A CHALLENGE TO FRENCH FASHION DICTATORSHIP

A Thesis

Presented to

the Department of Curriculum & Instruction

Kansas State Teachers College of Emporia

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science

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August 1972

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

A continuous fashion show has been in progress ever since man descended from the tree tops. As soon as civilization advanced beyond the survival stage, man's inherent urge to decorate or adorn asserted itself. During ancient and medieval times styles were unchanged for hundreds, even thousands of years. The pace of fashion began to gain momentum during the Middle Ages. Changes occurred more rapidly after the Renaissance. Voyages of discovery, contact with strange races, different cultures, customs and costumes, in addition to the rise of the merchant middle class, all contributed to an accelerated rate of fashion change. Today the almost immediate dissemination of fashion news via television and satellite has resulted in an ever increasing flow of fashion. The rate of fashion acceptance and rejection is at an all time high.

For centuries France has been the undisputed leader of the Western fashion world. There have been many reasons for this dominance. Louis XIV, who ruled from 1643 to 1715, recognized the importance of the fashion industry as an economic asset to the country. He and his Prime Minister, Jean Baptiste Colbert, gave encouragement and protection to the industry. The geographical position of Paris as the

crossroads of Europe made it a natural meeting place for people from all parts of the world. The cultural climate of Paris encouraged the arts of music, painting and literature. The related arts of the fashion industry, weaving, dyeing, embroidery, lace-making, jewelry-making, and leather work, had reached a high degree of development. There was a large supply of highly skilled labor who worked for low wages. In addition the most important person in the fashion business, the designer, occupied a place of highest esteem in the French social order. All of these conditions helped promote the highly creative art of dress design.

France has held this position of fashion leadership with only very brief interruptions during some of the wars and revolutions until the present. The longest interruption occurred during World War II, a period of approximately eight years. During this interval American designers, who had previously contented themselves and their customers with copying and adapting French designs, assumed fashion leadership and created originals suited to the American way of life. The American-designed sportswear and separates which originated during this period made American designers supreme in the field of casual clothes.[1]

When the French showed their collections after World War II, French fashion and fabrics dominated again and the

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[1]Bettina Ballard, In My Fashion (New York: Van Rees Press, 1960), p. 171.

prestige of imported fashion insured French designers of first place in the fashion world of the United States.

American women still tend to wait for approval from Paris before accepting changes in fashion.

THE PROBLEM

The purpose of this study was to investigate American influence on American fashion. Specifically, what effect have American fashion designers had on American fashion since 1945? Because of the American consumers' traditional reliance on "the word from Paris," no one has investigated the influence of American fashion design nor made present-day comparisons of the most prestigious designers in the United States and in France.

HYPOTHESES

Since sportswear and separates have become so much a part of the American way of life, a hypothesis was formulated that the influence of American fashion designers on the designs of sportswear and separates has been greater than the effect of Parisian designers since 1945.

Because Parisian designers still stress elegance in fashion, a second hypothesis was formulated that the influence of American fashion designers has been less than the effect of French fashion designers on the designs of dresses, suits, and coats since 1945.

PROCEDURE

This historic research to challenge the dictatorship of French fashion will be based on bibliographic data from newspapers, periodicals, histories and encyclopediae of fashion, and the author's personal collection of clippings and photographs.

A brief history of fashion will explain France's attainment of leadership in fashion.

Comparable designers will be selected from France and from the United States since 1945. Specific fashion contributions from each designer will be assessed and evaluated in order to challenge French fashion dictatorship and to prove American designers can take their place among the top creative designers of the fashion world.

In an effort to overcome the possibility of an American bias, the author has tried to compensate by the inclusion of bibliographic material written by French, German, and English fashion journalists in addition to American-based publications.

LIMITATIONS

This study will not explore the economical, sociological, or psychological aspects of fashion, but will be limited to the creativity of fashion designers. The most important person in the fashion world is the designer. Without innovation there could be no fashion change and fashion would cease to exist.

DEFINITIONS

Definitions of the terms used in this study can be found in a fashion glossary in the Appendix which begins on page 100.

Chapter 2

THE RISE OF FRENCH FASHION LEADERSHIP

Fashion depends on the human drives to lead and to follow, not on the whims of the Paris couture or the economic needs of the garment industry. Individualists with a dominant desire to be leaders are the first to accept a new fashion. They are imitated by the conformists who are less sure of their fashion taste. In order to maintain this leadership it is necessary to have innovations in fashion. Fashion is based on a constant flow of fresh ideas and obsolescence,[1] and the most important person in the evolution of fashion is the designer.

Queens and royal mistresses have always been fashion leaders and were especially influential during the reign of Louis XIV whose seventy-year rule lasted until 1715. During this time France became the chief political power in Europe, and Paris became the fashion capital of the Western world. Paris has maintained this position, with a few brief interruptions in times of war, until the present time.

Louis XIV led the renaissance of culture and surrounded himself with the most interesting personalities of the time in art, literature, sculpture, music and fashion.

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[1]Marilyn Horn, The Second Skin (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1968), p. 192.

These people became his court and were "in society." The fashions adopted by royalty were copied by the nobility who, in turn, were copied by the upper classes who were wealthy enough to do so. Fashion as we know it today was not democratized until a much later date.

The French government recognized the importance of the "needle trades" and the art of dress design as economic assets and passed laws and regulations which enabled them to become the most important industry in the country. The court ordered aristocratic families to dress in an elegant and extravagant manner to help subsidize the struggling industry.

The textile mills were expanded, and tapestries, ribbon, and lace were produced. Cloth manufactured in France was exported all over the world. The French government regulated the methods of dyeing and even new kinds of cloth had to be endorsed by royal decree. Standards of quality and quotas were set and maintained. Heavy import duties on lace, fine linens, and muslin also protected the French textile industries.

Louis XIV married Maria Theresa of Spain who brought with her the wide hoop skirt which was flat in the front and back, fine Spanish leather, and beautiful laces which appeared on women's collars and cuffs.[2] Lighter softer fabrics were worn.

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[2]Bernice G. Chambers, Color and Design (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1951), p. 96.

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Louise de la Vallière, a favorite of Louis XIV, was the first to wear a necklace with a pendant which is still called a lavaliere. The artist, Jean Antoine Watteau, designed the Watteau gown for Madame de Maintenon to wear to conceal a pregnancy. "Watteau pleats" fell from the shoulders in back, and the gored front had no defined waistline. This was the forerunner of princess styles. Mme. de Maintenon eventually became the wife of Louis XIV.[3]

The wife of Louis XV was not a social leader so Madame de Pompadour and Madame du Barry set the fashions. Panniers grew wide and the whaling industry flourished to provide the whalebone needed to make the hoops. Madame de Pompadour encouraged the king to subsidize the silk mills of Lyon which became the finest in Europe. She is remembered for the pompadour hairdress in which the hair is combed back from the forehead with a few curls at the side or back.[4] She inspired striped patterns and flowered Pompadour taffeta in dress fabrics.

Louis XVI ascended the throne in 1774. Under the leadership of his queen, Marie Antoinette, fashions and hair styles were carried to extremes. Hoops and panniers extended the hipline to a width of six feet. Later she wore the simpler shepherdess dress after reading Rousseau's Emile.

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[3]Hazel T. Craig, Clothing, a Comprehensive Study Philadelphia: J. B. Lippencott Co., 1968), p. 60.

[4]Carolyn G. Bradley, Western World Costume (New York: Appleton-Century-Croft, Inc., 1954), p. 220.

She had the Petit Trianon built so she and her court could play at being milkmaids and shepherdesses. These extravagances helped pave the way for the French Revolution.

