear object of loss is at odds with Fred Davis' account of nostalgia in which "there is some common experiential base to which the word points and which it qua word evokes." For Davis, nostalgia's material is not only a general past but "the past which is the object of nostalgia must in some fashion be a personally experienced past." (WEB\_7 1997)

Benjamin refers to structural theory and allows us to perceive similarities across periods apparently separated by rupture and discontinuity, and to plot historical time not as something that flows smoothly from past to present but as a more complex relay of turns and returns in which the past is activated by injecting the present into it.

Furniture, music, clothes, shoes and cosmetics of the past decades are being revived, and it has become fashionable to collect "antiques" ... the nostalgic hold on history, tradition, and culture has made way for the endless production of commodities.

Three forms of recollection can be found among contemporary cultures: Retro, Old School and Revival. We have to differentiate between a transformation of stylistic elements and a reanimation of an historical atmosphere that does not take the contents of the historical style into consideration and does not reactivate it either.

Retro is the imitation of elements or complete sets of clothing of centuries past, a nostalgic looking back on times past. Revival already etymologically comprises the dimension of updating. Style and stylistic features are not supposed to be preserved, but are open for change.

The ephemeral and consumable nature of everything in a short time brings a critical view to retrospective look such as the risk of producing mere copies of the past styles and bringing them forth via pastiche as a contemporary virus of postmodern

fashion. But, the lure of retro in fashion world makes the past an indispensable source for the contemporary design research, not only because the design research and critical theory in fashion is closely linked to historical research of fashion , but also for its potent of reflecting the evolution and commodification of visual culture . (Kipöz 2005, p.2)

Walker claims, if one can understand the reasons for stylistic change through time, one has also acquired a key to the laws of cultural evolution. Art historians reasoned that if style was interextricably bound up with a time, a place, a people, then it could be used as a diagnostic tool to date anonymous artefacts, to situate them geographically and to assign them to specific cultures. For this method to work, a relationship of authenticity between style and society had to be assumed, that is, it was believed that later copies and fakes could always be distinguished from ‘the real things’ because the former could never exactly reproduce the social and material conditions that gave rise to the originals. (Walker 1990)

The 80s and The 90s are an amalgamation, and are characterized by an appearance of styles of revival, from the retro floral fashions to the hippie and swing revivals of the late 90s. There is now the opportunity to live an historical style of youth culture as an aesthetic quotation. Punk reanimates the styles of the 50s, Teds or Rockabillys. At the end of the 80s, the 60s Neo-Hippies are reanimated and at the beginning of the 90s there is a revival of styles of the 70s and Neo-Punk. The contemporary revival of the 80s, which can be observed at the end of the 90s, creates a revival-loop: Punk already is a combination of revival-elements of the 50s and contemporary attributes of fashion, so that now a dual time-loop is created. (WEB\_3 2005)

In contrast to the modelling of the past, mentioned above, Old-School-phenomenon, first appearing with HipHop as well as Techno, shows a completely new form of self-referential recollection: reverting to the original forms gone now becomes an internal process of the style and demonstrates the possibility of an autopoiesis of systems of youth cultures. This preservation of old elements of the style and their uncalculable revitalization outstrips and eludes economic exploitation and selectively creates an autonomous economic cycle between scene-boutique and flea-market. (Richard 2005) For example, the “adidas old school” trend, which suddenly reanimated old tracksuits of the 70s and was passed on to the Ravers, after the tracksuits had been retrieved from wardrobes of the parents and from flea-markets by the HipHop scene,

could not have been predicted by any marketing-strategist. Richard adds, A forgotten element of ordinary culture is discovered by the adolescents, gets a symbolic meaning and becomes an important stylistic element. The stylistic segment therefore develops within the youth culture itself. Only then, manufacturers of sports-items can pursue a follow-up by, for example, offering the old sports-shoe design from the 70s as a re-edition.

### **3.2.1. Lifecycle and Nostalgic Returns of Shoes**

The life cycle of the shoe is arguably one of the most impressive part of its social history. One could believe that all shoes are the same but many are entirely separate species. They have very dissimilar features but they do shod all of humanity, who calls from all walks of life. Like the other fashion items, dress or clothing, shoes also have birth stage, the adolescence, teen and adult years, and old age. And the life cycle begins again.

Exaggeration is a constant theme of fashion. It is employed to give maximum impact to a new look and to prolong the life of a dying one. The evolution of shoe styles is much slower than the changes in other items of clothing so the use of exaggeration to make a new fashion statement is rarely necessary. There are millions who see shoes as nothing more permanent or important than an item of clothing destined to last for two or three years at the most and then to be forgotten like any other fashion. Of course, the fashion is fugitive: at the very moment that a style becomes fashionable it begins to die. (McDowell 1989, p. 9)

Shoes started as a functional item. The earliest forms of shoe unearth so far is ten thousands years old, a sage-brush-bark sandal with straps running around the heel and over the top of the foot. The mountain people who lived in the area of what is now the border of Iran wore footwear made of wrap-around leather, much like moccasins. In historical North America, the shoe fashion was that of the indigenous people, who also wore the leather wrap-around shoes. However, as man rose above the purely survival needs, the perceived beauty began to play its role in the evolution of various trends and fashions. Footwear, considered a highly expressive item of clothing, also evolved with the changing notions of 'what is beautiful.' With time, the trends in fashion kept on changing and re-emerging in modified forms.

The oldest shoe on record is documented as early as 3500 B.C. (O’Keeffe 1996, p. 22) From this time forward, every civilization has crafted their own designs to fit their individual needs. The evolution of foot coverings, from the sandal to present-day athletic shoes that are marvels of engineering, continues even today as we find new materials with which to cover our feet. Shoes have an extensive history and in some form or another, have been around for a very long time.

Has the shoe really changed that much? We are, in fact, still wearing sandals the first crafted foot coverings and the most common footwear in most early civilizations. Moccasins are still readily available in the form of the loafer. The modern moccasin derives from the original shoe adopted in cold climates by races as different as North American Indians, Eskimos, Laplanders and Siberian tribesmen. The distinctive seam on the upper of a modern moccasin is all that remains, however, of the puckering string that was gathered and tied about the ankles to give all over protection to the foot.

Adopting the fashions of earlier times have become fashionable. Many of the shoes we wear today can be traced back to another era. The Cuban heel may have been named for the dance craze of the 1920s, but the shape can be seen long before that time. Platform soles, which are one of the most recognisable features of footwear in the 1970s and 1990s were handed down to us from 16th century chopines. Then, high soles were a necessity to keep away the feet from the dirty streets. Today, they are worn strictly for fashion’s sake. The poulaine, with its ridiculously long toes is not that different from the winkle-pickers worn in the 1960s.

Fashion historian Caroline Cox notes, that the look of the modern stiletto is evolving from a witchlike pointy toe to a rounder toe, and Prada, a favorite among the stylish set, is returning to a thicker cone-shape heel that was popular 20 years ago instead of the narrower slope familiar to fans of Jimmy Choo and Manolo Blahnik. In the 1960s, the heel was square, while in the late 70s – as a backlash against the wedge and the clog – stilettos either had a punk-rock edge or they were disco sandals, Cox explains. (Cox 2004)

As another example, Mary Janes have been a 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century standard for American children, particularly little girls, as well as adult females. They continue to be a fashion statement for this new century because of a retro appeal for times that had more well-defined values than today’s postmodern society. Dr. Mary Thompson, who lectures in Brigham Young University, explains the return of Mary Janes as ‘the return of innocence in a postmodern society.’ If the shoe evokes a retro time of innocence that



in some measure is still desired by women, because it is reminiscent of a simpler time for the wearer. Mary Janes have proven their popularity and staying power through the years and even centuries.



Figure 3.1. Mary Jane 1900

(Source: WEB\_10 2004)

There are many definitions, especially since the shoes seem to reinvent themselves each fashion season by different designers. Mary Janes continue to reinvent themselves with each passing fashion season, never seeming to be out of fashion, because they are able to adapt to the latest trend promoted by designers. Thus, this shoe has been around centuries to evolve into the shoe it is today.



Figure 3.2. Mary Jane 1920

(Source: WEB\_10 2004)

Mary Janes, which, although they were officially named in 1902 and became popular at that time, were merely a reintroduction of the shoe to a new generation. The Romans in 34 A.D. had a very similar shoe that was made of thick black leather and heavily decorated with hole-punched patterns. (Wilson 1969, p. 36) The Normans also had a similar shoe that was worn by the commoners in 1066-1154 A. D.(Wilson 1969, p. 64) But the most striking resemblance to a Mary Jane is the shoe worn by the Tudors in 1485-1558 A.D. (Wilson 1969, p. 108) This shoe is the exact replica of the current Mary Jane, and for this time period was known as the “bar shoe”. The description of this shoe was: “bar shoes with very square toes fashionable for both men and women. Fastened with a button with high-cut or low vamps and a strong sole. Plain, black, worn by the peasant classes; slashed with colored satin puffs, worn with varying toe-widths

by the upper classes.” (Wilson 1969, p. 108) In the original book by Lewis Carroll, (1865) “Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland,” Alice is depicted in the drawings as wearing black Mary Janes. “Lewis Carroll, 1865, Alice in Wonderland, dressed Alice in flat, ankle-strap shoes with rather square toes.” Other historical evidence of these shoes in the 1800s is Little Lord Fauntleroy, who wore these popular “bar shoes” with his suits who is believed by many to be the forerunner of the current Mary Jane wore by today’s children. And also the style itself has ancient origins and a show with an open front and crossbar was widely worn in the Middle Ages by both men and women, it was not at the time, however, considered a child’s style.



Figure 3.3. Mary Jane 2005  
(Source: WEB\_10 2004)

When it comes to the elongated toe, which made its first appearance in the 12th century, was one of the first examples of a comparatively sudden fashion change in footwear. It did not evolve as the result of a new technique and was not a response to a recently emerged need. The long pointed-toed shoe, known as the poulaine or crackowe, was a dandy fashion. It was totally urban, as all fashion must initially be, and was confined to the courts and capitals of Europe. Its impracticality for normal everyday wear proclaimed its wearer to be a man of privilege.

The poulaine was largely forgotten until 20th century – at least as a fashion source. In the 1960s, pointed toes and narrow uppers became stylish with the young and liberated. Winkle-pickers are largely associated with sharp young men but they were also worn by girls. In fact, women’s shoes with pointed toes and stiletto heels had a much longer fashion life than the male version. (McDowell 1989, p. 47)



Figure 3.4. Platform Sport Shoes

(Source: WEB\_11)

The “nostalgia” and “retro” forms of recollection can be easily found among contemporary sport shoes. Sneakers are “the first new kind of footwear in the past three hundred years,” says Richard Wharton, who is internationally famous as an expert on the cultural significance of sport shoes. But already one of the hottest trends is revival of classic sneakers styles from the past. Indeed, trend reports cite the retro jogger right alongside other hot styles, like the platform sports sandals. Clearly, history can throw light on current fashion trends. (Steele 1998) For example, the nineties saw the return of platform shoes, via the Spice Girls, as well as the emergence of skate shoes - used more as casual fashion than sporting wear.

Nostalgic sneaker styles were first released in the 80s and 90s. Only recently have the shoes started making a comeback in the trendy cultures as a way of reversing the “cool” effect of the corporate titles. They re-emerged in punk culture, around the same time that Adidas made it big through Run DMC - as athletic wear became street wear in the 1980s: a good response to the shoe styles that dominated the 70s, which had men and women at towering heights as they boogied down in their platform shoes.

Vintage Nikes, “retro” re-releases of classic shoe designs that have become nearly as sought-after as the originals. Nike pioneered this retro movement in 1994 by reintroducing exact replicas of early-model Air Jordans. Today, Adidas, Puma and Vans also fuel the market, dropping limited, or “quickstrike” runs of retro models at choice boutiques around the world. These events are sometimes done in collaboration with sports stars, artists or fashion designers.

As one examines footwear history, both in the West and in other parts of the world, the similarities are apparent. Though the shoemakers of the past never would

have thought to a pair of sandal or sneakers with platform sole, our shoe fashions of today are, for the most part, modernised adaptations of past styles.

If one can deduce that basic shoe shapes have evolved only so much, it is necessary to discover why this has happened. It is surely not due to a lack of imagination, the colours and materials of shoes today demonstrate that. Looking at shoes from different parts of the world, one can see undeniable similarities. While the Venetians were wearing the chopine, the Japanese balanced on high-soled wooden shoes called geta. Though the shape is slightly different, the idea remains the same. The Venetians had no contact with the Japanese, so it is not a case of imitation. Even the mystical Chinese practise of footbinding has been copied (though to a lesser extent) in many culture. Some European women and men of the past bound their feet with tape and squashed them into too-tight shoes.

## CHAPTER 4

### FASHION AND CULTURE

In this section, it was aimed to look at different conceptions of culture in order to be able to say what kind of cultural phenomena fashion, clothing and shoes are. Also it will be argued that what is involved in everyday or commonsense notions like fashion, clothing, communication and culture to see what is contained within them and to see how they have been constructed or put together. Countless social scientists, particularly cross-cultural psychologists and cultural anthropologists have devoted their lives to the study of culture.

In culture, Raymond Williams distinguishes three senses of the word. The first is 'cultured person'. The second is the sense in which one speaks of culture and means specific cultural activities or interests. And the third is refers to the means of these processes, in which sense one speaks of the arts and intellectual works. (Williams 1981, p. 11)

The word *culture* derives from the Latin word *colere*, meaning to inhabit, to cultivate, to protect and to honour with worship. From this word, the word *cultura* developed. *Cultura* referred mainly to the ideas of cultivation and tending; the earliest uses of the word 'culture' in English in the early fifteenth century, stressed the idea of looking after crops or animals. (Barnard 1996, p. 32) Barnard also adds that, it is fascinating to note that, even at this early point in the history of the world, there is a metaphorical connection being made in people's minds between the notion of dress and the notion of culture.

