COTTON AND CAPITAL

PAJAMA FASHIONS BEFORE AND AFTER COVID-19

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ABSTRACT

While many businesses continue to endure hardships as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and "sheltering in place" in some places becomes obsolete, the significance of what we do and wear at home remains as important to our health and safety as what we do at work, in public spaces, and in social life. In hopes of lasting commitments to conscious lifestyle choices, this article analyzes the culture of pajama wearing in the early twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Drawing from diverse sources ranging from The Metropolitan Museum of Art to independent news media outlets, the article illustrates, despite sleepwear's association with comfort and ease, how the history of the garment is instead steeped in narratives of colonialism, slave labor, and the hazards of the modern chemical industry. By weaving diverse sources and histories, baggy and loose-fitting pajamas are re-positioned as an understudied fashion garment that now plays a key role in a new era of individual and consumer self-awareness.

KEYWORDS

Sleepwear; Loungewear; Pajamas; Pjama fashions; Fashion and colonialism; Western and Eastern influences.

I. The Business of Sleep

What one wears to bed is big business. From high-end brand names to fast fashion and lingerie, sleepwear sells. A person on average spends a third of their life in bed, and an additional 25 percent of their non-working hours at home, presumably in sleep or loungewear attire of some sort.[1] During the global COVID-19 pandemic, this number thickened as millions of people were instructed to stay at home as much as possible. Many bedrooms transformed into home offices, and what one wore to bed was also what one wore to work. Social norms adjusted accordingly so that wearing pajamas or baggy loungewear became acceptable in many virtual workspaces. In a May 2020 study, Adobe Analytics reported that while there was lesser need for formal attire during the COVID-19 pandemic, the demand for comfortable leisurewear and pajamas in the United States rose by 143 percent.[2] In short, wearing loose and comfortable clothing has become one way we have all done our part to collectively battle a global contagion.

While many businesses and families continue to endure hardships in the economic aftermath of the pandemic and "sheltering in place" becomes obsolete, the value and significance of what we do and wear at home, the authors maintain, is just as important to our health and safety as what we do at work, in public, and in social life more broadly. In anticipation of a lasting global awareness of domestic and personal lifestyle choices, this article analyzes key moments in the history and culture of pajama wearing. To be clear: this does not include many home workers who wear pajamas while they start their day more out of a necessity for fashion or stylistic choice. The article draws from diverse source materials, ranging from the archives of The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, to independent news media outlets based in Shanghai, the United Kingdom, and the United States. For three reasons, the authors focus on cotton pajamas almost exclusively. First, cotton has become largely synonymous with comfort, especially in American loungewear and pajama-wearing practices. Second and third, soft and loose-fitting cotton is, counterintuitively, bound up in the histories of the African-American slave trade and British colonization. The article offers a condensed narration of the (colonial) history of this specific garment, the pajama, and the ways in which its etymological and cultural origins in Asia have been appropriated time and time again, through colonial structures and agents around the world. We approach and define the term "fashion" broadly, as a set of culturally esteemed aesthetic practices loosely related to gar-

1
Michael Jeffrey Aminoff, François Boller, and Dick F. Swaab, We Spend About One-Third of Our Life Either Sleeping or Attempting to Do So, in: *Handbook of Clinical Neurology* 98, 2011, vii; Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), *American Time Use Survey – 2018 Results*, Washington: U.S. Department of Labor, 2019, n.p. (16.06.2020).

2
Chauncey Alcorn, No One Is Buying Pants, but Pajama Sales Are Soaring, in: *CNN Business*, 12.05.2020, n.p. (16.06.2020).

ments. Likewise, we define "cultural appropriation" as the practice of translation and sharing through time and space, though we are also careful to note violence and abuse that may arise therein, especially within the broader contexts of global capitalism. By weaving together diverse sources and histories, we illustrate how these ostensibly liberating garments are not only an understudied fashion but now play a key role in a new era of consumer self-awareness.

II. Modern Sleepwear

The origins of the pajama date back to the thirteenth-century Ottoman Empire, typically worn by Muslim men and Sikhs of the Jat caste in India, Iran, Pakistan, and Bangladesh [Fig. 1]. The Jat caste is traditionally a farmer caste, an agrarian people who wore the item for reasons of practicality and not fashion. The word pajama derives from the Urdu origins "pāy-jāma" or "pāy-jāmeh", denoting baggy and loose-fitting pants with a tie at the waist and unrelated to sleeping. The two segments of the term are an amalgamation of the Hindi terms "pa(y)", for leg and "jamah", for garment.[3]

The object and term "pjama" was only adopted by Europeans in the seventeenth century, during the British colonization of India, during which time the pjama came to signify men's loungewear, consisting of a jacket as well as pants.[4] What was once seen as a simplistic item of base functionality for lower caste members of the society was transfigured once it was appropriated by British colonists.

The British East India Company received its trade charter in 1600, shortly after which such Indian-made textiles as the pjama were newly worn by privileged members of the self-assumed superlative British Empire. In her recent book, *Caste. The Origins of Our Discontents* (2020), Isabel Wilkerson defines caste as a precursor to (largely American) systemic racism. For Wilkerson, caste is an "unseen skeleton" and "subconscious code of instructions for maintaining" divisions of power and hierarchy.[5] Wilkerson argues that "Caste is the infrastructure of our divisions. It is the architecture of human hierarchy, the subconscious code of instructions for maintaining, in our case, a four-hundred-year-old social order."[6] While the violence of British colonization is far from invisible, it is also important to understand how caste-based colonization thrives

3
Lisa Lim, Where the Word Pyjamas Comes from … or Is It Pajamas?, in: *South China Morning Post*, 12.10.2017, n.p. (16.06.2020).