Marie Antoinette's dressmaker was Rose Bertin, the first dressmaker of whom we have record. She was a gifted designer and had an acute business sense. She sent dolls dressed in her latest designs to the courts of England, Germany, Russia, Spain, and Portugal to sell her latest creations. From London they were sent to the American colonies where the wealthier ladies copied the French styles with the help of local seamstresses. Thus the influence of Paris on this country's fashions began in the American Colonial Period.[5]

Rose Bertin was given the title, Secretary of Fashion, under Louis XVI. She escaped to England when the French Revolution began. When it was safe for her to return to France she brought back the inspiration for the chemise dress which she adapted from an undergarment worn by English women. This dress was the forerunner of the Empire Gown.

England influenced the fashion scene for a brief period while France recovered from the Revolution. In addition to the chemise England gave Europe a masculine appearance to some of the costumes for women, the first time since the Amazons that women sacrificed femininity to adopt

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[5]Jeannette A. Jarnow and Beatrice Judelle, Inside the Fashion Business (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1965), p. 89.

a soldier-like appearance.[6] This could be noted in a riding coat with turned-down collar, cuffs, and wide pointed lapels with big metal buttons.

After the French Revolution there was a return to Spartan simplicity in fashion as women turned to the ancient Greek style.[7] The dresses had plunging necklines which sometimes exposed the bosom, a high waistline, and short, puffed sleeves. They were made of transparent muslin which clung to the body and flesh colored body stockings were worn underneath. There were so many deaths from influenza and pneumonia they became known as the muslin diseases. The dresses were usually white to imitate the white statues of Roman and Greek origin which had been unearthed in the excavations of Pompeii and Herculaneum during the middle of the eighteenth century. These excavations inspired a classic revival in fashion, furniture, and architecture.

The Revolution affected clothes, industry, and commerce. Weavers were unemployed and exports fell off. Napoleon wanted luxury and a brilliant court. In order to stimulate the economy he decided to revitalize France's fashion industry. He gave the task to the designer, Leroy, who was to emphasize brocades, velvets, embroideries, and lace which were all produced in France. Napoleon put a ban

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[6]Gisèle d'Assailly, Ages of Elegance (Greenwich, Connecticut: New York Graphic Society, Ltd., 1968), p. 142.

[7]Mila Contini, Fashion (New York: The Odyssey Press, 1965), p. 211.

on the importation of textiles and decreed the ladies of the court should not wear the same dress twice.[8]

After Josephine married Napoleon she ordered all of her dresses from Leroy. The light muslins gave way to heavier, stiffer fabrics, but the high waistline remained a distinguishing characteristic of the Empire Style.

Napoleon abdicated in 1814 and the Bourbons returned to power. Louis XVIII ruled from 1814 to 1824. During this period waistlines remained high, necklines were trimmed with ribbon, ruching, lace and plumes, and sleeves gradually puffed and became the leg o'mutton sleeves.

Napoleon III ruled from 1852 to 1870. He married Princess Eugénie of Spain who became the fashion leader of the Second Empire. Their court was the center of fashion, pleasure, and dazzling display. Eugénie brought the Spanish mantilla from her native country and has been given credit for launching many new styles and fashions. The normal waistline returned, corsets reappeared, and skirts became bell-shaped. It was known as the Age of Crinoline because of the crinoline petticoats worn to maintain the fashionable silhouette.

In 1860 the fashion industry was revolutionized by an Englishman named Charles Worth who opened the first fashion house in Paris. He transformed the business of dressmaking into the art of the couturier. Empress Eugénie

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[8]Ibid., pp. 216, 223.

became Worth's client and he eventually dressed nine crowned heads of Europe who followed Eugénie's leadership.

The reign of Napoleon III and Eugénie came to an end in 1870 and with it the last influence of royalty on the fashion world. In the future, fashionable women of the Western World would look in turn to actresses of the theater, motion picture stars, and members of the international or "jet set" for leadership in fashion. Today's style-setters may be actresses, television personalities, society leaders, or other women in public life. Diana Vreeland, a former editor of Vogue, coined for them the name, Beautiful People.[9]

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[9]Marilyn Bender, The Beautiful People (New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1967), p. 77.

Chapter 3

TREND SETTERS OF THE FRENCH HAUTE COUTURE

A couture house is defined as a firm where the designer imposes his own ideas and does not work to the requirements of individual customers.[1] This completely new idea of preparing a collection of made-up clothing of his own design and presenting it to his clientele originated with Charles Frederick Worth, who may be considered the father of present day fashion. The shop he set up in 1858 marked the beginning of haute couture.

Other dress designers began to develop their own ideas and open couture houses. From then on many men tailors became the directors of fashion houses in Paris. They presented fashion to their private customers and sold models to foreign buyers for duplication in other countries. By the year 1900 Paris set the style for Europe and North and South America. Fashion in other countries simply copied the French haute couture. Never again would high fashion be the privilege of a special social caste, namely royalty, but would also be available to the rapidly rising class of wealthy industrialists.[2]

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[1]Madge Garland, Fashion (Baltimore: Penguin Books, Inc., 1962), p. 35.

[2]Helen L. Brockman, The Theory of Fashion Design

A more democratic concept of fashion has developed in the United States during the past fifty years due to the ability of the garment industry to mass-produce ready-to-wear clothing of good quality and fashionable design at reasonable cost.[3]

CHARLES FREDERICK WORTH

At twenty Charles Worth left London for Paris where he found work selling men's garments and women's accessories. He designed dresses which were made by the seamstress who was employed by the store to make up fabrics which were sold by the yard. His designs attracted so many customers he soon went into business for himself.[4]

In 1868 the Chambre Syndicale de la Couture Parisienne was organized to represent the French dressmaking world and Worth became its first president. He realized the growing industry would need protection in matters of law and taxes as well as a supply of workers capable of producing the beautiful handmade garments which customers had come to expect from Paris designers.[5]

Worth's influence was far-reaching. He imposed his

(New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1965), p. 31.

[3]M. D. C. Crawford, One World of Fashion (New York: Fairchild Publications, 1967), p. 150.

[4]Brockman, op. cit., p. 32.

[5]Alpha Latzke and Helen P. Hostetter, Clothing (New York: The Ronald Press, 1968), p. 162.

ideas on his clients, designed new styles for each season, and sold models for duplication in other countries. He was the first to show his creations on live mannequins. His French wife, Marie, was the first to model his designs.

His taste for soft flowing lines required large quantities of cloth. This in addition to Empress Eugénie's interest in dress contributed to the prosperity of the French fabric mills and manufacturers of trimmings during the period of the Second Empire under Napoleon III. The silk looms in Lyons more than doubled after Empress Eugénie appeared in a dress designed by the House of Worth and made of Lyons silk brocade.

Although Worth was responsible for a number of fashion innovations in cut, his real talent lay in predicting what would become successful.

Worth never really liked the crinoline. After it reached the absurd proportions of ten yards around in 1860, Worth designed a gored skirt, drew the skirt fullness to the back, and lengthened it into a train. The bustle soon followed.

In 1864 Worth created the tunic, a skirt that covered the petticoat but was draped in order to show it. His princess gown, cut in gores from the neck to the hemline, completely changed the fashion silhouette in 1866.[6] It was named for Princess Pauline Metternich, wife of the Austrian

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[6]Francois Boucher, 20,000 Years of Fashion (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., no date), p. 383.

ambassador. She was responsible for Empress Eugénie's patronage of Charles Worth after she wore one of his creations to a ball. Another design that appeared during the 1860's for the first time was the jacket and skirt costume, a forerunner of the suit. Worth's Empress Eugénie hat has been revived periodically, the last time in the 1930's.

