Canadian Critical Luxury Studies

Decentring Luxury

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Introduction

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Canadian critical luxury studies (CCLS) represents a distinct contribution to the field by mobilizing the study of luxury as a lens to reconsider the historic 'periphery' and propose a new definition that includes a plurality of cultural practices. It does so by reconsidering Euro- and US-centric assumptions that limit luxury as a practice originating in former imperial metropoles and hegemonic economies. This volume re-angles existing scholarly perspectives, shedding light on historically undervalued and discursively marginalized sites of cultural production. In this way, *Canadian Critical Luxury Studies: Decentring Luxury* advances discussions in the field by representing the first critical exploration of the Canadian relationship to and role in critical luxury studies (CLS). Each chapter questions luxury within a specific framework: Indigeneity, geography, technology, history, class, space, fashion events and public art. The fundamental premise of the volume is that the circulation of luxury – goods, services and experiences – is neither unidirectional nor one-dimensional. Once stripped of its colonial and ideological underpinnings and released from the discourse of the cultural and political superstructure, luxury in the Canadian context demonstrates its value in more inclusive practices that counter the equation of privileged European mystification and US-styled market domination. CCLS' epistemological project is to highlight this decentred perspective on luxury.

CCLS situates luxury at the intersection of three discursive orbits. First and foremost, CCLS evaluates luxury in the context of colonial and neocolonial systems of capital so that the project of decolonizing luxury remains at the forefront. Secondly, CCLS investigates luxury as it circulates in its finished commodity form and as it is extracted, harvested or traded in its so-called raw, unrefined state. While it may function symbolically as power and economic domination for some, the circulation of commercial luxury impoverishes land and life for a great many others. The case studies in this volume highlight the double-edged impact of luxury in order to reveal the mystique of luxury that circulates through consumer culture. As much as luxury operates as the material medium of social power at the level of the individual and as a discursive expression of (soft) power at the level of nations, the capitalist circulation of luxury necessarily entails a zero-sum game. Reflecting CCLS' third discursive orbit is the acknowledgement that for the individuals, the conglomerates and the nation states whose dominance is symbolized, materialized or reified through the accumulation of raw and refined luxury, there is a real impact on the lives of individuals and groups finding themselves on the historical, ideological and political losing side of the equation.

Situating Canada on the losing side of an equation of global status may seem curious, considering the country's place in the world economic order and its presence in a number of international organizations: the G7, the United Nations, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the World Trade Organization (WTO), to name a few. While Canada has an active role on the international stage among a cohort of Global North and West hegemonic states, it is nevertheless pertinent to note the perception of Canadians of their country's international status. Based on the results of a public opinion survey, a 2020 report from the MacDonald-Laurier Institute (cf. Devlen 2020), a Canadian non-partisan think tank, found that while a majority of Canadians (72 per cent) believe that it is important for their country to maintain an influential role on the global stage, only 5 per cent of Canadians believe that Canada's international role is currently an influential one. Perception and reality are often disparate phenomena, so that Canadians' perception of their status and the country's real political and economic impact differs depending on the age, gender, education and political slant of the respondent. However, the generalized perception of limited Canadian international stature reflects the political realities of the country and its particular history.

In North America, the US market dominates in all contexts: commercial, economic and, pertinent to the current discussion, cultural. In his study of Canadian cultural protectionism, Szeman reminds us that

> the struggle we have imagined as a national one is an international one: culture globally shares a common enemy, which in Canada long ago appeared in the guise of American popular culture. Our enemy is contemporary neoliberalism, an order that 'erects into defining standards for all practices, and thus into ideal rules, the regularities of the economic world abandoned to its own logic: the law of the market, the law of the strongest' (Bourdieu, 'Reasoned', 125).
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> (2000: 225)

Compounding Canada's secondary relationship to the United States is the legacy of colonial interference. As a former European colonial possession, Canada's development did not allow for a storied history of commodity production that could foster the growth of the country's 'soft' power. While a bountiful source of raw materials (and skilled production treated as a raw material) from first contact, Canada remained overshadowed as a luxury producer by European imperialist centres long into the twentieth century. In the context of cultural production, Canada has consistently been a secondary actor. Examining the strategy of place branding in the Canadian fashion industry, Brydges and Hracs posit, 'as a young country – which celebrated its 150th birthday in 2017 – with a young fashion industry, Canada can yield insights into the *ongoing process* of carving out a national identity' (2018: 109, emphasis added). The challenges and transformations brought to bear on luxury and luxuriousness in the Canadian context, a number of which will be discussed in the chapters that follow, demonstrate that 'constructing this identity [as an "author country"] can be a particular challenge for "tier-two" (Rantisi 2018) or "not-so-global" centres' (2018: 110). In this light, CCLS follows the logic expressed by David Gilbert that the status of fashion world cities 'involves the relationships between places, both between imagined or actual centres of influence and "peripheral" places in the geography of fashion' (2013: 13). In the context of a national luxury identity, the situating of Canada in the periphery acknowledges its colonial history and imperial relationship, in which Canada was a source of raw materials with constituent Indigenous labour required for its extraction and a settler-colonial market avid for foreign-made fineries. Later, the production-consumption relationship that binds Canada and the United States, a relationship whose imbalance has plagued Canadian foreign trade policy since the early twentieth century, further entrenches Canada as a secondary and tier-two site of global luxury production and consumption.

Critical luxury studies: An overview

Democratized luxury. Über luxury. Deep luxury. Branded luxury. Experiential luxury. What can we make of this fragmentation of an idea into these (and many other) antithetical, tautological or – often – illogical concepts? How, in fact, has luxury been 'democratized'? What distinguishes 'deep' from 'experiential' luxury? CLS, realized in 2016 with John Armitage and Joanne Roberts's field-defining volume, *Critical Luxury Studies: Art, Design, Media*, seeks to engage with these questions as well as analyse the myriad ways that luxury impacts society's functioning and how culture is expressed through its manipulation. Luxury is a broad-reaching and longstanding phenomenon. Accordingly, CLS is an interdisciplinary and transversal field that seeks answers not only to the question 'what is luxury?' but further also to the ancillary questions 'how does luxury function in society?', 'what compels luxuriousness in culture?' and 'who adopts practices of luxury, how do they and to what end?' Specialists in cultural studies, historians, literary scholars, philosophers, sociologists, social scientists, as well as luxury brand specialists, marketing analysts, economists and industry consultants have all engaged with the phenomenon. While CLS can be said to have been founded as a field with Armitage and Roberts's 2016 collection, luxury has a deeper history as a hermeneutic object. In John Sekora's (1977) examination, *Luxury: The Concept in Western Thought, Eden to Smollett*, the critic parses the history of perceptions of luxury from biblical allegory to the public debates and literary representations of eighteenth-century England. Sekora finds that moral aversion to luxury was a recurring theme up to the early modern period. It was only in the eighteenth century that perceptions began to shift to focus on political economy. To date, this remains the foundational premise in the history of luxury. Christopher Berry (1994) revisits this history in *The Idea of Luxury: A Conceptual and Historical Investigation*. Berry's analysis parses luxury by philosophically defining luxury as *qualitativ*e refinement (as opposed to *quantitative* accumulation). His study breaks down the barriers that tied luxury to elite consumption. In *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century: Debates, Desires and Delectable Goods*, historians Elizabeth Eger and Maxine Berg both expand and focus the discussion of luxury by tying the circulation of exotic and refined goods and eighteenth-century western consumer culture to a shift in sociocultural practices, what the historians call 'the civilising impact of superfluous commodities' (2002: 7). Their case studies highlight the impact of the growing cultural acceptance of luxurious goods – fashions, furnishings and foodstuffs – on the cultural politics of the time. For instance, in her chapter on imported Asian luxuries, Berg insists on the creation of the western idea of Asian exoticism, not arising from the goods coming from Asia, but from western commercial desire for an 'Orientalised' East that determined what goods were produced and exported from Asia. These foundational and insightful works remained relatively discipline-specific analyses.

