Chapter Six:
Concluding Pointes

Terpsichore in Jimmy Choo examines the complex web of consumption, negotiation and re-appropriation between dance and fashion. It investigates the relationship between performance, shape, form, fabric, haute couture, modern dance and the bodies that set all of these into motion. This thesis included a series of images carefully tailored to deliver the overall argument of the thesis, i.e., genealogy of high fashion bodies, material/fabric and theatre dance choreographies has always existed. The performance of high fashion calls upon large degrees of choreographies which overlap with dance practice. These are areas that many fashion and perhaps even dance scholars have overlooked. As a corrective, I argue that fashion choreographies are highly influenced by the shapes, forms, and the mobility of fashion materials. This is the case when models perform a series of choreographic shapes, spatial designs, walks and sets of actions to promote current fashion silhouettes and display the mobility of the fashion products. One of the key contributions of my research is that I highlight the intimate connections between corporeal techniques and choreographies performed to sell fashion commodities. In other words, I analyse fashion as a form of performance, by comparing fashion to dance, and argue that fashion too has a choreography.

In relation to motion, this thesis is unique in its methodological framework. The application of effort-shape theories in conjunction with detailed movement and visual analysis has allowed me to develop kinetic language to describe mobility in fashion products. Expanding my research from Entwistle (2006, 2015) and Evans (2013) on fashion corporeality and performative labour in fashion modelling, I argued for effort factors concerning flow, weight, time and space, as visual templates to investigate changes of shape and motion in fashion garments in relation to the moving bodies. As a result, I have theorised movement choreographies for high fashion performance. What I provide is a visual and kinetic language to read fashion choreography in general. I also consider how modern and post-modern dance choreography can be used to describe trends in fashion. These trends then transform the mode of display in high fashion performance.

I bring dance knowledge and kinetic analysis to bear on the field of fashion criticism and scholarship linking early modernist dance, particularly in the work of
Loïe Fuller, Martha Graham and Merce Cunningham, to twenty-first-century high fashion editorials and films. I have argued that these dance artists set interrelationships between fashion, fabrics and choreography of modern and post-modern dance. My contribution to new knowledge in fashion-dance practices is explicitly located in the concept of dynamic flow, tensile elasticity and experimentation of bodily silhouettes as I have expanded effort-shape theories and applied them onto modern dance vocabulary that is then transferred to current fashion editorials and films.

In this thesis, I looked at the radical transgression in the work of Alexander McQueen and Michael Clark. Their collaboration framed the concept of fashion advertising events through the guise of a choreographic performance. I have argued that McQueen and Clark appropriated punk aesthetics and attitudes in their aesthetic history, particularly in the case of Deliverance. This collaboration still fulfils the choreography of the fashion event and provides surplus value to the McQueen brand. Although they may subvert certain normative aesthetics of fashion design or the representation of the clothed bodies through provocative intertextuality and unruly falling bodies on the catwalk, the performance was commodified and the commercial aspects of high fashion economies (e.g. the notion of bodily display, strategies of the front-row seating plan, and market positioning) overshadowed their potentially avant-garde radical practice. By appropriating punk ideologies and translating into oppositional strategies, they engaged in a critique that emerged as ‘cool’ and ‘seductively subcultural’. However, because the fashion industry is part of the capitalist marketplace, it operates as a kind of appropriating machinery, whose shows move them from ‘radical outsiders’ to established members of the very same mainstream industry they attempt to critique.

This tension between performance and advanced capitalism introduces the final strand of the crossovers: art sponsorship and high fashion. Theatre dance companies have collaborated with fashion designers: Julien McDonald with Richard Alston, Paul Smith with the Royal Ballet, and Karl Lagerfeld with English National Ballet. Fashion designers assuming the role of costume designers for art dance productions results in a new collaboration that brings other sets of concerns within the marketplace of exchange between dance and fashion. I have argued that the term ‘artistic collaboration’ is paradoxical. On the one hand, the work can unite artistic disciplines, as costumes can enrich visual aesthetics, expand choreographic concepts,
provide narrative impetus to a performance, and highlight corporeal techniques of dancers. On the other hand, it becomes apparent that the fashion industry exploits its financial power and commercial status over cultural products, turning art events into public relation agents in order to project its corporate image as well as advertise its fashion merchandise. It also brings maximum exposure of the brands in the prestigious light of high art publicity. It is significant that dance companies, too, need economic resources from the fashion industry to prolong their artistic creations. Thus, this so-called collaboration maximises the potential exposure and increases audiences for both disciplines, thereby, as I conclude, making dance a successful business whilst luxury fashion brands make art their business and push their business as art. It is not so much a collaboration as it is a capitalist exchange of value and services.

