Chapter Two:
Corporeal Cloths: Shapes, Forms, and Fashion Bodies

Figure 2.1: Fashion in motion

Motion is integral to fashion performance. I propose two high fashion editorials with significant movements, in both corporeality and materiality, to argue that fashion too has a choreography. With dancers in crimson pleated gowns and opened coats, photographer Francis Giacobetti freezes the elevated bodies and layers them in a collective collage for *Pleats Please*’s promotional photographs. In a similar
fashion, *Dynamic Blooms* features a choreographic duet between a Polish international model, Monika Jagaciak, and Benjamin Warbis, a principal dancer from the Michael Clark Company, who has also performed in many fashion venues. Here, Knight captures the fashion bodies at the peak of their energetic performance as he commands Jagaciak’s body to spin and fall in Warbis’s embraces in order to display and open up each tassel in Versace’s nude dress to the greatest distance. He also composes a technique of collage doubling Jagaciak’s lower body in the opposing direction to amplify dynamism of the fringed dress. Whether the required movements are improvised, directed, or specifically designed, this labour of fashion performance demands great degrees of corporeal techniques and calls upon specific knowledge of choreographies in order to produce visual materials that seize spectatorship, display fashion commodities and arouse appetite for fashion consumption.

By highlighting motion in fashion performance, it is evident that the practice has been embedded in interdisciplinary frameworks between dance and fashion and thus operates under the promotional and socio-political control of fashion economies. The existing practices demand further choreographic analyses and deeper understanding of interrelationships amongst fabrics, garments, corporeal alignments and chosen choreographies. The issues coincide with my preliminary research and questions raised in Chapter One which seek further investigation of the connections between choreography and fashion merchandise (see Figure 1.6 and point 1.1). Moreover, media such as photographs and films regularly mediate fashion performances. Poses and movements purposefully executed as a solo sequence become a collective partnering between the fashion bodies and the camera lens. This collaboration requires an additional set of studies, particularly in image composition and post-production techniques, such as editing, in order to read the performance of the fashion trade. As a result, my analytical approach functions as a choreography in itself, as I attempt to juxtapose seemingly disparate disciplines in order to create a coherent structure that instantiates my claim for the interrelationship between fashion, choreography and photography in this chapter. I am creating a taxonomy of the different components that, I argue, make up the choreographed fashion shoot. My visual analysis provides a model for how images are examined in subsequent chapters. At the crossovers between fashion and dance, it is essential to draw certain connections between the two disciplines and establish a methodological framework, particularly on the kinetic language, to read and translate choreographic elements that
make up fashion choreography. The main purpose of the chapter is to set the methodological frameworks to visual analyses from dance studies to body theories, art history, and media studies that will be further conducted in the subsequent chapters and discussed throughout the course of this thesis.

The choreographic components fall into three categories: shapes, forms, and motion. The first subheading examines notions of shapes and forms in high fashion garments. It then shifts its focus onto shapes and forms in fashion bodies and the interrelationships amongst choreographic shapes, spatial designs and fashion commodities featured in the performance. In this section, I will draw upon Lois Elfeldt 1974 book, *A Primer for Choreographers*, which illustrates basic principles of shapes and forms in choreography, and apply these concepts to the area of fashion design and performance. I will also apply shaping theories developed from Laban Movement Analysis onto fashion corporeality and argue for the interconnections between choreographic shapes and high fashion silhouettes. The final subheading examines the concept of motion in fashion performance. I firstly illustrate motion in fashion materials and introduce Rudolf Laban’s approach to effort and shape theories to illustrate flow, weight, time, and space factors. These are key components that countlessly circulate in high fashion products and dictate corporeal performance and movement qualities. Visual materials include catwalk presentations, editorials, and fashion films. The chapter closes with ‘The Art of Walking’, where I articulate postures and walks as well as conducting choreographic readings of the movements to construct a runway modelling technique. I turn to Mauss’s (1979), Entwistle’s (2015), Evans’s (2013) and Foster’s (1997) notions of “the body of technique” and the “hired” body in relation to Laban’s effort-shape theories to further theorise my readings of the performance and map the interrelationships between commodities and fashion corporeality.

Methodologically, I compose series of visual materials (i.e. photographs and video clips) but divided them into thematic groupings. Each set of photographs responds directly to the subheading of shapes, forms, gestures, and motion in fashion performance. I utilise these images to further illustrate visual and detailed movement analyses that draw on textile and costume construction in relation to the moving bodies. I also employ comparative studies within the thematic groupings. This is the case when I fix one high fashion garment as a controlled variable and record each achieved effects, both visual and kinetic, when different choreographies are executed.
to display the same garment. Images employed in this chapter also underpin my predominant visual methodology and choreographic readings of the fashion trade. This allows me to formulate arguments for the notion of choreographing fashion and the influence of modern and post-modern dance choreographies in twenty-first-century high fashion that I will present in the subsequent chapters. What I provide is a kinetic language to read fashion choreography in general while also allowing for the possibility to think how modern and post-modern dance choreography can be used to describe trends in fashion which can then be mobilised by the industry to transform the mode of display in high fashion performance.

2.1. Shapes and forms in fashion choreographies

Shapes and forms are one of the fundamental concepts in fashion design. Manufacturers, advertisers, and consumers employ the terms to identify bodily silhouettes and volumes of the garments. There is a distinct difference between shapes and forms, and fashion professionals have defined the two terms differently. For the purpose of this thesis discussion, I use the term shape to refer to two-dimensional figures, such as dots, lines, levelled surfaces, and defined silhouettes whilst I associate form with three-dimensional volumes, such as cones, cubes, pyramids, and spheres. For example, the term shape can be used to describe a garment at its flat pattern-cutting stage. Flattened in its two-dimensional pattern, an A-line dress denotes a triangular shape as the eyes draw the outline of the garment. This is not usually associated with the volume of the dress, which is a near cone. Similarly, a circular skirt refers to the shape of a circle in the pattern-cutting stage of the garment rather than labelling the drape, flare, and volume in its three-dimensional form.

Led by visual materials, this section establishes how shapes and forms are constructed, displayed, celebrated and contested in luxury fashion. First, it focuses on shapes and forms at the stage of production design, where I demonstrate how designers arrange shapes onto high fashion clothing and translate two-dimensional flat patterns into three-dimensional sculpted forms. I will then look at ideal bodies and the notable silhouettes adorned in high fashion in relation to shapes and forms. This will lead to the final section, where I investigate how the industry employs shapes and forms, a fundamental concept of choreography, to display fashion commodities. In providing choreographic readings of the images set in thematic groupings, the photos allow me to formulate collective patterns between shapes and forms that run through
every aspect of fashion choreographies. This analytical framework dependent on visual materials enables me to develop the key point of this thesis, namely for the close yet perhaps unacknowledged relationship between high fashion products, corporeality and spatial design in fashion performance.

a) Shapes and forms in high fashion clothing

Throughout my vocational training and professional practice, shapes and forms are the fundamental concepts explored in fashion design. For instance, Central Saint Martins, a formalistic fashion design institution in London, sets up the White Project as the first assessment in their design curriculum for first year students who are asked to produce their first collection in stark white. It assesses how aspiring designers understand, construct, and challenge existing aspects of fashion design, particularly notions of shapes and forms. In other words, the aims and objectives of the assessment enable students to really engage with the concepts of shape and form, not colour. They must successfully show this knowledge before proceeding onwards to adding colour and other design aspects to their individual collections.

In high fashion practice, shapes and forms are thoroughly constructed, displayed, celebrated and contested throughout the history of fashion. Focusing on the construction of shape in twenty-first-century high fashion, Figure 2.2 illustrates how designers choose to embrace vivid graphics and varieties of digital prints, a central figure in fashion design, in their collections which later became design signature. To best illuminate the subject of shape circulated in high fashion design, I select corporeal technique of walking as a controlled mode of display in order to draw attention solely to the garments. I also investigate this clothing in its two-dimensional outline as translated into medium of catwalk photography. Figure 2.2a features international model Kristina Salinovic in Vivienne Westwood’s deconstructed, draped, ankle length tunic dress. The fabric calls upon primary pigment of crimson, indigo, lemon and forest green alternated with kohl running in long rhythmic strips from the neckline down to the hem. Stiffness in its fabric also presents the skirt in octagonal plane, a shape drawn from the horizontal waistline that flares out to the knee level before it tapers towards the hemline at the ankles. By displaying these vivid stripes through flat panels of the skirt, it reinforces verticality in the cloth. I have drawn a hexagonal shape and cross axes over the images to amplify the visual readings of shapes and forms in Westwood’s designs (see Figure 2.2: second row
Elsewhere in the garment, the shape of these thin straight lines breaks and crosses in various axes as the garment twists and drapes in response to its deconstructed pattern.