CLS multiplied the tools of analysis available to scholars and researchers. Case studies in Armitage and Roberts's (2016a) eponymous volume came out of architectural studies, fashion studies, human geography, public health, media studies as well as philosophy, sociology and cultural management. Collectively, the volume responded to the perceived rise of a luxury-dominated cultural sphere that remained uncritical of the growing hegemony of luxury. For this reason, sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's ([1983] 1986) taxonomy of capital became a key concept in the field's epistemology. For CLS, luxury is conceived as cultural capital, that is to say a form of social value used by individuals and institutions to materialize power and assert both social and economic dominance. Under the umbrella of CLS, scholars have sought to explicate the underlying causes and effects of an imposing circulation of luxury on other cultural practices. Underpinning these analyses is a Marxian perspective that parses value in commodities and insists on a surplus value (beyond expense) that, first, creates the experience of luxuriousness and, second, is a materialization of social relations. ‘Luxury goods serve as the reified and commodified expression of the social relationship of their production’, asserts Ulrich Lehmann (2016: 67–68). So, for CLS, luxury always occupies a double function: personal and social. ‘On the one hand, luxury is uplifting both spiritually and materially; on the other, it is seen as “improductive” and therefore useless in any society that privileges economic and social rationality’, assert McNeil and Riello (2016: 4) in their study, *Luxury: A Rich History*. Focusing on personal values and valuation questions the authority of Bourdieusian and Veblenian models of luxury consumption as displays of either cultural sophistication or economic waste. Mansvelt, Breheny and Hay’s investigation of consumption habits of individuals from varying economic strata reveals that all people build ‘narratives of justification and entitlement to forms of luxury consumption [to] provide means of shaping identities as responsible, controlled and autonomous consumers’ (2016: 104). CLS affirms that individuals can assert autonomy via luxury consumption. However, in the social field, luxury is also an instrument with which to enact dominance. Armitage and Roberts remind us that luxury unites a transnational class of wealthy consumers and functions as a means of distinction for this select group. Further, these scholars highlight the social functioning of this display and imagining of dominant luxury: ‘A wider population aspires to join these elites and they satisfy their aspirations by imitating elite consumption behaviour’ (2017: 29). For CLS, luxury is a complex phenomenon that can both liberate and limit individuals in society.

Luxury is also an institutional tool. By addressing the political economy of luxury, CLS has fruitfully studied the role and effects of institutionalized luxuries. Institutions, in this sense, include corporate entities, religious organizations, public place-making and para-public spaces. Historian Catherine Kovesi uncovers the relationship between religious veneration and the contemporary cult of luxury brands by harnessing Walter Benjamin’s well-known theory of the aura. Kovesi likens the aura of the sacred relic to that of the luxury-branded commodity. She explicates the paradox that luxury brands materialize, shoring up the singularity of brand identity while ensuring the replicability and omnipresence of their commodities on the market (2016: 114). Analysing a 2009 court case launched by Christian Dior Couture against Copad, a discount retailer that had acquired the rights to sell Dior-branded corsetry from the luxury brand’s licensed manufacturer, the historian concludes that contemporary consumer culture has elicited a sacralization of luxury. The ruling, handed down by the European Court of Justice, accepted Dior's legal argument that the brand's 'aura of luxury' was imperiled by the presence of its branded commodities in non-elite spaces, such as that of Copad. Kovesi cites part of the ruling to demonstrate that luxury-branded commodities are more than the sum of their material qualities. 'The quality of luxury goods […] is not just the result of their material characteristics', she argues, 'but also of the allure and prestigious image which bestows on them an aura of luxury' (2016: 116). Space is an integral aspect for buttressing the prestige of commodities – their aura of luxury.

Conversely, luxury also impacts space. Mario Paris's edited volume, *Making Prestigious Places: How Luxury Influences the Transformation of Cities*, approaches luxury as 'a driver of change in the city' (Paris and Fang 2017: 1). The studies in his volume consider luxury as a means to transform spaces into prestigious places. They challenge the idea that gentrification – through the increased presence of high-end and exclusive institutions, such as luxury-brand stores, cultural centres and refined public services – is one-sided development that displaces the already economically marginalized. Given the urban studies perspective in conversation with CLS, the case studies in Paris's volume generally focus on the symbolic meanings of luxury retail and cultural spaces as cultural capital, without engaging with the critical project of CLS. In their introduction, Paris and Fang privilege the commercial growth potential that luxury brings to urban space, positing that '[l]uxury is a catalyst generating several opportunities (visibility, events, new heritage and shared spaces, etc.) and not only parasitizing its historical and urban value' (2017: 6–7). A more critical approach to luxury and space can be found in architecture specialist Adam Sharr's (2016) chapter in *Critical Luxury Studies*, 'Libeskind in Las Vegas: Reflections on architecture as a luxury commodity'. Sharr examines what he calls the commodification of architecture. Specifically, he investigates the slippage of the groundbreaking aesthetic of world-renowned architect Daniel Libeskind's Jewish Museum, opened in 2001 in Berlin, into a self-referential style once applied to the design of Las Vegas's Crystals at CityCenter, a commercial retail centre, built in 2009. For his 2001 project, Libeskind developed an aesthetic of trauma that commemorated the harrowing experience of Jewish people in Berlin under the Third Reich that stood as a memorial for the horror of the Holocaust. The unprecedented style of the Jewish Museum catapulted Libeskind to 'starchitect' status, and subsequently, the aesthetic became the architect's signature. Sharr evokes the use of the 'Libeskind brand' for later projects, namely the high-end Las Vegas shopping centre, to demonstrate the flattening out of meaning when architecture no longer functions to commemorate, but to manifest cultural and economic capital. For Sharr, the formerly symbolic and complex aesthetic choices of the Jewish

Museum have become both self-referential stylistic elements and signs of the commercial domination of contemporary culture in the luxury mall while architecture slips from socially useful to socially instrumental. 'Crystals at CityCenter seeks to claim the idea of architecture as art, as a pursuit whose details and nuances exist for the appreciation of connoisseurs. [...] It connotes the idea of architecture as a signifier for high culture, becoming a device for marketing to "high-end" consumers' (2016: 171). Sharr's analysis demonstrates that luxury is not simply a change agent in the creation of prestigious places. Rather, commercial luxury can reduce the monumental and the commemorative to empty signs of consumer culture.