Overall, *Terpsichore in Jimmy Choo* is novel in its visual analysis of choreographing fashion. It contributes to both fields of dance and fashion through visual history and detailed movement analysis. I am aware that the medium of photography, films, editorials, fashion and art events, selected as case studies in this thesis, carry distinct artistic histories and are unique in their operation. Each platform retains a set of structures with variable emphasis on the subjects of fashion performance, the dynamics between key agents that run and hold the fashion industry, and the performing arts network as a whole. For instance, fashion magazines have become a site of commodification. The authority for producing fashion photography shifts agency from fashion designers responsible for their own advertising campaigns to fashion editors who control the editorial pages and cultural intermediaries in a magazine. Because of these different modes of production within the fashion industry—all set up to circulate brand identity, produce consumer desire and ultimately channel profit back to the corporate luxury brand, magazine owners, and fashion designers—one rigid methodological framework cannot provide the overarching analyses to work that is mobile and flows with different power negotiations. However, my methodology allows for a conversation between these seemingly disparate fields as they share embodied knowledge in textile, garment constructions, corporeal techniques, choreographies, and the role of technology in response to fashion economies. This conversation challenges the practice as a whole and requires new sets of understandings and analyses that theorise the transferred knowledge, or, according to my thesis, a performance exchange, from one discipline to another. In other words, a knowledge of the industry coupled with an understanding of how fabric, motion and
choreography work, establishes new criteria for branding, selling and circulating fashion products. This is what my research hopes to offer.

As I am also a practitioner in dance and fashion, much of the information that is passed on to me through oral exchange in informal settings (at fashion shows, clothing stores, fashion shoots) appears through these pages. Although there may not be quantitative evidence for certain claims, knowledge production still occurs in the social relationships and collaboration between people, particularly in a field as qualitatively rich as the fashion world. As a result, my scholarship blends both scholarly materials with more everyday knowledge of mine and/or my consultants. At times, my argument may explicitly connect to a particular aspect of the field. For instance, Chapter Three highlights the visual taxonomies between high fashion performance and modern dance choreographies that support changes of shape, form, and particular effort factors in the garments. To a lesser degree, it analyses the magazines that publish these images and other socio-political influence that direct particular photographers and models to produce such work. Nevertheless, I have located how the moving bodies, equipped with corporeal knowledge of modern dance, heighten design features, a concept that embraces high fashion economies. In other words, I maintain a triangulated relationship between fashion corporeality, choreographies, and the political economy of luxury fashion throughout my analyses.

Terpsichore in Jimmy Choo offers new concepts that open up avenues for future research. As I locate the interplay between two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional forms in fashion design that transform into choreographic shapes and movements in fashion performance using fabric as an extension of the body, fashion photography provokes a concept of “freezing motion”, thereby suggesting the area of cognitive research. There are studies involving the “mental representation of movement” which explain how static stimuli, such as frozen-action photographs (see Figure 6.1), are viewed (Freyd 1983, pp.575-81; Reasons 2003, pp.43-67; and Freedberg and Gallese 2007, pp.197-203). These images stimulate somato-sensory systems within the brain, which provoke motion as an aesthetic experience. In this process, a subject’s mental representation of the figure recognises the chronological orders of movement from the photographs. Viewers can experience “a sense of bodily involvement” and predict what happened before and what will occur after the shoot (Freedberg and Gallese 2007, p.197; and Nash 2010). Thus, static stimuli provoke in readers a sense of the relayed effects of movement.
Reframing this concept in cognitive sciences to the frozen motion of fashion photography sets up how the choreography and mobility of garments, in response to bodily effort and gravity, constructs a relationship between perception, interaction and performance in fashion advertising equivalent to dance choreography.