Figure 2.2: Shapes in British high fashion and the visual analyses

Figure 2.2a (left column): Kristina Salinovic in striped draped tunic dress, *The Only One collection*, look 48, Vivienne Westwood Spring/Summer 2011 Ready-to-wear, Paris Fashion Week, 30 September 2010;

Figure 2.2b (middle column): Codie Young in geometric and floral maxi dress, look 13, Paul Smith Spring/Summer 2013 Ready-to-wear collection, London Fashion Week, 16 September 2012;

Figure 2.2c (right column): Manon Leloup in structured warrior dress, look 13, Peter Pilotto Autumn/Winter 2013, London Fashion Week, 18 February 2013.

Another British fashion designer, Paul Smith, famous for his use of colour palettes, patterns, and humoristic twists in his classic British talent, parades his 2013
collection dense with graphic shapes and abstract floral design. In Figure 2.2b, the maxi dress features turquoise, black, rust, mustard and cream panelling run in bias cutting that meets at the centre seams. In his fabrics, Smith orchestrates the shape of coloured panels asymmetrically playing with various scales of proportion. A medium-sized black panel that runs over the right bust meets the turquoise plane at the seam. They are both adjacent to a large cream shape of italicised rectangles adorned with coloured lines of various sizes. Prior to reaching the black and rust planes at the hemline, Smith overrides these diagonal strips with a bold floral print. The direction of the flower toys with the silhouette of the dress that flares out in an A-line shape as the filament of the flower climbs up the slope of the skirt and blossoms towards the model’s bust. Moreover, the diagonal shape in each panel that meets at the centre seam pays homage to the neckline of the dress that runs in a deep V (see Figure 2.2 second row centre for visual demonstration).

Finally, in Figure 2.2c, fashion model Manon Leloup strides down the runway in Peter Pilotto’s structured warrior dress. The brand comes from artistic partnership between Christopher De Vos, who envisions structural play in womenswear pattern cutting and Peter Pilotto, who designs the fabrics that consistently contain opulent prints captured in vibrant colour for the collection. The garment celebrates the notion of shape in fashion design to a large extent. In its silhouettes, Pilotto’s dress embraces the shape of the female contour as it runs from the high neckline to exaggerated shoulders plates cut in semi-circle. It then follows the conceptual V line of the model’s torso and nips in at the waistline before curving over the hip and tapering towards the knee in a pencilled shape with a high front slit. The notion of shape is further apparent as De Vos and Pilotto’s design is dense with graphics and layering details. De Vos places printed shoulder yokes over an electric blue bodice emblazoned with zigzag white lines and black abstract hour-glassed panels. To separate the yoke from the bodice, De Vos runs a white strip over the bust line. He then lays the tilted hemline of the bodice over the wrapped pencil-shape of the dress with black and white strips that run parallel to the opened slit to exuberantly visualising the overlaps. In the printed panels, Pilotto composes gradated greyscale triangles that sharply cut over curled floral design in monochrome. Maya Singer (2013, p.1), a fashion journalist from style.com website, commented on the collection stating that
Pilotto and De Vos reverted back to *form* [my italics]. There were new shapes of printed puffer jackets, and pencil dresses in kaleidoscopic patterns, and iterations of the now-familiar Pilotto nipped-waist, full-skirt dress silhouette, albeit with an inventive construction that utilized 3-D printing techniques.

The emphasis on the new forms of “puffer jackets”, “pencil dresses in kaleidoscopic patterns”, and “nipped-waist, full-skirt dress silhouette” supports my visual reading of De Vos and Pilotto’s garment where I see notions of forms constructed in fashion commodities. Although the photograph flattens the three dimensional form to a two dimensional shape, it is the use of choreography on the catwalk, or during the photo shoot, that marries the two-dimensional with the three-dimensional. As a result, I stress the significance of a choreographic strategy to literally bring, or corporealis, the high fashion garment to life. By performing visual analyses of these images, I suggest that the garments exemplify experimentation of forms in twenty-first-century high fashion. This is the case when designers explore the notion of form and construct it in their design.²

From shapes to forms, fashion is the art of moulding two-dimensional fabrics into three-dimensional sculptures working in tandem with female contours. Certain production techniques, such as introducing darts and seams at the pattern cutting stage or draping toile over dummies, allow designers to sculpt luxury sheaths around female bodies. Hussein Chalayan regularly employs experimentation and avant-garde practice throughout his career to challenge notions of shapes and forms in high fashion. The finale of his Autumn/Winter 2000 collection performed at Sadler’s Wells Theatre, London, reaches its climax when a fashion model lifts off the lid of a disc shaped wooden coffee table. She replaces the plate with her slender body, then pulls the inner layer of the disc and hooks it over her leather belt. As a result, her performance transforms a two-dimensional disc into a cone wooden skirt, made up of layers of wooden discs (see Figure 2.3a).
In a similar fashion, Junya Watanabe, avant-garde Japanese designer, constructed a gigantic neck ruff in his Autumn/Winter 2000 collection, *Techno Couture* (see Figure 2.3.b). Watanabe demonstrates advanced skills in engineering this sheer ruffled collar from a series of stitched flat patterns. This is a technique implemented from the Japanese craft of origami, whereby he pleats, stitches, and fans the fabrics out to unravel voluminous forms. In this precise sense, Chalayan and Watanabe’s garments demonstrate how fashion designers fabricate three-dimensional forms from two-dimensional raw materials.

**b) Shapes, forms, and the fashion bodies**

Whilst some designers like Westwood, Smith, Pilotto, Chalayan and Watanabe favour flat-surfaced resources in formulating shapes and forms, others choose to impose sculptural masses onto female bodies. Gareth Pugh, avant-garde British fashion designer, is one of the key figures in this artistic camp who regularly uses geometric graphics of grids, cubes, spheres and spikes in his clothing, a design that speaks volumes (see Figure 2.4a). For Pugh, volume operates independently from mainstream fashion silhouettes as he often cages female bodies with monochromatic designs inspired by costumes seen in Britain’s extreme club scenes and futurists’ aesthetics. For instance, look number seven of his 2006 Autumn/Winter collection
featured a model in a black-layered leotard. The garment toys with the art of balloon twisting as Pugh engulfs model’s wrists with magnified balls utilised as mittens. He then designs another globe adorned with two sausage-shaped ears on top of the black open-faced Lego helmet (see Figure 2.4b). These inflated forms pay homage to costumes designs of Leigh Bowery, an Australian-born London club figure and performer, whose fame circulated amongst British and New York club scenes in the 1980s and 1990s, who challenged the notion of shapes and forms in art and mainstream fashion (Tilley 1997; Getz 2006).

![Figure 2.4: Shapes and forms in Gareth Pugh’s designs](image)

Even though Pugh shifted his conceptual designs from a celebration of heroine and warrior women to more commercially viable clothing in his later career (Mower 2007), the construction of shapes and forms in his garments remains constant. The overstated balloons become a softer inflation of pillowed coats and dresses (see Figure 2.4c), a collapsible square that falls into a geometric flare when the wind-machine stops and the model stands still. The print also contains countless concave and convex harlequins viewed through a kaleidoscopic lens that distort its shapes, scales and rhythmic patterns. The garment echoes graphics in avant-garde aesthetic as Pugh performs contrasting plays between fashion and the female forms.

In parallel fashion, designers like Alexander McQueen and Sandra Backlund construct shapes and forms in their luxury design, but highlight their three-
dimensional concepts in response to female contour. In his Autumn/Winter 2009 collection, McQueen fashions high drama onto a classic black dress by notoriously exaggerating the silhouette of the female bodice in a gigantic bow covered in layers of black feathers. This excessive form plays in tandem with the volume of the dress’ train in a heart-shape that streamlines towards the hip before tapering at the knees (see Figure 2.5a). In this case McQueen carefully inserts exaggerated implants in the shoulder and hip zones with the purpose of emphasising the feminine contours. As I suggest, these forms function as an aesthetic critique of the hourglass silhouettes of Christian Dior’s post-war couture, a classic silhouette that McQueen constantly rebelled against (I will address McQueen’s ‘rebellious’ aesthetics in chapter 4).