Aporetic luxury

For too long, luxury has been theorized and experienced as the domain of the powerful, the imperialist, the colonizer, the wealthy capitalist or the cosmopolitan consumer. Luxury as an idea is crystallized in perceptions of rarity, exclusivity and excess. In its reified form, luxury is a category defined by expense, despite a glut of luxury branded fashions and commodities on the market. In the past decade, the ensuing growth in consumer luxury spending has brought the notion of 'democratized luxury' to the fore, particularly for the field of luxury brand management (cf. Kapferer and Bastien 2009; Turunen 2017) as well as for researchers in CLS. However, as mentioned, historians of consumer culture have, following Berg (Berg and Clifford 1999; Berg 2005), already documented the imperialist and colonial circulation of 'exotic' fineries and the ensuing growth of a middling market in eighteenth-century Europe as the true beginning of luxury's so-called democratization. The idea of luxury brought down from its elite perch may conjure idealized images of commercial equality in which everyone has access to specialized commodities that satisfy personal wants and express the fluidity and multiplicity of social identity. To signal this new affirmative and psychologically reinforcing function of luxury, one could invoke Lipovetsky's (2003, 2005) 'hyperconsumer' who, freed from the constraints of Bourdieusian habitus, consumes to quell ontological anxieties yet is free to play with identity and extract personal pleasure from luxury goods. However, the contemporary global 'spirit of luxury' (Armitage and Roberts 2016c) 'should be seen as part of a long-term process involving the decline of aristocratic power, the rise of the middle classes and pressures from below for increasing democratization' (Featherstone 2014: 50). Conversely, luxury management scholars invoke a troubling neoliberal motivation underpinning so-called democratized luxury consumption. In HEC Paris professors Jean-Noël Kapferer and Vincent Bastien's (2009) work, the democratization of luxury is, in fact, decidedly *undemocratic*. Blending the jargon of microbiology and psychoanalysis with a dash of neoliberalism, these luxury management specialists posit:

> '*[D]emocratic luxury': a luxury item that extraordinary people would consider ordinary is at the same time an extraordinary item to ordinary people*. The DNA of luxury, therefore, is the symbolic desire (albeit often repressed) to belong to a superior class, which everyone will have chosen according to their dreams, because *anything that can be a social signifier can become a luxury*.
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> (2009: 314, original emphasis)

The only thing democratic in this conception of luxury is that the neoliberal ideology of entitlement to luxury has spilled over to all levels of society. Taken to its logical conclusion, luxury in Kapferer and Bastien's conceptualization is a self-nullifying classification: ordinary to the extraordinary, extraordinary to the ordinary, luxury management empties the term of any meaning.

It is pertinent to remember that 'democratized luxury' emerged out of the imperialist project. The expansion of a so-called luxury market occurred with the labour of the enslaved, the indentured and the colonized and precipitated the damage and destruction of the natural world. In *Crass Struggle: Greed, Glitz, and Gluttony in a Wanna-Have World*, R. T. Naylor (2011) casts a damning light on luxury industries, such as gold, silver, diamond and other precious gem mining and trade. The colonial history, the neocolonial reality and the environmental and human devastation inflicted by these industries tarnish the sheen of the Cartier bangle that (as well as being made from illegally mined gold) is the reification of luxury. Contemporary production of so-called luxury goods betrays the unchanged Global North and West's domination of capital and cultural tastes. The inexorable culmination of hegemonic luxury has emerged in the wake of crises stemming from the neoliberal financialization of debt among the racialized poor, the growing reduction of the middle classes and the neocolonialism of 'globalized' supply chains, all while the wealth of a borderless class of 'super-rich' expands inexorably and behind closed doors. Picketty's recent study, *Capital and Ideology* ([2019] 2020), reveals the ideological underpinnings of global wealth disparity that have morphed economic structures so that, since the 1980s, the world is engulfed in an inequality regime that intensely concentrates both wealth and growth for a small 'über-elite class' at the cost of a numerically vast group of the world's poor. While not a treatise on luxury, Picketty's analysis makes plain that access to luxury remains profoundly circumscribed in the contemporary period. This reality extends ideas of so-called democratic luxury to the limit of the absurd. Luxury, *democratized* or not, is now a label that is applied to goods, services and experiences that strain the applicability of standard definitions of the luxurious.

However, more seriously, the so-called *democratization* of luxury masks the real entrenchment and shrinking of the domain of privilege to a very select few.

Despite the evacuation of meaning from an excessive presence in the commercial realm and the less-than-luxurious conditions surrounding the extraction of the raw materials of luxury industries, the idea of luxury has a real impact, not only for those with great economic capital or those in the cycle of consumption that characterizes the alleged aspiring and middling classes but also for the economically and sociopolitically marginalized. In this perspective, CCLS adds its voice to those who challenge luxury's epistemological Euro-American centrism and sociocultural dominance. In the recently published volume *African Luxury: Aesthetics and Politics* (2019a), co-editors Simidele Dosekun and Mehita Iqani challenge the wider hegemony of luxury in the social and cultural realm precisely because of the impact of such discourses on those without access or hope of access to the realm of hegemonic luxury. The editors assert in their introduction that

> however precisely defined, luxury very much matters. It matters in our contemporary global moment of extreme income inequality; in a world in which we speak routinely of not just 'the 1 per cent' but smaller fractions thereof and, conversely, of 'surplus' or 'disposable populations', the many (and rising) on the sharp end of 'neoliberalism's power to define who matters and who doesn't, who lives and who dies' (Giroux 2008: 594).
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> (2019b: 4)

Like the case studies in *African Luxury*, this volume sheds light on the distinct modes that luxury can assume in peripheral markets and that add ontological value to personal and collective experience.

Armitage and Roberts remind us in their volume, 'The philosophy of luxury entails recognition that all human beings live in a world that is created by human beings, and in which they find meaning in sumptuous enjoyment' (2016b: 2). Luxury is a highly personal, symbolically imbued and emotionally charged *added value* that individuals from all socioeconomic strata can access to enrich themselves ontologically and collectively. The idea of luxury has been marshalled by former imperialist nations as a symbol of economic dominance, by fashion and luxury centres of production for its 'soft power' (viz. France's *Comité Colbert*, the United Kingdom's *Walpole* or Italy's *Altagamma*) and in urban spaces that agglomerate commercial signs and artistic representations to create prestigious places. In contrast to this hegemonic mobilization, in the geopolitical context of formerly peripheral and colonial outposts, the idea of luxury – imbued as it is with its own nationalist, imperialist and colonial history – is troubled by its wholesale and unproblematic adoption and deployment as a political and economic instrument.