My case studies in Chapter Five can be expanded to subsequent ones that examine collaborations between fashion designers and established dance companies in order to unpack what negotiations occur when dealing with corporate art sponsorship. Since the *Dying Swan* performance in 2009 together with *Ballet Russes Design Perspectives* performed at the Raphael Gallery, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, in 2010, commercial affiliation between English National Ballet and the fashion industry rapidly has spread to the public domain. The ballet company joined *Istituto Marangoni*, a private fashion school founded in Milan, and introduced a collaborative project for emerging designers to dress the dance bodies in ENB’s *Firebird* (2012) alongside David Bamber, the designer responsible for the production. The ballet company and the fashion institute exhibited the work at the prestigious venue of City Hall Chamber, London, and held an evening symposium titled *Design for Dance* (Cheng 2012). In its promotional context, the collaborative project was well-timed, as the Marangoni Institute had planned to set up the London campus and hoped to include Design for Dance in their syllabus. Unfortunately, the course failed to be integrated into the programme (Roberts 2013).
The partnership between ENB and the fashion industry reached its climax in 2013 when the company launched its rebranding campaigns. The promotional labour was conducted under the reign of new artistic director, Tamara Rojo, ex-principal dancer of the Royal Ballet, who implanted her creative vision to prolong the company’s future under a pressurised economic climate (Farquar 2011). Rather than employing conventional mediums of posters capturing images from the performance to promote dance programmes for upcoming seasons, Rojo presented the work as fashion editorials featuring the company’s dancers in Vivienne Westwood’s lavish creation (see Figure 6.2). The labour of rebranding hoped to “celebrate a fusion of modernity and tradition”, where the drama of the clothes enriches dance performance, as Rojo highlighted at a press conference (Alexander 2013, p.1). Photographed by Guy Farrow, the campaign presented Kerry Birkett in a Victorian-inspired embellished dress posing as a broken and lifeless Coppélia on a mint period daybed. The image included Marize Fumero, draped in a brocade dress worn over an ivory tutu and accessorised with tulle tiara, who shaped herself in a ‘swan dive’ pose with exaggerated crossover en-pointe. Finally, Farrow presented the group work as an ‘after shot’ of a black-tie dinner party where the dancers, Jennie Harrington, Sayako Tomiyoshi, Daniel Kraus, Stina Quagebeur, Ksenia Ovsyanick and Laurent Liotardo, embodied the drama of Westwood’s clothing through choreographic shapes posed over, on, and underneath the deconstructed dining table.
It stood out that the chosen cast did not comply with the hierarchical structure in the company’s professional ladder where guest stars and lead principals occupy the top rank of the chart earning up to £60,000 per annum (Farquhar 2011). In other words, no principals appeared in the photos. These images are not necessarily advertising the dancers (non principals as it were). Instead, it attracts attention through the fashion, quotes and eroticised posing, thereby working to shift the audience’s perception of ballet and perhaps even to attract new consumers for it. Here, fashion is doing the work, not the bodies. Although the bodies are labouring to pose and present the garments, it is the novelty of high fashion on non-star ballet bodies that seems to be the main draw of the advertising campaign. To a large extent, the ballet stars also influence box office success, as their labour of dance equips them with celebrity status and attracts audience across the globe (ibid.). Yet ballet adheres to its own rules, particularly in the consumption of ballet repertoires that favour highly skilled bodies over choreographies and dramatic stories. Because these ballet bodies have not emerged as the virtuosic bodies that ballet consumers pay money to see, the costumes by high fashion couturier Vivienne Westwood then emerge as the stars, not the dancers.
From an advertising perspective, particularly in response to the company structure, stars of the ballet company would be suitable candidates for brand ambassadors. However, the creative team selected junior soloists (Liotardo and Kraus), first artists (Ovsyanick) and the cast of *corps de ballet* labelled as “artists of the company” to be ‘The Faces’ of Rojo’s new brand image. The casting process of the campaign was well-coordinated with the ballet cast where, according to the BBC Four television series *Agony & Ecstasy: A Year with English National Ballet*, the company handpick young talents and physically and mentally push them to the high demands of soloists and principal roles (Farquhar 2011). Moreover, ENB’s rebranding through the use of high fashion campaigns, allowed the casting procedure to comply with the visual aesthetic of the modelling business (e.g., tall and thin bodies). Thus, this fashion performance, where the emerging talents equipped with youth, beauty, and stamina were labelled as ‘New Faces’, was set up to raise commercial viability to the agency and excite the market (Premier Model Management 2014).