In 1874 Worth's sons entered the business, Jean as designer and Gaston as the business manager. Later the grandson, Jacques, continued the tradition. They opened a branch in London in 1927.[7]

After Charles Worth died in 1896, Jean and Gaston adapted to the new era and the House of Worth was still the byword of fashion. The actress began to replace the empress as fashion leader. Sarah Bernhardt, Réjane, and Duse were prominent actresses of the time. They were glamorous, wore clothes well, and in addition gave credit to their designers in playbills and in photographs in fashion magazines, which members of royalty had refused to do.[8]

The House of Worth closed its Paris business in the 1950's after dressing many prominent women for nearly one hundred years.

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[7]Garland, op. cit., p. 152.

[8]Brockman, op. cit., p. 34.

JEANNE LANVIN

In 1890 Jeanne Lanvin opened a couture house which is still in operation. At her death in 1946 her daughter, the Countess of Polignac, assumed management of the House of Lanvin. She brought in Antonio del Castillo to be the designer and changed the name to Lanvin-Castillo. Today the present ruler of the haute couture house is Bernard Lanvin, a great-nephew of Jeanne Lanvin. The women's division is handled by the Paris designer, Jules-Francois Crahay, and Mrs. Bernard Lanvin. Mr. Lanvin is in charge of a ready-to wear boutique which opened in Paris in 1968.[9]

Jeanne Lanvin began her career by making such beautiful dresses for her own little daughter that people who saw them asked for copies for their own children. As her daughter grew, Madame Lanvin made clothes for older girls, and eventually for women.[10] Until her death she was one of the leading couturières. Jeanne Lanvin, Gabrielle Chanel, and Madeleine Vionnet made up a world-famous trio of French women whose talent has not been equalled in any country or any time.[11] Jeanne Lanvin was awarded the Cross of the Legion of Honor by the French government in 1926.[12]

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[9]R. Turner Wilcox, The Dictionary of Costume (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969), p. 92.

[10]Brockman, op. cit., p. 34.

[11]Garland, loc. cit.

[12]Latzke, op. cit., p. 127.

Her original color sense came from nature, Renoir's palette, Botticelli's ethereal figures, and the stained glass windows of churches which inspired the famous Lanvin blue. She used gold and silver textiles, brocades, and wonderful embroideries in her collections.

Madame Lanvin became famous for her beautiful robes de style in the 1920's and 1930's. This evening fashion had a tight bodice and a bouffant skirt, ankle or floor length. These picture dresses may have been inspired by her friendship with the Spanish painter, Zuloaga, who painted women wearing the Spanish costume of tight bodice, full skirt, and shawl, but according to legend she wanted to enhance the beauty of her daughter, Marie-Blanche. These timeless dresses she created still appear on the fashion scene from time to time.[13]

PAUL POIRET

As a boy Paul Poiret sold costume sketches to Paquin, Redfern, Worth, and other designers. In 1896 Jacques Doucet gave young Poiret his first encouragement and later asked him to join his firm, then considered the height of elegance. After two years with Doucet and a short period with Worth, Poiret opened his own shop in 1904.

Poiret had broad interests, great imagination, magnificent taste, and was an extreme non-conformist. These

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[13]Garland, op. cit., pp. 128-9.

characteristics gave him the most original mind that the couture has produced. The acceptance of his fashions and his fame were the greatest any designer had ever experienced. His influence over his generation even extended to fabrics and interior decoration.[14]

Poiret became the fashion king of the day, dictating to his clients and completely enchanting them. He transformed his wife, Denise, into one of the most stunning women in Paris to show his new creations. He declared war on corsets and refused to allow Denise to wear them because they would distort her lovely figure.

Poiret was greatly influenced by the arrival of the Russian Ballet in Paris in 1909. Stravinsky's Firebird and Rimski-Korsakov's Schehersade inspired the rich colors and the Oriental look he made fashionable. The textile industry was revitalized with the demands for exotic fabrics of deep violet, vibrant red, warm orange, emerald green, and royal blue. A startling combination was cerise and purple.

Poiret was the first fashion designer to produce a perfume. He named it Rosina after his daughter. Future designers made fortunes from the perfumes they popularized.

Poiret was also the first designer to travel around the world to spread French fashions. The nine live mannequins who accompanied him were the first substitutes for the doll mannequins which had been used previously to publicize

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[14]Brockman, op. cit., p. 36.

fashions.[15] Journalists waiting at every stop in addition to Poiret's flare for publicity did much to promote French fashion. As he lectured he would create a garment on a live model in just a few minutes using a roll of material, a box of pins, and a pair of scissors.

Fashion was in a period of transition at this time. Many of Poiret's innovations became trends which changed fashion from the elegance of display that had been in vogue since Louis XIV to the elegance of chic simplicity.[16] Poiret's fashion silhouettes were the first departure from the tight-waisted, full-skirted fashions then in vogue. He placed the belt just below the breasts in true Empire style. His open-neck kimono waist did away with the high collar and set-in sleeves for many years to come.

The long tunic hanging over a narrow underskirt appeared in 1911.[17] Sometimes a wide band or sash finished the edge of the tunic or was tied around the underskirt at a place below the knees. This narrow skirt, used for suits, dresses, and evening gowns, was called a hobble skirt. As walking became almost impossible, a slit appeared at the side or front. By 1913 the tunic, shortened to about knee-length, became fuller and served as a minaret or lampshade

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[15]Mila Contini, Fashion, ed. James Laver (New York: The Odyssey Press, 1965), p. 286.

[16]Brockman, op. cit., p. 35.

[17]R. Turner Wilcox, The Mode in Costume (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), p. 354.

like overblouse to the hobble skirt. This lampshade tunic and hobble skirt received the greatest acceptance ever experienced by a style.

Poiret introduced the walking skirt which he called the trotteur. He shortened skirts to ankle-length and introduced huge muffs and fur stoles.[18] After the minaret silhouette the draped fullness dropped half-way down the skirt length, sloping in to the ankles in the peg-top silhouette. The minaret tunic and the peg-top skirt lasted until World War I.[19] Although Poiret freed women from corsets and petticoats, he hobbled their ankles.

Poiret was too avant garde in 1911 and failed in his attempt to introduce a divided or trouser skirt which was called a harem skirt or Turkish trousers. More than thirty years passed before slacks were worn except in the country and on the beach.[20]

Poiret was forced into the army at the peak of his popularity. At the end of the war fashion had changed. His influence dwindled and his customers went to the designers who understood the new fashions. His house closed at the end of the 1920's. By the time he died in Paris in 1944 he had become a sorry figure, living more or less on charity, ignored and forgotten.[21]

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[18]Contini, op. cit., p. 363.

[19]Wilcox, 1958, op. cit., p. 355.

[20]Garland, op. cit., p. 124.

MADELEINE VIONNET

Madeleine Vionnet was a great dressmaker, perhaps the greatest of all time. She was also one of the most original designers ever known.[22] She has been responsible more than any other single designer for the simplified architectural structure of modern fashion.[23] Her simplified construction along with Chanel's chemise dress led to a more rapid growth of mass production for the ready-to-wear.

A true artist, she lacked the showmanship and desire to be a trend-setter. Her collections never received the coverage they deserved due to her fear of being copied. She became a great success and had a definite influence upon the foremost couturiers of her period.[24]

Vionnet was apprenticed in a small dressmaker's shop at the age of twelve or thirteen, spent five years in a tailor's workroom in London, returned to Paris to work under Madame Berber at Callot Soeurs where she perfected her technique, then was hired as a designer for Doucet in 1907. In 1912 she opened her own firm. She closed during World War I but reopened with increased importance after the war and retained her influence on fashion until she closed during the

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[21]James Johnson Sweeney, "Poiret," Vogue, Vol. 158, No. 4 (September 1, 1971), p. 186.