The ideas that are central to this conception of culture are those of process, production and refinement. Bearing in mind a warning from Williams that the changes in the meaning of the word 'culture' are both complicated and intricate, it seems that this sense of culture was extended to a 'process of human development'. (Williams

1976, p. 77) Williams claims that from the early sixteenth century the word 'culture' began this metaphorical slide from one area of human experience to another. Where people were used to the idea of the word 'culture' relating to tending crops and animals, they began to get used to the idea of 'culture' relating to the 'process of human development'. When people began talking of culture as human development, the idea of process, of production, they stressed the end products of that process and the idea of refinement and improvement. The latter is something still found today when people speak of 'improving' literature, for example, or of 'refining and improving one's mind' or manners, or of a 'cultured person'. (Barnard 1996, p. 32-3)

The conception of culture combines elements from what Williams calls the 'ideal' and the 'documentary' conceptions of culture. (Williams 1961, p. 57) On the 'ideal' model culture is a 'state or process of human perfection'. It is conceived in such a way that an end point, an ideal, may be thought of and in terms of which all other cultures may be measured and judged. (Barnard 1996, p. 33) On the 'documentary' model, culture is conceived as a set of what may be termed 'edited highlights' from that process. All the best, most interesting and illuminating pieces of art, literature and music are collected together on this view and called 'culture'. As Williams says, on this conception, culture is 'the body of intellectual and imaginative work' in which human experience is recorded. (Barnard 1996, p. 33)

There is another conception of culture, one which Williams suggests, which did not become fully established until the early 20th century. (Williams 1976, p. 79) This is the conception of culture associated with the name of Herder. Herder argued that nothing was more 'deceptive' than the application of the word 'culture' to all nations and periods because it implied that culture was the same sort of thing, consisting in the same sort of activities and to be judged by the same standards in all these different nations and periods. (Williams 1976, p. 79) He was arguing against what Williams calls a unilinear conception of culture and in favour of a multilinear conception of it. He was proposing that it was necessary to speak of many different lines of cultural development.

On this conception of culture, culture is a 'way of life'. It may be the way of life of different nations or times. Or it may be the way of life of different groups existing within a nation or a time. This conception is in some conflict with the unilinear

conception of culture. The plurality of this conception means that each culture has activities and standards that are specific to it, and the standards of one can not be used to judge the activities of another.(Barnard 1996, p. 34) There is another feature of this conception that should be noted.

“Culture is a description of a particular way of life, which expresses certain meanings and values, not only in art and learning but also in institutions and ordinary behaviour” says Williams. (Williams 1961, p. 57)

The ideas of change and difference, which may be seen as elements of any definition of fashion and dress, are compatible with the definition of culture as a way of life which changes and differs both between and within different social and economic groups. And, fashion, dress, adornment and also shoes, cannot be left out of this definition of culture. They not simply to express messages, but rather to be constitutive of social relations, so culture and cultural practices are not simply expressive of meanings and values but, as William says, they are rather constitutive of a social order.

These practices and products are not ‘derived’ from a social order that is already there. Rather, these practices and products are ‘major elements in its constitution’. (Williams 1981, p. 12-3) Barnard notes that, it is not the case that there is already in existence a society with different cultural groups, who are already in positions of relative power, who then use fashion, clothing and dress to express or reflect those positions. Fashion, clothing and dress are signifying practices, they are ways of generating meanings, which produce and reproduce those cultural groups along with their positions of relative power. (Barnard 1996, p. 36)

It is worth stressing that fashion, clothing, dress and shoes – in particular – are not used to simply to indicate or refer to social and cultural positions, they are used to construct and mark out that social and cultural reality in the first place. The point here is that, it is through fashion and clothing that we are constituted as social and cultural beings, that we decode our social and cultural milieu.

The work of Veblen can helps to describe how fashion and clothing may be used to indicate social position. Veblen devoted a whole chapter of his book to ‘Dress As An Expression Of The Pecuniary Culture’. He sees the function of fashion as the principle

of conspicuous waste and leisure, which is used for differentiate the one in a high hierarchy from those in the lower levels. Veblen's position was that the upper classes invented fashion to distinguish themselves from those below. When the styles and practices of the upper classes were imitated, when their fashions 'trickled down' to their social inferiors, the upper classes were impelled to reconstitute themselves.

The trickle down theory of fashion has been rewritten by twentieth-century street and diffusion fashions, but which still function in the same way to designate the identity of the wearers. The invention of the fashion label or brand name has given the consumer a sense of social location. This sense of location is made to seem part of the allure of fashionability and part of the unexplicated stabilising of identity which accompanies signature goods such as Nike, BMW, Sony.

The styles of everyday life are instantly appropriated and transformed into commodity signs. These signs circulate globally at faster rates. Invading all cultures, these signs are transported by media and by commodities. No culture is immune. Likewise, signs are appropriated from all cultures and circulated through this global information system. Advertising even uses signifiers of resistance. Rap sells Rebook's or Nike's basketball sneakers as a sign of hipness or coolness. Converse, sends its researchers into street cultures in order to find new styles.

Consequently, the word *culture*, includes both abstract ideas, such as values and ethics, and the material objects and services, such as automobiles, clothing, food, accessories, art, body adornments, shoes and sport, that are produced or valued by a society and culture is the accumulation of shared meanings, rituals, norms, and traditions among the members of an organization or society. As it mentioned in previous section, as being cultural phenomena, fashion, clothing, dress and fashion items are the artefacts, practices and institutions that constitute a society's beliefs, values, ideas and experiences. According to this view, they are the ways in which people communicate, not only things like feeling and mood, but also values, hopes and beliefs of the social groups of which they are members. As stressed by Loek Van Der Sande, "There is no design without culture, there is no culture without identity."

Today users and consumers demand something more than just functions, they ask for values. This is already obvious in certain product categories, such as food,



drinks, cosmetics, clothing, shoes, where the original cultural base is very important. Most products have to transmit elements of cultural identity in order to obtain a competitive advantage. European culture, the culture of the nations that make up Europe, is known and valued throughout the world. In a global environment, transmitting European values through products and brands is a challenge for companies and designers.

European countries like England and Germany lost their domineering position to the ever increasing influence of the United States. This not only redefined the physical transformations but also a change emerging at the horizon of their civilization and social transformation. This great phenomenon can be simplified by the word “culture”. In this purpose, culture can be defined as the preservation of the past, but not limited to the cultural heritage. It is also the expression of creativity and the urge for innovation and renewal of the presence. Culture contains a clear vision on the future. As a working formula, it can be taken that culture identifies groups of people who are not divided by nationality, geographical borderlines, but groups of people who are determined by common backgrounds and common aims. It is in particular here that culture will become the strongest commodity, not just within Europe but also outside Europe.

#### **4.1. Cultural Influences on Shoes**

From the cultural point of view, shoes have a long and rich history and there are different parameters for understanding the changes within different societies and life cultures. All local cultural identity can be found in the products. Shoes and other consumption choices can not be understood without considering the cultural context in which they are made: “Culture is the “lens” through which people view products.”(Solomon-Rabolt 2004, p. 37)

In this section, shoes will be explained as forms of cultural production. While cultural production has been explained in terms of different ways of life and with reference to the constitution of social, cultural and individual identities.

Design means cultural continuity and plays a predominant role in the process of integration and unification. In an ever moving world, with an ever increasing mobility, borderlines seem to disappear. Markets have become worldmarkets, products are designed to meet with requirements and demands of consumers in such different parts of the world, like South East Asia, North Western Europe and America. Cultural artifacts, such as food, dress, shoes, accessories, music, clothing styles, etc. are now free-floating entities, which are both commodified and homogenized.

Design has contributed largely to a concept of the world market, in which comparable product-specifications are at hand and consequently visual appearance of products all over the world has become the consequence of fashion, of trends and of pluri-national consumers taste. (Montana 1989, p. 41) For example, the shoes you can buy at the Ginza at Tokyo differ not much from the shoes you can acquire on Madison Avenue.

During the past two decades, the concept of “culture” and by extension the idea of “cultural difference” and the underlying assumptions of homogeneity and integrity, have been re-evaluated. Cultural difference is no longer viewed as a stable, exotic otherness. Self-other relations are increasingly considered to be matters of power and rhetoric rather than essence. (Montana 1989, p. 43) And cultures are increasingly conceived of as reflecting processes of change and internal contradictions and conflicts.

A shoe’s quality is today measured in terms of want and desire, rather than need. Today, consumers demand something more than just functions, they ask for values. This is also already obvious in other product categories, such as food, drinks and clothing where the original cultural base is very important. We judge the shoes, that we surround ourselves with depending on whether they please us, seem beautiful, contribute to giving us a desired identity, and give us an image in relation to the world outside. Whether ergonomically correct or technically perfect, primary importance is the visual impression – the communication of values.

Shoes can be seen as a set of functions. It also has particular aesthetic qualities and a symbolic representation. These three elements – function, aesthetic and symbol – are deeply cultural.

Sociology defines culture as a system of norms, values, and beliefs which are historically derived and which provide the cognitive, affective, and evaluative criteria necessary for a group to adapt to its physical environment. It associates culture with geography and history.

In many countries around the world, the majority of people still do not wear shoes and therefore they are often associated with special occasions or significant status. Up to now, a huge variety of shoe types and styles have evolved each appropriate to the particular religious or cultural beliefs, geographic conditions and climate of a particular country. All the cultures have solved the problem of the special need to be covered the feet.

Shoes throughout the Middle East vary according to culture and climate. The Muslim faith requires shoes to be removed before entry into a mosque for prayer, so the backs of many Middle Eastern shoes are often folded down so that the shoe can be easily slipped off and on. Religious considerations aside, this loose style also encourages the ventilation of the foot in a hot, dry climate.

From early antiquity it would appear, shoe was an important form of communication in both symbols and language. It is not only a tool that provide us with stable pedestals with which to stand and move in a unique way, but also have become the metaphoric foundation of our language and faith. Shoes have through the ages, and in every culture, been bestowed with mystical and magical importance. In sequence section, considering the shoes as cultural icons, it will be focused on the social and cultural history of shoes in different countries.

#### **4.1.1. England**

For England, The Victorian Era, the time during the reign of English Queen Victoria, could be called the time of ridiculously proper manners. The social and moral values as well as fashion and shoes were influenced by Queen Victoria. These values included devotion to family life, public and private responsibility, and obedience to the law. Table legs were covered with skirts so as not to be too “arousing” and well-bred women could not even be considered to have anything as indecent as legs. Victorians were masters of euphemism and legs were referred delicately as the “lower limb”. These lower limbs were kept completely covered by long skirts and crinolines and such was the pressure to conceal what was considered forbidden fruit that ankle boots came into fashion as a way to avoid accidentally revealing a glimpse of the forbidden.

Travel became a popular leisure pastime with the wealthy. Eastern fabrics and fashion fused with classic French design and became symbolic of one’s sophisticated

lifestyle and understanding of the world. The fashion and social pressure to conceal women's legs and feet cause a surge of shoe and foot related pornography in London.

Unsurprisingly it is at this time that Baron Leopold Von Sacher-Masoch, from whence it was originated the word masochism, wrote freely of experiences with his mistress in which allowed her to whip and walk on him before kissing the shoes that had caused him pain. Sacher-Masoch, a product of Victorian obsession with shoes and feet, wrote in his book *Venus in Furs* that his ideal woman was a cruel woman in furs and high heels.

The deadening hand of gentility and respectability was laid on all aspects of life as the Victorian age. Middle-class morality swept away the sultry and voluptuous Byronic romanticism which had begun the century. Smouldering passions and exquisite melancholy were blown away like so much mist by the tradesman attitudes that dominated Victorian England.

The 19th century was dominated by dancing. More than anything else, the craze for public balls affected attitudes to dress. Jane Austin's novels show the importance of balls in English social life, especially for the newly confident middle-classes, and the same was true throughout Europe. The effect on footwear was soon apparent. Flat shoes came back into vogue, eventually doing away with 'straights', which could be worn on either foot and which had come in as a result of the development of the high heel.

When it comes to War Period, the youth of London found themselves in a period of traditional values, conformity. Struggling to escape the oppressiveness of morals, family obligations, a string of youth subcultures emerged as a way of rebellion and self expression, continuing today with punks and skin-heads. In 1950s, it was adopted a combination of Italian and French styles of the period. They had Italian suits with narrow lapels impeccably tailor-made for themselves, and wore them with pointed-collar shirts. The shoes of necessity were hand-made winkle-pickers, so named because of their extremely pointed toes which so closely resembled the pins used to pick the meat out of a type of snail called a winkle-pickers.

Due to the baby boom after the war, Britain was also becoming an increasingly younger country. In the early 1960s, almost forty percent of the population was under twenty-five. New technology was also reducing the need for manpower, thus increasing the amount of free time. Because the older generations were conservative and fearful that pandering to the whims of the young would create an anti-social culture, the market

was left wide open to young entrepreneurs who were more familiar with the wants and needs of their new customers.

There was a very general breakdown of cliques within the Mod culture, into three loosely defined groups: the mainstream Mods, the Scooter Boys, and the Hard Mods. Mainstream Mods entertained most styles of the subculture from time to time, but generally dressed in Italian silk suits with narrow lapels. Italian tasseled loafers for basket-weave casuals, usually with pointed toes. Ties were always very thin and usually black, worn around the necks of button-down shirts. Mods sported dark glasses, in keeping with the 'cool' image. Scooter Boys opted for a more casual attire, wearing anoraks and Army parkas for warmth. Shrink-to-fit Levis were popular with the Mods, often in black. They also outfitted their scooters, dressing them up with mirrors, headlights and fog lamps around the handlebars. Hard Mods, a group that gradually evolved into Skinheads, were aggressively working class males who wore mainly jeans and work boots. Doc Martens were and are a popular work boot due to their exceptional strength and fit.

#### **4.1.2. India**

Indian shoes demonstrate a huge diversity in styles and materials depending on the geographic region the wearer is from, their religion, social status, or sex. (WEB\_4 1995)

The religious and cultural significance of feet in the Indian tradition is unique. They are considered to be sacred and therefore objects of veneration: the feet of elders are worshipped by the younger generation, the feet of religious teachers and holy men and women by their followers, the feet of idols by their devotees and the feet of those from whom a wrongdoer seeks forgiveness.

Veldhoen took the photographs of the feet while travelling in India in 1996. Feet are sacred in India and they also carry great importance for Indians: *Feet take you everywhere in life, they are the number one means of transport. As the naked foot is in direct contact with the earth, I believe it passes on personal strength and aura to the trodden ground.* (WEB\_4 1995)

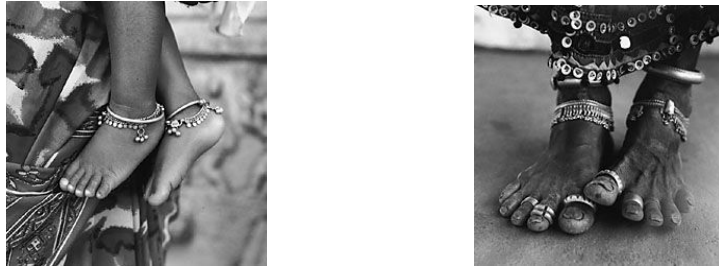


Figure 4.1. Holy Feet in India

(Source: WEB\_6 2004)

The foot is the one of the most admired parts of the female body in the Indian perception of romanticism and eroticism. This may be one of the reasons why young girls and women decorate the soles of their feet in very special ways, for example by colouring them with red *alta* or *kumkum* paste, by using these to paint intricate designs on them, or by tattooing them.