With the current reign of neoliberal capitalism and so-called globalized trade, the discursive power of luxury should no longer be a surprise to anyone. However, luxury's ideological function begs the question: 'Who really benefits from luxury in this system?'

This question is at the heart of the case studies that make up *Canadian Critical Luxury Studies: Decentring Luxury*. Since Canada is a tier-two economic market and a secondary geopolitical centre of influence, luxury in the Canadian context cannot and should not be treated simply as a system of production, consumption and circulation that expresses cultural dominance or aspiration for cultural dominance. As the case studies in this volume demonstrate, luxury as an idea is an internally contradictory sign that empowers and alienates. Luxury is both personally symbolic and politically invested. Ultimately, luxury succeeds and fails as a sign of distinction and as a materialization of power. Critical luxury scholars, as much as marketers, producers and advertisers, seemingly define luxury as essentially positive for the beholder, owner or experiencer. McNeil and Riello assert that 'luxury is uplifting both spiritually and materially' (2016: 4). Acknowledging its aporetic nature, Mark Featherstone determines that 'contemporary luxury represents the sacred unconscious of the profane world' (2016: 69). Reaching further back, Lehmann finds that since the Enlightenment, 'the socio-cultural expression of [economic] dominance is luxury' (2016: 82–83). Luxury, according to these scholars, can be manipulated by individuals without adverse effect. Berry (2016), expanding on his germinal study *The Idea of Luxury*, separates the circulation of luxury in society from social positioning or personal alienation to situate luxury squarely as a source of pleasure. 'However, unless luxuries gave pleasure there would, pace Baudrillard (1988: 47) or Appadurai (1986: 144), be nothing to register or communicate' (2016: 49–50). Most recently still, in her discussion of luxury fashion, Thomaï Serdari theorizes luxury as a spiritual experience for an idealized consumer who 'is completely entranced in its beauty or when she is inspired to think about an important theme based on messages or signs the object communicates through its design' (2020: 67). To date, while questioned, analysed, historicized and theorized, luxury is broadly deemed to bring pleasure, buttress individuality and materialize liberty. In the context of European cultural power and its epistemological wake, it is possible to frame luxury as a purely humanist phenomenon. This requires, nevertheless, ignoring the colonial system of luxury that extracted raw materials, human labour and wealth from dominated geographic regions and then introduced 'refined' finished commodities as well as accompanying hegemonic discourses back into these regions. This ideological flow continues today through neocolonial systems of offshore production.

This is not to say that in secondary geographies, luxury, fed back into the system, cannot provide pleasure for the individual or demonstrate personal autonomy.

A number of case studies in this volume demonstrate the ways that individuals can reconsider luxuries as a means of personal and collective affirmation. Riley Kucheran, for example, shares the experience of care, generosity and sustainability that informs the processes of Indigenous making in his intervention in this volume. In addition to notions of tradition and handcraft, which also exemplify these practices, Kucheran asserts that 'Indigenous making is luxurious' precisely in the generosity of the exchange in which Indigenous making occurs. Valérie Lamontagne opens her case studies by commenting on the personally enriching relationships that characterize the wearables community. Her perspective deepens the idea of luxury by highlighting the relationship-building between makers, between makers and future makers, as well as between wearer and wearable. The luxuriousness of e-textiles is found in the refinement of experience that technical garments bring. Tellingly, Lamontagne expresses that the field of wearables is a luxurious space that creates surplus value. In her intervention, she asserts that 'the laboratory in itself is a research-social-materials space where humans and nonhumans and their "dance of agency" (Pickering 1995) converge and create the wearable designs of today'. The creative space itself, for Lamontagne, is more than the sum of its parts and what emerges is more than futuristic garments – the laboratory becomes a social space that enriches human experience.

As these examples suggest, the idea of luxury in second-tier contexts requires decentring to understand how non-hegemonic luxury challenges culturally dominant discourses and how the practice of extra-European luxury counters imperialist or neoliberal ideology. In Alexandra Palmer's introduction to her groundbreaking edited volume, *Fashion: A Canadian Perspective*, the curator acknowledges the difficulties of asserting a national luxury identity (this time in the field of Canadian fashion) from under the shadow of more established European commercial production. 'Canadian fashion design identity languishes unacknowledged, especially when compared to France, America, Italy, Britain, or Spain, and any success by Canadians tends to become subsumed under the more identifiable American fashion scene' (2004b: 3–4). For Palmer, however, there have been a number of attempts, both successful and less so, to build a Canadian fashion identity, which her volume convincingly argues. As Elke Gaugele and Monica Titton (2019) remind us in their excellent volume *Fashion and Postcolonial Critique*, fashion – like luxury – is a measure for cultural attainment and is used as a signal of cultural superiority. Invoking Sandra Niessen (2003), Gaugele and Titton state, 'Who has and who does not have fashion is politically determined, a function of power relations' (2003: 12). What has been deemed fashionable as opposed to unfashionable, such as traditional or ethnic dress, is a discursive distinction tied to capitalist systems and political and cultural hegemony. 'Every bit as much as imperial monuments or great exhibitions, fashion was used as a means of expressing the superiority of certain places in the world order' (Gilbert 2013: 16). The perception of who can and does produce luxury versus/as well as who consumes it, in the context of globalized and transnational capital, sharpens perceptions of cultural and economic dominance that are tainted with the history of imperialism and colonialism. This is evident in the analysis from contributors Kathryn Franklin and Rebecca Halliday that examines the problems faced by organizers of Toronto Fashion Week and determines that, for historically secondary markets, one of the impediments to forming a truly luxurious identity is that enactments of cultural production rely on international and 'imperialized' displays to the detriment of more home-grown and situated performances. A Canadian luxurious cultural identity has yet to escape the shadow of European luxury hegemony. However, contributor Marie O'Mahony harnesses examples from smaller state European craft to demonstrate ways that Canadian craft makers can use geographical closeness and regional proximity as the basis for collaborative innovation.