[22]Garland, op. cit., p. 152.

[23]Brockman, op. cit., p. 41.

[24]Wilcox, 1969, op. cit., p. 97.

German occupation of Paris during World War II. Her greatest influence was from 1918 to 1939.

She revolted against the corsets worn the first part of the twentieth century. As early as 1907, at Doucet's she presented mannequins "in the skin" or without corsets. She was also experimenting with her famous bias cut which was to succeed after the war.[25] Normally garment pieces were cut on the lengthwise grain of a fabric. With bias cuts the lengthwise grain runs on the diagonal, giving a better draping quality to the fabric. Due to this intricate cut necklines fell into graceful cowl effects, skirts hugged the hips and flared below but did not cling anywhere. To accomodate designs using her bias cut Vionnet persuaded textile manufacturers to make fabrics wider than the standard thirty-six and thirty-nine inch widths then in use for all except woolens.[26] She introduced a new fabric, a balanced crepe called crepe de Chine, which was perfect for her new bias cut.

The design and construction of the bias dress was the first radical innovation in garment construction for many decades.[27] In 1919 the tubular frock of crepe de Chine which Vionnet created slipped on over the head, needing no

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[25]Boucher, op. cit., p. 391.

[26]Hazel T. Craig, Clothing (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippencott Co., 1968), p. 99.

[27]Bernice G. Chambers, Color and Design (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1951), p. 210.

fasteners. Before dresses had to be fastened down the front or back. The dress was unlined and depended on cut alone to give it shape. She was the first of the couturiers to cut an unlined garment. The dress was truly sensational. Other innovations, such as the halter and cowl necklines, the asymmetrical neckline, and the skirt with handkerchief points, developed as a result of this bias cut.

Other firsts with Vionnet were the hemstitched blouse, the coat made of half fur and half fabric, and the costume in which the lining of the coat was made from the same fabric as the dress.

Vionnet's new approach to dressmaking led to the flapper look of the 1920's and the draped, classical gowns launched by other couturiers between World War I and World War II.[28]

In the early 1930's her bias cut became the essential diagram for every garment from the chemise to the top coat.[29] When she introduced the cut, manufacturers feared they would not be able to reproduce these "geometric" designs by mass-production methods. Not only were they able to do so, but underclothes were also cut on the bias and retained this cut for more than a decade.[30]

Instead of making sketches Vionnet worked out her

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[28]Anny Latour, Kings of Fashion, trans. Mervyn Savill (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1958), p. 200.

[29]Garland, op. cit., p. 50.

[30]Ibid., p. 66.

designs on a half-size wooden mannequin. She modelled and draped fabric like a sculptor working with clay. She thought it necessary to work on a lay figure[31] rather than sketch in order to consider the potentialities of a material. Her cuts were so intricate that it was impossible to copy her designs without ripping the garments apart.

Pupils of Madeleine Vionnet who are active in haute couture are Madame Alix Grès and Jacques Griffe.

GABRIELLE CHANEL

The early years of Gabrielle Chanel are obscure and she herself has told conflicting stories, but she was born in Auvergne, orphaned at an early age, and raised by two old maiden aunts. She reigned over the fashion world for more than fifty years and at her death in January 1971, the ageless "Coco" may have been eighty-eight years old.

The titled suitors she attracted introduced her to Parisian society and set up shops for her in Deauville during World War I and later in Paris. She rejected all of her lovers for the sake of her fashion career. She broke through convention to create her own life.

She began a revolution in fashion. Coco sensed that women were tired of lace and ruffles, elaborate hats, and constricting corsets, so she gave them an emancipated,

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[31]Celia Bertin, Paris a la Mode, trans. Marjorie Deans (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957), p. 172.

casual look which still dominates today.[32]

In the early twentieth century women left their homes to work as governesses, typists, and salesclerks. During World War I women replaced men in offices and factories. Chanel made high fashion out of realistic working-girl clothes. However the working girls could not afford them until they were mass-produced in cheap copies of the originals that Chanel made for customers of the haute couture. Instead of fearing fashion piracy as did other designers, Chanel was flattered when her high fashion designs were copied and mass-produced. She said, "If fashion isn't worn by everybody, then it is only eccentricity."[33] Chanel's simplified clothes lent themselves to mass-production and the wholesale apparel business thrived, especially in New York's Seventh Avenue garment district.[34]

Chanel was as responsible as any other individual for the fashionable look of postwar Paris and the spirit of the Roaring Twenties. The boyish look, which was a flat-bosomed silhouette bounded by straight lines, was an outward expression of women's new freedom. Moving away from corsets, ankle-length skirts, and heavy hats, Chanel's simple short skirts, low waistlines, and loose jackets were

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[32]"The Real Coco," Life, Vol. 67, No. 25 (December 19, 1969), p. 38.

[33]"Kate and Coco," Newsweek, Vol. 74, No. 19 (November 10, 1969), p. 76.

[34]Brockman, op. cit., p. 39.

easy to wear. They started the new trend of chic simplicity. According to Chanel, "Clothes do not matter. It is the way you look that counts." It was smart to look neither feminine nor rich.[35]

Anything Chanel did became fashionable--from turning a sunburn into the fashion for suntan to making mixed sizes of beads fashionable after she hurriedly restrung a broken string of pearls.

In a few years the influence of her fashion innovations was seen in all the couture houses of Paris. In 1920 she took the common jersey of the stableboy and made it more chic than satin and velvet for duchesses.[36] In 1920 her simple chemise dress swept every other type of dress off the fashion map.[37] She made wool jersey into dresses, suits, and, when woven with silver or gold threads, into evening wear. She launched wool for formal wear and put cotton into smart women's wardrobes. In 1915 she was the first to use artificial silk for high fashion.

Other innovations were the short, accordion-pleated skirts in jersey, pullovers, simple cardigan jackets and straight-lined evening dresses. The Chanel suit, introduced after World War I and worn for decades, consisted of a

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[35]Ibid.

[36]Marilyn Bender, The Beautiful People (New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1967), p. 228.

[37]Garland, op. cit., p. 49.

short skirt and a hip-length, boxy jacket. It was made of beautiful, textured woolens in lovely colors, and sometimes was set off by a brilliant silk print used for the blouse and lining. She introduced the triangular scarf, the loose overblouse, and white pique collars and cuffs. She was known for her little black dress, still considered indispensible in the smart woman's wardrobe, and favored lace dresses for evening.

Chanel's pockets were made for use, not merely as decoration, and her buttons really buttoned. She was the first to replace trimmings and embroidery with costume jewelry[38] and ropes of artificial pearls became a trademark.

In 1938, almost overnight, the fashion world deserted Chanel for a flamboyant Italian designer, Elsa Schiaparelli. Chanel closed her establishment in 1939. She felt the trends contradicted her theory of what fashion ought to be.[39]

In 1954 at the age of seventy-one, after fifteen years of retirement, she made an unprecedented comeback, picking up her own trend of fashion where she had dropped it in 1939.[40] Her reasons for returning to the fashion world may have been boredom; to bolster sales of the world's most famous perfume, Chanel No. 5; or to defend women from Dior's "New Look" which she called "the style of the camouflaged

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[38]Wilcox, 1958, op. cit., p. 418.

