

Suits and tailoring feature throughout the book and are the subject of Joshua M. Bluteau's chapter, in which he takes an anthropological approach to explore the question of how and why the suit has survived as a staple of men's dress. Suits are also the means for Kate Dorney to address the important performative element of dandyism with a focus on the ways they have been worn by artists and performers such as the Beatles, Gilbert & George and boxer Chris Eubank Senior. In 'Casual Subversion', Shaun Cole considers the influence of sportswear and leisurewear on mainstream menswear, but also on subcultural styles, from the formalization of 'uniforms' such as cricketing whites to the contemporary ubiquity of the tracksuit. Closing the book, Jay McCauley-Bowstead brings the dandy up-to-date with a survey of the current dynamism of British men's fashion and designers such as Craig Green and Grace Wales Bonner.

The range of sources, illustrations, garments and art works throughout the book make the catalogue both a delight to look at and a useful reference resource for the history of menswear. It provides a tantalizing foretaste of the forthcoming exhibition at Manchester Art Gallery that I am looking forward to visiting when it opens later in 2022.

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Rachel Worth, *Fashion and Class* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020). 208 pp., 40 b&w illus. Pbk £23.99. ISBN 9781847888167.

Rachel Worth's book is a timely contribution to the developing conversation that questions assumptions about the historical understandings of dress and social identity, which is often riddled with privileged academic interpretations. Her ambitious research is confidently structured into a chronologically focused seven-chapter framework that includes politics, technology, social democratization, mass retailing, design and, finally, ethical considerations and sustainability. She considers how all these themes connect with notions of class structures.

Worth notes that she will follow a 'micro rather than macro' historical method. This leads to a rather American/Eurocentric investigation, but one that Worth is clear to point out. She does not apologize for this approach, as class structure and consciousness are, in her view, most strongly apparent in British, particularly English, life. The familiar works of Thorstein Veblen, Georg Simmel and Pierre Bourdieu inform her critical fashion thinking around the dissemination of fashion. Far from passively following their theories, however, Worth carefully unravels their research premises and cleverly acknowledges the potholes in their assessments of class, taste and society.

In each chapter, she provides a distinct overview of class-led relationships with clothing, yet not always fashion. In Chapter 1, Worth addresses ideas of working-class dress in both rural and urban contexts. There is a definite partiality to discourse around rural dress, which is one of Worth's areas of expertise

(see *Clothing and Landscape in Victorian England: Working-class Dress and Rural Life* (2018)). Chapter 2 moves away from class demarcations in England to focus on eighteenth-century France, outlining political, economic and social unrest that informed dress practices across French society. Chapters 3 and 4 examine technological growth in the English textile industry and the impact of the industrial revolution, in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, concentrating on class identity and the growth of the cotton industry. There is undeniably room, and a need, for a transparent treatment of colonial trading here, yet Worth decides to draw evidence for the shifts in mass production and consumption from the fictional works of Fanny Burney and Jane Austen to assess the impact of economic change and the extent of class levelling through consumption of cotton in the nineteenth century.

Chapters 5 and 6 explore ideas of ‘democratization of fashion’. This is where a more robust examination of class characteristics and nuances would have been fruitful. Fashion is not, as Worth suggests, influenced solely by wealthy sartorial choices; it is rather a result of negotiating community belonging, acceptability and levels of affordability. These pivotal factors are found across classes, affecting the levels of fashion’s democratization. Chapter 6 incorporates Worth’s seminal research on Marks and Spencer as a provider of fashionable, ‘affordable’ dress (see *Fashion for the People* (2007)) and is highly informative. Chapter 7, which addresses ethics and sustainability, at first appears to sit uncomfortably within discussions of class. Worth’s objective here is to highlight the perils of mass consumption and the alternative initiatives offered in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. This appears to be a momentary divergence from class relations, but Worth astutely comments that with a more sustainable approach to ‘clothing production and consumption [...] class might ultimately become both an irrelevance and an anomaly’.

Overall, more explicit discussion of key terms, such as ‘fashion’, ‘dress’, ‘democratization’ and ‘affordability’, as well as ‘working’, ‘middle’ and ‘upper’ class, would have been useful for the novice academic to navigate this rich investigation of symbolic class and human interplay with dress. Worth concludes that ‘class and class consciousness grew out of specific historical circumstances and they continue to be meaningful concepts in twenty-first-century British society’. This statement opens up all manner of related conversations for further study in the rapidly shifting critical conversations about fashion. *Fashion and Class* is a brave, purposeful text that provides a firm overview of symbolic class divisions and shifts in dress consumption, be it fashion or clothing, and will stimulate future discussions about the system of fashion.

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