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## (Ad)Dressing film history: Film and Fashion amidst the Ruins of Berlin / Film, Fashion and the 1960s

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## (Ad)Dressing film history: Film and Fashion amidst the Ruins of Berlin / Film, Fashion and the 1960s

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In 2012, Helen Warner published the article ‘Tracing Patterns: Critical Approaches to On-screen Fashion’ in which she was still able to claim that ‘the study of on-screen fashion continues to be somewhat marginalised in the academy’.[1] Since then, publications dedicated to fashion and film have significantly grown in number. Beyond the seminal *Fashion in Film* edited by Adrienne Munich (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011), there is also *Dressing Dangerously: Dysfunctional Fashion in Film* by Jonathan Faiers (London, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), in which he formulates the ‘negative cinematic wardrobe’[2] theory, and several historiographic studies like *Hollywood before Glamour: Fashion in American Silent Film* by Michelle Tolini Finamore (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013). Publications that focus on national film productions are also prevalent, such as *Italian Style: Fashion & Film from Early Cinema to the Digital Age* by Eugenia Paulicelli (New York-London: Bloomsbury, 2016).[3] Besides these more historic, semiotic, analytical, and theoretical works, Giuliana Bruno’s *Surface: Matters of Aesthetics, Materiality, and Media* (Chicago-London: University of Chicago Press, 2014) also offers one of the first attempts to philosophically reframe the relationship of film, fashion, and media. And yet, given the now sustained interest in on-screen fashion, gaps remain in the scholarship. Acknowledging the ‘strong mutual relationship’[4] between fashion and the moving image, film history continues to offer numerous possibilities for (ad)dressing, for revisiting, actual on-screen fashion and film costumes from different angles. The two recent publications under review here serve this purpose: *Film, Fashion and the 1960s* edited by Eugenia Paulicelli, Drake Stutesman, and Louise Wallenberg

(Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017), a collection of eleven original essays as well as an epilogue dedicated to the costume designer Adriana Berselli; and *Film and Fashion amidst the Ruins of Berlin: From Nazism to the Cold War* (Rochester-Suffolk: Camden House, 2018) by Mila Ganeva.

*Film and Fashion amidst the Ruins of Berlin* is the second monograph by Mila Ganeva, a trained Germanist, and follows her book *Women in Weimar Fashion: Discourses and Displays in German Culture, 1918-1933* (Rochester-New York: Camden House, 2008). Both publications appear in the Screen Cultures: German Film and the Visual series, edited by Gerd Gemünden and Johannes von Moltke. Ganeva's second book presents an important contribution to the area of audience studies in relation to film and fashion. With a gap of roughly six years, *Film and Fashion amidst the Ruins of Berlin* continues Ganeva's work on rewriting history through meticulous archival research. It is characterised by a strong focus on historically-omitted stories of women and their actual living situations – stories 'left out from the master narratives' (p. 11) – on the understanding that discourses on fashion may have appeared as a 'frivolous and irrelevant' topic to scholars when faced with grave historic events (ibid.). But, by revisiting history through the lens of fashion, Ganeva is able to expose important continuities between Germany's war and postwar years, ones that 'have structured patterns of visual experience, tastes, and everyday practices of the predominantly female audiences of both films and fashion displays in and outside of films' (ibid.). Ganeva methodologically strengthens her focus on Berlin through the spatial proximity of the city's fashion and film industries. Furthermore, she builds on the notion of 'dissonances' – put forth by Alon Confino (p. 12) – which allows her to examine the dynamic and often seemingly paradoxical landscape negotiated between fashion, film, and its audience. Her argument revises earlier assessments, which assume that 'different regimes of occupation and diverging ideological agendas' engender more dramatic different experiences in everyday life (p. 11). Building on the existing connections between historical discourse and fiction films, Ganeva uncovers a duality: 'Both fashion and film [...] vacillate between continuous engagement with social reality and a temporary surrender to the world of fantasy.' (p. 8)

The first chapter, titled 'Vicarious Consumption: Wartime Fashion in Film and the Press, 1939-44' (p. 21ff), lays the groundwork for the book's central objective. An expanded and revised version of a previously published article,[5] the chapter examines 'the multivalent status of wartime luxury consumption through the lenses of the illustrated press and cinema' (p. 23). An