[39]Brockman, op. cit., p. 39. [40]Ibid.

corset."[41]

The 1954 collection showed a marked similarity to those of her successful years of the 1920's. The collection was criticized and ridiculed by the European fashion press but the American fashion press and American customers ensured the success of her comeback and she continued to hold her own in competition with the young designers. She still had her followers during the 1960's when most of the world was mad for minis, but Chanel won again. Her clothes couldn't look more perfect for the 1970's.[42] From the beginning of the mini skirt craze she had resisted, repeating, "The knee will not be shown here (at Maison Chanel), the knee is a joint." She also ignored the midi. Her hemlines never changed.[43]

The big Broadway hit of 1969-70, Coco, with Kathyrn Hepburn cast as Coco, told of Chanel's return to the fashion world after years in retirement. The costumes showed a fashion parade through the years.

Gabrielle Chanel's death on January 10, 1971, came the day after she had approved the designs for her spring collection, but her styling philosophy will be carried on by

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[41]Joseph Barry, "An Interview with Chanel," McCalls, Vol. 93, No. 2 (November 1965), p. 170.

[42]Women's Wear Daily, Vol. 120, No. 40 (February 26, 1970), p. 16.

[43]Jane Pecinovsky Fowler, "Coco Chanel: A Legend Unto Herself," rev. of Marcel Haedrich, Coco Chanel: Her Life, Her Secrets (Little Brown and Co.), The Kansas City

the five designers who worked most closely with her. A new director was appointed for the House of Chanel.[44]

ELSA SCHIAPARELLI

Elsa Schiaparelli was born in Italy, spent some time in New York, and settled in France in the early 1920's where she designed for Madame Lanvin. She became one of the most influential and daring fashion designers of the century. By 1930 she was the trend setter, typifying the spirit of her time. "Shocking" was the word that best symbolized the era when to be shocking was to be smart.[45] Shocking was the name she gave to the perfume she originated and shocking pink to the purple-pink she took from the color schemes of the artist, Berard, and made a fashionable color.[46]

Schiaparelli began her fashion career in the 1920's with hand-knit sweaters in modern designs which became the rage. She branched out to sports clothes in 1927, added evening gowns in 1930, and by 1935 was able to buy Madame Cheruit's fashion house. Her customers included smart society women and glamorous film stars. She designed for the woman who wanted to be smart, not merely pretty.

Star, June 25, 1972, Sec. C, p. 6.

[44]Lucie Noel, "Coco Lives 'On' in Fashion World," The Kansas City Star (January 31, 1971), Sec. C, p. 10.

[45]Brockman, op. cit., pp. 43-4.

[46]Latour, op. cit., p. 196.

The history of fashion shows that the years preceding great catastrophies reveal a tendency toward the eccentric and a search for new sensations.[47] In the dull depression years and just before World War II, Schiap, as her friends called her, offered one fashion surprise after another. She launched more novelties than any other designer of her day.[48] The bizarre influence of the Surrealist movement in art was apparent in her designs. Her genius for publicity was matched by no one except Dior, and her photogenic models far outnumbered those of the rest of the couturiers in the fashion magazines.[49]

The black sweaters she designed with white motifs became a fad which swept the fashion world. Anita Loos who wrote Gentlemen Prefer Blonds in 1926, was the first to wear Schiap's creations. The sweater designs included a large white bow knitted on the front and an X-ray view of the chest with white ribs outlined on black.[50] She has also been given credit for the evening sweater.

In the early 1930's Schiap was the first to use padding to broaden the shoulders. She was inspired by a trip to London and her admiration of the square-shouldered Guardsmen. She copied their shoulder epaulettes, their frog

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[47]Ibid., p. 197. [48]Garland, op. cit., p. 90.

[49]Bettina Ballard, In My Fashion (New York: Van Rees Press, 1960), p. 65.

[50]Brockman, op. cit., p. 44.

fasteners, and braided trimmings. Most of the Paris couture showed broad shoulders but Schiap's were the most spectacular--gathers, cartridge pleats, padding, braid, anything decorative.[51] The broad shoulder silhouette was to remain for fifteen years.

Schiaparelli opened the first couture boutique and she inspired the artisans of Paris to design for her the most original bags, jewels, belts, scarves, and other gadgets to be sold in her boutique.[52] She started the fad for gadgets. Her phosphorescent brooches lit up at night, and her handbags were illuminated inside and played melodies when opened. She designed buttons in the shape of animals, masks, fish, chains, padlocks, and guitars.

During the 1930's synthetic fabrics began to enter the fashion world. Willing to try anything once, Schiap came out in 1935 with a glass dress, complete with Cinderella slippers.[53] She used Lastex before any other dressmaker would touch it. She was the first of the haute couture to use zippers. By this time floral prints had disappeared from high fashion, and the few patterned dresses featured abstract designs. Schiap had a silk print made from a photograph of some newspapers she had thrown down on the floor.[54] She persuaded Cocteau, Berard, Drian, and Vertes to design mad new fabrics for her before designer

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[51]Ibid., p. 45. [52]Ballard, op. cit., p. 63.

[53]Garland, op. cit., p. 91. [54]Ibid., p. 90.

prints had been thought of.[55] Dali designed a lobster print for her.

After a visit to the Tyrolean Alps she designed a dirndl skirt to be worn with a peasant blouse. Her visit to India inspired her to use the draped effects of the sari.

In 1937 she showed long stockings worn with pale corduroy shorts, a forerunner of tights and Bermuda shorts[56] which preceded the pantyhose and hot-pants of the early 1970's.

She also originated the "tailored" evening dress with its own jacket, the most successful design of her career. This dinner suit became a uniform for concerts, theaters, and night clubs.[57] Her day suits were beautifully and simply cut. They provided a background for dramatic hats and jewels, with only the imaginative closures on the suit jackets showing her daring nonsense. Long, full dinner slacks appeared in her collections. The full-length, jewel-embroidered evening cape of heavy wool she brought out in 1937 was another winning design.[58]

After World War II she was unable to compete with Dior's New Look. Her function had been to shock and after

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[55]Ballard, op. cit., p. 61.

[56]Jeannette A. Jarnow and Beatrice Judelle, Inside the Fashion Business (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1965), p. 123.

[57]Ballard, op. cit., p. 62.

[58]Garland, loc. cit.

such a war people could no longer be shocked by mere dress design. She closed the doors of her fashion house in 1954[59] but remained active in the sale of Schiaparelli perfume.

[59]Bertin, op. cit., p. 181.

Chapter 4

FRENCH TREND SETTERS AFTER WORLD WAR II

In the summer of 1940 the German armies invaded France and from 1940 to 1946 the fashion world of Paris was cut off. During this time there were practically no fabrics, no trimmings, no heat in winter, and miserable food. People were more concerned with the war and simply were not interested in fashion. Many houses were forced to close. In addition, the designers had to resist German pressure to move the fashion industry to Berlin. Lucien Lelong must be given much credit for keeping the French couture together during the war. The American forces ended German occupation in 1944, and by 1946 the Paris openings were again making fashion news.[1]

CRISTOBAL BALENCIAGA

When Madeleine Vionnet, acknowledged by the experts as the greatest of all dressmakers, closed her fashion house in 1939, she was replaced by the greatest of all tailors, Cristobal Balenciaga.[2]

Cristobal Balenciaga was born in a Basque village in

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[1]Helen Brockman, The Theory of Fashion Design (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1965), p. 51.

[2]Ibid., p. 49.

Spain in 1895 and learned to sew in his mother's sewing room. His father died when Cristobal was thirteen and his mother moved to San Sebastian to become a seamstress. At fourteen he proved he could sew and tailor by copying a Parisian model of a dress.[3] He was apprenticed to a shop in Madrid where he learned dressmaking and tailoring techniques. In 1916 he opened a shop of his own in San Sebastian. He soon had shops in Madrid and Barcelona. When the Spanish Civil War started in 1936, business became so poor he went to Paris and opened a couture house in 1937. There he became known for his outstanding workmanship. He was the complete technician. He could cut, sew, baste, and press. He was even known to embroider a sample before sending it out to the embroiderer.[4] He was the only member of the postwar couture who could actually make every model he showed if necessary. According to superstition, in all his collections there was one dress he had sewn entirely himself.