Shoes range from the simplest leather sandal or wooden paduka (toe-knob sandal) worn by a holy man, to ornate padukas of carved wood, ivory or even silver that have been widely adopted for ceremonial use. Heavily embroidered mojaris with their traditional curled toes and open or flattened backs are commonly worn in the north while juttis with their round or pointed toes are another variation.

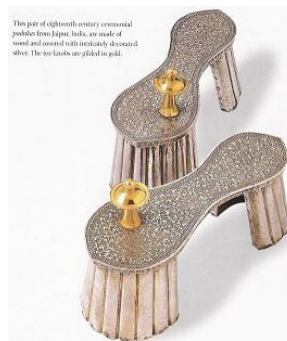


Figure 4.2. Indian Paduka

(Source: WEB\_6 2004)

### 4.1.3. China

For ages, many women have been wearing shoes that are a size smaller than their feet, based on a misconception or misunderstanding of the saying “small feet are sexier looking”. The saying is in fact true, but is based on miniature feet and can be traced back to ancient folklore in China.



Figure 4.3. Foot Binding in China  
(Source: WEB\_ 5 2004)

Chinese girl's feet were wrapped very tightly with cloth so that they could not grow anymore. It was a common practice in China between 950-1912 A.D., until it was outlawed. These girls with "lotus feet" grew up to be women with tiny 3 to 5 inch feet in length. The custom of binding the foot into the shape of a pointed lotus bud was carried out by millions of Han Chinese women of all social classes. Bound feet were required for a Han woman to be considered marriageable. They were a mark of status, beauty and sexual attractiveness.



Figure 4.4. Lotus Shoe  
(Source: WEB\_ 5 2004)

Foot binding in China began centuries ago and was practiced into the early years of the twentieth century as a sign of beauty. Chinese bound feet were permanent. The feet became permanently deformed, for the remainder of the girl's life.

The first two years of footbinding was extremely painful at all times. All toes, except for the big toe, are broken and wrapped under or over the foot. In some cases, toes actually fell off during the process. After the first two years, the amount of pain while walking varied among individuals.

While Chinese foot binding and other forms of body modification are not necessarily good or right to do, they usually add color to the lives of the human beings involved.

This Chinese custom was not a matter of male domination at all, also has all of the signs of a woman behind it. The process of foot binding is so horrifying and unwrapped bound feet are so grotesque that it would have frightened the any man.



Figure 4.5. Lotus Shoe  
(Source: WEB\_5 2004)

Tamsin Blanchard, author of *The Shoe: Best Foot Forward*, speaks of the similarities of foot binding and high heels. For like the high heeled Venetians, Chinese women could hardly be expected to do much but recline in luxury on their ideally sized three inch bound feet.

Manchurian women were forbidden from binding their feet but they developed footwear, with high pedestals or wedge-like platform soles, so the wearer mimicked the gait of a woman with bound feet.

For men, shoes and sandals made of wood, textiles and vegetable fibres were generally worn by the labouring classes. The average citizen wore simple cloth shoes with layered soles. In contrast, the shoes of the upper classes were made of sumptuously embroidered silk.

The Chinese had a similar clog. Much like the chopines of the 1600s, it had a very deep sole. Usually made from wood, the Chinese, like the Japanese, fancily embroidered and decorated the shoe.

#### 4.1.4. Japan



Figure 4.6. Japanese Zori  
(Source: WEB\_2 1999)



“Japan is a country without an industrial past and without natural resources., such as fossil fuels, basic nuclear materials or other raw materials for the traditional heavy industries. Japan, in fact has nothing at all.” (Montana 1989, p. 43)

Traditional Japanese footwear is not seen that often these days as is usually only worn with other traditional clothing. Zori are sandals made from rice straw or lacquered wood and are worn with a kimono for formal occasions. There are other kinds of Japanese footwear other than the Zori.

Outdoors, both men and women wore wooden thonged platforms called geta over their tabi. Getas were made of wood and were often quite high, designed to lift the wearer off the ground. This increased their status and also prevented them from soiling their feet and clothes. Geta are most often seen these days on the feet of sumo wrestlers. The Japanese clog, or “geta” was typically about 3 to 4 inches high. Like the picture, straps held the shoe to the foot. This kind of shoe is usually worn with “tabi” something like what we would call a sock.

Another kind would be the waraji, and you may see the occasional budhist monk wearing them. Waraji are sandals made from straw rope that in the past were the standard footwear of the common people.

All three designs allow for free circulation of air around the feet, a feature that probably came about because of Japan’s humid climate.

In Japan, shoes are removed on entering the home. Historically, tabi were worn indoors - divided cotton sock which separates the big toe from the others and fastens at the back with brass tabs.

Oriental and Japanese imagery has thrived at the cutting edge of international culture, in the late 1990s. Oriental-chic in Europe, and Japan-chic in East Asia, have merged. To an extent they have become one international cultural trend. (WEB\_2 1999)

The diffusion of Oriental and Japanese style culture across Europe and America has converged with the powerful trend towards self-conscious, self-Orientalism, in fashion and culture produced in Japan and East Asia.

In its most recent revival in the 1990s, cultural Orientalism has become an abstract theme. Neo-Asian style has been concerned not with national identity, but with personal and corporate identity. Neo-Asian culture has been used to pose people in a new way: to imagine new kinds of people. Neo-Asian style has ultimately been concerned with re- defining and re-inventing the modern person. (WEB\_2 1999)

Though often futuristic in form, Neo-Asian culture also utilizes some of the recurring motifs of old-fashioned, (racist, and romantic), definitions of Oriental people. Motifs such as ‘passive’, ‘inscrutable’, ‘childlike’, ‘victim-like’, ‘lacking subjective will’, ‘machine-like’, and ‘ephemeral’, have been separated from their previous, racial context. Some of these motifs are now packaged as the core attributes of a new global model of behaviour and style for the cool and mobile person. The Neo-Asian theme in international culture, (especially fashion), illustrates a connection between the flux of fuzzy Neo-Asian values and Neo-Asian style government, and the disorientating loss of individualism, across global society. (WEB\_2 1999)

#### **4.1.5. Italy**

“After the Second World War jazz was extremely popular in Italy and when Cool School trendsetters like Chet Baker performed there in the early 1950s, their minimal, casual apparel must have influenced the development of that style which would become known throughout the world as ‘Italian’” . (Polhemus 1994, p. 44)

Italy, by the mid-1950s was rapidly becoming a place where the direction of popular culture is shaped. Though this culture did not include innovative music, it did most certainly include design. From Vespa to the Tubino light Italian style in 1955 was already well on the way to becoming an international synonym of desirable.

This nation had long possessed the craftsmen in all design-related areas who had the skill and the eye to fashion objects of excellence. And, fortunately, neither fascism nor the disruptions of defeat caused any long-lasting damage to this tradition.

When we focus on the issue of clothing styles, Italy was well placed to provide inspiration for the working class, for example, Britain, a country which was just beginning to discover a more democratic approach to style. Traditionally a country in which the working class as well as the upper class considered it not only a privilege but also a responsibility to dress well. Modern lines of Italian menswear symbolized continental Europe’s rise from the rubble of war and offered the Western world a vision of what the future would look like.

Finally, the particular style of dress which evolved in postwar Italy was aesthetically appropriate to its historical moment. The sharp, short jackets and trim, tapered trousers which looked so right on a Vespa signified an easy, carefree, lighter

approach to life. It was an approach which fitted perfectly within that notion of ‘The Leisure Age’ which was increasingly seen the hallmark of postwar prosperity throughout the West.

When it comes to shoes, Italy is the leading shoe manufacturing country in the Europe, it also holds fifth place amongst world-wide footwear manufacturing countries and is the third largest exporter of footwear in the world. This is an indication of the success of the Italian footwear sector which, with its 7570 companies and 113,000 employees, is of considerable importance to the Italian economy and represents one of the leading sectors in the Italian Fashion industry.

“Italian footwear is big business. So an Italian shoemaker is not unusual, but an Italian shoemaker whose differentiating factor is technology is a little more unusual” says the leading shoe manufacturers. The leading position of the Italian shoe industry on the international market is due to the high quality of the product, the elevated capacity for innovation, flexibility resulting from the geographic concentration and size of the companies; a wide range of designs to suit current trends and satisfy customer demands; customer service and the “Made in Italy” image.

Polegato, founder of Geox, compares the situation to Coca-Cola. “The original formula is the only one but it’s made all over the world. And you can find and drink your Coke in every part of the world sure that its taste is always the same. It doesn’t matter if you’re in the USA, in Russia or in Kenya.”

Da quando i grandi maestri calzaturieri Italiani hanno portato nel mondo il concetto di scarpa elegante, quella Italiana gode di enorme reputazione, e in virtù di questa fama il nome dell’artigianato e della creatività calzaturiera nazionale era conosciuto molto prima che, nell’universo della moda, si affermasse il ‘Made in Italy’.

Obviously the ‘made in Italy’ tag is compelling in fashion and design, particularly when it comes to shoes, there is no doubt that being an Italian brand helps. Italy is not especially acclaimed for its technology, however, it will be regarded as an exception and that the other features of the brand – Italian culture and Italian design – will combine with the technology to offer the customer both form and function.

Waters points out in his discussion, when a product is treated, it is embedded with the culture and the politics of its place of origin. Thereas it acquires certain attributes that have nothing to do with its material substance. For example Italian shoes

are treated as being very good products, because mainly there is a perception that in Italy there is a fine shoe industry. Thereas those shoes are being enculturated and carry symbolic meanings. (Waters 1995)

The world-wide fame of Italian footwear today has its roots in the intense development of the sector starting from the Renaissance.

In the Renaissance period, Italy prospered as a major port of trade between Europe and the East. The city-state thus accumulated an exceptional amount of wealth, and conspicuously consumed material culture of all sorts and influences, both occidental and oriental. Some of the most aesthetically pleasing masterpieces surviving from this era consist of objects related to fashion, including footwear.

In Italy, women's feet, in contrast to China, were not their main physical attraction however. The Italian woman was known for an aesthetically pleasing face, breasts, and waist. No permanent damage was done to the bust in the West, but the waist, often tightly corsetted, could lead to miscarriage and infertility in women, and hair was often plucked or shaved from the forehead in imitation of classical sculpture.



Figure 4.7. Platform Sole Shoe in covered cork

(Source: WEB\_11)

During the third quarter of the eighteenth century French and Italian shoe styles quite literally reached their height.

One of the most celebrated shoe designers of the twentieth century was Italian Salvatore Ferragamo. In 1914, he emigrated to North America. Ferragamo began making shoes for the American Film Company and by 1923 he moved to Hollywood but, in 1926 returned to Italy. This shoe designer's secret was he adopted an assembly line approach but instead of machine driven manufacture employed highly skilled shoe

makers to construct each part of the shoe by hand. By this time he was exporting Italian shoes to North America and the quality of his work has created a strong Italian market for designer shoes. Restrictions on leather supply during the Second World War was enough to fire his imagination and he worked with an array of innovative materials including cellophane, fishskin, and canvas for the cork soles.

When steel was commandeered for the extension of the Abyssinian War in 1936 he devised cork wedges heels. The style was ignored at first but he persevered until it became the most popular throughout the war years.



Figure 4.8. Invisible Shoe  
(Source: WEB\_11)

The cork wedge became a registered Ferragamo trademark in 1936. In 1937, Ferragamo was inspired by the Italian Renaissance and re-introduced the Chopine, a tall platform shoe style. In 1947 he invented the “invisible shoe” and won the Neiman Marcus Award (Oscar of fashion) which was the first time an Italian had won the award.

#### **4.1.6. France**

The design of shoes does not place in a vacuum. Changes in social environment have just as much influence as do fashion movements. Major upheavels like revolutions, or fundamental shifts in the nature of society, such as are caused by industrial advances, have their effects. But shoes are most susceptible to changes in sexual attitudes. They were altered by the French Revolution, as all of life was. The year 1789 was one of the great watersheds in the history of fashion. Eighteenth-century dress

had generally been fairly static for men and women but, more than that, fashionable life was essentially urban, idle and privileged.

The movement gave further impetus by the reaction to social and political events in France. More practical styles of footwear, such as boots, became increasingly popular, as if to meet an increasingly energetic society's need for less formal costume. In the wake of the French Revolution heels became lower than at any time in the 18th century. By the late 1790's, heels disappeared entirely and the soft, flat, without heels, square toed and tied with criss-cross ribbons slipper, flat shoes and Grecian sandals became popular and dominated the next 50 years of women's shoes had appeared. No more were rich brocades and sumptuous satins required. Men's shoes were also flat, with smaller heels. The fashion spread out to other parts of Europe and it was noticed that men and women began to wear shoes 'as light as paper'.

These changes in fashion do not simply affect modes; they also have a profound influence on manners. One of the most interesting and lasting effects of fashion shoes of the Directoire period was on the way in which people walked. The characteristic courtier's walk of the Rococo age was puppet-like and stilted. High heels gave even the most masculine of men a slightly mincing gait and women looked as though they were gliding on wheels. With the low-heeled shoes of the Directoire, the modern walk was born. Aristocrats and upper gentry for the first time in generations walked naturally and easily, as peasant and children had always done.

When they were not walking, they were dancing – a mania for public balls swept Paris and fanned out to take in the rest of Europe at the same time as militarism was also engulfing the continent. War has always been glamorous; Napoleon made it chic. With him began the movement to have soldiers bedecked in magnificent uniforms and equipage. An officer's boot had to be the very perfection of his authority – immaculately made and beautiful kept. Wars have never stopped balls and they did not do so in the 19th century. They were taken seriously. Since women's dance shoes were as delicate as modern ballet slippers and the new dancing was much more vigorous than the old minuets, it was common enough for popular girls to wear out a pair of shoes before the evening was over. Many carried an extra pair in case they danced through the soles. Women's dance slippers have continued to take a lot of punishment.

Costume-made luxurious clothing came to symbolize France, and particularly Paris, eventually leading to the origin of the haute couture fashion business and began to

play a major role in the fashion world. Often called the Fashion Capital of the World, France encouraged creativity and inspiration. Paris is still serves as a meeting ground for all of the arts. (Marshall, Jackson, Stanley, Kefgen, Touchie 2004, p. 38)

In France, there are many fashion and shoe designers who have done remarkable work in shoe design, such as: Roger Vivier, Louboutin...

Many fashion experts would claim that Roger Vivier has created the most beautiful shoes of the twentieth century. His work in the fifties with Christian Dior marked a highpoint of the shoemaker's art. McDowell points out, the shoes he designed at that time had the elegance that only a French designer achieves. Vivier is, without doubt, not merely a great shoemaker, but one of the great designers of the century. (McDowell 1989, p. 190)

#### **4.1.7. Turkey**

Over the ages other peoples who settled in Anatolia or who passed across that bridge between Europe and western Asia, the Hittites, Phrygians, Lydians, Romans, Byzantines, Arabs, Mongols and crusaders left their own stamp on Anatolia's clothing traditions and the way of clothing. Emigration from Asia to Anatolia caused many cultures to integrate. This was reflected on clothes, symbols and motifs of the Gagauz tribes which formed a united culture of their own.