For Backlund, a Swedish fashion designer whose expertise lies in sculptural knitwear, her raised-and-oversized-shoulder dress covered in evenly gradated spikes, also illustrates the visual display between garments and the female form. The pagoda curls elevate the shoulder pads to the earlobe height and amplify the curve amongst neckline, collarbone and deltoids in the female torso. Backlund’s dress also flares out in an A-line shape implementing volumes towards female waist and hip. My visual analysis of Backlund’s spiked dress coincides with fashion journalist, Laura Simpson’s statement (2013, p.1):
Striving to exaggerate and accentuate the female form [my italics], Backlund fluctuates proportions, producing designs that are simultaneously sci-fi and warm, as she works with heavy wool, paper and more recently hair. By fusing futuristic design with tactile and familiar materials Backlund has managed to transform [my italics] the very meaning of knitwear into a piece of sculpture, a piece of moving [my italics] art.

Simpson’s quote highlights the close interrelationship between knitwear and female forms, a feature in Backlund’s designs. I want to draw attention to how the journalist engages with the idea of movement and transformation (a word that implies movement) to continue to undergird my overall argument about the relationship between corporeality, dance and fashion. Although these fashion designers or journalists may not have access to the discourse of dance studies, I suggest that dance studies allows for a way to read the movement inherent in fashion, particularly how the clothes are best displayed, worn, styled or photographed.

To further theorise my argument upon negotiations between shapes and forms in high fashion clothing and the female bodies, Harold Koda, curator at The Costume Institute, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, addresses the relationship between shapes, forms and how they refer to human anatomy. In his 2001 book, *Extreme Beauty: The Body Transformed*, published in conjunction with the exhibition of the same title held at The Metropolitan Museum of Art from December 2001 to March 2002, Koda curates numerous shapes and forms from historical and national costumes to pop culture and high fashion clothing. From brass neck coils in Padaung woman, Burma, to Viktor and Rolf’s puffed sleeves in *The Black Hole* collection (2001); from Jean-Paul Gaultier’s iconic cone bras worn and modelled by Madonna to nineteenth-century metal corsets, Koda draws connections between costumes, fashion and bodily adornments. He dissects the female form into five zones: the neck, the shoulders, the chest, the waist, the hips and the feet. He then directs the focus onto a series of clothing designed to celebrate and exaggerate women’s bodies in each category. Watanabe’s ruffled collar, as illustrated in Figure 2.3b, is one of the neck adornments that Koda discusses and graces his book cover. Koda’s visual examples exhibited at and in *Extreme Beauty* allow me to further develop and draw connections between shapes and forms in high fashion garments and female corporeality.5
c) Shapes and forms in fashion performance

By conducting a series of visual analyses of high fashion garments, I argue that shapes and forms are thoroughly thought through and constructed in luxury commodities. In other words, shapes and forms provide information that can affect how the garment is worn, styled in a photograph, or modelled on a catwalk.

To expand upon my statement, I would like to draw attention to some of the historical silhouettes and choreographic shapes in the performances of high fashion. In particular, I highlight the poses that are executed to emphasise these celebrated outlines. Paul Poiret, an influential figure of the early twentieth-century French haute couture, is one of the key examples whose famous designs includes kimono coats and dresses in advanced draperies that free women from corsetry of the nineteenth century fashion. His clothing summons a modern silhouette of parallel lines and constructed rectangular shapes. In order to display his garments, he promenades eight in-house models in his garden. The chosen image photographed by Henri Manuel captures the poses of the models in both front and diagonal views (see Figure 2.6a). It is evident that when facing *en face* (to the front) they erect their spines and part their legs, a stance that resembles the width of the hip. I utilise ballet lexicon such as *en face* or *croisée* to help me analyse the poses of the models as I analyse the images. They keep most of the upper limbs neutral, elongating their arms and resting their wrists besides the hip. This bodily alignment highlights Poiret’s couture, particularly the straight-cut skirts and trains of the dress designed to celebrate parallel shapes and rectangular forms in contrast to the hourglass silhouette of the previous era.

Moreover, it is also apparent that some models (the third, fifth and sixth from the left in Figure 2.6a) present their bodies in a *croisée* position (*croisée* is a forty-five degrees cross axis reference to the camera lens). In so doing, they can afford to press their inner thighs together as the diagonal angle of the body minimises their shoulder widths that pivots back in perspectives. This allows lesser contrast between the shoulders, the waist, the hip and the legs—a body position that turns female curves into slimmer contours when viewed directly from the front in two-dimensional medium of fashion photography. This rotation of the body illuminates and emphasises Poiret’s design silhouettes raised in the previous paragraph. In terms of the upper limbs, they restrict their arms in elongated lines that run parallel to the body, thus eliminating any choreographic shapes that would interfere with the rectangular outlines.
In parallel fashion, the spiralled torso of Poiret’s mannequins is also witnessed in the pose of Marion Morehouse, a fashion model in the late 1920s and early 1930s, photographed by Edward Steichen published in *Vogue* magazine of May 1927 (see Figure 2.6b). The image promotes the lustrous garment designed by French couturier, Madeleine Chéruit. The flare in the train of the dress may add volume to the design silhouette. However, the overall garment retains a rectangular shape following trends in high fashion of the period. In the photograph, Morehouse angles her torso to a *croisée* position, distances her legs hip-width apart, and rests her hands on the upper hip. This rotation of her body in relation to Steichen creates a corporeal illusion akin
to those mannequins paraded in Poiret’s collection to a certain degree. In the first account, the croisée position minimises Morehouse shoulder width in order to formulate a rectangular shape within the body, from the shoulder to waist and hip. Secondly, her angled body transforms her wide stance into a smaller pose which seems to occupy less space. This not only feminises the space (based on the idea of women occupying less space) and the garment, but it gives the illusion of being light and airy, as it draws the gaze to the point of her foot against the floor. This visual effect or quality reflects Chéruit’s sheer and delicate fabric. Finally the bodily rotation erases the triangular shapes and spaces between the bent elbows and her slim torso that interferes with the silhouette. Her choreographed pose heightens the slender and square image. As a result, her corporeal technique provides parallel lines and rectangular shapes that flatter, or more precisely, help advertise the fabric and shape of Chéruit’s embroidered dress.

In contrast to the early twentieth-century high fashion, the post-war era preferred the hourglass silhouette. Thus, designers and photographers required other kinds of corporeal poses to illuminate this form. Fashion audience witness models with large degrees of leg crossovers, concaved torso, and angular arms. Figure 2.7a illustrates an American fashion model-come-actress Suzy Parker in a lipstick-red sequinned gown designed by Norman Norell, who formed a luxury American clothing brand Traina-Norell in the mid twentieth century. Captured by Milton Greene, fashion and celebrity photographer, Parker’s medium-long shot graces the cover of Life magazine, September 1952 issue. It is evident that Parker performs a pose whereby she places the bent left leg before her and glues the knees together. As she turns her head toward the right shoulder, she rotates her right wrist, rests it over her upper hip whilst resting the left hand over her right deltoid. The upper limbs automatically create triangular shapes as Parker presents her elbows away from the torso. She crunches her abdomen and curves her spine to complete the pose.
In so doing, Parker’s body highlights Norell’s hourglass silhouette to a large extent. By drawing her legs in a crossover and facing her torso *en face* towards the camera lens, Parker displays a distinct contrast between her angular shoulder frame, the nipped in waistline, curvature of the hip, and the extreme tapers of the legs. In this very precise sense, Parker demonstrates a streamline contour of the hourglass. To further amplify the exaggerated curve, her right hand pinches into her waistline, illuminating even greater contrast between the hip and the waist. The knee in her bent leg also pulls the sequinned fabric at the train of the dress closer to her body, revealing her curvaceous contours. These are bodily alignments Parker performs to advance the high fashion silhouette required during the post-war era.

It is also evident that the pose endorses an idealized female body in conjunction with the aesthetic preferences of the period: being curvaceous but, at the same, time tall and thin. To elaborate upon this account, Parker’s curved spine results in a concaved torso which pulls her abdomen toward the back wall. This reveals an empty space between the bodice of the dress and Parker’s physical body emphasising the illusion of being slender. As she directs her elbows away from the body and draws her shoulders towards the camera, the movement exposes the collarbones, another emblematic anatomy of being thin. On the other hand, the forwarded shoulders press
her pectoral muscles together and deeply draw her cleavage to its full visibility denoting a voluptuous physique. Thus, the overall pose gives an impression of being tall, thin yet curvaceous at the same time.

Beyond displaying the fashion silhouette and the ideal female figure, Parker’s bodily alignment also draws references to choreographic concepts of shape and form. The visual analysis indicates two prominent axes that Parker plots her body onto (see Figure 2.7b). The black lines demonstrate the first diagonal that runs from the top-left of the frame to the bottom-right corner. These lines visualise the shape where both of Parker’s forearms run parallel to each other. This angle is also witnessed in her nipped-in torso, tilted neckline, and her facial contour viewed in profile.