4
Ivor Lewis, *Sahibs, Nabobs and Boxwallahs. A Dictionary of the Words of Anglo-India*, Oxford 1991, 49.

5
Isabel Wilkerson, *Caste. The Origins of Our Discontents*, New York 2020.

6
Ibid., 17.

[Fig. 1]
The Cotton Market, in: William Johnson, *The Photographs of Western India*, Vol. 1: *Costumes and Characters, 1855–1862*: Men in Bombay wearing traditional pajama ensembles, ca. 1856. The term "pajama" derives from the Hindi "pāy-jāma" or "pāy-jāmeh," denoting loose-fitting trousers tied at the waist.

in the present in less obvious or visible registers. The European appropriation of the Indian pjama offers a case in point.

In its British assimilation, the pyjama (from "pjama") was no longer worn out of practicality, by farmers who required loose and lightweight clothing to perform their work in the fields, but instead by Europeans who could boast leisure time spent in what may have appeared to be outrageously baggy haberdashery for the era. Bernard Cohn also suggests the appropriation of the garment acted as a symbol of masculine bravery. The Sikhs were one of the few castes who came close to defeating the British during the colonial wars, therein attaining a reputation as "manly and brave ... a true son of the soil".[7] The European fashion of wearing these radically simplistic, lightweight garments, however, was hardly an act of solidarity with lower castes or democratic fashion, but instead, an extraction of symbolic masculinity into a culture of leisure – in effect, reinforcing the superiority of the colonizing caste, and their exclusive capacity to be frivolous with time, money, and fashion. Bagginess here comes to connote both freedom and hierarchy. In sum, the ways in which the pajama gained traction as a common fashion and sleeping item in Europe, and eventually America (discussed below), is tied up in the histories of colonialism and, as we will now argue, its intersections with mechanical reproduction.

The advent of industrialization revolutionized the textile industry which, in turn, laid the groundwork for the development of modern sleepwear in the Euro-Americas. Prior to mechanically reproduced garments, Europeans "slept in home knitted underwear", made of farmed "wool", carded by hand and "knitted on a home knitting machine".[8] In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and as a direct result of European colonial expansion by way of the African slave trade, there was an influx of cheap imports to Europe from the English and French colonies in the American South. Cotton in particular amassed in increasingly greater quantities as African-American slaves in the United States colonies were progressively exploited in cotton picking.[9] In 1860 alone, it is estimated that Great Britain imported 9,963,309 centum weights or

7
Bernard Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge*, Princeton, NJ 1996, 109.

8
Ingun Grimstad Klepp, Tone Skårdal Tobiasson, and Kirsi Laitala, Why Cotton as Linen? The Use of Wool in Beds in Norway, in: *Textile. Cloth and Culture* 14:1, 2016, 75.

9
Beverly Lemire, *Cotton*, Oxford 2011, 87.

"hundredweights" (CWTS) of cotton,[10] over 80 percent of which arrived from the United States.[11]

Once the raw cotton arrived at one of the thousands of British factories, men, women and children were put to work for long hours in dangerous mills filled with cotton dust to machine spin and weave it into cloth [Fig. 2]. Many were willing to work, which allowed profit-hungry employers to set low wages with substandard conditions ranging from poor air circulation to low lighting and volatile Argand lamp systems. The horrors of the industrial age have been well documented elsewhere.[12]

As cotton weaves became more accessible and cheaper for the average European consumer in the eighteenth century,[13] the skills required to use looms, create pelts, prepare leather, or weave linen at home became less common.[14] Even if the quality of handspun and homemade weaves and textiles were of a higher quality than machine-made products, which they often were, it was more cost-effective to purchase finished textiles because they were comparable in price to yarn, had a quicker turnover and saved time and money.

A second component in the development of modern sleepwear was the transformative nature of the modern sleeping environment. Modern advances in running water and electricity in living quarters led to innovations in washing machines, heating, and related devices of comfort and convenience. Central heating made cold nights less burdensome and heavy bedding (wools, pelts, or furs) faded out of use.[15] Electric washing machines made laundering textiles less cumbersome, making the shift from potentially deteriorating sleep under-garments (common in the late eighteenth century) to utilizing new, cheaper cotton alternatives.[16] With the benefit of textile factories and carding mills already in place, by the first decade of the twentieth century, sleepwear had become common throughout

10
A CWT, formerly known as centum weight, was a standard unit of weight used in commodities trading contracts between North America and the United Kingdom: Gordon Scott, What Is CWT (Hundredweight), in: *Investopedia*, 02.04.2020 (16.06.2020).

11
Anne Farrow, Joel Lang, and Jenifer Frank, *Complicity. How the North Promoted, Prolonged, and Profited from Slavery*, New York 2005, 7.

12
Karl Marx, *Capital. A Critique of Political Economy*, vol. 1, trans. B. Fowkes and D. Fernbach, London 1967, 129–137.

13
Even though there was a slight price increase in the cost of cotton during the American Civil War, cotton nonetheless became more dominant than linen in the 1800s: Klepp, Tobiasson, and Laitala, Why Cotton as Linen?, 81.