For almost six centuries the Turks lived in or near Europe and interacted with Europeans, assimilating parts of European culture over time.

One of Atatürk's most important reform was the adoption of a constitution that encouraged secularism. Islam does not affect daily Turkish life as much as it would other Islamic nations. Governments, schools and business operate independently of religious beliefs. Even traditional clothing, such as veils for women and fezzes for men, were abandoned in the shift from Islam to secularity. Woman's 'Çarşaf' and 'peçe' were replaced by coat, scarf and shawl. Men began to wear hats, jackets, shirts, waiscoats, ties, trousers and shoes. Religious power over Turkish institutions is nonexistent and this reflects a preference for association with other Western cultures. (Gannon 1994)

The Turkish way of living at that time brought about functional clothing styles. As the horse was the common and inevitable form of transport in the daily routine, women's and men's wear resembled each other (unisex). Sources indicate that central Asian Turks used to wear leather boots, mintan shirt, a short caftan used with a belt and a kind of riding trousers loose at the top narrowing downwards suitable for horse riding. Caftan and boots also gained significance as a sign of status. The socio-economic differences between the administrators and the common people also affected the clothing styles. While the Palace and its court displayed showy clothes, the common people were only concerned with covering themselves.

The sense of women's wear in primarily began in large residential centers such as Istanbul and Izmir in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and as women gradually began to participate in the social life, along with the westernization movement. With the industrialization process of the 1960's women entered the work life and tailors were substituted by readymade clothes industry.

“With the appearance of American culture with the Menderes government in 1950, the changing Turkey met jeans, chew chewing-gums, put on sports shoes, Rock and Rolled. Meanwhile ladies from Ankara and Istanbul became now more elegant than Parisians. All costumes were being sewn by famous tailors or brought from Paris.



## CHAPTER 5

### GENDER OF SHOES

#### 5.1. High Heels

“To be carried by shoes, winged by them. To wear dreams on one’s feet is to begin to give reality to one’s dreams.” (Roger Vivier)

There is no solid evidence that definite heels existed anywhere before 1500. According to legend, early 1500s the high heel may have been invented by Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519). There are earlier records of high heel shoes that served a practical function such as heeled boots horse riders wore to grip their stirrups better. However, 1533 was the year that gave birth to the high heel that served no purpose other than beauty and vanity. Catherine de Medici, when she got married to the Duke of Orleans, wore shoes with two-inch heels because she was sensitive about her lack of height.

Some historians believe the fashion for high heeled shoes arose as a modification of the chopine, or also, there are some reports that Turkish and Persian miniatures and paintings show clearly raised heels.

Linda O’Keeffe, author of “Shoes” tells us that heels date back to the pre-Christian era. Egyptian butchers wore them to elevate their feet above the carnage, while Mongolian horsemen had their boots heeled to better grip their stirrups. (O’Keeffe 1996, p. 73)

Up until the 1700s, the five inch heel was most popular amongst European women. However, when the French monarchy fell, so did the height of shoes. From then on heels rose and fell depending on current fashions and politics. (O’Keeffe 1996, p. 74) The development of a proper heel with an arched sole was the dominant feature of shoes in the seventeenth century. Elevated shoes had been known from early Hellenic times however this phase of fashion was the first time shoes were associated with the female sex. It completely altered the posture of the wearer, encouraging both men and women to carry themselves in a way which set off the flowing lines and affected manner of the Baroque period.



Figure 5. 1. French Red Heeled Shoe  
(Source: WEB\_5 2004)



Figure 5.2. Louboutin Red Sole Shoe  
(Source: WEB\_5 2004)

That red heeled shoes have always been considered special. Like most of the royal heads of Europe, Louis XIV adopted red as the colour of kingship: his wooden heels were covered in red leather and this distinctive fashion quickly spread to his courtiers. Red heels were one of the few seventeenth century fashions to appear in England before being seen in France. It was at this time that the fantastic form of decoration known as the shoe rose became a craze in aristocratic circles. In modern fashion red is the most daring an outrageous shoe colour and designers consider the wearer to be blatantly sexy. Today, Louboutin is one of the famous contemporary shoe designers who made shoes with the red soles. He paints the soles of all his shoes bright red, regardless of their colour. And says, “I wanted to break the dullness of black or beige soles. And present a ‘finished’ object. All my soles are red.” A trademark which he hopes will, as usual, be imitated.

Practicality has little to do with female high heels. They have always been essentially about allure – as they are today. In the 18th century a wag made fun of the tyranny of high heels with his couplet addressed to fashion victims: ‘Mount on French heels when you go to a ball, it now is the fashion to totter and fall.’ And indeed, at the court of Louis XVI, women wore such extreme high heels that they could walk only with the aid of a stick and could not tackle stairs without the help of an admirer, servant

or, a husband. The female high heel was curved and tilted to make women look precious and provocative – as much the same way as high heels do today.

In the 19th century the high heeled shoe became the top style to own. Although Europe brought the new trend for high heels, America wasn't far behind in becoming of style. In 1888 the first heel factory in the United States opened, allowing for easier access and availability and making it unnecessary for women to import their shoes from Paris.

Newly liberated, women in the early part of the 20th century favored sensible shoes. But in the 1920s, as hemlines rose, legs and feet were suddenly on display and shoes needed to be as beautiful as they were practical. However, the 1950's ushered in the era of the stiletto. O'Keeffe says, "Of all the miracles of modern shoe technology, the stiletto may stand as the greatest." (O'Keeffe 1996, p. 120)

"High Heels are a paradox " wrote Rona Berg in Vogue. "They can make a woman appear more or less powerful". When worn over long periods of time, they can be a prescription for pain, responsible for hammertoes and fallen arches. But when worn for the look they can work magic and seduce the right male.

"It is hard not to be sexy in a pair of high heels" adds Tom Ford, designer at Gucci. Many other people agree that heels have the power to transform even the most practical woman into an elegant *femme fatale*. For example, clubbers in knife-edge heels became contemporary femme fatales, night trippers of the subterranean city journeying through the dark spaces of urban myth.

"Nothing has been invented yet that will do a better job than high heels at making a good pair of legs look great, or great ones look fabulous," proclaims shoe designer Stuart Weitzman.

According to O'Keeffe "Women may wear slippers, put on sneakers and slip into loafers, but they dress in high heels".(O'Keeffe 1996, p. 72) Psychologically, high heels give permission to lead than to follow. A woman might become a towering seductress or she can choose to become the subject of the object of a male.

According to Steele, one reason high heels are considered sexy is because they produce an erect ankle and extended leg. The arch of the foot is radically curved like a ballet dancer on point. The entire lower body is thrown into a state of tension resembling that of female sexual arousal. (Steele 1998, p. 18) By tilting the pelvis, her lower back arches, her spine and legs lengthen and her chest thrust out. The breasts

thrust forward, and the *derrière* protrudes. A woman in high heels looks taller and thinner. Her legs are emphasized and the leg muscles tighten, the calves appear shapelier. And because they are at an angle, her feet look smaller and more pointed.

High heels also changed the wearer's gait. O'Keeffe, author of writes, "Physically, it is impossible for a woman to cover in high heels. She is forced to take a stand, to strike a pose, because anatomically her center of gravity has been displaced forward." (O'Keeffe 1996, p. 71) This proactive stance, sexually enhanced posture, and added height provide psychological empowerment for the wearer and convey an autonomous and feminine message into society.

"Your body balances differently if you are wearing two-inch heels or six-inch heels" observes Manolo Blahnik, master of the skyscraper heel.

What do high heels "say" about the women who wear them? Popularly, high heels are referred to as "limousine shoes" with the implication that they are worn only by ladies who don't actually have to walk anywhere.

High heels are not a type of shoe. They are a type of *heel*, which can be attached to a variety of different shoes – stilettos, boots, sandals, mules, pumps, even sneakers.



Figure 5.3. Different Types of High Heels

(Source: WEB\_8 2005)

Height is not the only significant stylistic feature of the heel, however, width and shape are also important. Some shoe designers, such as André Perugia and Roger Vivier, have been known for their innovative heel shapes. No study of the heel can ignore Vivier's comma heel, for example, or Perugia's corkscrew heel. Then there is the Louis heel, the Sabrina (also known as the kitten heel), the ferrule heel, the stacked ball, the pyramid and etc.

The Sabrina heel, for example, is "one of the most influential heels of the 20th century. According to Manolo Blahnik, "It typifies a certain elegance evocative of Audrey Hepburn."

Some women long ago decided that comfort is their main concern. La Velle Olexa, fashion director for Lord & Taylor, says; “There is still a comfort factor that prevails for most women in their busy lives. This season the high heel is important, yet women want to be able to walk in comfort and go through their day.”

Obviously, not all high heeled shoes are uncomfortable. In fact, there is a growing business in comfortable medium-heeled pumps. But the general consensus is that flats are the most comfortable kind of shoes. Therefore, high heels implicitly convey the idea that comfort is not only consideration, that under certain circumstances glamour happens to be more important. Conversely, when flat or medium heels are fashionable or generally worn by women, high heels look excessive. At the office, very high heels may look inappropriate. (Steele 1998, p. 43)

Much of the intense debate around high heels is generated by the harmful effects of high heels and especially the stiletto. More and more studies emerge everyday with resounding voices saying that shoes are physically detrimental. Foot doctors say that continual use of high heels with narrow toe space can actually lead to foot deformities. A clinical professor of orthopedics, Michael J. Coughlin says, “The deformities that often develop after years of wearing high-fashion pumps are similar to foot problems that were formerly seen in Chinese women whose feet had been bound.” Additionally, long time wear of high heels is also being linked to knee arthritis in women, and most recently, back problems.

High heels have long been stigmatized as a crippling mechanism of the ever present and detrimental patriarchy. As a system of values, categorizations, lateral and vertical hierarchies, oppression, subordination, presentation and performance, meanings are infused in every aspect of life. It appears impossible to escape misogynistic values but as Judith Butler writes, “The law might not only be refused, but it might also be ruptured, forced into a rearticulation that calls into question the monotheistic force of its own unilateral operation.” In other words, never underestimate the “range of disobedience;” (WEB\_8 2005) because the possibilities of rejecting domination are endless.

In this research it was also included a section on basic styles of high heeled shoes. Except stiletto high heel, there are two other distinct kinds of high heel footwear

that will be dealt with in sequent section. These categories include high heel “fetish wear”, and “tango dance wear”. In general, the high heeled shoes in each of these three categories are of distinct styles. However, there are some shoe styles that span and fit into more than one category.

### **5.1.1. Stiletto**

Speaking of the high heel and specifically the stiletto, Caroline Cox, author of “Stiletto”, says, “Not for nothing do we refer to stilettos as killer heels. These are shoes that blatantly contravene the original purpose of footwear: to protect the feet and aid mobility.” And adds, “Men like an exaggerated female figure. Stilettos also make a woman seem quite delicate because you have to balance in the shoes. She might need a man’s hand”.

The word *stiletto* derives from Latin *stilus*, stylus, and spike. The spike or needle, tends to be both higher and thinner than average high heel. It is usually at least four inches high, sometimes as much as seven inches. The Stiletto heel was introduced in 1952 in Italy and was 4 inch in height. It was on a classic pump with a pointed toe. Known as the “Cobblers Delight” because the bottom tips needed frequent replacement. The heels pierced floors and were banned in aircraft and many public buildings. Despite their bad reputation by the end of the 50s stilettos were the only shoes a fashionable woman wore.

Wright’s study about ‘stiletto’ may be used to show quite clearly how the object exists in a number of different discourses. It may have been seen as a ‘modern’ and rebellious object. The stiletto is constituted intertextually in that it is the object of medical, moral, fashionable and industrial or technological discourses. Medical discourses condemned the heel for causing back problems and for deforming the foot, for example. (Wright 1989, p. 13) Moral leaders appear to have been alarmed by the body shape imposed by the stiletto, emphasising as it did womanly breasts and bottoms. (Wright 1989, p. 13-4) Industry and technology had to solve the engineering and material problems involved in constructing a heel that might be four or even six inches high and not break the moment a woman stood on it. They also had the problem of

finding stiletto- resistant flooring material for dancehalls, offices, aircraft and even pavements. (Wright 1989, p. 13)

According to Kaite, stilettos, embody complex paradoxes and social innuendos. There is inherent tension between sexuality and danger. They constantly revolve and play with the masculine/ feminine dichotomy. The “The high heel is a weapon...and also a phallic symbol. And at the same time that it cripples a woman, it makes her seem powerful. In heels, the woman can be evilly subdued – she can't run very fast, she's off balance, her feet probably hurt – but she's also taller, wearing a spiked thing that could be driven into a man's body: It's called a stiletto after all.”

For most high heel admirers, the stiletto high heel is the “high heel of choice”. Without any doubt, the stiletto is the most sexy and most feminine style of high heel that has ever been made. Unfortunately, the origin of the stiletto high heel is ‘officially’ unknown. However, one can trace the stiletto high heel back to a “fetish wear” origin.



Figure 5.4. Monroe and Red Leather Pumps, 1960

(Source: WEB\_4 1995)

High heeled shoes have existed for centuries, but the technology of creating stilettos was only perfected in the 1950s, when Italian shoemakers inserted a metal stick which extended almost the full length of the heel to prevent it from breaking.

Throughout the 1950s and early 1960s, stilettos were associated with sex symbols like Marilyn Monroe. Her tragic death, when she only 36 years old in 1962, has frozen her image, with in a pair of high heeled shoe and skirt blowing up, for all time. It is very unlikely that Marilyn Monroe would ever have become such a mega-star without wearing high heels. From 1957, the stiletto was associated with glamour, with

rebellion: it represented some one who was in some way ‘modern’ and ‘up to date’, and above all, someone who inhabited a world outside the home. (Wright 1989, p. 14)

Although stilettos fell out of fashion in the late 1960s- to be replaced by flats, and subsequently by platforms, sensible pumps and athletic shoes- very high heels became fashionable once again in the 1990s.

“Walking in high heels” is not as similar to running and being an athletic skill, as it is to ballet on point dancing and being an artistic skill. It is possible to make the comparison with ballet on point dancing. However, walking in high heels involves some athletic skill as well.

In recent years, Manolo Blahnik and Sandra Choi (designer for Jimmy Choo) chose the stiletto high heel for their enormously popular lines of luxury women’s fashion shoes.

### **5.1.2. Tango Dancing Shoes with High Heels**

There are many different styles of dancing. Only in a few are high heels ever worn by the ladies, namely disco and tango dancing.

