

## Brevik-Zender on De Young (2019)

De Young, Justine, editor. *Fashion in European Art: Dress and Identity, Politics and the Body, 1775–1925*. Bloomsbury, 2019, pp. x + 275, ISBN 978-1-78831-448-0

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This engaging volume comprises nine insightful essays analyzing clothing and accessories in French, British, and German art during the long nineteenth century. In her introduction, Justine De Young notes that dress has been treated using many different methodological approaches, resulting in the disciplinarily “orphaned status” of fashion (2). She makes a convincing case for her volume, which centers on fashion in painting and visual culture while still providing a broad range of case studies. As another of its strengths, the collection features a number of established scholars whose influential work has helped to define the intersection of art history and fashion studies.

In Amelia Rauser’s informative opening chapter, the white muslin dress emerges as a tool of artistic agency in paintings by Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun and Marie Victoire Lemoine, as well as in the “back to nature” politics embedded in experimental theater by Rousseau. The draped garment was popularized by trendsetter Emma Hart, who staged “attitude” performances dressed in neo-classical style, and by engravings of Hart by Frederick Rehberg. An elegant chapter by Heather Belnap examines garments and accessories in late portraits of Joséphine Bonaparte as signifiers of Napoleon’s imperial project. Joséphine, the artists who painted her, and her costumer presented the Empress in neo-classical, Gothic, and French regional styles and also drew on colonial materials such as cashmere and corals from France’s Mediterranean conquests. Together, this network of artists and style-makers fashioned Joséphine into a justification for Napoleonic expansionism.

In chapter three Susan L. Siegfried’s sophisticated analysis of the 1830s *Le Goût nouveau* lithographs of Achille Devéria centers on time and the ways in which the “here and now” quality of Devéria’s fashion illustrations presented the accelerated temporality of modernity. Reading his lithographs as “a new hybrid category of print, which situated itself between the conventional costume print and the painted genre scene” (75), Siegfried argues compellingly that their expression of the “nouveau” can help us better understand how modernity in the 1820s and 30s temporally positioned itself in relation to neo-classical, Gothic, Renaissance, and Romantic aesthetic currents. Julie Codell’s absorbing fourth chapter concentrates on how unusual attire in Dante Gabriel Rossetti’s paintings destabilized identities, particularly those of social class. Incorporating second-hand jewelry and uncanny “illegible dress” (95), Rossetti subverted conventions of portraiture and fashion illustrations alike, producing an “erotics of the unclassifiable” (101). Codell persuasively calls for reevaluating the gender identities of Rossetti’s models and Rossetti himself, arguing that the former, through their unconventional self-fashioning, may have helped to posit “alternative femininities” (94), and that the artist drew on an aesthetics of “jouissance” to disrupt fixed categories of Victorian masculinities.

In chapter five Justine De Young turns to the 1872 Salon, the first state exhibit following the Commune, to elucidate how female figures and garments expressed France’s state of mourning post *année terrible*. Reactions to Alsatian peasant girls, nurses, and French village women in artworks varied depending on whether they were seen to be wearing fashionable dress (a morally suspect practice given the suffering of the previous year) or traditional attire not associated with the bourgeois *Parisienne*. De Young concludes with a telling comparison of how Carolus-Duran’s approach to dress met mixed, sometimes moralizing, reviews, whereas Berthe Morisot cleverly avoided criticism of her treatment of feminine fashion in her understudied portrait of her pregnant sister. Emmelyn Butterfield-Rosen’s fascinating chapter six delves into the hostile reception of Georges Seurat’s 1884 pointillist “manifesto-painting” (150) *Un Dimanche à la Grande Jatte*. The stylishly bustled woman paired with a monkey on a leash in the painting’s foreground became the site for the expression of multiple anxieties. Viewers responded to the work’s rupture with mimetic figure painting, its rendering of busts controversially recalling mannequins from the ready-to-wear industry, its expression of sociologist Gabriel Tarde’s conception of human society as fundamentally one of imitation (or “singerie” after the French word for “monkey”), and its suggestion of transgressive animal-human “mutual mimics” (168), all against the polarizing backdrop of Darwinism.

In chapter seven Andrew Stephenson skillfully tackles the semiotics of the male overcoat in British and American portraits of the 1890s. Indicating “a modern sense of manly self” (181), the coat was linked to the sexual transgressiveness of Aestheticism and to the figure of the “‘man of action’ forging his way in contemporary life with dress signaling his confident participation in the rapidly changing public sphere” (189). Interestingly, Stephenson turns to anarchism as one sphere of action associated with the overcoat, historicizing the garment in Roger Fry’s 1894 portrait of “English radical socialist, writer, and pioneering homosexual campaigner” (193) Edward Carpenter in relation to London’s avant-garde networks and to volatile socialist and

anarchist movements of the decade. Kimberly Wahl's lively chapter eight on suffragettes and dress reform in early twentieth-century Britain usefully revisits themes from the volume's first three chapters. Wahl shows how neoclassical draped dress and the "Old English" corset-less silhouette were promoted as ideal suffragette attire. However, rather than favoring nostalgic garments, politically active women opted for mainstream or high-fashion looks. Outfitting themselves attractively, they sensed that "an increasingly aspirational appearance was an effective tool in political demonstrations" (216). They used fashion to suggest that anti-suffrage was an outmoded style of thinking. In chapter nine, Anne Söll offers a nuanced study of 1920s paintings by German New Objectivity artist Anton Räderscheidt. Men's clothing in Räderscheidt's eerie canvases functions as "part of a dystopia that isolates men, turning them into empty puppets" (234), registering a crisis of masculinity brought on by World War I and women's emancipation. Referencing the "proper gentleman" popular in contemporaneous fashion magazines for men, Räderscheidt manipulated the trope, depicting his male figures with stiffly held bodies and dressed in unfinished prototype suits, causing them to appear like dolls or fashion dummies rather than projecting masculine authority and stability.

These highly informative chapters could certainly be enjoyed separately, while reading the entire volume, which unfolds chronologically, provides a rich and dynamic historical overview of dress in European art of the period.

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