14
Ibid., 80–82.

15
Ibid., 81.

16
Ibid., 79.

[Fig. 2]
"Worker at a Cotton Gin", ca. 1940s, U.S. Department of Agriculture. The next step of cotton ginning refers to the process of separating the cotton fibers from the seed, removing any dirt and or other extraneous matter. Image courtesy of U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Western Europe and parts of the Americas, eclipsing bulky woolen flannel.[17]

In sum, and contrary to prevailing opinion, cotton is not an inherently natural or ethically sourced fabric. Its history reveals manufacturing and processing that requires unsanitary conditions and an abundance of chemicals (pesticides and insecticides), coupled with industrial capitalism's encroachment on the global marketplace, colonialism, and slavery. Arguably, the rise of pajamas as a mainstream wardrobe staple for middle- and lower-class Europeans arose in part through capitalist profit aims. In a nascent consumer society, marketing items through fashion becomes another means of creating demand through desire rather than need. For example, modern sleepwear first became popular with women and youth, many of whom lived in larger cities and began the trend of bringing new urban fashions – cotton nightgowns and pajamas – back to the smaller towns, which eventually led to a wider base of the pajama-wearing public.[18]

This mass shift to cotton sleepwear, however, was not free of roadblocks or significant backlashes. Alongside the rise of synthetic textiles in the nineteenth century came a slew of concerns regarding health and safety. Flannelette offers a case in point.

The story of flannelette, as recounted by Alison Matthews David,[19] evidences the textile to have emerged in the late 1870s, introduced as a cheap and more affordable alternative to its precursor, wool flannel.[20] Wool flannel, traditionally woven by hand in cottage industries, is a tightly interlaced animal protein fiber that made the garments and items produced from it especially thick, durable, and possessing a considerably intense thermal barrier.[21] In contrast, flannelette was a plain-weave cotton fabric, made from natural, unprocessed cotton. It was made to resemble the softness and warmth of wool flannel by raising the fibers onto the surface of the fabric, creating a napped fuzzy texture. The textile was problematic, however, because it loosened the fabric structure, enabling significant airflow to circulate through the fibers of the fabric, which meant that its loose, lightweight structure would encourage the rapid spread of a fire if a flame were to land on it.

The high cost of flannelette was therefore not its price tag but the potentiality of death. "If a spark landed on it," David explains, a

17
Ibid., 83.

18
Ibid., 79.

19
Alison Matthews David, Blazing Ballet Girls and Flannelette Shrouds. Fabric, Fire, and Fear in the Long Nineteenth Century, in: *Textile. Cloth and Culture* 14:2, 2016, 244–267, 245.

20
Ibid., 260.

21
Ibid., 259–260.

"sheet of flame could flash over the whole surface."[22] Moreover, during much of the nineteenth century, gas and oil lamps were still used for domestic heat and light, reinforcing flammability as an already acute concern. As a result, "many burned to death in highly inflammable clothing".[23] Nonetheless, flannelette textiles were extremely popular among consumers, used for girls clothing, bedding, sleepwear, and to make costumes for the ballet (worn on the inside of ballerina skirts). The highly sought-after fabric fulfilled economic requirements, as it was inexpensive and widely available to lower classes, but as David suggests, it fulfilled psychological and emotional needs that allowed the lower and middle classes to keep up with new fashions, that is, the endless pursuit of upward mobility through social belonging that is the essence of industrial capitalism.[24] The Commission on Consumer Product Safety in the United States still requires children's pajamas to be treated with a "fire retardant" before going to market.[25]

By the second half of the nineteenth century, a series of combined efforts led to a set of solutions for textile flammability. As a result, industrial innovations in textile safety democratized modern fabrics while simultaneously propagating a growing cultural (and eventually global) dependence on synthetic fabrics and mass-produced clothing. As Europe's importation of cheap cotton from India and the Americas increased, and as mechanical reproduction helped turn the screw of the bourgeoning consumer society, a new exoticization of the same cultures that supplied the Euro-Americas with free (slave) labor and cheap natural resources appeared.

III. Jazz-Age Pajama Fashions

By the early twentieth century, pajamas in the form of sleepwear had become mainstream and affordable. New to this century, however, was the debut of pajamas as chic *daywear*. As noted above, pjamas are not the direct equivalent to pajamas. The "pjama" in its Eastern-inspired form was not manufactured for actual sleeping but rather, as an item one could "wear outside on the street, over as a guest at people's houses".[26] Even as silk or cotton daywear, this not-so innocent textile made its way into a garment that came to

22
Ibid., 260.

23
Ibid., 245.

24
Ibid., 246.

25
Anon., Children's Sleepwear Regulations, *U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission*, n.p. (04.10.2020).

26
Anon., Decorative Paris Pjamas (File # MM53 041840), New York: Archives of The Costume Institute, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, ca. 1973.

embody histories of colonization and labor exploitation at the same time as it captured the vibrant energies of the new century.

From beachwear fashions worn in the Hamptons to the south of France, and from eveningwear worn by icons on the red carpets of Hollywood, daywear pajamas came into vogue alongside the rise of jazz, art deco, and the free-spirited zeitgeist of the 1910s through the early 1930s.[27] During the first three decades of the twentieth century, a new energy filled the air, propelled by the wish to understand the modern age as wholly distinct from the past. Former editor of *American Vogue* Diana Vreeland describes these years as the "Decades of Invention".[28] Relative to the tradition-laden, bourgeois academicism that defined the art, culture, and customs at the end of the last century, the designers, architects, musicians, performers, writers, and artists of the new age actively "smashed traditions", saw "class barriers crumble [and] new life patterns emerge".[29] A close analogy can be made to the revolutionary spirit that drove a new era of streamlined modern architecture, casting away the bulky décor and excess of the previous century.

The popularity of the loose and baggy pajama style seemed especially cut for the new generation of women who fought for and embodied the free-spirited, sexually liberated zeitgeist of the jazz age. Arguably, the androgyny of the pajama also functions on yet another revolutionary level of gender fluidity and sexual ambiguity, yet to be explored in sartorial scholarship. At the time, new technological developments in the automobile, cinema, and photography further enhanced a sense of freedom and mobility in movement while innovations in architecture demonstrated that concrete, steel, and glass could be used to structure massive free-standing skyscrapers in what would become known as the international style. In sum, the era saw "fresh styles" converging across the creative disciplines "like the clashing of cymbals".[30] Many of these accomplishments transpired in Paris.