The tango with its smooth suave Latin sensuality became popular during mid decade. The name of the dance maybe from the Spanish word meaning first person singular, tengo, or “I possess”. The dance was thought to resemble a sadistic Apache dance in which a woman attempts to love a sadistic man. No dance swept the country faster than the tango and brought millions of dollars to dance instructors.

Tango dancing started in the 1800’s and is still going strong. Tango dancing originated in Argentina and has spread around the world. It is practiced throughout the America, Europe, Australia, and Asia. Tango found its way to Paris via the luxury cruisers of the time. Rudolph Valentino tangoed his way to fame causing women in the audience to swoon and faint from worship. The dance was banned in many cities with the threat of fines and imprisonment. For tango experts who participate in tournaments, there are also different versions of tango.

By 1913 the craze hit England and became very much a tea dance phenomena. Irene and Vernon Castle were the key dancers of the time and their appearance was



studied by thousands of followers. When she wore white satin high heeled shoes stores could not keep the items in stock. Vernon wore a wrist watch which had been considered rather effeminate, real men wore a pocket watch, but such was his influence of male attire he single handedly won the males over to the time piece bracelet. Women's shoes were made from silk, fabric or kid leathers with styles including straps and buttons. Louis heels began to re-appear and shoes were made for dual day wear as well as dancing.

One may wonder whether there is any difference between dancing shoes and regular street shoes. Dancing shoes are lightweight and better constructed to take the pounding a dancer gives to them. However, some dancing shoes are reported to be poorly constructed. The soles should be preferably made of suede leather, otherwise grated shiny soles. The heels should be medium to thick in thickness for better balance.

### **5.1.3. Foot Fetish and Fetish Shoes**

Originally the word 'Fetish' was thought to come from Portuguese "feitico" and derived from the Latin, "factitius" or "facere", to do or to make. The implication being the artefact was created artistically or by the supernatural and was worshipped in obsessive fashion because of its magical powers.

Steele defines fetishism as "lust directed towards items of women's clothing or parts of women's bodies, which was later expanded to men." According to her the original meaning was either religious or anthropological. By the nineteenth century, the term had been extended to refer to anything, which was irrationally worshipped. (Steele 1996)

Many believe fetishism has been around for thousands of years whereas others consider it developed only in modern Western society. Steele points out fetishism as we would recognize it today appeared in Europe in the eighteenth century and crystallized as a distinct sexual phenomenon in the second half of the nineteenth century. (Steele 1996) French psychologist, Alfred Binet, was the first to describe fetish in the psychological sense, in 1887. As the science of sexology developed from the nineteenth century, the term fetish became firmly associated with sex and the attraction of certain portions of the female body, or specific articles of female attire. Examples of body parts which attract the fetishist include and are not restricted to the feet, hair, buttocks, and breasts.

Objects in which the fetishist is attracted include and are not restricted to gloves, lingerie, nylons and panty hose, leather, brassieres, garters and panties.

The attraction could be sexual or non-sexual, and the object, inanimate or animate. Today's fetishism is associated with perversion involving a sexual association with an inanimate object. Many people believe that inanimate objects can possess inexplicable powers. Inanimate object fetish can be subdivided into form and media fetish.

- In the form fetish, it is the object and its shape that are important, for example, high heeled shoes.

- In a media fetish it is the material that attracts e.g. hard materials like leather and soft materials such as fur.

Animate object fetish involves parts of the body, for example, feet, legs and buttocks, ankles, toes etc. Steele believed it was often impossible to draw a clear line between foot and shoe fetishism albeit other authorities would take a different opinion.

### **5.1.3.1. Foot Fetishism**

“Almost every woman is not only conscious of her feet, but sex conscious about them.” (Andre Perugia)

Foot fetishism has been a powerful sub-division of sex since shoes were first created. Many scholars accept feet were used as convenient metaphors for the genitalia. Keen, perhaps, to downplay emphasis on the generative process, the belief set of many pagan religions, the ancient Hebrews took the foot and made it a gender icon. (WEB\_5 2004)

According to Brame, the definition of foot fetishism is a pronounced sexual interest in the lower limb or anything that covers portions of them. The allure normally attributed to erogenous zones is literally translocated downward and the fetishist response to the foot is the same as a conventional person's arousal at seeing genitals. (Brame and Jacobs 1996)

Freud considered foot binding as a form of fetishism. Moderate to high level fetishism would be classified as a type of paraphilia. Paraphilia maybe classified as a type of 'obsessive compulsive disorder' through sexual behaviour. In the case of pedal paraphilia, the concentration is on the foot, stockings or shoe.

Sexual behaviours including preferences are in part governed by biological factors and fetishism seems to be a product of both history and nature. At present there is no satisfactory explanation why fetishism is more common among males than females. The majority of fetishists are completely unaware of the beginnings of their love of the foot. Foot fetishists tend to keep their inclination concealed for fear of social ridicule or other apprehensions. Published research indicates fetishists have poorly developed social skills, are quite isolated in their lives and have a diminished capacity for establishing intimacy. Rossi (1990) reported the majority of male fetishists were married, living perfectly conventional lives with their spouse, who in turn was fully aware of partner's behaviours and preferences.

Fetishists view the foot as others seek aesthetic pleasure from some other erogenous form. Points of attraction include the size of the foot, curve of the arch and instep, the length and straightness of the toes, the texture and complexion of the skin, contours of the heel and ankle, the softness of the sole, and if possible, even the foot odour. The fetishists are naturally attracted to feet dressed in open design footwear such as high heel sandals. The focus of their attention is on the behaviour of the owner especially in the way the person uses their feet in non verbal ways. (WEB\_5 2004)

### **5.1.3.2. Shoe Fetishism and Fetish Shoes**

Shoe fetishists or retifists are similar in principal to foot fetishists but their stimulus, the shoe, becomes the total focus for arousal. Freud considered the shoe to represent the female genitals but by the time he wrote about fetishism the foot had been an erogenous zone for centuries. He described the foot as a phallus and when it entered the shoe, union was symbolically complete.

“The naked foot itself is not as erotically appealing, the shoe raises up the foot and gives it mystery and allure so it's not just a piece of meat,” Steele says. According to her, since the 1880s, high heeled shoes have been almost entirely associated with femininity with the exception of cowboy boots.

Retifists usually collect women's shoes and have exquisite taste for elegant style. Their preference covers the seven basic shoe styles described by Rossi (1993) and materials such as leather and furs often influence their choice. Retifists will personalize their collection by giving names to their favourite shoes. Freud was convinced all

women were clothes fetishist, and believed clothes were worn to provocatively shield the erotic body. Most authorities now acknowledge there is a difference between foot and shoe fetishism and someone who innocently collects shoes. This behaviour is neither thought to be pathological fetishism nor normal fetishising. It usually involves females but not exclusively. This area of human behaviour is much neglected within the literature. Fetishism is not thought to be a typical female trait. (Richards 1996)

There are degrees of fetishes, according to Steele. Using the example of high heeled shoes, she said that most people are level one or two, finding them appealing. Her example of level three was a French writer who followed women in Paris wearing high heeled shoes. She gave for an example of level four, Marla Maples' ex-publicist, who was found guilty of stealing Maples' shoes. "He denied being a fetishist, but admitted that he had a sexual relationship with Marla's shoes," Steele said.

Possession of shoes is important to the retifist and in cases of paraphilia, men may steal the shoes they are attracted to. Kiernan (1917, reported in Rossi, 1990) first described the term kleptomania which was used when theft took place when associated with sexual excitement. "Hephephilia" is a term used when there is an uncontrollable urge to steal the objects of specific focus. Many hephephiliacs are ordinary people with no criminal intention other than a compulsion to possess the object of their desire due to a repressed or complicated sex life. Theft from shops is common as is robbery from private property. Many retifists keep copious records of their activities all of which adds to their excitement. Shoe snatching, including foot assaults, have been reported around the world. When these cases do come to court however the behaviour is often dismissed as a trivial deviation. Most medical authorities agree such behaviour signifies power and indicates domination. Famous retifists include: Omar Kayyam, Leo Tolstoy, Feodor Dostoevski, and Paul Murphy.

It is important exploring also the symbolism and fetishism of high heels. The erotic literature on shoe fetishism often associates high heels with the image of the "phallic woman". According to Steele, submission to the powerful "phallic woman" is a very popular fantasy. She described how women in high heels are seen as powerful Amazonian women, fierce, and armored when wearing a corset. In contrast, she said that men in high heels are hobbled, can barely walk around and that being in a corset is like being punished.

Tightly laced corsets are another fetishized items discussed. There are fantasies of being constrained and imprisoned in high heeled shoes and corsets. Corsets were part of women's wardrobes in the 19th century the way high heeled shoes are now. The idea that only the upper-class wore corsets is false, says Steele. She explains that while upper-class women could wear colorful satin corsets, respectable married women would only wear white corsets.



**Figure 5.5. High Lacing Shoes and Tight Corset**

Tight lacing excites desire not just because it has a constraining effect but also because it carries the promise of release. This is why stays have always been such a powerful aphrodisiac. Both the tying and untying can have a strong sexual charge – a fact that shoe makers have been aware of for a very long time, says McDowell. (McDowell 1989, p. 73)

In 1960s, fetishistic or 'kinky' clothes in leather or PVC had wide appeal. In this time, a couple of hundred leather/rubber/PVC clad 'Pervs', a huge international subculture, has grown. This was arguably largest, most far-reaching and influential of any contemporary street – or club – based subculture. The Pervs have exerted a strong influence on mainstream culture via the extraordinary popularity of 'fetish fashion', it sometimes seems that superficiality has triumphed over substance. This is true up to a point, but it must also be said that beneath the Pervs' shiny black facade there is a serious commitment to exploring a new sexuality – one which seeks to replace the casual 'Your place or mine' promiscuity of the 1960s 'sexual revolution' with an approach that is more relationship-based, and more ritualistic (even spiritual). In the process, the Pervs are redefining and extending the meaning of sex itself. At the same time the Pervs propose a way around the contemporary impasse of male/female power

struggles by substituting instead Sub(missive)/Dom(inant) roles which are not specifically defined by gender. While this aspect of the Pervs' ideology addresses issues which have been raised by generations of feminists, the shift away from 'casual sex' takes seriously the reality of AIDS. (Polhemus 1994, p. 105)

Fashion designers such as Gianni Versace and Jean-Paul Gaultier have brought fetishism and S&M imagery to haute couture. This picture shows a Versace advertisement from Versace's 1992 "bondage" collection, the woman outfitted in S&M style with black leather and boots. This collection was the focus of a New York Times article, "Chic or cruel?" debating whether the style exhibits misogynistic sexual fantasy or liberation.

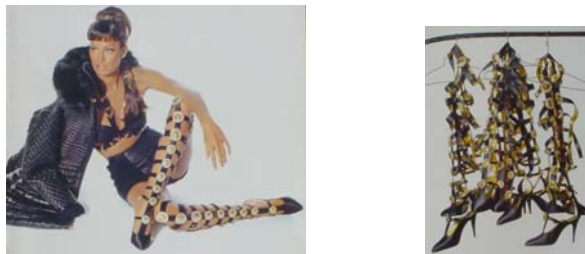


Figure 5.6. Versace's 1992 "Bondage" Collection

(Source: WEB\_5 2004)

"The rise of punk fashion in the 1970s and 80s took the clothes out of the closet and porn films as they were worn on the street by punk girls and boys," Steele says. Punk rock counter culture was the most shocking youth movement the world had seen yet. In the wake of the peace and love hippies of the 60s, the punks defiled decency and snarled at courtesy. They were loud, angry, repugnant, and darn proud of it. Westwood transformed their rocker style to fetish wear with 'Too Fast to Live, Too Young to Die' fetish wear, then settled firmly into punk's grasp with sex in 1975. Punks were the scourge bela of society: they were confrontational, and they demanded attention with their shaved heads, day-glo colored Mohawks, silver studded and spiked leather jackets, torn stockings, combat boots and body piercing.

There is also additional evidence of a fetish origin for the stiletto high heel. In Linda O'Keeffe's book named 'Shoes' (1996), there is a picture of an extraordinary beautiful André Perugia "fetish" high heel shoe with a very high (about 6 inches) bonafide "stiletto" high heel that is dated 1948.

### 5.1.3.3. Fetish Mules



Figure 5.7. Fetish Mules  
(Source: WEB\_5 2004)

There are so many kinds of fetish shoes over a long period of time. Mules were originally simple, flat, backless slippers. Originally it evolved as a form of footwear for the boudoir, worn by the most fashionable of ladies and the most exclusive of courtesans. In the Rococo period mules were popular also for men and they had the romantic connotations. By the eighteenth century they had evolved into backless shoes on high heels. Today mules, which are known also as “slides” are believed to be among the most seductive of all shoes, because they leave the foot half undressed. Fetish mules stand tall with the stiletto heel, and are decorated with an unexpected pattern. It is worn by women who don't entirely realize what they say, historically and presently, to admirers yet know they look sexy.

## 5.2. Chopine and Platform Shoes

Although the thinking that produced the sixteenth-century high heel was similar to that behind the chopine, the similarity ended there. The platform shoe of the 1400s to 1600s, called the chopine, was one of the most extreme and artificial styles of footwear ever created. When people think of platform shoes, they tend to think of the wild disco filled 70s, or maybe the foot high vinyl sneakers they may see on today's youth. When we think of the 1600s, we might mistake that era for the Victorian era with women wearing skirts that billow out making it hard to even walk through a door. But in the late 1400s to the mid 1600s the platform sole reached immense popularity.

It was usually designed with cork or wood as the sole that it could reach a height of over 50 cm. The thick-soled, raised shoe was designed to protect the foot from irregularly paved and wet or muddy streets. But the enhancement of the wearer's stature also played a role.

There is no one defining moment when the chopines were invented. It made its major fashion appearance in the 15th Century and the popularity of this extreme shoe thanks to improved trade and transport spread throughout Italy, Spain, France and England in particular.



Figure 5.8. Venetian Chopine  
(Source: WEB\_11)

The origin is unclear, but it probably originated spontaneously in Venice and was first worn by prostitutes, but was then adopted by fashionable Venetian aristocratic ladies and the courtesans. The Venetians made the platform sole into a status symbol, revealing wealth and social standing for women. The chopine's height introduced an awkwardness and instability to a woman's walk. The Venetian woman who wore them was generally accompanied by an attendant on whom she would balance. Despite the obvious expense, Venetian sumptuary laws (laws regulating expenditure on luxuries) did not address the issue of exaggerated footwear until it reached dangerous proportions. Sixteenth-century accounts suggest that the chopine's height was associated with the level of nobility and grandeur of the Venetian woman who wore them rather than with any imputation as to her profession.