He not only influenced some of the most elegant women in the world but also influenced other designers. There was a saying that what Balenciaga did one year the rest of the couture--Dior included--would do the next, or even the year after.[5] Balenciaga was always a little ahead

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[3]Anny Latour, Kings of Fashion (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1958), p. 259.

[4]Women's Wear Daily, Vol. 124, No. 60 (March 27, 1972), p. 4.

[5]Madge Garland, Fashion (Baltimore: Penguin Books, Inc., 1962), p. 157.

of other designers. He never followed any fashion trend but his own. His dresses differed little season to season but never seemed to go out of fashion. He gradually changed his basic silhouette about every six years. According to Balenciaga, "Women don't change every season, why should clothes?"[6]

To show how his fashions evolved, in 1945 he made suits that hugged the rib cage and curved in a stiffened form over the hips--the forerunners of the suits Dior brought out as the New Look in 1947.[7] In 1947 he created the barrel-coat silhouette; in 1948, his high-waisted coat; in 1950, back blousing. In 1951 his fitted front, loose back coats and suits were the start of an easier silhouette after the tautness of the New Look. They eventually changed the suit look all over the world. Also in 1951 his famous two-piece brown lace dress which eliminated the waistline was a shock to the fashion world. It was the forerunner of the unwaisted styles that succeeded it. In 1952 he showed all-around blousing; in 1953, hipline belts; in 1954, the loose jacket and "demi-fit" which was accepted internationally. This led to the unwaisted tunics in 1955; bloused tunics in 1956;[8] and finally in 1957 the most drastic of his

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[6]Bettina Ballard, In My Fashion (New York: David McKay Co., 1960), p. 117.

[7]Brockman, loc. cit.

[8]Jeannette A. Jarnow and Beatrice Judelle, Inside the Fashion Business (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1965), p. 127.

trends--the chemise which had no waistline.[9] It marked the beginning of the non-fitted look. The chemise or sack was copied so badly and so cheaply that it whirled into fame and just as rapidly whirled out again.

Balenciaga liked to make clothes in which women were comfortable, in which they could move their legs, and which could be put on with little effort. He used as few seams as possible, added as little trimming as possible, and never had complicated fastenings.

Balenciaga's Spanish background showed in his rich embroideries, braids, fringes, laces, and his use of black, which had always been a fashionable color in Spain. He liked the elegance of black and white, the brownish red of the Spanish earth, the grayish green of the olive trees, and the vivid red of the bull ring. He believed in the Goya combinations of black with beige, gray with black, and black with yellow.[10]

Hats were his one madness--yet the little Balenciaga pillbox has been the standard of elegance for hats ever since World War II.[11]

Balenciaga shunned publicity and refused to do a wholesale line in America, but in later years he consented to permit a few models to be exported for line-for-line copying by American manufacturers. His designs were always

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[9]Lawrence Martz,"A Retiring Master," Newsweek, Vol. 71, No. 23 (June 3, 1968), p. 64.

[10]Ballard, op. cit., p. 116. [11]Ibid., p. 117.

among the most popular reproduced.[12]

Balenciaga and the American designer, Mainbocher, have shared the pleasure of dressing most of the women whose names have appeared on the Best Dressed List.[13]

After designing for almost thirty years in Paris, Cristobal Balenciaga retired in 1968 at the age of seventy-three. He was one of the most important contributors to fashion during this period.[14] He came out of retirement to design the wedding gown for Carmencita de Martinez Bordiu when she married Prince Alfonso de Borbon y Dampierre in Madrid on March 8, 1972. This was the last design he created. A few weeks later he was dead but his influence will remain, especially in the work of Givenchy, Courrèges, and Ungaro, who had the privilege of working with Balenciaga before they opened their own shops.

CHRISTIAN DIOR

In 1946 Lucien Lelong presented his most exciting collection which introduced a new designer, Christian Dior. Dior still used the wartime silhouette but he gave it high fashion significance. Lelong urged Dior to branch out on his own.

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[12]Brockman, op. cit., p. 50.

[13]Geneviève Antoine Dariaux, Elegance (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1964), p. 58.

[14]Newsweek, loc. cit.

Marcel Boussac, the French textile magnate, wanted to finance a fashion house in order to launch a fabric promotion.[15] He offered Dior almost unlimited financing and put at his service a finance department, a costing department, a statistics department, and a system of anti-copyist procedure.[16] Never had a new house had the advantage of such a vast advertising campaign.

Dior showed great organizational ability. In less than a year he gathered a staff, trained mannequins, decorated a salon, and designed a magnificent first collection.

In February, 1947, Christian Dior introduced the fashion change of the century and his name became a household word. He reversed the skimpy, short, broad-shouldered wartime silhouette and emphasized tiny waists, natural shoulders, and great, full skirts.[17] His New Look eliminated shoulder pads, added hip padding, nipped in the waist, widened the skirt, and dropped the hem to mid-calf. The New Look swept the world and Paris resumed her prewar position of fashion capital of the world. The French government recognized him by awarding him the Legion of Honor for designing the New Look.[18]

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[15]Gisèle d'Assailly, Ages of Elegance (Greenwich, Connecticut: The New York Graphic Society, Ltd., 1968), p. 233.

[16]Celia Bertin, Paris a la Mode (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957), p. 196.

[17]Brockman, op. cit., p. 74.

[18]Jarnow, op. cit., p. 90.

It was the inner construction which gave the new contour. Interlining materials became very important. Petticoats of stiff but feather-light fabrics of nylon, stiffened net, or even horse-hair braid were required to support the wide skirts. In the next fifteen years American manufacturers sold millions of bouffant petticoats as every female from five to seventy-five adopted the New Look.[19]

Dior's New Look revolutionized the girdle world. Waist cinchers, wasp waists, Merry Widows which became a best seller for Warner's corsets, pretend bosoms, and padding were necessary for most women to achieve the New Look. Many new industries sprang up to ensure the success of the silhouette. Dior had given women what they had not had since World War I--corsets and petticoats.[20]

Dior put his perfume on the market in 1949. By 1964 the Dior firm had become the largest fashion organization in the world, with houses in London and New York in addition to Paris. In 1964 Diors accounted for fifty per cent of all French fashion export business.[21] Dior launched the idea of "outfits," including gloves, shoes, hats, stockings, bags--all carrying his personal mark.

Dior's New Look was the third time in modern fashion history when the silhouette underwent a sudden,

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[19]Brockman, op. cit., p. 54.

[20]Garland, op. cit., p. 130.

[21]Alpha Latzke and Helen P. Hostetter, Clothing (New York: The Ronald Press, 1968), p. 170.

revolutionary change instead of following its customary, natural evolution. The other times were in the late 1790's after the French Revolution, and in 1929 when hems fell almost over night. World War II had brought fashion to a stand-still and a change was long overdue. The New Look succeeded in spite of opposition from the press; from the English government still experiencing wartime shortages; and from American husbands who hated to have their wives' entire wardrobes made obsolete. But women wanted to look like women again and fashion won.

Dior understood how women wanted to look and was able to produce the look they wanted when they were ready to accept it.[22] He launched several trend-setting fashion innovations following the natural evolution of the fashion silhouette. In 1953 he shortened skirts; in 1954 he brought out the H-line silhouette; in 1955 he showed the A-line silhouette which, with variations, lasted over a decade.