In the 1920s and 1930s, daywear pajamas were especially in vogue in Paris and, similar to their Hindi precursors, consisted of lightweight pants, in addition to a short-sleeved or sleeveless blouse. The key distinction was tailoring. Daywear pajamas were elegant, often made of silk, chiffon, or equally luxurious material and characteristically designed by some of Paris's foremost fashion

27
It should also be noted that the European spelling "Pyjama" implied the same item: "pajama", which was, and remains, the North American spelling. The advertising industries were aware of this and thus used different spellings to market to respective consumers.

28
Diana Vreeland, *The 10s, the 20s, the 30s. Inventive Clothes 1909–1939*, New York 1973, 2.

29
Ibid.

30
Ibid.

labels.[31] The stylish daywear pajamas of the 1920s were, at first, luxurious, haute couture and not the equivalent of the mass-produced pajamas worn today for actual sleeping (or, as worn outside, a phenomenon to which we return in the conclusion).

French fashion designer Elsa Schiaparelli designed a pajama pant in the 1920s for the American textile manufacturer Belding-Heminway fabrics featuring an African-inspired Safari line called, "Silks of a New Adventure". The design featured a zebra print called "Punda", a pattern that took the basic geometry of zebra stripes and abstracted them into triangles.[32] Susan Hannel argues that this appropriation of African culture marked "a microcosm for everything that was appealing and modern about Africa – exotic tans, airplanes, and the savage jungle hunt".[33] African art, she argues, was problematically "perceived to be simultaneously primitive and modern".[34]

The Euro-American "craze for things African", Hannel continues, "began during the first part of the 1920s", fueled by jazz music, the Charleston dance, and the Harlem Renaissance, and reached a high point at the 1931 Colonial Exposition in Paris, at which point mild fascination had blossomed into an outright obsession and a full-blown "negrophilia".[35] It was in African art, textiles, and dance in particular that many Europeans found a vital source of inspiration. Artists like Picasso, Matisse, Derain, and Vlaminck drew out aesthetic qualities from the African objects and textiles they witnessed in museums and local flea markets, leading to what is now understood as the basis of modern art and abstraction.[36] One can identify such influences in the work of Paul Poiret and the numerous European artists who collaborated with Léon Bakst and Sergei Diaghilev for the Ballets Russes. While borrowing from other cultures helps maintain the rigor and diversity of one's own, the cultural and racial stereotypes of Africa and African peoples fueled colonial fantasies of domination and control, resulting in more damaging consequences than the positive sharing of cultures. What does it mean that contemporary fashion industries, while claiming a commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion, continue to perpetuate harmful stereotypes of Africans and cultured Others by way

31
Anon., Decorative Paris Pjamas.

32
Susan Lee Hannel, "Africana" Textiles. Imitation, Adaptation, and Transformation during the Jazz Age, in: *Textile. Cloth and Culture* 4:1, 2006, 68–103, 92–93.

33
Ibid., 69.

34
Ibid.

35
Ibid., 70.

36
Joshua I. Cohen, Fauve Masks. Rethinking Modern "Primitivist" Uses of African and Oceanic Art, in: *The Art Bulletin* 99:2, 2017, 136–165, 138.

of appropriating so-called primitive and animalistic patterns and prints? Can such items as the Punda-print remain a renowned piece in the annals of fashion history without being subject to further anti-racist analysis?

Such methods of cultural appropriation were nonetheless evident in the vast majority of pajama designs in this period [Fig. 3]. Another example comes from the Callot Soeurs, a leading Parisian fashion house in the 1910s and 1920s led by Marie Callot Gerber, Marthe Callot Bertrand, Regina Callot Tennyson-Chantrell, and Joséphine Callot Crimont. Callot Soeurs had turned to looser clothing in the interwar era, and also drew inspiration from cultured Others, including Diaghilev's Russian theatre, and then de rigueur fascination with the Far East.[37] The Callot Soeurs' slip-like dresses consisted of an over-blouse, cardigan jacket, always in extreme luxury and high-quality. In addition to their earlier styles of straight-line dresses, and evening dresses with layered tulle skirts, the sisters also began to make lounge pajamas of "delicious printed crêpe" and pantsuits with belts.[38] However colorful, heavily beaded or embroidered, their clothes always carried an elegant simplicity.[39]

Famed fashion designer Coco Chanel also designed elegant "beach and evening pajamas"[40] in the 1920s, coordinated in playful and chic summer and spring ensembles, and interweaving her iconic "borrowings from sportswear, menswear and military uniforms for couture women's fashions".[41] The roster of designers who created daywear pajamas during this time is endless, including such famed persons as Madeleine Vionnet, Paul Poiret, and Sonia Delaunay, among others. As soon as pajama fashions began appearing on the runways of Chanel, Schiaparelli, and Callot Soeurs, cheap imitations for daywear and sleeping items began to appear in the 1930s across the industrialized world. Whether in the form of simple sewing patterns that could be made at home, by a hired seamstress or simply as a pre-fabricated item on the racks of a department store, these innovations (and exploitations) helped pave the way to fast-fashion cultures we have become all too familiar with.