![Figure 2.7b: The visual analysis of Suzy Parker’s fashion performance.](image)

The second axes marked in blue lines indicate cross diagonals that Parker performs. These are shaping references that runs from her bicep to the hem of her ruched white gloves, to the angle of the palm that is placed on her hip, to the sleeves of her draped shawl, and to the left thigh. All of these run parallel to her eye-line. The crossover of her legs in relation to the waist and hip contour also creates a reversed teardrop. This shape is further prominent as the sequinned dress shimmers in the studio light. Finally, Parker drapes the shawl over her arms and allows it to fall in a shape that reinforces the teardrop but gradually radiates from the centre. From the corporeal
alignment executed in reference to parallel grids, geometric angles and symmetrical curves, Parker’s performance opens up a discursive possibility between modelling poses and dance choreographies particularly shaping theories and notions of spatial design.

To expand upon this claim, shaping is a fundamental concept in making dance choreographies. The concept has its root in Effort-Shape theories formulated by Rudolf Laban, a pioneering dance artist and theorist who applies methodological frameworks based in science and mathematics onto performance. Shaping defines “the aspect of movement form which allows the mover to accommodate to the plastic character of objects in space, to their volume, or contour, their three dimensionality, and consequently to mould space into plastic forms himself” (Dell 1993, p.55). In other words, shaping theory examines how the body forms itself in space in relation to other objects. Within the context of this thesis, the other objects include fashion corporeality, commodities, and shapes of the environment. This explains how Parker ‘performs’ a choreographic pose that moulds each body part to the crimson sequinned shawled gown as well as Norell’s fashion silhouette and the rectangular frame of Greene’s photograph discussed in the previous paragraph and illustrated in Figure 2.7b.

Laban’s shaping theories also share large similarities to the notions of shape and spatial design developed by Lois Ellfeldt in her 1967 book, A Primer for Choreographer. Ellfeldt argues for viewing choreography as an action design. This is the case when choreographers compose and experiment upon forms, space, dynamics, rhythm and their interrelationships to create a shape of a dance (p.22). A shape of a dance in this sense draws physical alignments of bodies in relation to space as well as directional patterns as the bodies move through space (see Figure 2.8). The shape of a dance also includes the negative space between the body and environment. This results in geometric shapes and free forms as the bodies advance, spin, glide, zigzag, rise, pause, and gather through space. These choreographic aspects of shapes, forms, and space in relation to the body and directional patterns underpin Ellfeldt’s argument in seeing choreography as action design.
Laban’s shaping theories and Ellfeldt’s concept of spatial design relate directly with the choreographic readings of fashion performance I engage in. To further illustrate this point, I turn to current fashion editorials and advertising campaigns where fashion models shape themselves around the environment and perform choreographic shapes that are best representing garments. Simultaneously, the poses give reference to distinct spatial and body design, as argued by Laban and Ellfeldt. For instance, Figure 2.9 features international model, Andreea Diaconu, clad in a Lanvin swimsuit worn over latex briefs designed by Atsuko Kudo and accessorized with Tom Ford knee-high strapped gladiator stilettos, a silver panel necklace, and an embellished headband in matching materials. Diaconu rests her right elbow and her right chin over mirror cubes that stack up to the height of her ribcage whilst her left leg stands erect. She places her left hand in a form of a fist to her upper hip. She fixes her gaze beyond the horizon as she turns her head to the left side of the frame.
I claim that this editorial relies on the intimate connection between the high fashion silhouette, shaping choreography and spatial design. Firstly, Diaconu aligns her slender body to the vertical and horizontal lines of the cubes. The horizontal lines give spatial alignment to her chin, her shoulders, her right knee, her fibula and her waistline that are interconnected from the bottom of the silver necklace to the recess of Lanvin’s swimsuit. These lines also reference the rectangular frame of the photograph as well as the backdrop that runs parallel to the metatarsals of her left foot that comes in contact with the floor. Secondly, the vertical lines provide seven remarks in Diaconu’s choreographic shape; from her right forearm to the erected neckline that runs parallel to the white headwear, her lateral muscle, her extended left leg, the left heel, and the point of reference between the bended right knee and the tip of her apex.

It is also evident that there are significant diagonals and zigzags materialising through this pose. The slanted angle of her crown runs parallel to her forehead, eyebrow, jaw line, right wrist, left forearm from the elbow to the fist, a distance from her left shoulder to her right elbow, right femur, and the left sole. All of this correlates with the top cube viewed in perspectives. The opposing angle applies to Diaconu’s face viewed in profile which runs parallel with her arched abdomen, her pushed buttock, and her left foot. These diagonals toy with the recesses in Lanvin’s swimsuit.
as it clasps her body but reveals curves around the armholes, the high-cut hip line, and the concaved contour at the waist.

Diaconu also constructs significant spatial design through her pose. Several triangles are evident in the negative space between her body, the heels and the backdrop. The empty space designed by her right arm, torso and the top cube share large similarities to the shape between her bended right leg and the stretched left leg as well as the triangle between her left foot, the heel and the floor.

To further advance my argument upon the notion of shapes and forms in high fashion performance that ties choreographic shapes to design features and fashion environment, Figure 2.10 illustrates American fashion model, Kendra Spears, in Escada Spring/Summer 2013 advertising campaign. As Spears drapes herself between candyfloss pink walls before the mint green sea, her pose calls upon choreographic shape that references the axis of the location and most significantly the yellow one-shoulder jersey dress with black and taupe asymmetrical stripes. On the first account, Spears aligns her skull to the verticality of the walls and the photographic frame.

![Figure 2.10: Escada Spring/Summer 2013 advertising campaign; Photo: Claudia Knoepfel and Stefan Indlekofer; Source: www.escada.com [Accessed 13 January 2014]](image)

On the second account, she directly extends her elbows out to reach the wall but tilts her spine to the same angle of the asymmetric neckline of the dress exuberantly emphasised by the angled black stripes. This angle also commands Spears to send the
right side of her hip towards the left wall reminiscing the alignment of the tilted elbows. In so doing, Spears advances the diagonal line of black and taupe stripes to a more extreme angle and displays them in an alluring streamline running in tandem with her bodily contour. Finally, by shortening the distance on the left side of her torso due to the tilted elbows and the hip, this contraction emphasises the softly ruched detail at the waistline of the dress.

Spears’ choreographic shape displays the Escada’s dress and shows a distinct contrast to those performed in the Look Book and catalogues (see Figure 2.11). In its achieved effect, the diagonal stripes worn by other models appear rigid and static, unlike the meandering line that lusciously snakes along Spears’s body. Moreover, the ruched detail of the dress is lost in the middle photograph as the model contracts her torso to the opposing side, resulting in gathers and folds at both sides of the waistline. Finally, by pressing the inner thighs and knees towards the centre of her body whilst pushing the hip outwards, Spears heightens the pencilled silhouette of the dress unlike those performed in the far right photograph where the dress appears to be wider and less tapered at the hem as the model faces her torso fully fronted and stands in parallel. To use dance studies language, I suggest that there are specific corporeal vocabularies of gesture and pose that link with the particular shape, form or style of the garment. A body (whether it is that of the photographer, the stylist, the model or the designer) can negotiate the most effective ways to display the article of clothing. This is where I argue that the concept of shape and form as elaborated through choreographic structure becomes essential in high fashion photography.

[Figure 2.11: A comparative study between Spears and other models; Source: www.escada.com, www.neimanmarcus.com, and www.style.com [Accessed 13 January 2014]]
By conducting these visual analyses in tandem with a comparative study and choreographic readings, I illustrate a variety of achieved effects in displaying high fashion garments. This allows me to develop my argument in perceiving shapes and forms in high fashion design that directly communicate with the fashion bodies and thus inform choreographic shapes in high fashion performance. In other words, fashion commodities require choreographies of posing that call upon choreographic shapes, forms, patterns, and spatial design in order to highlight particular silhouettes.

2.2. Motion

*Fabric is alive!*

When I drape cloths over a dummy for apparel designs, I discover that each material has unique characteristics and differently responds to movements. Whilst some fabrics smoothly glide across the body, others crisply spring into voluminous shapes, firmly cling around the female contour, playfully swing along the hemline or delicately hang over the shoulder. Each textile signals its distinctive qualities as it responds differently to every pin I insert and every pleat I fold. For instance, a basket-weave raw silk allows me to create volume due to the stiffness of the yarn. However, it is reluctant to slip smoothly over the body and refuses to hang softly in flares. In contrast, crêpe satin and silk charmeuse delicately fall in flares but perform poorly when I model them into a neatly structured form. My draping experience, particularly the performative quality of fashion textiles, suggests that fabrics have certain characteristics. They are living artefacts, as these clothes uniquely respond to my design practice and ‘move’ in relation to their raw materials and woven structures.

