

Jonathan Faiers, *Fur: A Sensitive History* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2020). 240 pp., 217 col. and 29 b&w illus. Hbk £40.00. ISBN 9780300227208.

Jonathan Faiers's book is a long-awaited exploration into fashionable fur and human interaction, which augments previous historically concentrated works such as those by Elizabeth Ewing (*Fur in Dress*, 1981), Julia Emberley (*The Cultural Politics of Fur*, 1997), and Chantal Nadeau (*Fur Nation*, 2005). Their research focused on themes of image, fantasy, gender, race, colonialism, national identity, and nation-building, whilst Faiers centres on the sensory, the emotive, and haptic visuality to untangle fur as aspiration, sensuality and fashion. He proffers that his study will be a journey, an expedition into fur's polysemic sphere. His thematic structure is led by 'pioneering' critical guides, including Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, and a visually rich research methodology that provides the reader with the necessary equipment to navigate the territories of 'Furland'. Faiers's light-hearted, refreshing, excursive approach does not, however, undermine the strength of his thought-provoking and auspicious study.

Faiers is keen to assert that his volume will focus on fashionable fur rather than fur that is worn for its thermal properties, cultural significance, and economic benefit, acknowledging important, extensive, and authoritative bodies of work that are readily available and in production. The five-chapter structure of 'Hair', 'Pelt', 'Coat', 'Skin', and 'Fleece' is supported by Faiers's innovative framework of 'indiscipline' fashion thinking. This formula offers diversity in critical thought beyond those of fashion theories and histories to create a hybrid approach that captures the slippery nature of fashion. Faiers astutely contextualises fashionable fur as 'present, tactile and seductive' and turns to philosopher Michel Serres's 'voyage' through the sense of touch. This focused work on sensory interactions in fashion has been much anticipated. Faiers's nucleus here is the touching and feeling of fur as a trigger for personal interaction, which provides a foundation for fashion scholars to reconsider sensate emotions that imbue fashion and are the very essence of fashion thinking.

Central to Faiers image-filled research methodology is the interface of literature, fashion journalism, advertising, paintings, craft objects and fictional film, an approach with which he is extremely comfortable and expertly integrates. He weaves film imagery throughout his book to evidence fur's dissemination in popular culture and its historically entwined relationship with established notions of glamour and desire. Yet filmic costuming, particularly in the early to mid-20th century, is little more than a representation of escapism,

through narrative constructions rather than reality. Newsreels and cinemagazines would have been shown alongside the cinematic blockbuster, and provide fantastic period evidence of accessibility, affordability, acceptability, and the everyday dissemination of fashion fur beyond the imaginary. Faiers continues on his pelage adventure to consider ideas of emotional and physical response, trade and commodification, mythical, ritual, and symbolic representation, along with the transformative potential of fashionable fur.

The conclusion questions 'Future fur' and asks whether fashion fur is dead. Faiers perceptively reflects that if this is so, the wider uncertainty of fashion should be reconsidered, through 'past, new, or perhaps re-discovered narratives concerning our relationship to clothing'. Future fur may take the form of growing animal collagens, or the digitally rendered and printed, with ideas of recycled, roadkill, and remodelled fur briefly offered as possibilities. For Faiers's proposals to be successful ethical boundaries would need to be blurred, pushed and in some cases, overlooked. These conversation triggers are beyond the remit of this book. Faiers's complexity of methodology and criticality demands a study that is fluid, but ultimately disciplined and grounded. *Fur: A Sensitive History* is a brave and positively challenging book, that is a timely contribution to alternative and progressive ways of re-thinking fashion dissemination as a process and critical platform.

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