In sum, the mixing of cultures, creative disciplines, and collaborative spirits that fueled the decorative arts and music in the jazz age in the first quarter of the twentieth century are responsible for introducing some problematic extensions of colonialism and com-

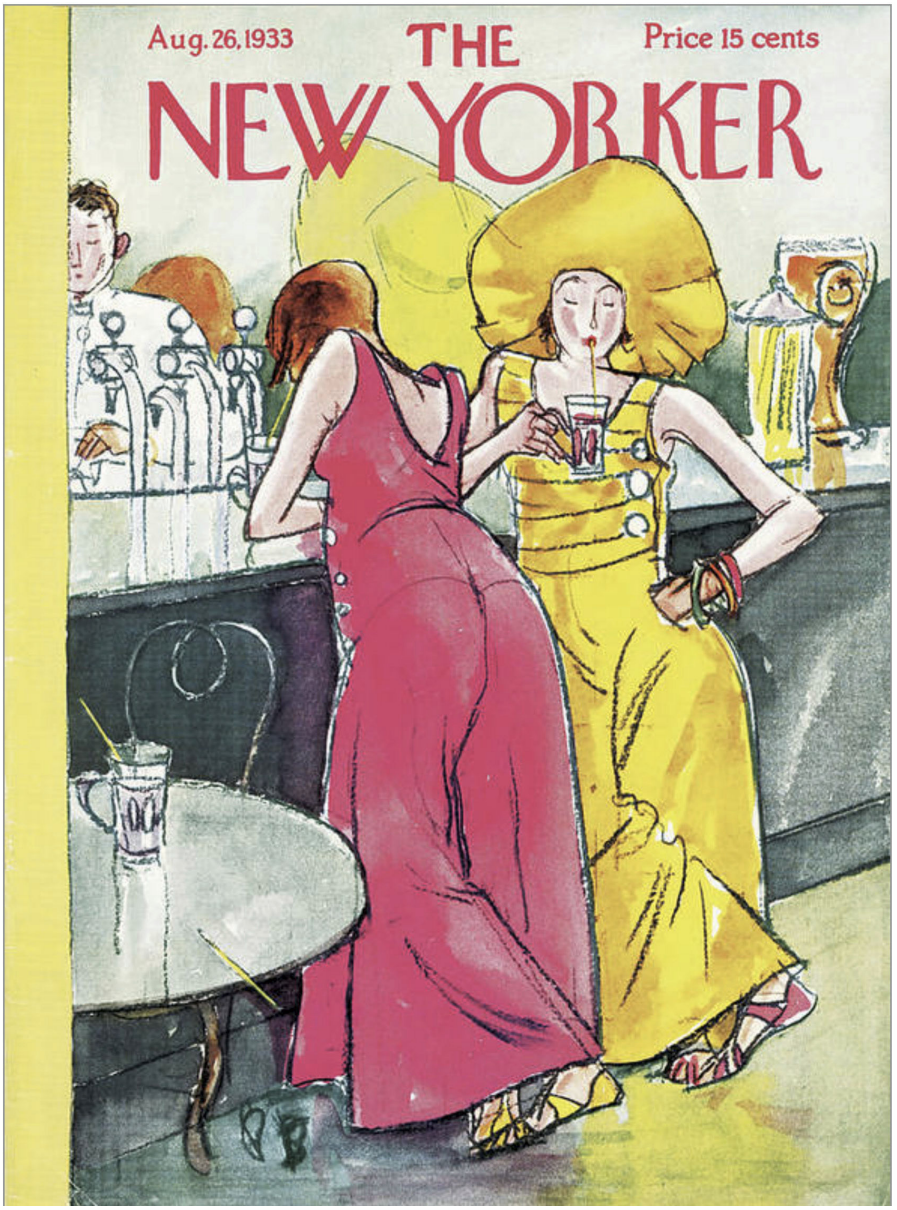
37
Irving Penn and Diana Vreeland, Penn Book Draft, New York: Archives of The Costume Institute, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1975, 7.

38
Ibid.

39
Ibid., 8.

40
Vreeland, The 10s, the 20s, the 30s.

41
Ibid., 3.



[Fig. 3]
Cover of *The New Yorker*, August 16, 1933. Fashioned as chic daywear, baggy and loose "pajamas" were worn by American women as a symbol of freedom and comfort. Cover in Public Domain.

mercial capitalism that persist in the sleepwear of the present but also, some of the most innovative cornerstones in the history of modern art, fashion, and design. Future apparel scholarship would benefit from an exploration of the pajamas' intersections with sexual ambiguity and its problematic history of oriental fetishization.

IV. The Shanghai Pajama Ban

This article has thus far focused only on the development of mainly cotton pajamas as modern sleepwear exclusively in the Euro-American context. In closing, we consider an unexpected reversal of cultural appropriation trends through the pajama-wearing fashions in Shanghai, China at the end of the twentieth century.

Euro-American daywear pajamas first arrived in Asia in the 1920s as luxurious "foreign-style nightgowns".[42] For most, pajamas were a beautiful garment to admire but too costly for the majority of people to afford and thus only a very few, wealthy persons could purchase and wear them. The few who could afford to do so put such items on display as a signifier of social and economic status. As a result, lavish, imported daywear pajamas, when worn outside, became "a Chinese status symbol" of contact and exchange with the freedom, liberties, and materialisms of the capitalist West.[43] Pjamas and pajamas alike, Euro-American fashions that originally drew inspiration from traditional Asian and African cultures, now returned to "the East" to combine "leisure, art, personalization and nostalgia" in what has since become a globalized fashion market.[44]