Figure 5.9. Twenty-inch Venetian Chopines 16th century  
(Source: WEB\_11)



Wilson states that chopines “restricted a woman in her walking...and this itself served as a status symbol (since servants had to accompany these women; and since these women could not do any manual labor while wearing platform shoes); they rendered her stance unstable and therefore added to the men’s feeling of superiority.” (Wilson 1969)

Other most common answer to their origin is that they derived from Turkish bath shoe which kept the delicate feet of the wearer from directly contacting heated water and slick marble floor. Another source hypothesizes that the style reached Europe from the Orient long before Renaissance times -in ancient Greece- when actors wore platformed footwear on stage. According to this deduction, maybe the style was part of a general Renaissance -an awakening- which included classical styles of dress. A number of societies have platform shoes, such as the Japanese.

The outrageousness of the chopines was frequently remarked of in the writings of many visitors and tourists of Venice. One visitor “suggested that the chopine had been invented by jealous Italian husbands who hoped that the cumbersome movement it entailed would make illicit liasons difficult”. This aspect of domination and submission wrapped up in inability to walk echos the style of fetish and lotus shoes.

Chopines did not disappear after 1600. Between the 1600s and the 1930s they lost their extreme popularity. The Victorian era decided that women’s shoes should be small, and feminine, which held no place for the chunky platform. By the 1930s, new, more convenient styles were emerging, especially during the World War II years. It was in the late 1930s that the chopines returned as platform shoes.

This era was practical in the shoe’s construction and modest in style. The notable fashion designers of the day, however, had a different vision and created more adventurous platform shoes. Some of the major shoe designers of the period were Salvatore Ferragamo, Andre Perugia, and David Evins. Each contributed something unique to the platform shoe sensation of the 30s. Andre Perugia, for instance designed this platform shoe with gasps and wide eyed responses from the public. It was revolutionary in design. It certainly looks different. Most of the women wore heels with subtle platforms, maybe 1 inch at the most, and with such styles as these, new rules were broken that set the grounds for the adventures of the 1970s.



Figure5.10. Platform Sandals of Andre Perugia, 1939, Salvatore Ferragamo,1935, Andre Perugia, 1939  
(Source: WEB\_ 11)

So the 30s had passed and toward the end of the 1960s, platforms re-emerged. At the beginning of the fad, they were worn primarily by young women in their teens and twenties, and occasionally by younger girls, older women, and (particularly during the disco era) by young men, and although they did provide added height without nearly the discomfort of spike heels, they seem to have been worn primarily for the sake of attracting attention.

Manolo Blahnik, can find nothing good to say about platforms, insisting, “I absolutely hate platforms. They remind me of the hideous 70s glam-rock style. You should elongate the leg – whereas platform shoes give you these huge surgical things on your feet!”(Steinhauer 1998) According to Steele (1998), high heels give a sexy gait, whereas platforms just raise you up.

Platforms tend to appeal more to young people, and are often made in inexpensive materials, such as wood or cork. They irrevocably associated with the 1970s, which is often described as “the decade that taste forgot.” (Steele 1998, p. 100) It was during these years that experimentation with fashion, not only drugs and sex, broke all kinds of rules of the pretentious 50s. Certainly, youth fashions of the early 1970s tended toward excess.

Platform shoes were not ascribed to one particular gender in the 1970s. Men, as well as women, adorned platforms. It became quite common place to see young women in 3 inch soles, walking with a young man wearing matching 3 inchers. So it is the lack of gender rules that distinguished the 70s from the earlier eras. Pop art emulated the platform shoe, and by 1971, it was considered the most exciting year in shoe design, not only for the population but for Pop artists. It was during the 1970s that the platform shoe experienced its most playful and colorful look.

By the mid seventies the most ordinary people were wearing two inch deep

platforms without a second thought. But accidents did happen and many a woman and man twisted on a pair of platform shoes. At about the same time clogs became popular as they followed the trend for chunkiness of sole.

Men would never dare to wear platforms in the 1600s or 1930s. Men in the 70s, however, tended to wear more of the boot type platforms, leaving the more feminine shoes for women. The same theory can be reversed. Women would never have dared to wear men's shoes before, and with gender issues exploding in the 60s and 70s, it becomes acceptable.

In 1970s, dressing to shock was popular, and the Punk and Glam movements took it to an extreme. Glam rock had arrived with larger than life groups parading on stage wearing platform shoes. The androgyny unisex style of the glam rockers popstars such as Bowie, Shirley and Elton John made them a firm fixture with men and women. Designers took platform shoes to new heights, building 7- to 8-inch stacked heels and covering them in rhinestones, sequins, and other adornments. Elton John (one of his performance shoes are shown to the right) donned outrageous outfits and platform shoes to look sexy and to entertain the audiences. Tiny Elton on the other hand needed the extra leverage his boots gave him to reach the piano keys on his Steinway during live performances. Later Elton appeared in the film Tommy sporting the largest pair of DM boots ever seen.

Platforms do not look right on professional women and especially, on older women. Moreover, high platforms are like walking on stilts and look more awkward than sexy.



Figure 5.11. Elton John's Platform Boots 1973  
(Source: WEB\_4 1995)

## CHAPTER 6

### SEX AND SHOES

“Sex is to gender as nature is to culture.” –Anonymous-

As the technology advanced, it became possible to blend comfort and style in footwear. Footwear, like other items of clothing evolved to make statements about gender roles. Men’s footwear became more macho and women’s footwear more feminine. However, in the early 20th century, women asserted their freedom and looked for broader horizons beyond hearth and home and this led them to choose more practical footwear.

Steele in her book says, “Researches indicate that people tend to categorize shoes into one of several clusters. 1) *Feminine and Sexy* 2) *Masculine* 3) *Asexual or dowdy* 4) *Young and Casual*” (Steele 1998)

In her study, the respondents, who are in age from eighteen to seventy, regarded styles such as high heeled pumps, strappy sandals, and women’s high boots as being “feminine and sexy.” In the popular imagination, the “feminine” shoes must be sexy (high heeled) and uncomfortable.

Shoes in the “masculine” category included both work and leisure styles, such as loafers, oxfords, jogging shoes, and cowboy boots. In contrast to feminine type, “masculine” shoes are supposed to be comfortable and practical. For example, shiny leather loafers might reflect a rich, impeccable lawyer-type, “Sensible shoes” – from moccasins to work boots – identify the wearer as a member of the laboring classes, feet planted firmly on the ground.” (Benstock and Ferriss 2001) In sensible shoes one can plow a field, pave a road or simply walk as a means of transportation.

The category of “asexual” shoes included women’s shoes, such as nurses’ shoes and career pumps, which were perceived as “unsexy, conservative, comfortable, and appropriate for walk.”

The “young and casual” cluster included thongs (flip flops), clogs, topsiders and desert boots.

The significance of shoes, feet and high heels have a history of masculine power and female fetishization. Opponents of the high heel often call upon fascist beauty

standards and self destructive desires to please men as the culprits responsible for causing women to don back breaking heels which limit mobility and cause extreme physical harm not only to the feet but also the knees and back.



Figure 6.1. High Heels and Women  
(Source: WEB\_ 8 2005)

While high heels have remained popular, in the last half century they have been a controversial topic. Many second wave feminists rejected standards of “feminine beauty,” denouncing what they saw as women, “being forced, by social and mass media representations controlled by men, to see themselves in fragments through male eyes.” (Gamman 1995, p. 88) High heels came under attack along with many other gendered aesthetic objects at this time. However, in the eighties high heels were reclaimed in the name of personal choice and women’s empowerment. “Dressing up, grooming, and playing around with identity could not be regarded as a response to oppression or the ‘male gaze’ when sisters said they were doing it for themselves.” (Gamman 1995)

It was at this time that women really began to conscientiously reclaim the “feminine” as a personal and even rebellious decision. Nancy Friday, author of *The Power of Beauty*, writes, “We do it for the image in the mirror, the reflection of ourselves as hot and in charge, an extraordinarily satisfying goal that we can live with more happily than with a man; who needs him?” (Friday 1996) Today the arguments surrounding high heels fluctuate depending on style and popularity.

High heels infuse the wearer with a sense of power; more importantly feminine power, not an offshoot of some masculine aspect. Lee Wright, “points to the associations of the stiletto with symbols of ‘liberation rather than subordination,’ symbols that are ‘progressive rather than retrogressive,’ conveying ‘rebellion and dominance’.” (Kaite1996) While men and masculinity also have an interesting shoe history that at times includes various heeled styles, today high heels are exclusively feminine. So often women in society draw upon masculine constructs and ideas of

power, adopting them for their own instead of reclaiming the “feminine” in a powerful and authoritative way- but they do with high heels.



Figure 6.2. Men with High Heeled Boots, 18.yy  
(Source: WEB\_5 2004)

High-heeled shoes were invented during the Renaissance, and at various periods in history they have been fashionable for both sexes. The greatest cause of discomfort is the high heel, which forces the foot forward in the shoe. This discomfort has been happily ignored by men as well as women in the past. In those days many men believed that fashion was more important than comfort.

The history of footwear is inextricably linked to the history of transport, says McDowell. (McDowell 1989, p. 11) For every century, the commonest means of getting from one place to another have been walking or riding. Horse-riding, for pleasure or transport, has been and overwhelmingly masculine prerogative and this fact has had a considerable effect on the on the design of heels for men’s shoes. High heels for men helped keep the foot in the stirrup and aided control of the horse during hard riding. They could not be functional if the heel was too narrow and tapering, as it would be liable to snap; and if were too high, walking was difficult. So male high heels were a response to a practical need; they had to be dual-purpose, suitable for riding and convenient for walking.

Although high heels were worn by both men and women in the past, their use by each gender was different. European men’s shoes gained higher heels through a mix of fashion and class distinction (I have a horse; I don’t need to walk; I want a pair like the King’s). The chronology of the high heel for men shows how the high heel never challenged masculinity, the chronology of the high heel for women shows how femininity is a cultural construction.

Steele argues, ‘in the past, men wore clothing that was at least as erotic and extravagant as women’s clothing’ and ‘yet no one has suggested that changes in men’s fashions reflected... shifting sexual interests on the part of women’.

Men’s boots had high heels until the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> when, with improved coach design and the development of the railways, there was less demand for a boot designed to be pre-eminently suitable for riding. Today the pump has almost disappeared from the male wardrobe. Over the past two centuries the overwhelming historical trend has been toward flat and low heeled shoes for men. Ornamentation also has largely been eliminated from the male wardrobe. Related with this matter Manolo Blahnik claims that;

“Today men think only about comfort and economic success, not about following a code of behaviour. As a result, almost all the sartorial attributes of a leisured aristocracy- from delicate silks to embroidered high heeled shoes- were abandoned by men, and left to women.”

Another important factor speaking to the nuances of class and femininity is foot size. With 88 percent of surveyed women wearing shoes that are too small, there is clearly a remaining obsession with small feet. The high heel tapers the toes and arches the foot giving the appearance not only of eroticized curled toes but also the illusion of being small and delicate.

Perhaps the woman with the feet most renowned for their small size is the fabled Cinderella. Even though she had been relegated to a servant’s position, the prince of the kingdom fell in love with her at the ball. However, when she fled at midnight she left behind one impossibly small glass slipper. The prince then searched his kingdom for the woman whose feet were small enough to fit the slipper. He was in essence looking for the most refined, most feminine woman in the kingdom- and all of this from the size of her feet.

## **6.1. Sandals: Being Barefoot**

“The wonderful thing about flat sandals is that you have the feeling of being barefoot. It is pure liberation.” (Christian Louboutin)

Sandals have always been among the sexiest of shoe styles, because they leave the foot nearly naked. Few items of clothing emit as many different messages as sandals do. They range from the fuddy-duddy and dull to the glamorous and free. (McDowell

1989 p. 69) Above all, sandals are the simplest and most direct practical response to the need to protect the feet.

Sandals are so simple, it is not a surprise they were the first made footwear. 10,000 BC is the time scientists believe the early foot coverings started. All ancient civilization have its own version of the sandal. Sandals were the basic footwear of all Mediterranean cultures. There is little variation between Egyptian and Etruscan sandals; those of Greece and Rome are almost identical. Their openness and simplicity made them ideal for warm climates but, as they moved northwards and were more enclosed, they became the precursors of the modern boot.

A stiff sole fitted with a strap or a thong. In 3500 B.C. the Egyptians made prints of their feet in the sand, molded and braided papyrus for the soles. They were made to protect them from the rough terrain and hot sand, but they also made the foot almost completely bare and on display. The Egyptian took advantage by adorning their feet with jewels. The sole were made from poured gold and the straps were encrustations of rare stones.

Culture as radically different as ancient Rome and puritan New England agreed that respectable women must cover their feet. Within the Christian tradition the naked foot was regarded as impure and shameful. (Steele 1998 p. 90) In contrast, Wilcox notes, "The Greeks felt more dignified to walk barefooted in order to freely enjoy the rhythmic movement of one's body when walking." (Wilcox 1948)

Although sandals are one of the most ancient types of footwear, they were seldom worn in Europe after the fall of the Roman Empire. The only exception was during the Directoire period in France (1795-99), when sandals were temporarily revived as part of the neoclassical style.

Shoes revealed the status of their wearer, but sandals have been alternately symbols of prestige or poverty. Plain wooden sandals were worn by the poor in the middle ages; medieval priests and Franciscan monks wore them as a sign of dislike for worldly luxury. The sandals have gone out of fashion for almost 1,000 years, then they made a comeback in the 1920s. Although less conspicuous during the Depression and World War II, sandals came back into fashion in the 1950s, and never again fell out of style. The reappearance of sandals in the twentieth century thus marked a milestone in the history of footwear. In more general cultural terms, sandals were one aspect of the movement toward women's social and sexual liberation. Their significance parallels



women's new freedom to wear trousers, short skirts, and revealing swimwear. (Steele 1998, p. 106)

Whilst most young idealists followed the road to enlightenment and self discovery many rejected materialism displaying this symbolically by going barefoot. Beatniks and hippies also favored sandals; during the 60s and 70s, when they were first introduced from Germany to the United States, Birkenstocks, in particular, acquired the reputation of being a "crunchy granola" shoe, appropriate for hippies, hikers and lesbians. (Steele 1998, p. 106) Sandals became flat once again with the arrival of the Birkenstocks, but in the 70s there were high heeled disco sandals made of bright snakeskin and leathers. They were glamorous again with the addition of heels. By the end of the decade, newly liberated toes, nails painted, were out of high heeled sandals and soon scanty spaghetti strap styles were showcasing the entire world.

The disco style gave sandals a tacky reputation. It took the terrific work of designers such as Maud Frizon, Manolo Blahnik and Bennis Edwards in the 80s to give high-heeled sandals the sophistication while preserving their sexiness. Those designers showed us that the Egyptians were right: a well-designed sandal giving its wearer the ability to flirt right down to her toes.