Tension between the ‘New Faces’ and the established figures in the performing arts and modelling industry evoke Bourdieu’s concept of the field and its seasonal politics (see Chapter Four, point 4.1), as seemingly dancers and models, too, are inevitably subjugated by the commercial and aesthetic pressures to embody a youthful, vigorous appearance. This opens up a conversation between aesthetics and the politics of casting; between the upcoming and the established. What are the aesthetic criteria and parameters that particular brands look for? Are there any overarching factors in both the fashion and performing arts industry in representing skilled bodies in their campaigns (e.g. trends, social media, animation, technologies of camera and films)? How do brands (i.e. high fashion and dance companies) arrive at the idea of collaboration using dance choreographies in fashion performance in the first place? It stood out that ENB’s new brand identity was created during the economic climate where funding from the Arts Council England has been reduced progressively (Farquhar 2011). This area of artistic collaboration and corporate art intervention in relation to economic recession requires further research, as it will pose many questions pertinent to a wider debate concerning the often problematic interrelationship of power relation between the government and other key agents in performing arts and the fashion industry.
Throughout the course of this thesis, visual materials and embodied experience have informed the labour of my research. I have provided analytical frameworks for close readings of the practice and located connections where the world of art and commerce meet. Visual evidence appears in every chapter. In the hope of expanding the concept of surplus values and power relations between the dancing body and the dominant agents in the fashion industry in relation to capital, politics and cultural value, I have argued that fashion too has a choreography. By using movement theories from dance studies to analyse fashion imagery, I have demonstrated the concept of embodied knowledge in fashion. I have also investigated visual taxonomies linking early modernist dance to twenty-first-century high fashion. Moreover, I have situated fashion performance in its socioeconomic context by referring to theories of political economy in both high fashion and art dance events.

To mark the conclusion of *Terpsichore in Jimmy Choo*, I compose one final visual reading as an encore to the crossover between dance and high fashion. These photographs mark a visual continuation from English National Ballet to *The Mobius Strip* (2010), a collaboration between The Royal Ballet and British fashion designer, Jayne Pierson, featuring her Spring/Summer 2011 collection performed as part of London Fashion Week (see Figure 6.3). The dancers are used as models at this event. The dancing bodies glide across the stage through fluttering *bourrée* (rapid gavotting) before strutting down the runway in a Clydesdale walk, *en-pointe*. One dancer shimmies to display tasselled details at the sleeves of the dress. Her corporeal technique shakes and gives volume to the medium-length tassels that swing in a pendulous motion. Another dancer dashes downstage and strikes open an arabesque arm pose whilst shaping her legs in a parallel *passé* (a foot that is placed near the other knee). The momentum allows the draped bodice, hung in a shape of a long strip scarf, to whiz around her whilst the bent knee highlights the slit of the dress that continues to drape along the side seams. Finally, another dancer pivots on the press spot and wings her arms to reveal the orange strips of the grey silk coat.
In a similar fashion, the Dutch National Ballet collaborated with Amsterdam-based avant-garde fashion partnership Viktor Horsting and Rolf Snoeren, in Viktor & Rolf Spring/Summer couture show (Bumpus 2014). They also used professional dancers on the catwalk. The ballerinas bourrée down the catwalk, rapidly shuffling their feet en-pointe, in nude featherweight latex dresses, which recalls The Royal Ballet’s performance of *The Mobius Strip* (see Figure 6.4). They did not perform any distinctive choreographic shapes apart from bras bas arm positions (curved and loosely hung) and balletic kneels, yet the ghostly uniformed bodies evoke images of The Wilis in the Romantic Ballet *Giselle*. The timing of this Paris couture show coincides with the announcement of Viktor & Rolf upcoming collaborative arts event as Horsting and Snoeren were commissioned by the Dutch National Ballet to dress the dancers for their new work choreographed by Finnish choreographer Jorma Elo which was premiered in April (Feiereisen 2014). This crossover traces the practice that English National Ballet absorbed and inherited from the Ballet Russes and continues the historical trajectory of fashion and dance collaborations. Overall, I envision Terpsichore, the muse of dance, modelling through catwalks, films and editorial pages. She corporealisés as a moving mannequin, making dance part of the business of fashion, with choreographers using fashion, and fashion designers using choreography to enliven the already spectacularised and commodified world of haute couture.