In response to my concept of “corporeal cloth”, as a preliminary observation, mobility within garments is noted in the fashion discipline. In *Ballet Fashion Shoot: The Style and Grace of a Ballerina* (2008),

4 Serena French, a fashion editor for the shoot, repeatedly employed the term “movement” in describing the couture garments she selected as a costume for the featured ballerina, Leann Underwood (*New York Post*, 20 October 2008). French mobilised these terms by fanning out pleats and flares of the skirts and dresses to display a full sweep of the garments.5 In this sense, French’s definition of movement coincides with those employed by the dressmakers and designers, as Joseph-Armstrong (2008) recorded, describing the pattern cutting that allows fabrics and garments to expand when worn.
However, in dance, movement is much more complex and diversified. There are many layers and qualities to the term which cannot be solely categorised by one single characteristic as used in fashion discourse. As a professional dancer who experiences a full range of movements in different choreographic styles as well as a fashion designer who works closely with textiles and cuttings, I understand the complexity of the movements in both choreography and fashion garments and am aware that the terms cannot encompass one core motion. As a result, I began to ask questions concerning the use of fabric and cutting in relation to moving bodies to fashion scholars, practitioners and their collaborators over a period of two years. Quite often, the answer I received did not go beyond the point that designers’ garments move well on the body. What many fashion designers seem to celebrate is their design philosophy concerning conceptual ideas, choice of fabrics and their muses as inspirations. Even though the series of live catwalk shows presented since 1999 at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, are labelled as “Fashion in Motion”, the event merely “brings catwalk couture to a wider audience by modelling it against the beautiful backdrop of the Museum” (V&A 2014 Fashion in Motion, http://www.vam.ac.uk/page/f/fashion-in-motion/ accessed 1 August 2014). Further curatorial studies or research subjects on the term motion in relation to fashion, such as connections amongst fabrics, moving bodies, and high fashion merchandise or interrelationships between choreography and fashion performance, are scarcely mentioned or provided.

Therefore, to shed light onto the subject of motion in fashion, this section examines performances of the fashion merchandise in relation to the moving bodies. I ask what are the interrelationship amongst designers, materiality and moving bodies? In response to the mobile effect within textiles, that is, their ability to move and create movement, what kind of “movements” does fashion merchandise perform when worn? Can the terms exceed flow and a sharp change of direction in its materials when describing motion in fashion? If yes, what are the key factors that determine or dictate this mobility? I do this by conducting detailed movement analysis and adopting Laban Movement Analysis, particularly Effort and Shape theories, onto fashion bodies. The fashion bodies, in this sense, are the material character of the clothing that performs and responds to the external force such as wearer’s moving bodies and surrounded environment. I also incorporate fashion and textiles theories on
raw materials and fashion productions, as these studies provide key factors which influence and direct the performance of fabrics and garments.  

Before conducting the research, it is worth noting here that there are some limitations to Laban Movement Analysis. Occasionally, movements are non-linear but still remain a multi-dimensional experience. There is no starting or ending point and they can happen simultaneously. Moreover, Laban Movement Analysis relies on the linguistic medium to explain particular quality, such as free and bound, whereas effort factors are not always polarised. However, his theoretical framework is valuable to my research because it provides a qualitative language for movement in relation to kinaesthetic factors concerning body, shape, weight, time, flow and space, all of which have close proximity to what fashion products contain. What I offer here is a methodological template for observing motion in fashion merchandise which allows me the read choreographies in high fashion performance.

**a) Laban movement analysis and effort theories**

Many fashion scholars and practitioners draw an intimate connection between fashion designers and textiles (Udale 2008, Black 2006, Gale and Kaur 2004). Jenny Udale, Royal College of Art graduate and freelance printed textile designer, suggests that “the best fashion designers have a strong understanding of fabrics, how best to design with them and construct garments from them…Fabric can stimulate garment ideas and vice versa” (Udale 2008, p.130). This is the case when designers choose fabrics according to their function, cost, availability, demands, and, most significantly, a unique performance of raw materials, such as structure, texture, weight, and ability to drape, in order to achieve a desired silhouette (Black 2006, p.6 and Joseph-Armstrong 2008, p.1).

At the level of haute couture, Christian Dior described his relationships with fashion materials by claiming, “Many a dress of mine is born of the fabric alone” (Dorner quoted in Gale and Kaur 2004, p.5). Similarly, Emanuel Ungaro expressed his sensorial almost sensual relationship with cloth: “I caress it, smell it, listen to it. A piece of clothing should speak in so many ways” (Aillaud quoted in Gale and Kaur 2004, p.6). Finally in contemporary high fashion, Yohji Yamamoto, a Japanese designer famous for his unique pattern cutting and draping on a stand where he cuts fabrics directly from the body, emphasises that “Fabric is everything. Often I tell my pattern makers, ‘Just listen to the material. What is it going to say? Just wait. 
Probably the material will teach you something’ (Yamamoto quoted in Salazar 2011). In response to the quotes from fashion scholars and couturiers, fashion materials are a “living artefact” and fabric lies at the core of their creative process (Gale and Kaur 2004, p.5).8

The term *living artefact* open a dialogue between fashion materiality and kinetic properties particularly in the notions of shape, form and motion. To support my argument, Julie Dam, a fashion journalist from the *New York Times*, describes Issey Miyake’s dresses as such, “the Miyake design sensibility revolves around change and movement…The clothes appear precisely geometric and static. Once worn, though, they take on volume and mobility, as if they are living sculpture” (Dam quoted in Gale and Kaur 2004, p.15). The quote suggests static shapes and forms in high fashion garments and simultaneously locates changes and mobility in its materiality. It is also significant that the wearers activate motion in fashion products. This is the case when fashion models perform particular corporeal techniques to display and mobilise fashion materials and its designs features that respond to movements. In other words, fashion performance is another mode of displaying fashion in motion.

Changes and ‘movement’ in high fashion products respond directly to the kinetic language used in Laban Movement Analysis, particularly Effort theory. The analytical framework has its root in Laban’s “eukinetics”, developed in the 1920s, which later became a “method of systematic description of qualitative change in movement” (Dell 1993, p.6). This is the approach to describe and understand movement dynamics in the body. In the context of this thesis, the body includes fashion corporeality and commodities. Laban identifies four subcategories of flow, weight, time and space in his Effort theory in order to provide kinetic language in describing a change of the action (Davis in Irmgard et al 1970, p.31). The *flow* factor defines changes in the flow of tension or attitude towards continuity of movements whereas the *weight* factor notifies changes in the quality of the body weight (Bartenieff and Lewis 1980, p.53). The *time* factor, on the other hand, indicates change in the quality of time in movement whether “driven by it or lingering in it” whilst the *space* factor investigates changes in the spatial focus or attention (ibid., p.56). I examine how fashion merchandise consumes or approaches space.

The qualitative change in Laban’s Effort theory ranges between two opposing extremes and can be combined from one factor to another (Dell 1993, p.11). The
opposing extremes in the flow factor are free and bound. Free flow marks the flow of movement. Bartenieff and Lewis (1980, p.53) employ the terms “easy flowing”, “streaming out”, “abandoned”, and “ready to go” with this flowing quality. In relation to fashion and motion, free flow describes fluidity in fashion material such as satin, charmeuse, chiffon, georgette and feather as well as pleats, gathers, and draperies in fashion garments that allow freedom to flow or, to large extent, are sensitive to external forces. Lanvin’s stone-grey pleated dress serves as an example. This is the case when the silk fabric in the train of the dress waves in a delicate free-flow as it catches the wind whilst the fashion model advances down the runway. She also gathers the material and flicks it towards the audience in each stride to display the fluid draperies of the dress (see Figure 2.12a). Bound flow, in contrast, indicates restriction of the flow, a restrained tension that holds back the movement and cages the body in order to retain its original shapes. It may result from a rigid weave or a particular construction of the fashion material such as raw silk, organza, linen, taffeta, canvas, tweed, felt, leather, stone, bone or metal. This also includes design silhouettes that entrap the female contour. The aluminium coiled bodice designed by Shaun Leane for Alexander McQueen is a case in point (see Figure 2.12b).