Sport sandals have also emerged as an important style. They were invented in 1956 by brothers George and Ira Flop. In footwear and fashion, flip-flops are a kind of flat, backless sandal that consist of simple soles held on the foot by a V-shaped strap that passes between the toes and around either side of the foot, attached to the sole at three points. In American English, these are also known as thongs. In Hawaii, flip-flops are known as slippers. In many developing countries, especially in the tropics, rubber flip-flops are by far the cheapest manufactured footwear available.



Figure 6.3. Flip-Flop 2003  
(Source: WEB\_6 2004)

## 6.2. Boots

“Even ladies with awful legs, like huge columns, they get very masked by the boot. The best idea for covering up terrible mistakes of nature is the boot.” (Manolo Blahnik)

Boots convey a very different message than other kinds of shoes, because they not only cover the foot, they also have a “leg” that rises, at the very least to the ankle, often climbing to the calf, the knee or even halfway up the thigh. Legs are not only the organs of locomotion, they are also the pathway to the genitals, as well as constituting an erogenous zone of their own. (Steele 1998, p. 126)

No matter if they are stiletto or flat heeled, black or pink, knee high or demi ankle, boots instill you with a certain power.(Pond 1985) What, though, is the source of this power? As with most symbolism, the boots-power nexus derives largely from the history of this type of footwear.

Fine boots were important indicators of social status from before the sixteenth century until beyond World War I. Over the centuries their design gradually became less flamboyant but that did not reduce their importance. Sixteenth-century boots, as worn by the gentleman class, were extravagantly decorative. Long boots, of varying lengths did not become common before the 16th century, and were in any case heel-less. Real long boots giving support and protection to ankles and legs were not in common use before the mid 17th century, when heel making techniques had made progress. From this time on, army commanders began giving much greater attention to their soldiers’ feet, and the history of modern military footwear can be dated from this period. Up to 17th century, footwear had been virtually identical for both sexes although because women wore long skirts, which hid their feet, their shoes were less extravagantly decorated than men’s. Except for riding, women only rarely wore boots.

“Boots have long been associated with horseback riding, hunting and military use” says Steele. (Steele 1998, p. 126) This connection with horseback riding inevitably resulted in military connotations, since for millennia cavalymen were most formidable warriors. In feudal societies, like early modern Europe, the man on horseback was also the aristocrat, the knight, literally the *chevalier*. Thus, the boot implicitly symbolized both power and high status.

For seventeenth-century men, boots were the glamour footwear and they remained so for more than two hundred years. Although they changed shape, were

sometimes higher and sometimes wider, their message did not alter. Boots were macho. They made men want to swagger; they brought into the domestic scene overtones of hard riding, mighty battles and close male companionship. They were as chauvinist as the codpiece.

They were more commonly worn than shoes by men throughout the nineteenth century, and were regarded as more formal for day wear. (Pratt - Woolley 1999) Obviously, they have also had utilitarian functions in everyday life. Half-boots were more appropriate than long boots for wearing with trousers which, except for more formal occasions, were replacing breeches. (Pratt- Woolley 1999) Moreover, boots have not exclusively been worn by men. By 1830 fashions for non working women included boots. There was a return of the heel and the boots were worn short to the ankle, or just above. To give the appearance of daintiness, the boots were made on narrow lasts. Closely buttoned or tightly laced to the mid calf, the boot supported the ankle, presumably to reduce risk of sprains. Nevertheless, the predominant symbolism of boots has been masculine and militaristic. (WEB\_5 2004)

By the middle of the nineteenth century mass production meant the cost of boots became affordable to more people. No longer the a reliable sign of status, the boot became a symbol of emerging equality not just between the sexes, but also among the social groups (O’Keeffe 1996).



Figure 6.4. Leather Women Ankle Boots, 1850

(Source: WEB\_5 2004)

By the end of the 19th century hemlines began to raise, legs, ankles and feet took on greater importance. The idea of long legs has an appeal to both sexes. According to Steele (1985) Victorian fashion expressed neither the social and sexual repression of women nor male perceptions of them as primarily sexual beings. Victorian fashion revolved around an ideal of feminine beauty in which eroticism played an important part.

Steele also claims that, booted women have long been associated with Amozons, the *femmes conquérantes* of ancient mythology. The *Amazone* was a powerful erotic icon throughout the nineteenth century, celebrated in art literature for her strenght, courage, and grace. (Steele 1998, p. 132)

Generally speaking, the higher a woman's boot, the sexier it is percieved to be -- although the degree of eroticism varies also in relation to the height of the heel, and whether the boot is closely fitted to the leg, so as to reveal the shape of the calf. Nevertheless, even low boots still convey a message of sex and power. Ankle boots are a perennial fashion, and come in many forms, including the jodhpur boot, a traditional horsy style, and the granny boot, which is based on the Edwardian laced boot. (Steele 1998, p. 140)

The origins of the Cowboy Boot are well researched and started life as riding boots for the marauding Mongol tribesmen. Horsemen wore red wooden heels and conquered all before them. In the past, the only people who wore cowboy boots were cowboys. Over the past quarter of a century, however, cowboy boots have become incorporated into the fashion vocabulary, for both women and men. As a special subcategory of riding boots, cowboy boots obviously evoke the horsemen of the Wild West, so the symbolism of the boots is directly related to the symbolism of the cowboy. (Steele 1998, p. 141)



Figure 6.5. Cowboy Boots  
(Source: WEB\_5 2004)

Men and women who wear cowboy boots tend to identify with some element of the cowboy myth. The boots first entered fashion via the country-and western music scene, and remain a staple of the western wear industry. By the late 70s, however, cowboy boots had appeared on the disco scene, and were worn by such unlikely urban cowboys as Andy Warhol and Catherine Deneuve. When John Travolta starred in a movie about urban cowboys, the popularity of cowboy boots rose again. The modern concept of the cowboy as the working gentleman and hero, honest and true, is of course a myth perpetuated by Hollywood. Suede fringed jackets, blue jeans and t-shirts reached

a peak of fashionability after World War II, but quite the most sought-after items of cowboy costume were the boots.

The cowboy has also long been a gay icon, because of his extreme masculinity. Because cowboys have a such macho image, their boots are permitted to be far more colorful and ornamental than the usual male footwear. They are also among the very few men's styles to have high heels.



Figure 6.6. Biker Boots  
(Source: WEB\_5 2004)

Biker boots are another quintessentially masculine style, symbolizing the existential outsider – this time mounted on a motorized substitute for the horse. Central to the success of Bikers was their distinctive style. McDowell points out; “as the falsity of the traditional film cowboy as male hero was exposed, the new style, urban cowboy took his place in the iconography of heroism. Instead of a horse he rode a motorbike, which was customized every bit as elaborately as Roy Rogers’ saddle and boots.”(McDowell 1989, p. 84) The boots of the easy riders were, like their wearers, a paler version of the cowboy’s, stripped of most of the decoration.

Like the rest of the biker’s clothing, his boots are clearly functional: made of heavy leather, they protect his ankles from the heat of the engine and the exhaust pipe, and their thick soles protect his feet, which not infrequently drag along the surface of the road.(Steele 1998, p.142)They also gave a mechanical advantage to the biker when holding on to the pedals not to mention a buccaneer quality.(WEB\_5 2004) According to Steele, just as the biker himself is envisioned as being much more aggressive and rebellious than the cowboy, so also are his boots. Gay pornography that focuses on bikers stresses that the biker boot symbolizes an ultra-masculine person.

With the introduction of the mini in the 60’s women’s legs were more exposed and fashion designers created ankle and knee length boots to accentuate the new look. Thigh high boots enjoyed a degree of popularity too. By coincidence the boots often captured kinks or folds and were nicknamed as “kinky boots”. The youth of the

decade's preoccupation with promiscuity, meant instant success for these "go go boots". (WEB\_5 2004) Kinky boots, long the trademark of the professional dominatrix, first became fashionable in the 1960s as a part of the sexual revolution. Kinky boots had high heels and covered the leg at least to the knee – and often to the thigh. They frequently laced or buttoned closed. Go-go boots were popularized by Nancy Sinatra's song, "These Boots Were Made For Walking," and soon became a symbol of the 1960s. A white, flat-heeled version of the boot was first created by designer Andres Courreges. Other designers followed suit with boots in a variety of colours, materials, and styles.



Figure 6.7. Go Go Boots, 1960  
(Source: WEB\_5 2004)

In the seventies the US oil recession meant expensive fashion boots fell from fashion and. The youths from the suburbs were preferring an alternative life style which meant back to basic rock. The new rockers were punk and wore clothes more suited to bondage. This generation took to wear heavy-duty industrial style boots. The once ultra conservative, Dr Martens shoes became the trademark of urban youth excited by violence. Dr Klaus Martens started to produce the air condition soles in 1947, but its popularity took until 1960 to peak. Its air-cushioned sole was the important thing for him. Doc Marten boots became the trademark of urban youth and were associated with the alternative Punk movement. They have brought the aggression.



Figure 6.8. Doctor Marten Boots, 1990  
(Source: WEB\_6 2004)

They were also the first cross over shoes of the twentieth century and became a unisex fashion. Many psychologists believe the aggressive boot presented the ultimate paradox of style especially when worn by women and gay men the shoes at one level projected a macho aggressiveness, which belied the real feelings of the wearer. This was perhaps indicative of the confusion of roles and the blurring of distinctions within contemporary society. With its patented sole and trends no competitor has ever attempted to copy its world famous features.

“Towards the end of the sixties as music went underground (heavy metal) an alternative culture grew and listened to the music of Jamaican Ska. Blue beat suited the small clubs where the early ravers danced the night away. Robust footwear was the order of fashion and Doc Martin became the shoes to wear. Servicable yet fashionable the heavy duty boots were useful in a rumble and could be worn by either sex. Unisex was definately in fashion,” writes Kippen in her article. (WEB\_5 2004)

In the late eighties fashion has exploited the contrasts of mismatched items of clothing which are paired in such a way as to break all the accepted rules. Many clubs have been full of girls in mini skirts and lace tops worn with DMs to temper the message of feminine frailty and vulnerability with a degree of thougness and self-reliance.

Doc Marten had a great influence on leisure styles and became the indicator of the confusion of roles and the blurring of distinctions.



Figure 6.9. Beattle Boots, 1960  
(Source:WEB\_ 4 2005)

When the Beatles arrived, they came wearing boots with Cuban heels. Beatle boots were high heeled, Chelsea Boots which instantly became vogue. They just

chopped off the end. A point of interest the Beatle Boot was less macho and resembled the style of boot favoured by Victorian ladies. Whilst not effeminate it was distinctly a softer less aggressive style than brothel creepers and winkle pickers. The boots often incorporated a French seam or central stitch running from ankle to toe on the upper. In the convention of symbols this referred to female genitalia rather the phallus of long toed or winklepicker shoes.

The platform boot was popular with the Glam rockers of the seventies. Platform soles gave the height challenged an advantage they would otherwise not have had. Abba took the new platform boots to knee and thigh length extremes. Made in all sorts of material synthetic and natural the fashion passed with the death of disco.

However it remained popular as drag sartoria only to re-appear more recently in the nineties with “girl power”.

### **6.3. Sexless Sneakers**

The sneaker is the most powerful and lasting shoe design of 20<sup>th</sup> century. Quite apart from its strenght as a design in its own right, it is of great importance as the precursor of the training shoe which is perhaps second only to the clog as the universally democratic footwear worn by people of all ages and nationalities. (Mcdowell 1989, p.134)

Although sport shoe manufacturers insist that they are interested only in function, not in fashion and they talk about stability, traction, and support, the driving force of new athletic-shoe design is not merely performance. The use of athletic shoes for casual wear and fashion play a large role in shaping their appearance and features.

According to Richard Wharton, known as ‘sneaker guru’, there are types of people who wear sneakers. He draws a pyramid, and explains that at the bottom of the pyramid are the “Clueless”. Most people, he says, are clueless. This includes even the most avid *fashionistas*, for whom sneakers – like sports, in general – tend to be an unknown field of expertise. At the top of the pyramid are a small group of people who have never worn a proper pair of shoes, except funeral. Also he adds that they usually work in the media and/or graphic design, sometimes even in fashion, although they are more attuned to visual style than fashion *per se*. In 1998, for example, they were



wearing Nike Humaras – specifically, the Air Terra Humara, which *Vogue* described as “the hot high-tech shoe of the moment.”

Next in Wharton’s list come the so-called Designer Bofs. “They have no brand allegiance,” he says. “They wear the latest style. That could be the Nike Humara, or Adidas Badlander, which Wharton characterizes as ‘just brilliant’.”

The third category of people who wear trainers Wharton calls “Football Lads.” These are the mainstream guys who wear trainers that are comfortable and classic. “They will never wear anything outrageous,” he notes. Although Wharton felt that there was “no female equivalent” to the Football Lad, women might also be attracted to these styles for the same reason.

Although soccer is phenomenally popular in Europe, in the United States fashionable sport is basketball. Thus, within the United States, Wharton’s categories would have to be modified to take account of the significance of basketball shoes. Moreover, since professional basketball is dominated by African-Americans, the significance of sport shoes in America has a pronounced racial component.

Techno Urban Warriors make up the other category. They are young and they have no brand allegiance. “They’re very urban, very street, the kind who wear army pants and platform trainers. In United States, they are often skateboarders,” observes Wharton.

Thirty- and forty- somethings are Wharton’s last category. “They are still trendy,” he says. “Look at Mick Jagger. They go into classics such as Adidas Superstars, Converse Jack Purcells. Those have been around since 1950s, they’re low-tech, old-school, but they look good.” (Pond 1985)

The sneaker is a relatively modern invention with its roots in the Industrial Revolution.. The word ‘sneaker’ was first used in 1875 and it referred to the early croquet shoe which had been developed in the United States using the newly invented vulcanizing process to make rubber soles for the white canvas uppers. On January 24, 1899, Humphrey O’Sullivan received the first patent for a rubber heel for shoes.

The first popular sneaker was introduced in the United States in 1917 under the name Keds, which “combined the Latin *ped*, ‘foot’, with a ‘K’ for ‘kid’.” (Steele 1998,

p. 169) This was the classic “tennis shoe”. The Converse All-Star with its boot-like high top was introduced two years later, and for many years became the world’s most popular sneaker. The high supportive ankle made this sneaker especially good for sports like basketball. The Converse model has been one of the longest running success stories in the world of shoes. The originals, the Converse Performance Classics, have become known as the “old school” models, but Converse prefers the term “First School.”

World War II interrupted production of sneakers for the public as factories switched to produce items in support of the massive war effort and raw materials became scarce. After the cessation of hostilities, the slow rise in the popularity of sneakers resumed. Other major brand, Puma, was also founded at this time after Rudolph Dassler split with Adi Dassler in a feud. Rudi Dassler set up shop across town and the Puma brand was born.