'ambiguous image of women consumers' is revealed: women in Nazi cinema were represented as 'savvy businesswomen'; a surprising representation given how it was 'at odds with the propaganda stereotype of the German woman as maternal, homebound, rejecting fashionable attire, luxury items, makeup, and high heels' (p. 25). Already in Nazi Germany, the representation of women was characterised by a duality, fashion being simultaneously a vehicle for vicarious consumption and distraction *and* a mirror to the real experiences of everyday women's lives, as shaped by the scarcity of clothes and rationing of goods. Chapter two leaves the war context behind to focus upon the 'swift and paradoxical recovery' (p. 48) of the fashion industry in Berlin. By focusing on newsreels, fashion magazines, newspapers, and fashion shows, Ganeva provides a panoramic view of the fashion media. Furthermore, she addresses chapter one's allusion to amnesia regarding the Aryaniisation of the Berlin *Konfektion* (ready-to-wear clothing) in more detail. Another aspect of Ganeva's argument is thereby strengthened, namely that the fashion discourse is characterised by wilfully forgetting the past on the one hand and the attempts to rebuild life out of rubble on the other – epitomised in the *Flickkleid* (patchwork dress):

[It] not only reflected a practical way for German women to deal with the current situation but also alluded to the process of refashioning as a kind of selective, piecemeal working through of the past and piecing together a livable present, a patchwork of sorts. (p. 51)

The chapter's aim to uncover the underlying issues that facilitated the quick rebirth of the fashion industry continues to trace the book's central thesis – that fashion in film and in the media more widely 'delivered pipe dreams (*Wunschträume*), distracting and entertaining' but also catered to 'everyday needs and tackled more practical aspects of fashion' (p. 64). For example, fashion magazines offered both escapism and sewing patterns to female audiences who 'felt rather neglected by the press, especially in the field of politics' (p. 66).

To emphasise the importance of re-inscribing the Jewish history of the Berlin *Konfektion*, Ganeva adds a vignette that divides chapters two and three. Here, she recovers the story of the Jewish designer Charlotte Glückstein from obscurity. As Ganeva states, 'Glückstein seems to be the only Jewish woman at the helm of a successful fashion business in Berlin in the immediate post-war years' (p. 68). Her biography illustrates perfectly the paradoxes that Ga-

neva tries to address in her monograph: the ignorance of the past in the immediate post-war years and the embrace of ‘a notion of normalization that emphasizes primarily female agency, beauty, and consumption, both real and imaginary’ (p. 68). This is alongside the need to design fashion for the actual realities of women living in Berlin. Glückstein was a successful designer, whose ordeal in the KZs had actually been alluded to in the press: these accounts stand out against the ‘blackout of discussion of the past’ (p. 74).

Chapters three, four, and five revisit several film productions from the East and West to show their commonalities despite being produced in the divided city and/or country:

Missing from the existing approaches to these thematically related works from the East and West is an attempt to recognize them as interventions into a shared social context, addressing a common female audience as much through the films’ narratives as through their settings, costumes, visual aesthetics, and acting styles. (p. 122)

Through the representation of women working in the fashion industry, Ganeva argues that the films represented women’s actual daily life and struggles and also ‘acknowledged a very personal aspect of the quest for normality and rebuilding that was quite relevant to women in Germany after the war: the quest to look good and be comfortable’ (p. 130). For instance, in chapter five Ganeva retraces the developments in fashion on and off screen in the early 1950s by focusing on three films which, despite their apparent incongruity, ‘share some similarities and complement each other in an auspicious manner, especially in the ways they transform fashion from an element of the *mise-en-scène* into the primary multilayered and complex theme of their plots that is inseparable from the development of the female protagonists’ (p. 146). The films – *Modell Bianka*[6] (1951), *Frauenschicksale* (1952), and *Ingrid: Die Geschichte eines Fotomodells* (1955) – seemingly divided by ideology and borders connect female audiences through the depiction of fashion as well as the professional involvement of women (on and off screen) in the fashion industry.

In *Film and Fashion amidst the Ruins of Berlin* Ganeva has, again, made a valuable contribution to the growing body of publications recovering experiences of female audiences. By focusing upon a distinct period in time and place – and bringing attention to neglected or forgotten stories in fashion discourse – the monograph exhibits how a focus on fashion can offer a more nuanced history, as surprising as the results may be. The study, furthermore, provides invaluable material on known productions of German film. It is a

notable contribution to film, fashion, and women's history and scholars working in these fields will surely find numerous points upon which to expand.

In the second book under review, *Film, Fashion and the 1960s*, the essays are grouped together under section titles: 'The 1960s: Youth, Culture, and Sexual Liberation', 'Cities, Nations, and Fashion', 'Gender: Modernity and Tradition', followed by an 'Epilogue'. Already the section division hints at a problem within the volume: the considerable range of topics and approaches under discussion. As this review must be necessarily selective, I propose to first highlight certain especially noteworthy aspects of the volume – going against the given order – with a final note on the 'Introduction' to address this issue of breadth.