![Figure 2.12: Flow factor in high fashion garments](image)

**Figure 2.12a:** Free flow in Lanvin’s silk chiffon pleated skirt, Look 1, Paris Fashion Week, 30 September 2010; Source: style.com [Accessed 9 January 2014]

**Figure 2.12b:** Bound flow of the aluminium coiled bodice designed by Shaun Leane, Alexander McQueen, The Overlook collection, Autumn/Winter 1999, London Fashion Week
In relation to moving bodies, garments with bound flow quality require force or collective effort from the wearers to mobilise the fabric. If impossible, shaping can be another mode of choreography to display shapes and forms of the garments. This explains how McQueen’s model outwardly rotates her shoulder blades and expands her bended arms towards the audience. This results in a symmetrical shape in her upper body that displays the symmetrical shape of the coiled bodice. Moreover, the angle of her upper arms runs parallel to the hip contour of the garment and creates a negative space in a shape of triangle between the garment and her limbs. This choreographic shape and spatial design highlights a reverse triangular outline in Leane’s bodice that is tapered towards the waistline. Significantly, this is the point where the tip of her elbows drops, marking the narrowest measurement in *McQueen’s* nipped-in silhouette.

The weight factor is comprised of *light* and *heavy*. In Laban Movement Analysis, the weight factor is not equivalent to the body weight. However, in my application, the weight factor is consciously associated with the actual weight of the fashion merchandise, as it determines physical characters of the artefact that require effort in mobilising these garments. Lightweight materials include boiled wool, cotton, linen, silk, nylon and feather. Its materiality suggests airy, delicate, refined, and ethereal qualities. The heavyweight factor, in contrast, denotes rustic, vigorous, impactful and grave qualities mostly derived from metal, stone, glass, plaster, tweed, tartan, gabardine, denim, and leather.

In relation to the moving bodies, gravity is the first key external force that directly responds to the weight factor. Both light and heavy materials gravitate towards the centre of the earth. However, garments with lightweight factor merely require small efforts to set motion in fashion merchandise. This is evident as Ming Xi, an international model from China, effortlessly swings a *Chanel* couture featured gown but the lightweight fabrics allow the outer layer of the train to fly and engulf her slender body (see Figure 2.13.a). In contrast, heavyweight garments have a tendency to maintain their original shapes and gravitate towards the floor. In order to change this status, fashion models have to produce vigorous effort to activate mobility in fashion products. This is the case when Saverio’s model forcefully throws the embellished gold metal cape and the train of the dress and drags them along the runway in each stride (see Figure 2.13b).
In terms of duration, the *quick* time factor is mostly witnessed in fur. Loose fringes, feathers, tassels, and ribbons provide urgent and hasty qualities. These materials sharply respond to the sudden change of direction and are easy to visualise. In contrast, materials with *sustained* time factor, such as tweed, velvet, corduroy, layered draperies, double-facing and downed garments, deliver a sense of meandering as they require longer duration and more expansive effort to mobilise. This explains how Jordan Dunn, a British fashion model, merely hops in a *passé* position (one extended leg, the other folded) and swings her upper body towards the camera in order to shake the tassels in *Gareth Pugh’s* fringed dress (see Figure 2.14a).
In contrast to the minimum effort performed in Figure 2.14a, Monika Jagaciak, an international model from Poland partnered with British male dancer and fashion model, Benjamin Warbis, executes a series of vigorous shakes, spins and tumbles. However, such effort can merely float layers in *Christian Dior* gown a few inches off the floor as the couture garment persists to glide along the studio floor (see Figure 2.14b).

The final Effort-factor in Laban Movement Analysis lies in the opposing extremes between *direct* and *indirect*. Movements prescribed to the direct space factor often suggest pinpointed and channelled quality such as a pendulum motion of swings or an expansion of circular skirts when they turn. It also includes garments that hold their body shapes, such as a straight or stiff line of sleeves, a coned skirt, or skinny leggings. Figure 2.15a illustrates a captured frame in Gareth Pugh’s fashion film featuring blue bodysuits, speared gloves and masks with ponytails in matching colour in his 2011 Autumn/Winter collection. The ensemble gives a clear direction in space. The spikes dart sharp points wherever the head turns whilst the ponytails are gravitated in a straight line. The bodysuit has a bound flow quality that clasps the models’ silhouette, revealing the streamlined bodily contours. However, the torsos
and upper and lower limbs can be seen as straight lines when viewed in profile. As a result, both models perform choreographic shapes revealing the geometric outline in Pugh’s design. The erect body directs his gaze piercingly out in the horizon whilst shooting his speared gloves in forty-five degrees downwards. The angle of his extended arms run parallel to those executed by the female model as she kneels onto the floor whilst directing her gaze towards the ceiling. Her tilted skull and arched spine separate the blue ponytail from the bodysuit. This marks a steering column that runs parallel to her erected bodice. Beyond the static pose, the video of the photographic session shows the models moving in a robot-like quality. They change the posture on every prominent beat of the electronic music. They control the angularity of the movements throughout the performance and pierce the space with their spikes like clockwork. Ruth Hogben, the director of this fashion film, selects sharp cut editing and direct mirroring in digital post-production to amplify a direct space factor in this fashion performance.

Figure 2.15: Space factor in fashion performance

Figure 2.15a: A selected frame in Gareth Pugh Pitti Immagine #79 2011; Director: Ruth Hogben; Source: SHOWstudio.com [Accessed 9 January 2014]
In contrast to Pugh’s fashion films, the “indirect” use of space in Laban’s term indicates encompassing focus or flexibility in changes of direction. This quality of movement often occurs in a loose or a single-point bounded material including layers, gathers and pleats which float and expand freely into the space. Figure 2.15b illuminates a lightweight free flow quality in Miyake’s Prussian blue and turquoise silk-layered pleats dress as it progressively and organically grows in uncontrollable curves. Each layer individually responds to the wind machine as the model curves her spine and on the verse of rolling onto the floor. Her left arm may suggest a clear direction of falling as she plunges her voluminous kimono sleeves towards the floor. However, the turquoise scarf and other layers of the dress sequentially curl and flow in freeform, suggesting an outburst of motion in high fashion performance.

By applying Laban’s effort factors onto motion in fashion materials and performances, it is evident that there are series of movements that clothing performs when worn. Factors concerning body, flow, weight, time, space and shape dictate performance of fashion merchandise. The effort factors of flow, weight, time, and space can happen simultaneously, as witnessed in Figure 2.15b, where Miyake’s design carries a free flow and lightweight quality with a quick response to external force and swirls in an outburst motion. I do not argue that Laban Movement Analysis is an absolute system which covers every aspect of motion in fashion. However, what I provide here is a template for observing movements in fashion merchandise particularly in their relation to the moving bodies. The effort factors also provide a kinetic language to read fashion choreography and understand motion in fashion merchandise that luxury fashion designers produce. This methodological framework using effort-shape theories in conjunction with detailed movement and visual analysis allows me to develop my argument upon the selected mode of display in fashion advertising events and campaigns when the fashion industry hires models and dancers, as a moving mannequin, to feature the garments. This leads to the final section of the chapter, ‘the Art of Walking’, which investigates performance of runway fashion models as they display fashion in motion.
b) Performance of the body on fashion catwalk: the art of walking

At the level of fashion presentation and advertising, displaying fashion in motion lies at the core of the process. Ligaya Salazar, a former exhibition curator at the Victoria & Albert Museum, London, admits to difficulties in displaying Yohji Yamamoto’s clothes on static mannequins, as he often cuts the clothes directly from lived models when he can visualise how the fabric drapes and moves as the body travels through space (Ligaya 2011). Beyond the choreographic shapes and gestures captured in the two-dimensional medium of photographs and films, runway shows are the first fashion promotional events that display garments in their three-dimensional form. Thus, my study of runway modelling techniques will inform significant interrelationships between a moving body and mobility in fashion merchandise.

Dwight Jordan, a choreographer and a runway coach, once said:

Runway modelling is a visual art form for presenting line, motion and attitude. The goal is to bring to life, using the ultimate representation of poise, posture and natural expressions. It’s an art that, in one single presentation sells, entertains, and represents the client, agent and the model.

(Jordan quoted in Casablancas 2011, p.1)

In this quote, Jordan draws attention to the purposes of fashion corporeal techniques located at the intersection between performance art and commercial viability. He also suggests the circulation of fashion as a commodity in the performance of fashion advertising which connects bodies to fashion merchandise, audience and other dominant agents within the fashion industry.