The 1950s witnessed another increase in the amount of leisure time available to families. The Baby Boom began and sneakers officially became the choice shoe for American youth as school dress codes relaxed. The sneaker went through many design modifications before coming a popular teenage fashion in the late 1950s. Symbols of rebellious youth, such as teen icon James Dean was photographed wearing his Levis jeans, a t-shirt and white sneakers, gave sneakers a sexual quality, that made his lure even stronger. Possibly because they were inexpensive in virtually every country, they soon became the universal footwear of the burgeoning student classes. McDowell notes in his book, Elvis Presley was followed by very young fans of both sexes, all wearing sneakers, saddle shoes (their close relation) or loafers – which were in their turn to become a world, symbolizing middle-class, Ivy League attitudes. (McDowell 1989, p. 168) From then on, these cheap, durable shoes became part of the official uniform of kids around the world. The following timeline will illustrate the technological and cultural history of the sneaker.

In the 1970s informality became entwined with the cult of health. Sneakers came into their own in the 70s as jogging became the new fashionable sport and created a need for a special shoe used just for the purpose of jogging.

“Jane Fonda put ‘working out’ on the map; aerobics and jogging caught the imagination of all age groups and city parks were suddenly full of young and old taking

exercise. The result was that special footwear which had been devised for athletes was bought in millions of pairs by people newly ‘hooked’ on exercise.” (McDowell 1989, p. 103)

In 1971 sneaker technology took a step forward with the first Nike. Named for the Greek goddess of victory, they featured innovative “waffle” soles, wedge heels, and nylon uppers. The development of these running shoes coincided with the fad for jogging. Technology created a need for exercise apart from work and the shoes to perform this exercise. Until this time, manufacturers had been concerned with high production, but now they began to focus on marketing shoes for a lifestyle purpose. Shoes for walking, running shoes, football shoes, basketball shoes-- every sport needed its own shoes- and then you needed another pair of sneakers for just casual wear.



Figure 6.10. Nike Swoosh Logo

(Source: WEB\_ 12 2005)

The Swoosh logo of Nike is a graphic design created by Caroline Davidson in 1971. It represents the wing of the Greek Goddess NIKE. The Nike swoosh is a symbol with enormous power, an appropriate and meaningful symbol for a company that marketed running shoes. The “just do it” campaign communicated such a strong point of view to the target market that the meaning of the symbol evolved into a battle cry and way of life for an entire generation.

By the 80s, sneakers were everywhere. Athletic shoes diversify and gain popularity. Even more influential was the fitness boom of the early 1980s. The majority of the people who began taking fitness classes were women, but there were no sport shoes designed for their needs. (Steele 1998, p. 172-3) In 1982 Reebok created the first athletic shoe aimed specifically at the female consumer. These shoes are the result of the individualization of women, and an outcome of the feminist movement which demands that women feel comfortable with themselves.

Young women began demanding an alternative to high heels and women appeared to be much more likely to choose shoes for comfort. The image of a power-suited woman in athletic shoes rushing off to work is quintessential 80s. Quotes such as “It’s harder to climb the ladder of success in high heels” were taken seriously. Some women began dressing in mannish simplicity. Many women began wearing sneakers to work, carrying their pumps in a briefcase.

Inevitably, the exercise craze passed, but the demand for training shoes, known as trainers, did not. Young people liked them for their informality and older people liked them because they were broad-based and cushion-soled and so accommodated the foot in comfort. Also everyone liked them because they were cheaper than traditional shoes. Trainers became a cliché on the streets.

Woody Allen wore them to the ballet, Led Zeppelin wore them in their 1976 documentary, and Dustin Hoffman wore them while playing reporter Carl Bernstein in the movie *All the President’s Men*. The shoes originally developed for sports became the mainstay for most people. Nike and Reebok were the market leaders while older brands Adidas and Converse were nearly in ruins. Newer companies came in and out of fashion and the industry began shelling out large amounts of money for sports endorsements. A major footnote in the ‘Sneaker Era’ is the signing of basketball player Michael Jordan to a contract with Nike to produce and endorse his own signature line of shoes. Today, the Nike Swoosh and the Jordan Jumpman are icons and require no introduction.

Hip hop performers popularized several brands during the late 80s and soon stories began appearing in the news about children being shot for their sneakers. Shoe companies perfected their fashion and marketing skills by the 1990s. Sports endorsements grew larger and marketing budgets went through the roof. Sneakers became a statement and definition of identity and personality rather than humble athletic aids. It is interesting to note that during the period of time between the 1970s and the 1990s, sneakers suddenly became athletic shoes and major brands like Nike and Reebok divorced themselves and their products from the humble rubber and canvas sneakers and their history as technology advanced. The history of sneakers or athletic shoes as manufacturers would prefer them to be called became diversified at this point and is reflected best in the individual histories of the major brands.

Nike is also an example of what postmodern theorist Frederick Jameson (1984) calls the postmodern and global logic of "late capitalism." Cole (1997) argues, for example, that Nike parades itself as a postmodern corporation: "... a technologically hip and innovative corporation that prioritizes public issues and cares about public well-being.". Nike uses popular sports and media stars to tell stories that construct what is "hip" and "chic" in popular culture. Nike skillfully stories itself as a champion of women and minorities with re-cycled inner-city slogans like "just do it," images of successful minority athletes such as Michael Jordan, Jackie Joyner-Kersey, and Tiger Woods. Nike aligns the Swoosh with visions of social justice in ads with Jackie Robinson and Martin Luther King Jr. Activists point out the irony as Nike passes itself off as hero, the model postmodern virtual organization, offering itself as a solution to youth-violence, while operating female and child labor work camps in Asian countries.

Skateboarding became an enormous international craze early in the 1970s. But despite its popularity, Skaters did not begin to form into a coherent, visually identifiable subculture until much later the decade. Up to this point skating was a hobby rather than an identity, a sport rather than a way of life. As far as appearance style was concerned, however, there was little to distinguish Skaters from Surfers. Both groups wore extra-large, brightly patterned oversized shorts, graphic T-shirts and Vans. This style had been invented by the Surfers and it was logical that their sidewalk counterparts should find it appropriate to their needs. (Polhemus 1994, p. 86)

Until late in 1997, Air Jordan Shoes were a part of the Nike, Inc. family. Nike unveiled a new marketing plan in 1997 and Jordan became its own sub-brand of Nike with the release of The Air Jordan XIII, Air Jordan Team, and Air Jordan Trainers. From this point on, Jordan Brand products do not feature the Nike name or Nike Swoosh, and their only connection to Nike is a fine print address for Nike headquarters to be used for insurance purposes.

According to Nike's fans, Nike is not a staid mainstream brand, it's the "undisputed king". Time and again, Nike has innovated in the quality of its actual sneakers (appealing to athletes), in the way those sneakers look (appealing to the lifestyle wearer), and in edgy ways to promote them.

The athletic shoe industry's impact spreads far beyond the economic realm. Now shoe companies are viewed as agent of social change, sparking fitness movement, breaking down racial, class and gender barriers (or some would say, building them up).

One thing Nike fans and the antipreneurs criticizing the brand seem to have in common is the idea that a sneaker can stand for something much bigger than footwear. Bobbito Garcia -- author of the recent book *Where'd You Get Those?* , a blend of memoir, sociology, and the cataloglike history of urban sneaker culture -- makes the case for sneakers as nothing less than symbols of personal identity. He did some consulting for Nike in the 1990s, but in the book he blames the company and others for the advertising onslaught that made sneakers a mass lifestyle phenomenon. Nevertheless, he praises Nike's quality and its marketing savvy. And he questions the antistrategies of its upstart opponents: Like politicians who go negative, attacks on a widely respected brand are more likely to turn people off than rally a following; you can't build an identity by being not something else.



Figure 6.11. Nike Shoes and Lifestyle

(Source: WEB\_12 2005)

At the Vancouver International Hip-Hop Film Festival, one documentary, *Sneakers*, offered some insight. Netherlands director Femke Wolting tracked the progression of the sneaker from functional sportswear to a marker of cultural identity. He interviewed shoe historian Scoop Jackson, who believes that American ghettos inspired the global sneaker explosion. Young black men in the inner city experienced low employment rates and had little spending money, Jackson argues. With no jobs to dress up for and limited funds, they made cheap basketball shoes like Converse the footwear of choice.

As time went on, running shoes became a status symbol. Sporting brand-new designer kicks demonstrated that one was moving up; conspicuous consumerism was a way of asserting identity in the face of harsh economic and social realities. When hip-hop artists exploded onto the international stage, they transformed sneakers into high fashion. The track "My Adidas", for instance, saw Run-DMC popularize 'hood style

and skyrocket sales for the shell-toed shoe. When Michael Jordan teamed up with Nike for the Air Jordan, sneaker culture hit the mainstream in a big way.

In the mid part of the 20th century, the sneaker become a more common cultural phenomenon with emphasis being put on new technologies for athletes. Without a doubt, sneakers, or trainers, have become one of today's most fashionable items of clothing. Certainly, events within society contributed as much or more than technological advancements to the growing popularity of sneakers. In a recent survey made in United States shows that, 30 percent of the women aged 20 to 30 wore athletic shoes to work, and none wore high heels. Among women between 41 and 50 years old, 21 percent wore athletic shoes and 3 percent wore high-heeled shoes.

## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSION

The importance and meaning of shoes go so deeply into a woman's spirit, into her heart. It is no wonder that the shoe has become an object of fixation, obsession and love. Warner claims, "feet and shoes are ascribed telltale marks of identity and origin, since they are the lowest part of the body and in touch with the earth as opposed to the heavens." (Warner 1995)

In today's world of glitzy-glam consumerism and self-discovery, every accessory can be an attempt to encapsulate and define one's perfect self image. Quoting from Ferriss and Benstock, it can be claimed, "...satisfaction we take in having purchased a pair of shoes that 'is us,' that represents us... The fashionable dress of the Western world is one means whereby an always fragmentary self is glued together into a semblance of unified identity. Shoes serve as markers of gender, class, race, ethnicity, and even sexuality." (Ferriss and Benstock, 2001, p. 4) There is no doubt that, shoes not only reflect the personality of the wearer and, by the shapes they form through wear, tell how he or she walks and stands (in themselves quite strong indicators of personality), they also reveal the character by showing how the individual reacts to fashion.

In this research, it was discussed, what is it that makes shoes often seem so much more personal than other articles of clothing. Obviously, for many people it has to do with comfort, which brings with a sense of well-being. These days we take comfort for granted but for the majority of people well-fitting footwear became possible only with the advent of mass-production. As said McDowell, life is not only a matter of comfort, however, and it is not the fit of shoes but their style that can give us the feeling that we have wings on even if, in reality, we are being crippled. (McDowell 1989, p. 10) Like all clothes, shoes affect our self-esteem.

Shoes have always denoted lifestyle and one's place both in the formal and informal sectors of society. As the famous Forrest Gump says, "There is an awful lot you can tell about a person by their shoes --- Where they going, where they been..." (Forrest Gump 1994) For example, in high heels, one is clearly going "somewhere" in both the literal and metaphorical sense.



According to Katie, in the case of high heels tend to say one of two things about a person. More importantly still is the many-layered sexual and fetishistic meanings infused into high heels. Throughout the history, they are the most common sexual fetish. The stiletto heel is a fundamental part of the contemporary pornographic code. Fetishistic images may hold great appeal for some younger women, for whom high heeled shoes- and stilettos in particular- now carry connotations of rebellion against the established customs of “nice” femininity. Thus young women have rejected thousands of years of patriarchal morality. In this study, the high heeled shoe was discussed as a cultural icon which through its lifetime has been described as both a “symbol of female subjugation” and most recently as one of female sexual independence and it was looked at fetishes from a shoe fashion perspective. Much of the evidence used to explain fetishes was based on biological sex and gender roles.

According to one recent feminist analysis of the trend, the stiletto heel symbolizes “*liberation* rather than subordination.” Instead of being the instrument of a passive, conventionally feminine enslavement, the high heel has been reinterpreted as the symbol of a rebellious, assertive, modern woman. (Steele 1998, p. 36)

With so many gendered implications, it is clear that patriarchal values still permeate society dividing men and women into masculine and feminine worlds and furthermore into hierarchal categories. But the end result does not have to be submission or devaluation. Women, and others, can refuse degrading victimization and reclaim that which is ours both within and without overarching systems. High heels belong to the traditional feminine realm but do not subordinate. They instead radiate dominance; perhaps in a subversive and gendered form, but nonetheless it is dominance and most importantly – a woman’s dominance.

In contrast, the other social realm in which high heels are pervasive is the upper class. Kaite says, “The initial association between rank, wealth, and certain styles and fabrics is made: silk and the high heel are for the leisured classes, the bourgeois classes.” (Kaite 1993) From Catherine de Medici and the ladies of the French court to Manolo Blahnik’s “limousine shoes,” high heels proclaim wealth and status.

When looking at high heels and the upper class connotation of today, Tamsin Blanchard says, “a similar psychology of wealth and status may still be operating, the richer you are, the higher the heels, and the more likely it is that you only have to

walk a few short, painful steps from your limousine to your destination.” (WEB\_8 2005)

Today the search for style has taken over from the desire to be fashionable. The ultimate effect of fashion is to make everyone look alike; having style means accepting the broad flow of fashion but making it individual to oneself. According to McDowell, one way in which people have tried to ‘personalize’ their appearance is by having their shoes made uniquely to their specification – a luxury reserved only for the very rich. But for those who could afford it, exotic footwear was a marvellously self-indulgent way of looking distinguished.

Contemporary fashion is characterised by a huge number of styles. There is no one dominant shoe shape that is worn by everyone. There are however, strong trends – with people tending to buy flats one season, heels in another. Trainers and sports shoes have continued to be popular, as have heavy soled boots and shoes inspired by traditional workwear.

Shoes have evolved from very standard things to models of all shapes and sizes; gone from wardrobe staples to create cultural icons. They are very important icons in today’s society yet the origins and significance are lost to most of us. And, as cultural icons, shoes have come to represent those in the East and West and across generations as well. Designers take inspiration from other cultures, shoes of the past or the work of other designers. The appeal of shoes is unisex. With diversity, expression, and individualism, shoes represent modern society’s progression into the 21st century.

Consequently, as excitedly observed by the editors of *On Fashion* at the outset: “Nothing stands outside fashion’s dictates. Urban chic, terrorism and tribalism, rage and rapture all have their mode – ‘attitude dressing’”. Identity are clothed, so to speak. As the quotes doubtlessly imply, fashion and shoes are more than (but also) a matter of personal attitude and posturing; it encompasses and impacts collectivities both First and Third World, and it is part of the contemporary aestheticization of everyday life. Accordingly, shoes, like fashion, invite allegorical and symptomatic readings, serving as an increasingly significant sociopolitical indicator, which we saw in the cases of youth subcultures.

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