The emerging counterculture – in fashion, film, and music – as well as the change in Western culture at large is the focus of several chapters in the volume. For instance, Drake Stutesman's chapter 'Rite of Passage: The Hat That Wouldn't Disappear in the 1960s' focuses on the screen presence of hats worn by the main actresses in *A New Kind of Love* (1963) and *Puzzle of a Downfall Child* (1970). Her essay elucidates first how crucial a historically informed knowledge of clothes is to properly understand the meaning of the costumes in a given period, and second how the hat in both films is a sign of cultural change – an early indication of the emerging counterculture (p. 60).

There are also several chapters that focus on works by acclaimed auteurs, such as Jean-Luc Godard, Andy Warhol, Pier Paolo Pasolini, and Ingmar Bergman. In her article 'Pasolini's *Teorema*: The Eroticism of the Visitor's Discarded Clothes', Stella Bruzzi highlights the film's 'clothes moments' in which 'desire, sexuality, and Terence Stamp's quintessentially cool 60s look is made central' (p. 51). Bruzzi notices that costumes feature as 'additional signifiers' in the film, which is 'lacking in the conventional narrative traits' (ibid.): the clothes 'carry and create, not merely reflect, meaning' (ibid.). Furthermore, she describes them as 'oddly tactile yet unsensuous costumes' (ibid.); costumes which 'start not to reflect the characters, but rather to create barriers for [the actors]' (ibid.). This is an important observation as costumes have often been described as either highly efficient signs *or* as possessing tactility and hapticity, as Kristina Köhler points out.[7] Yet to fully grasp the sense and sensuality of costumes both approaches need to be combined.[8] Bruzzi's article represents, therefore, an important step into this relatively new direction in the study of film costumes.

Eugenia Paulicelli's contribution 'Fashion, Film, and Rome', which appears to be a revised and condensed version of a chapter in her aforementioned monograph *Italian Style*, goes one step further in exploring the connection between fashion and film. Besides providing a panoramic view on the relationships between the eternal city, fashion, and the film industry, and focusing – surprisingly – mainly on developments of the 1950s, Paulicelli argues that fashion works as 'a bridge that activates and facilitates the process of embodiment in film and the city' (p. 93). She forwards a theory of 'fashion experience' which builds upon Francesco Casetti's definition of 'filmic experience' (ibid.). The theory which sews together 'fashion, style, and film [...] on the body of the city at different levels of the imagination' (ibid.) is convincing. It weaves itself nicely into existing scholarship on the relationship between cinema and the city.

Amy Herzog's contribution on Andy Warhol, in which she discusses the influence of pornography on his work, is especially noteworthy because it addresses the importance of appearances and of undressing for Warhol's philosophy (p. 46). Moreover, in focusing on the act of undressing itself she is able to show that this act actually 'breaks the spell cast by the unified image of body-and-dress' (p. 38). As Herzog shows, Warhol's deep investment into the fashion industry plays out on different levels, providing a fresh perspective on his work. In her chapter 'Fashion Apart: Godard and Fageol in 1960s Paris' Astrid Söderbergh Widding attempts to connect fashion, cinema, and urban space in *Vivre sa vie* (1962) and *Bande à part* (1964) by building her argument on the Deleuzian concept of 'any-space-whatever' (p. 83), which she interprets as 'spaces in between' (p. 86). She posits that in the productions of the French New Wave 'a new way of conceptualizing urban space seems to appear by means of cinema and fashion together' (p. 83). The close attention paid to costume designer Christiane Fageol's contribution to film history is noteworthy, emphasising the impact of her designs in films which are often exclusively attributed to Godard: 'auteur cinema's tendency to credit only the director' (p. 84). Here, Söderbergh Widding foregrounds how it is actually Fageol's costumes which have 'become an important source of inspiration to filmmakers and fashion designers alike' (p. 88), though she does not differentiate between costume and fashion in her analysis. As Köhler argues, framing your discussion through clothing, costume, or fashion modulates the analysis in subtle but decisive ways,[9] meaning that the conflation of costume and fashion by Söderbergh Widding makes it hard for the reader to understand the specifics of her argument.

Expanding the focus of the collection on the work of distinct costume designers is Louise Wallenberg's chapter 'Mago's Magic: Fashioning Sexual Indifference in Ingmar Bergman's 1960s Cinema'. As Wallenberg notes, despite the extensive scholarship on Bergman, 'the importance of costumes (and fashion) in his films' has rarely been addressed (p. 170). Wallenberg, by focusing upon the collaboration between director and costume designer, not only expands the existing scholarship on Bergman but moreover shows how Mago's specific take on clothes and costumes shaped the aesthetic and meaning of Bergman's films: 'Androgynity rather than (ef-)femininity constituted the guiding and aesthetic principle when it came to the formation and display of a new, modern womanhood.' (p. 180) In this way, the costumes were rendered as truly 'queer creations' (p. 186), ones which transgressed any clear divisions between 'hetero- and homosexual desires and identities' (ibid.).