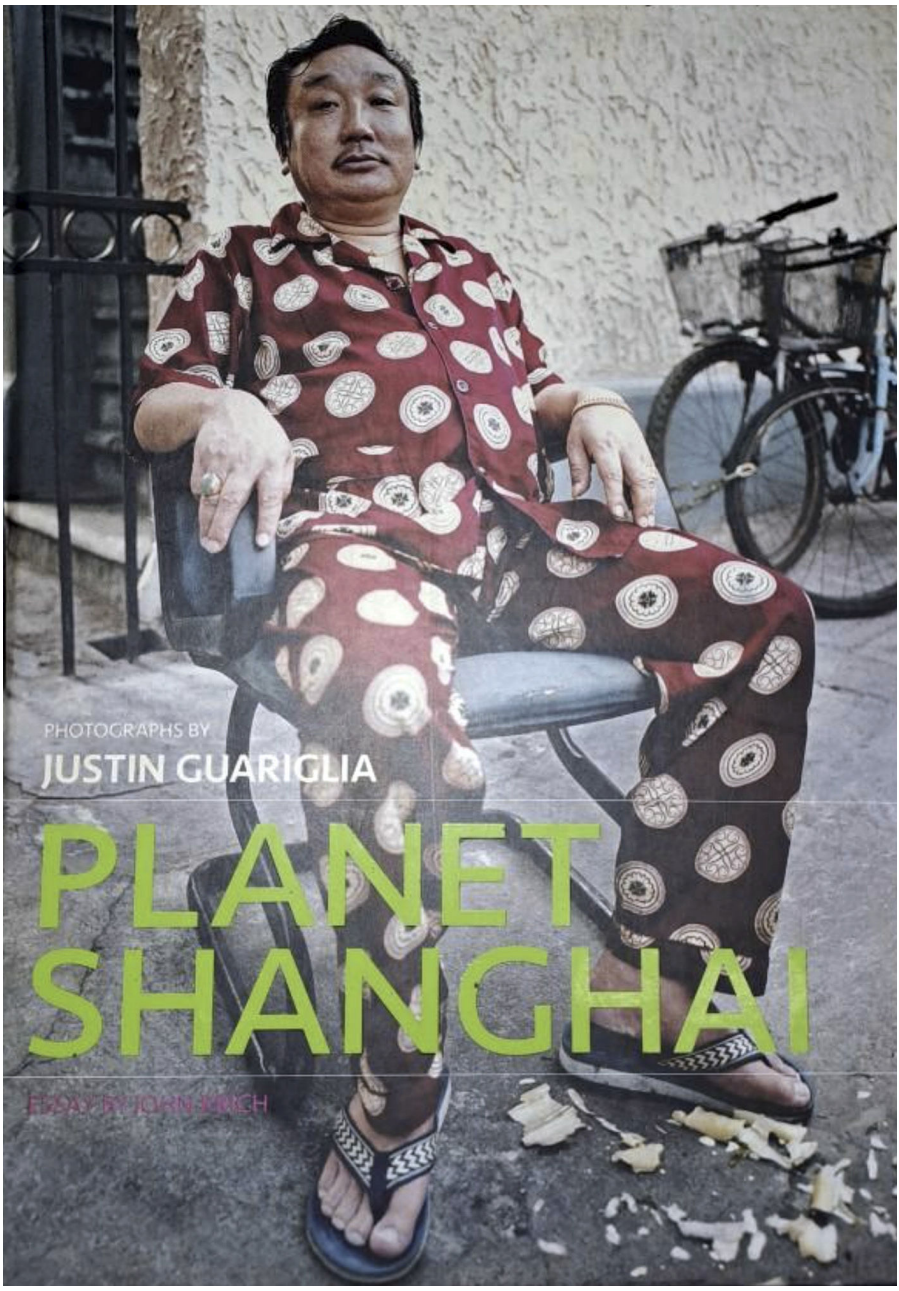
It was not until half a century later, in the 1970s communist China, when serious efforts were made to modernize the Chinese economy on the global stage, that daywear pajamas took on the force of a mainstream fashion [Fig. 4]. In particular, the public pajama trend centered in Shanghai, in the city's main shopping districts, Nanjing Road and Xintiandi, where many of the "nightgowns" one might see, Lanlan observes, were "trendy, high-end and well-made".[45] In this case, we are not talking about designer pajamas, but instead, sleepwear pajamas, which people in Shanghai were wearing outside *and* to sleep in at night. While it is likely that many wore satin and silky pajamas (versus cotton exclusively), the trend is nonetheless worth noting alongside modern China's twenty-first-century role in the textiles trade, let alone its role in the world history of cotton production. At the time, Deng Xiaoping,

42
Public Pajamas Persist in Shanghai, in: *The Wall Street Journal*, 29.10.2009 (06.09.2022).

43
Ibid.

44
Ibid.

45
Ibid.



[Fig. 4]
Justin Guariglia, cover of *Planet Shanghai* (2008). It was not until the 1970s in communist China when daywear pajamas took on the force of a mainstream fashion. Cover in Public Domain.

China's leader from 1978 to 1992, "sought to modernize the economy and society by 'opening [it] up' to the outside world".[46] This meant importing comfortable lounge and sleepwear fashions, which led to the influx of loose-fitting, non-revealing day-pajamas made of cotton or polyester. In Shanghai, sleeping pajamas re-appropriated into daywear items took on a new significance as a symbol of American cool. Yubing writes, "The Chinese adopted Western pajamas without fully understanding their context."[47] Many Chinese had previously never owned any "dedicated sleepwear other than old T-shirts and pants" and thus, when pajamas arrived, they appeared to be "a symbol of wealth and coolness".[48] Shanghainese people henceforth began wearing imported American pajamas to bed, but in the morning, they "kept them on to walk around the neighborhood".[49]

Wearing day-pajamas in Shanghai has been viewed by many as a part of the city's charm, elegantly illustrated in the pages of Justin Guariglia's 2008 book *Planet Shanghai*.[50] In 2010, however, this changed as the quaintness of the local practice gained the stature of a public relations problem. In 2010 Shanghai was set to host the 2010 World Expo, and authorities determined that the pajama-wearing custom was "backward" and "uncivilized" and should therefore be vanquished.[51] Signs began to appear around the city: "Pajamas don't go out of the door; be a civilized resident for the Expo", as volunteer "pajama policemen" patrolled neighborhoods, instructing pajama wearers to "go home and change".[52] Yang Xiong, then executive vice mayor of Shanghai and one of the directors on the executive committee for the Expo, maintained that the Expo offered the "perfect opportunity to kick [Shanghai's day-pajama-wearing] habit".[53] With such a large influx of foreigners to the city –