This section investigates the performance of runway models in relation to fashion merchandise. I look at how they mobilize the brand for commercial and promotional purposes. I employ a qualitative approach in the interdisciplinary sense between visual analyses, fashion studies, dance/performance studies, and kinesiology. I employ theoretical sampling strategies through texts, interviews, and visuals. I also observe techniques taught in runway master classes for female models and relevant television programmes such as *The Face* and *Next Top Model*. Data is also collected through photos and video clips of non-brand-oriented runway shows from New York and London, as well as Milan and Paris fashion weeks. These samplings are incorporated with knowledge in kinesiology to explain how the body operates, in terms of musculature, bodily alignment, effort, and balance. My analysis of the
walking derives from having watched the video of the fashion show. Due to the static format of the presentation of this thesis, I hereby provide still images to illuminate my argument concerning the visual aspect and movement in fashion corporeality. Nevertheless, my reading of the images is based on the actual fashion show where the bodies and clothing were in motion.

By looking at the scholarly work which has close proximity to the political economy of luxury fashion, Susan Foster (1997) introduces the concept of the “hired” body whereby a dance body is “a body for hire: it trains in order to make a living at dancing” (Foster 1997, p.255). This is a process by which the body advances in several dance techniques and fitness regimes to produce a multitalented body ready for employment opportunities (ibid.). Within this training, Foster constructs the notion of “the body of dance techniques” in which corporeal bodies are transformed into the “body-of-ideas” and in response to choreographic or aesthetic demands. In Foster’s own words: “Each technique creates a body that is unique in how it looks and what it can do” (Foster 1997, p.241).

By applying Foster’s notion of the corporeal technique in dance body to the female runway model, fashion bodies share large similarities with dancing bodies. Located at the intersection between performance and finance, this competent corporeality is purposefully constructed to be technically, intellectually and aesthetically desirable and responsive to demands from its “hired” status in exchange for its talent in displaying fashion merchandise. Through a construction of runway modelling technique, the notion of a model’s talent and its hired condition can be explained.

Foster suggests that studio dance pedagogy creates two significant types of bodies: perceived and ideal. The perceived body develops from “sensory information” (e.g. watching teachers) whereby the ideal body “combines with fantasised visual or kinaesthetic images of body” which has been prescribed with “specific size, shape, and proportion…as well as expertise at executing specific movements” (Foster 1997, p.237). In relation to a female fashion body for the haute couture and global luxury ready-to-wear market, a model has to be tall and thin. They do not have to be overtly beautiful but a unique facial structure or a “quirky” look is desirable.

Moreover, a model has to undertake the process of training in order to construct the technique which transforms the corporeal body into a highly-skilled body that is ready to be hired with talents in featuring fashion merchandise to its
fullest potential whilst capturing the brand’s essence and aesthetics producing desirable images in mannequin parades. Within vocational training, certain techniques will be taught. This is the place where runway modelling technique is formulated and transferred.

Runway modelling technique can be divided into three categories: posture, movement and role-play improvisation. A runway model must learn and then possess a distinctive body alignment. The head and the neck are erect whilst the chin is levelled in relation to the floor. Along the neckline, as shown in Figure 2.16, the model’s shoulders are “pulled back” yet naturally dropped. According to my observation, this “pull back” can be obtained by either directing the shoulders backward or drawing the shoulder blades together. One way of reading this posture is that it creates the expansion across the chest. This is akin to the bodily aesthetic in classical ballet which requires full presentational aspect given its history as the dance form initially developed for and presented exclusively to royalty (Cohen 1977).

However, the “pull back” in the model posture exceeds the dance one. From a bird’s eye view in ballet posture, shoulders are in the same alignment with the pelvis and the ball of the feet, which results in distributing the dancer’s body weight forward. In contrast, by further executing the shoulders backward in modelling posture, it inverts the curve on the middle spine. As a result, it visually magnifies the bust, a distinctive feature of female anatomy, and enhances the silhouette of the female body when viewed in profile (see Figure 2.16).
This silhouette is further reinforced as, continuing downward, a model’s spine is kept extended yet her upper body remains arched. By doing so, it heightens the curve in the lower spine which accentuates a female contour in the lateral view. As the model’s torso is arched, it maximises the space between the ribcage and the pelvis allowing the abdominal muscle to be elongated. While keeping the abdomen tight, this spinal posture enhances fashion’s ideal body: tall and thin.

In terms of the upper limbs, a model’s fingers are relaxed but restored together while the thumb is folded. Shown in Figure 2.17, the model’s arms are hung naturally alongside the body.

Occasionally, a runway model rests one or both of her hands on the hip and directs her elbow outward in order to create a triangular shape by the arms (see Figure 2.18). This posture is often struck to enhance a nipped-waist silhouette, reinforce geometric forms of the garments, accentuate a voluminous skirt, or overcome a restriction of the crinoline.
Finally, for the lower limbs, the knees are pulled, the legs are extended, the feet are parallel and the bodyweight rests over the ball of the feet.

Once having trained, practiced and obtained the prerequisite posture, the fashion body has to perform a series of movements which enhance the designs and materials of the garments, while simultaneously corresponding to the mood of the collection and designers’ image for the marketing and promotional purposes. Walking is considered a required core technique in fashion modelling. When walking, the head should remain level and still. The eye-line is horizontally parallel above the audience’s head. The shoulders are pulled back and the chest is expanded. The arms are relaxed yet “controlled”. According to my observation, this “control” is achieved when the arms are extended and elongated whilst the muscles around the posterior deltoid and latissimus dorsi are clenched. By doing so, a model can allow her arms to hang and swing naturally according to the gravity and the automatic bodily coordination of the walk (see Figure 2.19).
Continuing downwards, to some degree, a model sways her hip from side to side whilst the legs are extended and the inner thighs are magnetised. Significantly, whilst the upper body is held, a runway model releases the bodyweight through her legs in each stride. Moreover, in comparison to the pedestrian walk, a model has to maximise the length of each step and accelerate the pace. This is because this technique not only creates dynamics, accent and enthusiasm within the walk, but also directly responds to the issues concerning time limitation, length of the runway and numbers of outfits in the collection. Quite often, the stage is long. Once buyers, editors and press record the “look” and the details of the garment, they focus onto the next. Furthermore, by lengthening each stride, the leading leg will stretch the garment, which results in emphasising the movements in its fabrics and design details (see Figure 2.20). In some cases, the stride enhances pleats, ruffles, or loose fringes and sequins of the garments all of which carry free flow factor and quickly respond to a sharp change of direction or external forces.
In the basic walk, a runway model distinctively places one foot before another. According to this technique, several purposes can be distilled. First, this movement obscures the female genitalia which preserves modesty. Second, as shown in Figure 2.21, this technique gradually narrows the line of the legs and emphasises the contours of the hip when viewing from the anterior perspective.

Figure 2.20: (left) Alexander McQueen Fall 2003 Ready-to-Wear; Paris Fashion Week, March 8, 2003; Photo: Marcio Madeira; (right) Alexander McQueen Fall 2006 Ready-to-Wear Collection; Paris Fashion Week, March 3, 2006; Photo: Marcio Madeira

Figure 2.21: Paul Smith Women Spring 2009 Ready-to-Wear Collection; London Fashion Week, September 15, 2008; Photo: Marcio Madeira
Finally, it concurrently encourages the hip to tilt and sway which enhances movements in the garments especially a full volume skirt (see Figure 2.22).

![Figure 2.22: (left) John Galliano Spring 2009 Ready-to-Wear Collection; Paris Fashion Week, October 4, 2008; Photo: Marcio Madeira (right) Gareth Pugh Fall 2008 Ready-to-Wear Collection; London Fashion Week, February 13, 2008 (right); Photo: Marcio Madeira](image)

It is noticeable that there are variations within the basic walk. In the “cross-over” style, a model exaggerates a degree of crossing between her legs. Folkes (2007) suggests in his runway master class, *Coaching the new crop of girls for the New York Fashion Week Spring 2008*, that this style is suitable for a fitted garment such as a pencil skirt or fishtailed gown, as it allows the model to overcome the restriction and increases the hip movement whilst maintaining her rhythm and pace (see Figure 2.23).
In the “Clydesdale” walk\textsuperscript{16}, a model elevates her knees to a higher degree in each stride. It thus amplifies the impact between the landing foot and the floor. This impact ricochets throughout the model’s body which produces the “bouncy” effect to the garment. Simultaneously, as shown in Figure 2.24, the lifted knee strikes the fabric and its details into a full pendulous motion.
Finally, in the “grunge” walk, the style focuses on hip movements. It suggests a model should sway her hip and swagger along the runway. Some schools posit that this style is suitable for a younger target market; casual garments such as denims; or a ‘fetish wear’ (e.g. leather, rubber, and lingerie).

It is important to note here that these variations are by no means a prerequisite. Instead, these are templates for a variety of corporeal techniques which respond to specific fashion commodities and other performative elements, such as motifs, themes and musical codes.