Luxuries in the public space occupy a nexus of power linking economic, political and social concerns that impact those who live in those spaces. Conversely to Paris and Fang's contention that when luxury is harnessed in the public realm, there is the potential to create prestigious places that materialize luxury's function as a 'traditional component of the human environment and the urban culture' (2017: 1–2), Canadian instances of public luxuries – in the form of fashionable events or public art commissions – risk obfuscating their imperialist, colonialist or capitalist underpinnings. The various case studies of the volume that privilege transnational and symbolic capital and its systems of reified economic (commercial) activity highlight the ways that these public forms of luxury effectively evade ethical questions around the impact of luxury on the urban lived space. In the case of established urban centres, luxury can easily assume the appearance of a 'traditional component' of the environment, thereby obscuring the modes of domination that luxury marshals. Julia Polyck-O'Neill examines the dynamics of capital and power in two public artworks by West Coast artists Douglas Coupland and Ken Lum, works that respond in differing ways to the history and politics of their space, in Vancouver, Canada. Polyck-O'Neill unpicks the complex network of forms of capital at play in public art commissions that can both overshadow artistic intention and buttress the sociopolitical impact on public spaces. Luxury, in the making of prestigious places, commoditizes the context(s) of the space in which it is created and displayed. In Canada, publicly funded public artworks risk being reduced to salable commodities that erase and homogenize the diverse histories of colonialism and socio-economic marginalization that artists may intend to express in their original works. As such, luxurious place-making outside of 'world cities' can flatten complex histories of domination (colonial and economic) because, similar to the phenomenon of Toronto Fashion Week, analysed by Franklin and Halliday, luxury imports established hegemonic energies that are invested in maintaining global hierarchies of power. The 'prestigious place' in London or Paris fits easily into a network of domination with singular discursive intensity. In Canada, European-styled prestigious places (as much as established fashion capital-styled events) mirror and intensify the hegemonic qualities of public luxuries. Artistic intentions that foreground marginalized histories and idiosyncratic cultural realities in secondary fashion markets can shatter against the force of this hegemonic node.

As Berry has determined, luxury is not a fixed category. 'A luxury is not something static, it is dynamic; it is subject to development as the desires, and necessarily attendant beliefs, are met and then fueled with further qualitative modifications or refinements' (1994: 18). In this way, luxury is neither immanent nor immutable. It is dependent upon the perceiver to emit its luxuriousness. Philosopher Lambert Wiesing concurs 'that luxury cannot be a characteristic of things or of actions, but that it arises through a private aesthetic experience' (2018: 78). In this light, there is such a thing as *Canadian* luxury, but it will arise from the private evaluation of surplus value. Canadian consumers, then, are well situated to increase the luxuriousness in their lives through the perception of and investment in goods, services and experiences as luxurious. Co-editor Nigel Lezama examines the creation of 'civic luxury' in the T. Eaton Company Limited's merchandising strategies during the interwar years. Contrary to what the contemporary luxury brandsphere would suggest, luxury is not limited to expensiveness (following Berry 1994: 17; Mark Featherstone 2016: 69; Wiesing 2018: 80). Luxury is a surplus value that exceeds both the exchange and use values (following Marx) attached to goods, services and experiences. As such, luxury is not only the domain of the wealthy (a postulation which, nevertheless, is contra Marx, who deems that luxury creates wealth only for the capitalist class [cf. [1867] 1972]). Consumers can invest goods with meanings that are personal or communal. In this way, while the dominant consumer culture may compel individuals to consumption as a mode of neoliberalism in the hyperconsumerist economy (in which everyone has the *right* to the pleasure of luxurious goods and services), the experience of luxury becomes personal and self-affirming and not merely determined by expense or potential status considerations. The idea of luxury is personally construed. 'Understanding place, with its constituents of local and subjective meaning, compels researchers to recognise how political, economic, cultural and environmental practices, flows and relations influence the particular ways luxury is constructed and the moralities attached to it' (Mansvelt et al. 2016: 93). Motivation for consumption is possible outside of the traditional perspective of Veblenian display, and the consumer's relationship to luxury is contingent on place – geographic as much as socio-economic.

In Canada, then, the relationship to luxury is not simply a social phenomenon, in the ways that Veblen ([1899] n.d.) or, later, Bourdieu characterizes consumption and taste as strategic or ingrained modes that embody socio-economic status for individual social actors. Nevertheless, the historical context of European imperialism and colonialism imposes symbolic values that complicate the basic meaning of luxury all the while reinforcing power structures. Gilbert explains that in the field of fashion, imperial networks of production, trade and consumption functioned to buttress European hegemony.

> The growth and systemisation of European imperialism was an important phase in the development of fashion's world cities. Most obviously this worked in terms of the relationship between the great metropolises and the colonized world, especially the world of settler colonies.
>
> (2013: 18–19)

The perception of luxury in 'world capitals', like London, Paris and, later, New York and their respective nations, which have sufficiently assimilated the cultural identity and economic structures of the capital, remains untroubled by cultural hegemony, if not by economic realities. This is because the cultural ideology that supported the asymmetrical bonds linking metropole and periphery asserted a 'natural' relationship tying these imperial powers to luxurious production and circulation. For example, the dominant image of Paris as the unrivaled capital of fashion did not emerge *sui generis*, but was a concerted effort, since the seventeenth century, that united monarchy, government and later the media to support economic growth and political domination through the symbolic – or soft – power of the nation's luxury industries (see Rocamora 2009). Louis XIV's finance minister, Jean-Baptiste Colbert, recognized the value of a strong fashion industry as a colonizing force and source of economic dominance when he famously (although perhaps apocryphally) declared 'Fashion is to France what the gold mines of Peru are to Spain'. What is certain is that, at the time, the French government initiated protectionist legislation to favour national production and wider consumption of luxury textiles, like Lyon silk and Alençon lace (see Steele 2017), which became the very materials of luxurious self-presentation throughout Europe.

In the twenty-first century, this imperial and colonial hegemony is sustained by neoliberal deregulation and hypercapitalist ideologies that create neocolonial conditions of production and circulation. McNeil and Riello assert that the 'capitalism of luxury has created its own world – linked to finance and global enterprise – and is fast reshaping our spatial world, that of our districts, our streets, our desires, our ambitions, and our material culture' (2016: 254). Luxury is transforming cities, from Vancouver and Toronto to New York and Los Angeles, to London, Paris and

Milan, so that there is no longer much difference in the shops that line Toronto's 'Mink Mile' and those on Paris's rue du faubourg Saint Honoré or Milan's Via Montenapoleone. Moreover, in an ironic reenactment of historical Eurocentrism, the imperialism of luxury obscures the offshore production locales of many western luxury fashions so that only the mystified fashion capital appears on the label. This volume's other co-editor Jessica P. Clark highlights earlier enactments of this 'whitewashing' in her reconsideration of Canada's fur trade, nineteenth-century wilderness tourism as well as the later deskilling of Jewish immigrant workers in the early twentieth century. Clark's chapter argues that when the racist and imperialist lens is removed, it becomes clear that marginalized people, including Indigenous women and, later, Jewish garment workers, were central to the production of Canadian luxury in ways that were erased in Euro- and Anglo-centric historical accounts. Clark's recentring of the history of Canadian luxury production demonstrates that it is essential to uncover the imperialist, settler-colonial and Anglo-centric underpinnings of society, lest one reinforce a reception and perception of luxury that buttress its commercial meanings as well as the perceived natural dominance of elite settler cultural and commercial production.