In October, 1957, Christian Dior died of a heart attack. A young assistant who had had no previous publicity was chosen as his successor, and the Dior fashion empire continued under the leadership of Yves Saint Laurent.

YVES SAINT LAURENT

Yves Saint Laurent was born in 1936 in Oran, Algeria of a family of lawyers, but he showed his interest in the

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[22]Brockman, op. cit., p. 55.

theater and fashion by sketching dresses and designing his sister's clothes. He went to Paris to study art in 1953 at the age of seventeen where he won first prize in an International Wool Society Competition for his design of a cocktail dress.[23]

Christian Dior, one of the judges, was so impressed with his drawings that he hired him as an assistant. His fashion sketches showed the general characteristics of the coming trend. He worked very closely with Dior for nearly four years. When Dior died very suddenly in 1957, Boussac asked Saint Laurent to take charge of the House of Dior. At the age of twenty-one he became the head of a business of more than 2,000 people.

In Saint Laurent's first collection in 1958 his trapeze silhouette established his reputation and he became known as the "boy wonder." The trapeze rocked the fashion world almost as much as Dior's New Look had a decade ago. The trapeze was a short unbelted shift, but it had a fitted bosom and swung from narrow shoulders, widening into a flared skirt.

The next two collections were not so well received. They were too advanced for the time. He had made clothes for the young, but the young could not afford couture clothes, so they did not sell.

When Saint Laurent was called for military service

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[23] d'Assailly, op. cit., p. 241.

in 1960, Marc Bohan, who had been designing for the House of Dior in London, was chosen to head the Dior establishment. Bohan's first collection was successful and more realistic than Saint Laurent's clothes had been. When Saint Laurent was released from the army at the end of a year, he was not rehired and Bohan was retained to head the House of Dior.[24]

An American business man financed Saint Laurent so he was able to open his own house in 1962. Here he seemed to be more able to express his own feeling for fashion. His first collection was a success and elegant women from all over the world became his clients. He has become one of the foremost designers of France and his house is known for originality and trend-setting.[25] He is an engaging and prolific designer who has never grown up. He attracts American buyers and the majority of his private clients are American.[26] His collections are always spectacular, often revolutionary, and not always easy for the older woman to wear. His designs are decidedly feminine.

During the troubled economic times for fashion in the 1960's, Yves Saint Laurent, Pierre Cardin, and André Courrèges looked for survival in mass production. They and other young ready-to-wear designers put vitality in French fashion. They tried to relate clothes to contemporary life

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[24]Brockman, op. cit., p. 56.

[25]Latzke, op. cit., p. 168.

[26]Marilyn Bender, The Beautiful People (New York:

rather than to vanishing grandeur. They used techniques and materials of industrial technology to create popular fashion for many rather than costly works of art for a few.[27]

In 1966 St. Laurent opened Rive Gauche, a ready-to-wear boutique on the Left Bank of Paris. It sells clothes for the "young and the young in heart," according to Laurent. They are manufactured from designs he had in his couture collection a few months earlier at ten times the price.[28] He now has boutiques scattered throughout the world selling off-the-rack clothes. In 1970 he opened two shoe shops in Paris to sell shoes he designed to go with his clothing designs.[29] He has also designed collections of bedroom and bathroom furnishings for Fieldcrest.[30]

Yves St. Laurent has been responsible for originating many fashion trends and making others acceptable to the fashion world.

He designed the trapeze silhouette in 1958 while still at Dior's. His 1963 collection saved haute couture from the doldrums, both financially and artistically. He replaced the old "gussied-up" couture with an easy boyish look in everything from daytime wear to evening clothes. He

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Coward-McCann, Inc., 1967), p. 220.

[27]Ibid., p. 32.

[28]Ibid., p. 222.

[29]Women's Wear Daily, Vol. 120, No. 17 (January 26, 1970), p. 16.

[30]"The Rag Business Revisited," Forbes, Vol. 108, No. 2 (July 15, 1971), p. 19.

featured the shirt, the jerkin, the sailor jacket, the farmer boy's smock, and fishermen's oilskins. These appeared in a wide range of fabrics from tweeds to satins. He also showed tunics for evening and a tunic coat over a matching dress.[31] His Robin Hood thigh boots of black suede were to have far-reaching influence for many years.

In the fall of 1964 he dropped hemlines to mid-calf, but he was too advanced for the fashion world and bad reviews from the press cost him $100,000 in cancellations from buyers.[32]

His Mondrian Look became another winner in 1965. This quick-selling, easily-copied fad was inspired by a book of the Dutch artist's painting his mother had given him.[33]

After a trip to New York to promote his perfume, Y, his 1966 collection showed pea jackets, football helmets, and pop-art symbols on clothing.[34] Examples of his use of pop-art were jersey dresses adorned with ruby lips or pink lady torsos; a concealed blinking light in the bouquet of a bridal gown; a see-through dress designed as a publicity gag. This year his mid-calf length coats were successful.[35]

The African influence was apparent in his 1967 collection of safari outfits--huge sunglasses and casual shirts. He also showed black knickers in velvet.

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[31]"The Rites of New Fashion," Newsweek, 62:48-51 (August 12, 1963), p. 48.

[32]Bender, op. cit., p. 208.

[33]Ibid., p. 220.

[34]Ibid., p. 221.

[35]Ibid., p. 217.

In 1969 he launched the longest skirts since Dior's New Look in 1947. The midi may be defined as mid-calf length for skirts. He showed the unbelted midi-chemise, midi-length coats, maxi-length coats, side-wrap skirts, short battle jackets, jumpsuits, pants under long coats, and his famous silk patchwork evening dresses. His patchwork fashions eventually provided work for many poverty-stricken people in the Appalachian region of the United States by reviving the fad for quilting.[36] He also entered the mens-wear field in 1969 with boutiques in New York and Paris.

His Chemise Longuette made news in 1970. It was soft, feminine, unbelted, mid-calf length or longer, and slit to the knees in front.[37] He showed patchwork suede coats over the Chemise Longuette. His new version of the kilt was a side-wrapped, suede skirt.[38]

St. Laurent, who was the first to put women into longer skirts, rejected the fad fashion in 1971 to get back to the Basics--a return to Civilized Clothes. According to Yves, his basic or civilized clothes were classics which could be worn in many ways and for a long time. Everything was functional.[39] He reshaped and lengthened the pea

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[36] The Kansas City Star, May 25, 1969, Sec. C, p. 19.

[37] Women's Wear Daily, Vol. 121, No. 16 (July 23, 1970), p. 1.

[38] Women's Wear Daily, Vol. 121, No. 17 (July 24, 1970), p. 4.

[39] Women's Wear Daily, Vol. 122, No. 123 (June 25, 1971), p. 40.

jacket; added quilting to the yoke and sleeves of his trench coats which fans have always loved;[40] modified the design of the kilt to a side-wrapped skirt with fringe; made pants long and wide with no gimmicks;[41] and again produced another of his signatures--the smoking, a jacket and pants costume. From the past he revived a fingertip straight jacket, the topper. He made the jacket in rainproof fabrics, satin, black velvet, and in fur. It was to be worn over everything from pants to long evening dresses.[42] He featured black taffeta in addition to high laced boots.

Women had had it with fads, gimmicks, costumes, and Hot Pants. They wanted to look like real women again, not like jokes. The return of Civilized Clothes was the mood in Paris, Rome, and on Seventh Avenue. Yves Saint Laurent led the way when he rediscovered his great classics such as kilts, blazers, pea jackets, and beautiful pants. Said Yves, "The real base of fashion is the classics . . . ."[43]

PIERRE CARDIN

Pierre Cardin was born in 1922 to a wealthy wine merchant who hoped his son would become an architect. From

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[40] Women's Wear Daily, Vol. 123, No. 21 (July 30, 1971), p. 1.