In order to select a walking style, specific frameworks, poses and movement vocabularies directed by a designer, a choreographer, or a runway trainer are introduced to a model in a rehearsal. Yet, some of them allow creative freedom or demand some choreographic input from a model. In John Galliano’s ready-to-wear collection for Autumn/Winter 2009, Raquel Zimmermann, an international fashion model, reports that the designer asks her to “work” the skirt which is the first design in this collection (Zimmermann interviewed by Blanks, 2009). In its silhouette, this knee-length, pannier-hipped, bias-cut skirt is made of layers of fabric that fall and flare to its full volume. In order to “work” this skirt, as shown in Figure 2.26, Zimmermann exaggerates the cross-over whilst discretely striking her arms and
flicking her hands behind this voluminous skirt. Furthermore, at the pivot point, she forcefully swirls her hip to the right before crisply reversing its direction. In a split second, she sharply initiates a full-body rotation before disappearing into the dark backdrop of the hall. These are recorded movements Zimmermann executes in order to create a ripple effect in the garment. Thus, in this very precise sense, movements in runway modelling technique are constructed and re-appropriated according to fashion merchandise.

Figure 2.26: John Galliano Fall 2009 Ready-to-Wear Collection; Paris Fashion Week, March 11, 2009; Photo: Marcio Madeira

Quite often, a fashion model engages in a specific theatrical role-play, according to the theme of the collection or presentation. One example is the finale of America’s Next Top Model, cycle 7, a modelling competition show where aspiring models receive makeovers, modelling assignments and tasks to develop as models. Each week one is eliminated until two compete for the final prize of becoming America’s Top Model. The show often sets themes to modelling photo shoots. Cycle 7 featured a theme of a ghost’s bride. In the last section of the walk, the models erratically dash along the hall with piercing screams of total horror. However, despite this frantic role play, a responsibility to feature the garments remains. Caridee English, one of the final contestants, receives negative comments from the judging panel who condemn her for folding the dress and completely abandoning the technique. In contrast, the panels appraise Melrose Bickerstaff, another finalist, for
maintaining her posture and presenting her ruffled voluminous gown through elevations and a series of pivot turns whilst losing herself in a frenzy.

By looking at how the fashion body is constructed, how the modelling technique is formulated (i.e. body alignment and the basic walk), and how the specific choreography is executed (e.g. the cross-over, the Clydesdale, the grunge, and other theatrical role plays), a fashion runway model is a cultivated body prescribed with a certain technique and aesthetic (Mauss 1979 and Foster 1997). Located at the intersection between performance and commodity spectacle, a model is trained to make a living at modelling in exchange for her talent in displaying fashion merchandise to its fullest potential whilst capturing the brand’s essence and selling its desirable images in response to the political economy of fashion advertising. The fullest potential in this sense refers to the learnt techniques and choreographies of the fashion performance that allow them to exhibit the shapes, forms, and qualities of motion in high fashion garments.

2.3. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that shape, form and motion are integral to fashion performance. These design concepts constantly communicate with fashion bodies and inform the choreographies of high fashion performance that call upon shapes, forms, patterns and spatial designs. This is the case when models perform a series of choreographic shapes to advertise the promoted silhouettes. Their bodies also align with other fashion objects including sets, particular body parts, and photographic frames. Together they create the fashion performance, a spectacle of body, fabric and movement that translates into a commodity for circulation and consumption. This choreography materialises the brand identity of the high luxury garment, setting into motion factors such as consumer desire, fantasy, spectacle and even the mobility of fashion as an art form.

In relation to motion, Laban Movement Analysis provides kinetic language to describe mobility in fashion products. Effort factors concerning flow, weight, time and space are visual templates to investigate motion in fashion garments and signal choreographic readings of the fashion performance. The readings stem from my argument that fashion is the art of transforming two-dimensional materials into three-dimensional forms. However, mediated through the two-dimensional medium of film and photograph, the three-dimensional form of fashion falls back into its two-
dimensional root. As a result, models provide the corporeality necessary (e.g. twirls, swings, tumbles, advances, leaps, hops, and stretches) to display mobility in fashion products, using choreographies to illuminate a sense of three-dimensional form in their performance. In other words, choreographed fashion bodies return the three-dimensional quality back to fashion, and it is crucial to know this process and how it is contingent on choreographies of bodies and the choreographic potential of the fabric. The concept of exhibiting fashion in motion in editorials and films also overlaps with those performed on runway shows. The technique calls upon particular postures (e.g. arched spine, pulled shoulder blades and cross-overs) and movements (variations of walks, arm swings, accent and speed of the walk) in order to mobilise high fashion clothing as a living artefact.

The methodological framework of effort-shape theories in conjunction with detailed movement and visual analysis allows me to highlight the intimate relationship between fabrics, high fashion garments, moving bodies and choreographies of the fashion performance. This methodology allows me to investigate the influence of modern and post-modern dance choreographies in twenty-first-century high fashion conducted throughout the subsequence chapters. What I provide here is a kinetic language to read fashion choreography. What follows is an investigation of visual taxonomies linking early modernist dance to twenty-first century high fashion.

Notes

1 Some photographers including Knight also incorporate wind machines within the shoot to advance mobility in fashion merchandise whilst others choose to employ slow shutter speed and post-production techniques such as collage to amplify dynamism of the images.
2 It is also worth noting that there are variations, located at the walk, in displaying Westwood, Smith and Pilotto’s design. The connection between shapes of the garment and choreographic shapes in fashion performance will become clearer as the chapter develops especially in the final section, ‘The Art of Walking’. Here I have used shape interchangeably with form.
3 Body type standards shift historically equally as much as preferred fashion silhouettes. Variables of the hired bodies in high fashion suggest diverse views of the industry that seek to challenge existing normative aesthetics of shapes and forms in white Eurocentric high fashion. I am aware that the subject of contestation in shapes and forms of fashion products and bodies opens up wide-ranging discussion deeply rooted in various disciplines ranging from socio-historical climate to textile technologies, luxury fashion marketing and other body theories which are located outside the scope of my thesis. However, a relevant point that emerges from this discussion is that changes in fashion silhouettes directly affect fashion choreographies, which, in turn, call upon choreographic shapes, forms, and spatial design to highlight these silhouettes. I will discuss this concept in more detail in the next section.
4 produced by Anthony Gonsalves at the New York Post.
5 She also suggested that these pleats would allow the dancer to move freely.
I am aware of the contested terrain of dance and what constitutes movement to ontologically determine what dance can be. This is, however, based on the assumption that dance requires movement to be dance or understood as dance.

To further unpack the account on motion and clothing, I employ visual materials of photographs, illustrations and video excerpts from fashion events and magazines as case studies as well as a practical reflection on the theoretical framework.

With advancement in science and technology in the twenty-first-century high fashion including development in design philosophy, materials for fashion have exceeded the use of fabrics alone. Sequin, feather, fur, bone, paper, metal, stone, and man-made fibre can be used for making luxury garments. However, these materials are prescribed to the notion of shapes, forms, and motion as well as fabrics.

The observed runway master classes are conducted by Jay Alexander, a former model with a significant role in the television programme *America’s Next Top Model*; Mac Folkes, a freelance runway trainer and choreographer; and other ‘in-house’ training sessions run by modelling agencies including *Elite, Next, Wilhelmina UTG,* and *Premier* to prepare inexperienced models for the business.

By looking at the model portfolios from *Models 1* and *Storm,* the two leading model agencies in the UK, the minimum height of 5 foot 9 and the maximum dress-size of 8 or 10 can be identified (even though the average dress-size for these models are between size 4 and 6).

Posture in this sense is a static body alignment prepared prior to the ‘walk’. This, however, does not refer to the poses a runway model strikes in front of the camera or at the pivot point.

Some schools prefer the model’s shoulders to be symmetrical and squared. Others prefer it to be soft and smooth, allowing them to lilt slightly with balancing with the hip movement whilst walking.

Mary Quant, a British fashion designer who opened her first shop, Bazaar, in 1955, has imprinted a rapid-fire record of presentation by having the models dash down the stairs and feature 40 garments in 14 minutes (Quant cited in Evans 2001: 297).

This term derived from the Clydesdale horse which has been extensively bred for pulling heavy loads in rural, industrial and urban setting. However, aesthetically, the Clydesdale horses are noted for grace and versatility and often used in exhibition and parades.

Nigel Baker, a fashion photographer and a judging panel of *America’s Next Top Model,* entitles this type of fashion show as “theatrical catwalk” (Barker in ANTM 2006).

This episode, broadcasted in December 2006, features a collection of the bridal gowns from Victorio and Lucchino.