46
Gao Yubing, The Pajama Game Closes in Shanghai, in: *The New York Times*, 16.05.2010, n.p. (16.07.2020).

47
Ibid.

48
Ibid.

49
Ibid.

50
Justin Guariglia and John Krich, *Planet Shanghai*, San Francisco 2008.

51
Yubing, The Pajama Game Closes in Shanghai.

52
Ibid.

53
Ibid.

70 million visitors were expected – he concluded, "we don't want to ruin our cosmopolitan image".[54]

The concern with "saving face" in front of an international audience makes sense from a political and professional perspective. However, some of the day-pajama styles and outfits put together by the Shanghainese people are more stylish and aesthetically innovative than the majority of American loungewear has been. Nonetheless, the classification of American casualness as embarrassing, backwards, and uncivilized takes on a heightened pitch in lieu of the previous (Euro-American) generation's infantilizing of Asian (and African) cultures as exotic and wild. Both East and West engage in racialized dismissals and misguided appropriations of the Other, now braided into strange, intersecting histories ingrained in the very texture and fabric of all modern sleepwear.[55]

This disdain for daytime pajama wearing has hardly been unique to Shanghai. Elsewhere in the world, casual pajama wearing in public has invoked similar, albeit less dramatic concerns. In the United Kingdom and the United States, concerns about public pajama wearing are wrapped up in a class-based contempt for lower-class consumers. For example, according to the BBC news, in January 2010 at the Tesco supermarket in St Mellons, Cardiff, 24-year-old mother of two, Elaine Carmody visited her routine Tesco wearing pajama bottoms, where she was then refused service.[56] The store had recently initiated a ban on customers wearing pajamas, insisting that all shoppers wear "no nightwear" and must wear "footwear at all times" to "avoid causing offence or embarrassment to other customers".[57] Carmody later explained to Mark Hutchings of the BBC that she was only "popping in for a pack of fags".[58] However, if she had gone to the store to do "a full shop", she claims, "then we obviously would have gone in clothed".[59]

Circa 2017, pajama-wearing difficulties persist, by now deemed a growing "social problem" in the United Kingdom.[60] Back at Tesco,

54
Xiong, cited in Yubing, The Pajama Game Closes in Shanghai, n.p.

55
Future research may also consider the precarious role of sleep in contemporary China and/or forced-labor-produced cotton and how these registers resonate with pajama fashions or, pajama wearing as necessity.

56
Anon., Tesco Ban on Shoppers in Pyjamas, in: *BBC News*, 28.01.2010, n.p. (16.07.2020).

57
Ibid.

58
Ibid.

59
Ibid.

60
Roisin Ingle, Are We Going Out? I'll Get My Pyjamas, in: *The Irish Times*, 28.01.2012 (16.07.2020); Katie Morely, Shoppers Who Wear Pyjamas in Tesco Are Given a Dressing Down, in: *The Telegraph*, 05.01.2017 (16.07.2020).

a related pajama issue erupted after one customer complained publicly on social media that they found a fellow shopper "bloody disgusting" for wearing her fluffy robe and slippers in store.[61] Also in the United Kingdom in 2017, head teacher at Skerne Park Academy in Darlington, Kate Chisholm, wrote a letter to school parents, urging them to "dress appropriately in day wear" and stop wearing pajamas to school drop off, as well as at school events such as meetings and assemblies.[62] The letter suggests that parents should set a good example for their children, by dressing in appropriate daywear – i.e., the unspoken code for cleanliness as a synonym for the loyalty to social and economic upward mobility (or at least the appearance of it). Some parents consented with Chisholm's letter, while others contested it by continuing to wear pajamas.[63]

Meanwhile in the United States, in January 2012, Michael Williams, a commissioner in Caddo Parish, Louisiana, proposed an ordinance prohibiting locals from wearing pajamas in public. His motivations were similar to those in the United Kingdom, albeit targeted to "a group of young men" Williams saw "wearing sagging pants that hung below the waist", on the verge of revealing their "private parts".[64] As Williams explained it, "The moral fiber in our community is dwindling … it's pajama pants today, next it will be underwear tomorrow."[65] Another United States case comes from Mount Anthony Union High School in Bennington, Vermont where, in 2011, students were banned from wearing pajamas to school.[66] The issues here, and in those cited above, have less to do with pajamas per se than they do with the covert stereotyping of race and class, mixed with Euro-American values of (a certain kind of) cleanliness as "next to godliness". In the post-industrial era of electronic high-tech and fast-fashion excess, dirty, unhygienic clothing and appearances still function as international signifiers of poverty and lower-class status which also, conveniently, amount to a lack of purchasing power. Banning persons wearing "baggy pants" or

61
Ibid. In response to the no pajama rule, Tesco in 2017 responded in much the same way: "Many of our customers have told us that they feel uncomfortable when they see other shoppers wearing unsuitable clothing in our stores", in: Morely, Shoppers Who Wear Pyjamas.

62
Anon., Head Teacher Tells Parents to Stop Wearing Pyjamas on School Run, in: *The Telegraph*, 27.01.2016, n.p. (16.07.2020).

63
Ibid.

64
Courtney Subramanian, Louisiana Official Moves to Ban Wearing Pajamas in Public, in: *Time*, 17.01.2012, n.p. (16.07.2020).

65
Maura Judkis, Pajamas in Public. Should They Be Banned?, in: *The Washington Post*, 18.01.2012 (16.07.2020); Subramanian, Louisiana Official.