The mythology of 'Made in ...' still emits a luxurious aura for commodities that probably only have the most derisory and final aspects of their products completed in the fashion capital or that are, in fact, produced in abject conditions by undocumented foreign nationals or effectively deskilled immigrants (cf. Thomas 2007; de Bussierre 2018). In Canada, 'Made in-[insert former metropole here]' overshadows the surplus value that can be invested in the Canadian-made or in Indigenous making. Using the example of the gift, philosopher Dimitri Mortelmans reminds us, in the wake of French sociologist Marcel Mauss, that objects can be invested with symbolic value. 'As a gift, an object loses its functional or monetary character while being invested with symbolic meaning' (2005: 509), he explains. A given object or commodity can be invested with a value that will supersede use and exchange value and will carry more weight than its instrumental social function. Kucheran's discussion in this volume also underscores the deeper political investments possible in some Indigenous designers' works. He points to the important wider messages of environmental protection, food sovereignty and land reclamation that emanated from the runway at Indigenous Fashion Week Toronto in 2019. Kucheran asserts that this investment is not only politically symbolic but also materially real, precisely because of the idea of interconnectedness that characterizes Indigenous cultures. However, investment in the luxury object does not only involve the maker. Lamontagne also emphasizes how engagement with open-source design and technology is at the heart of wearables and breaks down the traditional barrier separating producer from consumer. Fashion-tech consumers, in fact, become makers and thereby personally invest in the garments through their own curiosity, interest and labour. Similarly, Indigenous making is a collective process, one that counters the western myth of the singular romantic genius, an archetype that has common currency in the fashion world, where the genius of the creative director often (but not always) overshadows the important collaborative work of the *petites mains* or the design team. To consider Indigenous making as luxurious is to rethink notions of the *griffe* (i.e. brand or label) as Pierre Bourdieu and Yvette Delsaut (1975) develop in their foundational analysis of the field of fashion, 'Le Couturier et sa griffe'. The hegemony of a founding designer, whose aesthetic and message are meant to dominate brand identity, is short-circuited because the client plays a role as important as the designer's. ' "Clients" are more like collaborators engaging in mutually beneficial exchange', explains Kucheran. The fashion system's ontological question, signaled by Bourdieu and Delsaut (using the example of Chanel), is how does one make Chanel – the symbolic object, designated as a rarity by the signature – without Chanel – the biological individual whose sole responsibility is to sign 'Chanel' to Chanel products (1975: 20, translation added).[1] This, by contrast, is a question for neither the fashion-tech community nor Indigenous making. Both not only involve a community of makers but also actively involve the 'customer'. In this light, both fashion-tech and Indigenous making permit a rethinking of luxury; the maker and the consumer are equally active in the creative process, and both participants communally invest the made object with idiosyncratic value.

Luxury as community capital

The reconfigured relationship between makers and recipients highlighted in this volume counters traditional conceptions of luxury that place the consumer in a secondary role, particularly through the lens of luxury brand management. Luxury, since undergoing the philosophical process of demoralization in the eighteenth century, is defined as being autonomous yet impacted by the various contexts in which it is expressed.[2] This perspective is apparent in Armitage's most recent study, *Luxury and Visual Culture*. For Armitage, 'luxury constitutes a specific realm – the abundant – with its own logic. But, while luxury does constitute a specific realm, it is nevertheless connected to other realms, to the realm of fashion and art, photography, cinema, television, and social media' (2020: 1). In contemporary culture, luxury has become the tool with which individuals operate socially and assert themselves individually because 'luxury' is no longer the province of a hereditary caste and at the same time has been isolated from any deontological concerns because it is merely a quantifiable state: 'the abundant'. In this light, Berry's (2016) addendum to his original 1994 study is particularly pertinent. Entitled

'Luxury: A dialectic of desire?', Berry's intervention revisits the demoralization debate in order to determine whether luxury is currently, in fact, undergoing a re-moralization. Berry analyses the cogency of contemporary arguments that seek to limit the increasing dominance of luxury as a mode of existence. In the sociological perspective, he highlights the argument of consumer alienation from the Left and, from the Right, the argument of luxury's reduced meaning through the increased presence of so-called luxury commodities. Both schools see the rise of the 'citizen-shopper' as the death knell of a properly functioning society, as the structures that luxury elicits, for these opposing ideological perspectives, are 'ephemeral, inherently unstable and transient' (2016: 58–59). Berry then looks to the environmental arguments that construe luxury and its consumption as essentially destructive and wasteful at a time when the health of the planet requires truly sustainable modes of existence. He concludes that, while the environmental perspective may with time carry more weight as scientific data come to the aid of philosophical arguments, luxury will remain an essential part of human existence. 'On a more mundane, but, I think, conceptually more fundamental level, it also seems eminently reasonable to believe that the desire for fresh over stale bread, for "refinement" in my sense, will persist' (2016: 62–63). Ontologically for Berry, luxury is 'refinement', in line with Enlightenment philosopher David Hume's determination. As refined objects and experiences, luxury is an available ontology for all goods, services or experiences and not an exclusive category reserved for objects with specific qualities. This conclusion supports Berry's initial determination in *The Idea of Luxury* that luxury 'is dynamic; it is subject to development as the desires, and necessarily attendant beliefs, are met and then fueled with further qualitative modifications or refinements' (2016: 18). As opposed to Armitage's (2020) conception of luxurious abundance, Berry attaches luxury to its *qualitative* state. Refinement is not definitive, as technology and innovation can elicit further refinements rendering earlier iterations obsolete, but it remains essential to the refined object or experience and not contingent on external perception. In this way, both quantitative (abundance) and qualitative (refinement) luxury are fundamentally limitless and essentially dangerous in a world of finite resources.

When applied to luxury goods, services and experiences in the contemporary luxury brandscape, refinement has been conflated with the desire for *personal* accumulation. Analysing the complexities of consumer behaviour in the age of branded luxury in 'Le Luxe au temps des marques', luxury marketing specialist Élyette Roux (2009) notes that the shift to the excessive consumption of luxury brands from the 1980s signaled an evolution in consumer thinking that began to focus on the pleasures of ownership, of expression of individuality, of consuming superfluous commodities and of expressing status. Luxury brand specialists Michel Chevalier and Gérald Mazzalovo determine that the growing importance of luxury consumption in the public sphere is linked (unsurprisingly) to the contemporary predominance of brand identity. They conclude that 'luxury purchasers want: To be individuals [...] To mix styles [...] To be "winners" [...] To be distinctive' (2008: 172–73). The perspective of luxury marketing and brand specialists betrays the neoliberal wish fulfilment of the hypercapitalist moment whereby the luxury status of the brand comes to stand in for the essence of the consumer. 'It is no longer the product that is rare and expensive: It is the *individual*' (2008: 173, emphasis added), conclude Chevalier and Mazzalovo. Perhaps more critically, McNeil and Riello determine a relationship of inverse polarity between luxury and consumer. It is '[a]dvertising [that] tells us that we are unique, that we need to be distinctive and that luxury is the capacity to reward ourselves with something a bit pricey but not unreachable' (2016: 229). With the devolution of luxury to the status of metonymy for *personal* surplus value, *refinement* as an idea is no longer the end, but the means, so that 'luxurious refinement' is not a quality found in the good, service or experience, but is now an expression of brand identity. In *Brands: The Logos of the Global Economy*, Celia Lury unpacks the social role of the brand in contemporary society. Lury proposes that brand identity 'is both a means of establishing the relativity or the abstract equivalence of products in space and time and it is a medium of relationality, able to support differentiation of both objects and subjects, products and consumers' (2004: 8). While Lury does not challenge brand hegemony, she highlights the role of corporate identity in social differentiation. However, refinement, which was contained in the luxury itself, has spilled out to become a social function, a 'medium of relationality'. Berry points out the problem when refinement becomes a tool for social measurement.

