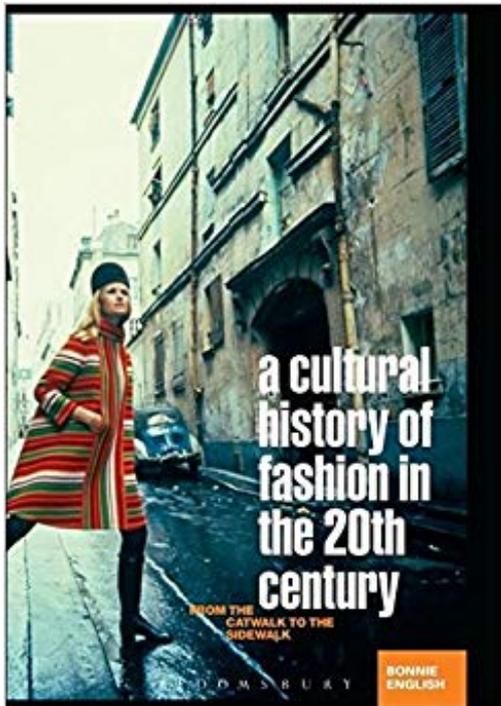


A Cultural History of Fashion in the Twentieth Century: From the Catwalk to the Sidewalk *by* Bonnie English



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The 20th Century saw the effective end of haute couture, the rise of prêt à porter and, finally, the triumph of street fashion. Bonnie English unravels the complexities and contradictions behind these changes to chart the history of modern fashion. What caused the demise of haute couture in the 20th century? What does the "democratisation" of fashion actually mean? Which key designers bridged the gap between "couture," with its associations of elite class and taste, and "street style," a product of tribalism and of popular culture and protest? If fashion imitates art and art imitates life, does life imitate fashion--do we wear the clothes or do the clothes wear us? Setting fashion within its social, cultural and artistic context, this book presents an engaging history of the interplay between commerce and culture, technology and aesthetics, popular culture and pastiche, and fashion and anti-fashion.



Reviews of the **A Cultural History of Fashion in the Twentieth Century: From the Catwalk to the Sidewalk** by **Bonnie English**

Hanad

I bought this as a gift for someone I love who is a stylist. I didn't read it but I scanned it and it seemed very academic but also very relevant to the work my loved one does. The pictures were dope.

Samugul

Modern fashion is a 'concept' that many people find fascinating. Particular periods have famous styles equated with them: the late-sixties the mini-skirt, the immediate post-World War Two period had the New Look, the 1950s, while often by-passed in consideration - the dirndl and shirtwaist and movie stars in tight sweaters emphasising their upper-body, punk fashion of the late-1970s with the zipper and over-sized safety pin - and so on.

Noting that fashion history is often essentially regarded as being about gracious ladies and heroic men, and is furthermore a collection of social histories attached to specific time frames - Bonnie English, an Australia based art history academic with a particular interest in fashion history, explores these aspects and a whole lot more. The book considers cultural developments from mainly British and American perspectives, as well as giving appropriate recognition to the role of French Couture, while further taking in broader European, later day Japanese and other globalisation influences. Additionally, how fashion acts as a reflection of society - how society moulds fashion - and fashion interprets society's current 'state of mind' in a material manner.

Big business, designer clothes, popular culture, clothing production techniques, the ever-expanding media and visual arts, the rise of the celebrity designer, the role of fashion in everyday culture and the elaboration of street culture, are all given their rightful position. The crucial role of timing, for example, in the introduction of particular styles is crucial to success or failure - here, in terms of the New Look for example, it is noted that Dior triumphed whereas Balenciaga had previously been overlooked. As English asserts: "understanding the reasons why changes have taken place and being able to contextualize these changes within a socio-historical setting is paramount for the fashion student, the emerging designer, the fashion historian and the avid follower of fashion".

The book begins by charting the situation prior to World War One and the rise of the Haute Couture; taking in notions of taste, the role of consumerism and the rise of the department store, the impact of the initially recognised designers such as Worth and Poiret, developments to mass-production techniques and the need for mass-markets for the rise of ready-to-wear. The book then expands into the more recent influences on fashion - this switch from hand-made to machine-made and the inclusion of synthetic fabrics to reduce finished product costs.

The Hollywood film industry has played a global influence in the popularisation of fashionable ideals, from Greta Garbo and her offset hat, to blonde haired Marilyn Monroe and her red lipstick, low necklines and billowing skirts to Jane Russell and several others with their tight-fitting sweaters and over-proportioned, falsely up-lifted bosoms. Moving forward in-time was the influence of the likes of Mary Quant and the role of Pierre Cardin in popularising modern classic menswear, the earlier ascendance of, and continued rise of Yves Saint Laurent. Furthermore, acknowledging the critical role of youth culture and its critical impact on fashion - from its fashionable roots in the 1940s and rock 'n' roll Teddy Boy culture of the 1950s - highlighting hippie movement influences and punk inspired fashion of Zandra Rhodes and Vivienne Westwood and the more later-day additional influences of Moschino, Benetton and Jean-Paul Gaultier.

The book concludes with the globalisation of fashion and asks whether fashion has witnessed the death of haute couture. The global presence of celebrity promoted fashion and the celebrity designer, through to the initial inklings of twenty-first century fashion with developments such as the notion of fashion show as spectacle - with Alexander McQueen's as example, and to the presence of Internet based e-Fashion. And finally, posits the question 'where is fashion headed'.

In conclusion, a well-written book that is easily accessible to any level of reader with an interest in fashion. As befits a broader understanding of 'fashion' from a relative 'global' - rather than a 'surface-level' understanding - the book acknowledges the role of a gamut of influences and persuasions impacting on this phenomenon known as fashion to which each person has their own way of interacting with it: whether that be an eagerness to indulge in the 'latest styles' or an abhorrence to new, and firm adherence to yesteryear, or a whole plethora of in-betweens.

Tall

This book is very academic. I was looking forward to something descriptive, anecdotal, fun and interesting but I couldn't get past the dry, boring text and citations of academic papers.

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