In respect to recovering or writing names back into history and consciousness, the 'Epilogue' should be mentioned too. It consists of a personal account by Eugenia Paulicelli on the costume designer Adriana Berselli. Paulicelli paraphrases some of Berselli's convictions. For instance, how Berselli 'stresses that it is not only the style, the cut, and the colors that determine the feel of an epoch, but also the movements of the body: the way one walks or puts on a veil, a hat, or a glove, and so on' (p. 214). Combining gestures and bodily movements with sartorial signifiers is an observation that harks back to Köhler's argument cited earlier: costumes implicate the body, a body in motion. As research on this relationship is just emerging, Paulicelli's account as well as chapter thirteen – 'Souvenir of a Costume Designer', in which Berselli herself discusses her career and work – is valuable material upon which others can now expand.

Although the editors of *Film, Fashion and the 1960s* claim to assess fashion in film on an international scale, it needs noting that only one contribution moves beyond the West: Anupama Kapse's article 'Women in White: Femininity and Female Desire in 1960s Bombay Melodrama'. The chapter puts forth a highly convincing argument regarding the different meanings that colour can have in different cultural contexts, based upon thorough film and cultural analysis. Moreover, Kapse elucidates how 'Bombay cinema defines costumes as a corporeal frame that synchronizes gesture and pose with lighting, music, and camerawork in an architecture of emotion and desire' (p. 151). Following Kapse's analysis of her various case studies, including *Sangam* (Raj Kapoor, 1964) and *Dil Apna aur Preet Parai* (Kishore Sahu, 1960), the white sari



is shown to be laden with political and ideological meanings connected to the aspirations, desires, and reality of the female protagonist.

Though *Film, Fashion and the 1960s* is dedicated to (revisiting) the 1960s, most of the assembled essays necessarily look before and/or beyond this decade. For example, they show how productions of the 1960s are linked to the past (such as the 1950s or even the silent era) or they assess how the 1960s provide an inspirational source for contemporary productions – as argued for in Nick Rees-Roberts's contribution 'Single Men: Sixties Aesthetics and Vintage Style in Contemporary Cinema'. Considering the observations on interconnections of different decades, it is surprising then that the 'Introduction' (authored by Paulicelli and Wallenberg) strongly positions the 1960s as a decade that 'offered a clear break' with traditions, especially in respect to cinema and fashion (p. 13). By referring to grand narratives, such as how 'gender norms and definitions were completely rethought during the decade' (p. 2), the editors try to strengthen the necessity of scholarly attention paid to fashion and cinema of the period – but, paradoxically, this early framing undermines some of the important observations of their contributors. It adheres to and reiterates the notion of progress, of the present as a perfection of the past, which is so persistent in fashion studies.

As a final thought, *Film, Fashion and the 1960s* shares with *Film and Fashion amidst the Ruins of Berlin* not only an interest in recovering (nearly) forgotten fashion and costume professionals from obscurity but also serves to further differentiate the relationship between fashion and costume – in view of a specific time period. Both books thus elucidate how costumes participate in fashion, how costume designers have reacted to trends in fashion, and how a 'look' on screen can easily be thought of as a fashion statement. Therefore, even if costumes are 'created for a solely cinematic purpose',<sup>[10]</sup> they nevertheless participate in a broader fashion culture. Moreover, because fashion and film are so closely intertwined – both being 'children of modernity' – it is logical that costumes are part of fashion discourses. As Wallenberg poignantly summarises: 'As unwearable garments, made to be seen and appreciated from a distance, they were not only highly inspirational as stage or screen costumes but also correlated to fashion, or to the very notion of fashion (as something intangible, untouchable, and abstract)' (p. 172).

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## Notes

- [1] Warner 2012, p. 122.
- [2] Faiers 2013, pp. 7-10.
- [3] The work of Marketa Uhlirova should be mentioned here too. See in particular Uhlirova's edited volume *Birds of Paradise* (London: Koenig Books, 2013) which deals with 'manifestations of costume as cinematic spectacle' (p. 15) across a number of decades.
- [4] D'Aloia & Baronian & Pedroni, 2017, p. 3.

- [5] Ganeva 2017.
- [6] Only *Modell Bianka* had been released under an international title: *Contra*. But it is worth noting the double meaning of the word 'Modell' in the original German title: 'model' and 'pattern'.
- [7] Köhler 2018, p. 1.
- [8] Ibid.
- [9] Ibid., p. 3.
- [10] Munich 2011, p. 21.