> Once luxury is 'de-moralised' then with the rise of mass consumption it was easily pressed into service as a guileless description to make goods 'desirable'. And once seen in this light, its salience within the lexicon of 'adspeak' can be understood.
> (2016: 53)

Contemporary luxury in the brandscape with its imperialist and globalized reach has co-opted meaning-making and relationality, which was the domain of the individual. Luxury is now afforded an identity and an identity-making function that was formerly the domain of humans and human relationships.

The Canadian context, while definitely not untouched by luxury's imperialism given its colonial history and neocolonial legacy, provides the opportunity to challenge this shift in refinement from an ontological essence to an instrumental quality. This entails embracing the conscious experience of engaging with goods, services or experiences as a personal act stemming from *personal* motivations that supersede *socially* instrumental reasons or brand positioning. It is the idea of *community*, as opposed to the social, that is the surplus value that makes Canadian luxury luxurious. A number of case studies in this volume demonstrate ways that luxury has been – or could be – harnessed for its communal values. Polyck-O'Neill points to the potential for public artworks, as a mode of public luxury, to represent place-specific histories often overlooked by the institutions that govern social life. Kucheran highlights the collaborative engagement required in different modes of Indigenous making. Lezama's and Lamontagne's case studies demonstrate the potential for community building on the part of the consumer, while O'Mahony points to the collaboration of both 'hand and machine' and makers and tech specialists that can bring a new vitality to luxury. Accordingly, because of the specificities of history and culture in the Canadian context, luxury circulation has the potential to operate differently than in other modern liberal states, for which 'having is constructed as an essential prerequisite of proper human being' (cf. Butler and Athanasiou 2013: 13). Some scholars have considered it of the utmost importance to foreground this liberal ideology underpinning modern subjectivity to mitigate the tendency of

> cultural studies and social history [...] to celebrate the liberating possibilities offered to individuals by consumption, but at the same time minimize the political economy of consumption and downplay the social costs that consumption has on many members of modern consumer societies.
>
> (Belisle 2003: 193)

However, by using luxury – the idea as much as the thing – heuristically, CCLS proposes that the human relationship to luxuriousness is both affirming and reifying. Luxury neither only liberates nor alienates. As both a personal experience and a sociocultural instrument, luxury sits at the intersection of political economy and cultural politics. What is considered luxury and how and by whom it is amassed, consumed, displayed or hidden depends on how the political superstructure situates the idea of luxury. Nevertheless, as this volume confirms, luxury is equally the outcome of personal engagement; individuals and groups determine value in goods, services and experiences, and are either enriched or impoverished in the experience of luxury. Furthermore, historical and asymmetrical power relations that controlled the direction of the flow of 'raw' materials and 'refined' goods as well as govern(ed) the positioning of metropole and colony, colonizer and colonized, settler and Indigenous occupant, scholar and epistemological subject also contribute to how luxury behaves both in the centre and in the periphery. CCLS is sensitive to these overarching structures that impact what is luxury and how it is experienced.

Instead of entrenching hierarchies, luxury in the Canadian context has the potential to short-circuit them. While Armitage and Roberts assert that 'it is the elites rather than the masses who offer us the most pervasive interpretations and accepted meanings of luxury' (2017: 29), Canadian luxury, when read through the lens of colonial history, problematizes these elite readings. The case studies in this volume demonstrate the ways that rural and working-class consumers, marginalized groups, diverse publics and institutions in secondary and peripheral markets have manipulated signs of luxuriousness to either positive or negative effect. The key factor in the affirming or alienating outcome is the creation of a luxury that is specific to the historical and cultural context in which it circulates. Canadian luxury, in this light, is not cultural capital in its hierarchical function, but rather a form of *community capital* (to play with Bourdieu's taxonomy) that comes out of shared values deeply related to place and common history. Kucheran crystalizes this functioning of luxury in the Canadian context when he explains the centrality of *care* in decolonizing research. Indigenous methodologies enact 'an ethics of care that is affirmed through life-long relations'. The originality of the case studies that compose *Canadian Critical Luxury Studies: Decentring Luxury* is twofold: first, the conviction that luxury circulates at all levels of society with the *potential* to enrich the lives of those who make and consume it, and, second, the focus on the impact of luxury that considers the presence or absence of a relationality that recalls or abjures Canada's colonial and social history, as central to the success or failure of luxury's surplus value to build ties linking diverse individuals and institutions.

Canadian critical luxury studies

This volume arose out of fruitful discussions held during the first Canadian conference in critical luxury studies, held in Toronto in May 2017. Among the Canadian participants, it became clear that addressing luxury epistemologically and materially from a Canadian perspective was a necessary conversation to cast light on luxury's colonial and imperialist history and its impact on secondary geographies. A number of interventions at the conference also highlighted the innovative and unique ways that luxury has been used, embodied and produced in Canada. The volume is organized into three sections, organized around the three aforementioned discursive orbits: colonial and neocolonial systems of capital; luxury's potential for failure in colonial and postcolonial sites; and futures of luxury in formerly colonized, 'peripheral' locales, including Canada. The first section presents a discussion with Riley Kucheran and case studies by Jessica P. Clark and Nigel Lezama. The opening section highlights the ontologically and socially enriching experience of luxury for makers and consumers when cultural specificities short-circuit the alienating potential of luxury. This section also recentres the role of historically marginalized groups in Canadian luxury production and circulation by casting light on the erasures that settler-colonial ideology and historical practices imposed to protect white Anglo privilege. The second section groups together studies by Kathryn Franklin and Rebecca Halliday, and by Julia Polyck-O'Neill that shed light on the failures of luxury to add value to the lives of luxury producers and 'consumers' because of luxury's colonialist and imperialist modes of circulation. The final section looks to Canadian luxury's future potential with analyses by Marie O'Mahony and Valérie Lamontagne that focus on the technologies of luxury that lead the way to the future growth of Canadian luxury at the cutting edge.