66
Tracey Lomrantz Lester, One Small Step for Man. A Vermont High School Bans Pajamas!, in: *Glamour*, 28.07.2011 (16.07.2020).

"loose-fitting" pajamas to the supermarket or on the public street, in some neighborhoods and not others, becomes yet another tool for perpetuating race and class-based discrimination. The distinction is again highlighted in the article's concluding section, as we consider daywear pajamas in twenty-first-century Hollywood.

V. Conclusion: Twenty-First-Century Pajama Games

In the first two decades of the twenty-first century, public pajama wearing remains stigmatized in lower-class and marginalized communities [Fig. 5]. In Hollywood and elite fashion circles, however, daywear pajamas have once again sprung back into vogue. The fashion re-emerged just over a decade ago, in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, then considered one of the worst economic disasters in recent history. According to fashion journalist Suzy Menkes, a number of men's fashion collections on display during the 2009 Milan Fashion week were all inspired by the new economic landscape of lost jobs, financial distress, and the need for lifestyle change.[67] With demand for tailored suits and formal wear on the wane, a return to daywear pajamas seemed a lucrative move. Runways from Dolce and Gabbana, to Bottega Veneta, Gucci, and Versace all feature casual, pajama-inspired loungewear once again made with high-end fabrics and quality tailoring. There was also a return to Eastern influences. At Gucci, Menkes writes, "pajamas and silken bathrobes succumbed to the allure of the East", placing "rampant Asian tigers" on pajama tops as a symbol of new directions in the contemporary "luxury fashion market".[68] The segue to more casual fashions must be seen as simultaneously marking a moment of economic decline, while also perpetuating a history of colonialism and its fetishization of the racialized Other, even as it fetches beauty and jouissance.

In Hollywood, luxury daywear pajama trends have spread to celebrities [Fig. 6]. Nicole Richie, Zendaya, Victoria Beckham, Selena Gomez, Chrissy Teigen, and Naomi Campbell have all been sighted by the paparazzi donning lavish pajamas on the street. In the 2000s, loose-fitting garments designed for women once again signified a new age of liberation, stylistically foreshadowing what would blossom by 2017 within the #MeToo movement.[69] Precursors can

67
Suzy Menkes, Hedging Their Bets. Pajamas Prevail, in: *The New York Times*, 22.06.2008, n.p. (16.07.2020).

68
Ibid.

69
The "Me Too" phrase was coined by activist Tarana Burke in 2006, after which it became a tool for empowering and supporting sexually marginalized women. Over a decade later, "Me Too" has developed into a broad call for social and political change when addressing experiences of survivors of sexual abuse, largely through the use of social media and hashtags: Alix Langone, #MeToo and Time's Up Founders Explain the Difference Between the 2 Movements – And How They're Alike, in: *Time*, 08.03.2018 (16.07.2020).

[Fig. 5]
Dolce & Gabbana, Spring 2009. A sleepwear-inspired collection on display during the 2009 Milan Fashion week.

[Fig. 6]
Gigi Hadid wearing Morgan Lane silk pajamas. Spotted by the paparazzi on Thursday April 13, 2017 in New York City. Image courtesy of Splash News.

also be identified in the loose-fitting clothing worn by such pop icons as Billie Eilish, Missy Eliot, Gwen Stefani, Rihanna, Erykah Badu, Avril Lavigne, Ariana Grande, and M.I.A., all of whom, collectively, set new standards for acceptably baggy and yet still highly stylized female fashions.

In 2018, American designer Marc Jacobs also designed clothing for this new generation of women [Fig. 7]. After watching Marc Jacobs's 2018 Fall Ready-to-Wear collection, long-esteemed *American Vogue* magazine editor Anna Wintour described the oversized silhouettes in the collection as ready to "go into battle".[70] The outfits, Wintour maintained, conjured up memories of the 1980s "power suits" – boxy pants and jackets – to match the aggressions of second wave feminism. But Jacobs's use of bold shapes, colors, thick fabrics, and generous sizing in this 2018 collection was just as apropos to 1980s feminism as it was (and is) to the then burgeoning #MeToo movement.[71]

Circa 2020, the battles of #MeToo and empowered women in comfortable power suits seem to have all but disappeared as mass media and news cycles have moved on to more pressing issues, like COVID-19 and the Black Lives Matter protests. But here too, as suggested at the outset, wearing clothing that is baggy and ready to "battle" takes on new meaning, related more to the loungewear and pajamas now worn every day in the privacy of one's home as we collectively fight a global pandemic.[72] Circa 2021, COVID-19 continues to ebb and flow across the global stage and as it does, casual and loose-fitting baggy pajamas have become acceptable for everyone, for reasons of practicality and less so for social or economic mobility. Will these habits remain in place after COVID-19 has dissipated? How do the power and politics of colonialism, slavery, and labor exploitation remain with us, even – or especially – in our most intimate and private spaces? These answers turn on a radical commitment to reassessing personal politics, healthcare systems, responsible fashion and lifestyle choices. Some high-end designers (Chanel, Gucci, Burberry, and Louis Vuitton) have ventured into making brand-name face masks and other protective gear, but in the case of pajamas, it is the dark histories of slavery, colonialism, and class-based discrimination – sprinkled with rare moments of loose and baggy freedom – that remain with us in each thread and fiber of these much-loved humble garments.

70
Nikolai Kokanovic, Anna Wintour Breaks Down the Best Moments of New York Fashion Week, Vogue: YouTube, 17.02.2018 (16.07.2020).

71
Langone, #MeToo and Time's Up Founders Explain the Difference.

72
Kokanovic, Anna Wintour.

[Fig. 7]
Marc Jacobs 2018 autumn / winter runway collection, look #7. Long time editor of *Vogue* magazine Anna Wintour describes the oversized items in the collection as "baggy" and ready to go "into battle".

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