Kucheran's focus on Indigenous cultural resurgence challenges hegemonic perceptions of the exclusive circulation of capital in settler-colonial and Eurocentric production systems. His discussion sheds new light on how Indigenous making recentres both making and consumption and disengages the myth of the idealized creator-genius that typifies the cultural production of western modernity. Kucheran explains how creation is elaborated through the shared knowledge and skills of a community, emphasizing the many hands that come together to create the luxurious object. Importantly, this intervention offers pathways to decolonizing western systems of scholarship as much as the fashion system. Clark revises historical characterizations of the Canadian fur trade to recentre the specialized skills of Canada's Indigenous peoples that were, in fact, of paramount importance for the global luxury trade in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Uncovering Eurocentric hegemonic value systems that have overwritten local realities, Clark's analysis also sheds light on the experiential luxury of nineteenth-century Canadian wilderness tourism. The final prong in Clark's rethinking of Canadian histories of luxury is to lay bare the Anglo-centric hegemony faced by Jewish immigrants, highly skilled garment workers, who in the early twentieth century integrated and introduced new skills to the Canadian fur-manufacturing industry in response to the ethnocentrism they faced in other fine-garment sectors. Lezama's case study of the Canadian department store the T. Eaton Company's 'Made-in-Canada' campaign of the 1920s brings a fresh perspective to the ways that ordinary commodities can be invested with a value beyond expense or social distinction. The Made-in-Canada movement was a wide-ranging privileging of Canadian manufacturing that emerged out of the contentious policy of free trade versus protectionist tariffs in the first decade of the twentieth century. The movement was subsequently adopted by elite cultural producers seeking the means to organize and fortify Canada's cultural identity against a growing mass and commercial culture. Lezama elucidates how Eaton's use of the Made-in-Canada discourse operated in between these two extremes to imbue civic value into consumption, thereby creating the refinement necessary to transform ordinary domestically produced commodities into bona fide luxuries. This section highlights alternate pathways for the creation of national luxuries that challenge perceptions of colonial, imperialist and class-based exceptionality.

The following section starts with an analysis by Franklin and Halliday of the historical and cultural context in which Toronto Fashion Week operated from its inception in 1999. In dominant markets, fashion weeks are an imperialist concentration of capital that circulates in a closed, yet totalizing system. Franklin and Halliday's case study examines the foundering of the Canadian fashion event from the perspective of glamour and luxury's failure to materialize the specificity of a smaller and culturally specific fashion market. Polyck-O'Neill's focus on Douglas Coupland's *Digital Orca* (2009) and Ken Lum's *Monument for East Vancouver* (2010) shifts the analysis to public artworks but maintains the focus on how the introduction of luxury into public space risks homogenizing marginalized histories and erasing disenfranchised communities. Polyck-O'Neill further complicates the correspondence of public artworks with public luxuries by foregrounding the political and economic dynamics that underpin art commissions. The case studies in this section highlight luxury's complex impact on Canadian urban spaces and Indigenous and immigrant people when Eurocentric and settler-colonial systems are superimposed on local lived practices.

The final section looks forward to the value creation for a Canadian context that embraces technological innovation in the making of modern luxuries. O'Mahony's intervention shares global trends that extend traditional definitions of luxury through digital innovations in design and production as well as technological evolutions for the front of house. O'Mahony suggests that if Canadian luxury is to maintain a surplus value that is immanent in the commodities as well as enriching for luxury producers and purveyors, the Canadian luxury industries will have to embrace the digital age. In the closing chapter of this volume, Lamontagne highlights the digital evolution of fashion wearables that enriches human experience. The four case studies of this intervention highlight Lamontagne's neologism 'fashion-tech' as an expression of the most contemporary embodiment of luxury as necessarily multimodal, essentially collaborative and phenomenologically centred on the human experience of being-in-the-world. The case studies introduce laboratory ateliers operating in Europe and in Québec and their projects. Importantly, however, Lamontagne foregrounds two aspects that make the fashion-tech field one of the most contemporary expression of CCLS. First, the field itself is founded on the values of collaboration and community-building, and, second, wearables' surplus value is intricately tied to human experience in that they 'offer new experiences for the body, as well as new relationships to fashion and technology', Lamontagne concludes.

The critical study of luxury is not a mystification of the power of consumption as a mode of self-actualization, but rather an investigation of how some choose to add value to their lived experience. Further still, the studies in this field consider the impact of luxury on culture and its expressions. *Canadian Critical Luxury Studies: Decentring Luxury* pushes the field further in particularly significant ways. Case studies in this volume have, at their core, the project of decolonization and the upending of accepted hierarchies based in imperialist, colonial, Eurocentric and capitalist hegemonies. Luxury is a complex phenomenon that, as this introduction has foregrounded, is neither entirely beneficial nor wholly detrimental to the persons or societies that seek it out. Importantly though, the studies that make up this book have highlighted that it is precisely *because* of the Canadian context – with its settler-colonial history; later, the Anglo-centric and imperialist slant informing cultural and capitalist activity; and more recently the country's secondary status on the world stage as a cultural producer – that luxury holds surprising and uplifting potential that merits deeper consideration. The study of Indigenous and immigrant luxury-making highlights an alternate history of agency for those who were erased from historical narratives and sidelined by political structures. By studying the successes and failures of luxury in a Canadian setting, CCLS is working to make relevant this new field for a wider swathe of people and contexts whose relationship to luxuriousness is complicated by histories of political and economic domination. This volume is an opening-up of the definition of luxury to which the editors and contributors invite scholars from a diversity of fields as well as luxury makers and specialists and those living and working adjacent to luxury to contribute. As this volume makes clear, Canadian luxury is community.

NOTES

1. 'Comment faire du Chanel – objet symbolique, marqué du signe de la rareté par la signature – sans Chanel – individu biologique, seul habilité à signer Chanel les produits Chanel.'
2. Berry (1994) outlines in excellent detail the process of 'demoralisation'. This economically modern and capitalist perspective that luxury shifted from a sign of individual weakness and social effeminacy to an engine for domestic productivity and a symbol of national strength is taken up by a majority of luxury thinkers since Berry's foundational study. Berg and Eger (2002) chart this shift in their contribution to their edited collection. Philosopher Gilles Lipovetsky (2003) analyses the movement from demoralization to habitus-freed hyperconsumption in his study 'La Société d'hyperconsommation'. Jeremy Jennings (2007) sheds light on the debates surrounding luxury's shift during the Enlightenment and its wake in 'The debate about luxury in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century French political

thought'. In CLS, luxury's demoralization is taken as the modern foundation of luxurious production and practices. In the introduction to their volume *Critical Luxury Studies: Art, Design, Media*, Armitage and Roberts assert that the project of CLS 'is necessarily concerned with morality, and the material and immaterial struggle to find and perhaps defend the meaning of the limitless' (2016b: 4–5).