[41] Women's Wear Daily, Vol. 122, No. 79 (April 23, 1971), p. 45.

[42] Women's Wear Daily, Vol. 123, No. 31 (August 13, 1971), pp. 4-5.

[43] Women's Wear Daily, Vol. 123, No. 16 (July 23,

the beginning Pierre was interested in dressmaking and made a doll dress for a neighbor's child when he was only eight years old.

At seventeen he left home for Vichy in unoccupied France and went to work for Manby, a man's tailor, where he mastered the tailoring that is evident today in the line and fit of his clothes. He left Manby's and served with the French Red Cross until Paris was liberated. After World War II he worked for the designer, Paquin. There he met many of the leading theatrical figures of the day and worked on costumes for their productions. The costumes he created for Jean Cocteau's film, Beauty and the Beast, won him recognition and an introduction to Dior who hired him. Cardin became a member of the team that produced the New Look at the House of Dior in 1947.[44]

Cardin spent three years with Dior, then opened a small workshop where he created fantastic costumes for the elaborate balls that were the rage in Paris at the time. He also became known as the best suit maker in town. He soon had to move to larger quarters.

By the mid-fifties he purchased a building which had a conservative men's furnishings shop on the ground floor. He divided the floor into two boutiques, one called Adam, the other, Eve. He designed gay and fanciful ties, sweaters

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1971), p. 4.

[44]Brockman, op. cit., p. 223.

and waistcoats for men, as well as fashions for women. His daring creations for men became very popular and in 1960 led to the first fashion collection for men by a top couturier.[45] He licensed manufacturers to produce his designs for men's clothing and furnishings which were distributed throughout the world in men's boutiques and department stores.[46]

To test his talent as a dress designer, Cardin presented his first haute couture collection in the summer of 1957. It was an immediate success and Cardin was on his way to international fame in the fashion world. In a little more than ten years Cardin had climbed from obscurity to a top position among the world's top fashion designers. His clothes became more extreme and his designs were always a season or so ahead of other designers. His clothes have never shown nostalgia for the past nor been inspired by certain historic periods of style. Fashion experts rank him among the top five trend-setting designers along with Yves Saint Laurent, Courrèges, Ungaro, and the House of Dior.

The moon has always influenced Cardin, and when the Americans landed a man on the moon in 1969 he was ready with his circular moon cuts. His big circular moon cape[47] became

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[45] Women's Wear Daily, Vol. 119, No. 48 (September 8, 1969), p. 15.

[46] Ishbel Ross, Taste in America (New York: Thomas Crowell Co., 1967), p. 237.

[47] Women's Wear Daily, Vol. 119, No. 22 (August 1, 1969), p. 10.

one of the best sellers of his August 1969 collection. He also showed tiny bolero jackets cut in his signature moon shape and edged with tubular cording.[48] He has also used circle pockets and round metallic belt buckles. Other trademarks include a circle tab closing, industrial zippers, and ornamental cutouts.

Cardin has mastered spiral and bias cuts and his use of bright, vibrant colors has introduced a youthful element to his clothes. In the late 1950's he showed the bubble silhouette and used the widely copied mushroom collars on coats and suits.

In the 1960's he gave metal jewelry a new look by having famous sculptors design it for his collections. He made the poncho famous by turning it into a skirt. Vinyl became fashionable when Cardin used it in his haute couture clothes. He matched short skirts with colored stockings. He plunged necklines in 1964; featured industrial zippers, hardware-fastened coats, and geometric cutouts in 1967; and showed floor-length coats over brief minis, circle capes, ribbed all-in-one tights under mini skirts, and poncho skirts over turtlenecks in 1969. He also gave menswear a brand new look.

In 1970 Pierre Cardin and Yves Saint Laurent pioneered longer lengths from the bottom of the calf to above the ankle, and to compensate for any loss of motion, slit

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[48] Women's Wear Daily, Vol. 119, No. 23 (August 4, 1969), pp. 7-8.

the skirts up the front. Cardin's 1971 designs pleased French silk manufacturers when he helped bring back taffeta and satin, their specialties. He showed taffeta dresses with wasp waists, tucked tops, bell-shaped skirts, and sleeves that flared from the elbow.

In addition to women's and men's clothing, Cardin has designed the interior of an automobile for Simca Company featuring new hollow-centered bucket seats and instruments of the dashboard in different colors--red, yellow, green, and blue.[49] For Fieldcrest he has designed furnishings for the bedroom and bathroom.[50] The ultimate diversification was reached when a brand of chocolates with his name on them[51] and Cardin-labeled plumbing fixtures[52] appeared on the market in 1970.

Pierre Cardin has designed all of the Cardin-labeled clothing but not all of the accessories. However the ties, shirts, hosiery, jewelry, wallets, and so forth must have his approval.[53]

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[49] Women's Wear Daily, Vol. 119, No. 60 (September 24, 1969), p. 4.

[50] Forbes, loc. cit.

[51] Women's Wear Daily, Vol. 120, No. 15 (July 22, 1970), p. 10.

[52] Women's Wear Daily, Vol. 120, No. 16 (July 23, 1970), p. 8.

[53] "Designing Man," Time, Vol. 93, No. 5 (January 31, 1969), p. 61.

ANDRE COURREGES

André Courrèges was born in the Basque country of the French Pyrenees in 1923. Although he would have preferred art school, he bowed to the wishes of his father and studied engineering. He became a research engineer for a large French manufacturing firm.

He hated the job and when he was twenty-eight years old he quit and went to work for Cristobal Balenciaga. During his ten years with Balenciaga he learned to cut, sew, and fit. He earned the reputation of "star tailor." Then he decided to go out into the fashion world on his own and, in 1961, opened a small salon decorated entirely in his favorite color, white.[54]

Courrèges designs for the woman who is active, moves fast, works, and is usually young and modern enough to wear modern, intelligent clothes. Women must be able to get in and out of cars, subways, buses, and planes. Courrèges is an athletic man and wants to give women freedom of body and complete simplicity.

He has refused to accept girdles or high heels.[55] In 1965 he predicted brassieres would be as forgotten in ten years as whalebone corsets. He preferred skirts which freed the leg and knee, and shod feet in comfortable little boots.

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[54]Thomas Meehan, "Where Did All the Women Go?", The Saturday Evening Post, 238:26-31 (September 11, 1965), p.28.

[55]d'Assailly, op. cit., p. 41.

According to Courrèges, "High heels are preposterous. They are just as absurd as the ancient practice of binding the feet of Chinese women."[56]

Courrèges builds dresses rather than designing them. His models are geometric and can be outlined by a square, a trapezoid, or a triangle. These bold shapes reflect his interest in contemporary architecture. He has been profoundly influenced by the ideas of the architect, Le Corbusier.[57]

His first collections were gay, young, and successful. His mannequins showed off his models while dancing to popular tunes. His neat geometry and fresh clear look made every bow and dressmaker's trick old fashioned. Things have never been the same. Courreges changed the face of fashion with his pantsuits, skirts above the knees, and boots above the calf.[58] He first became famous for designing beautifully tailored pants that could be worn on any occasion. In 1964 he made the prediction, "Women don't wear pants to the office yet, but they will."[59]

Three years later he had revolutionized fashion. By the spring of 1965 his Little Girl Look burst upon the

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[56]Nadine Liber, "The Lord of the Space Ladies," Life, 58:47-50 (May 21, 1965), p. 54.

[57]Marilyn J. Horn, The Second Skin (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1968), p. 258.

[58]Walter Vecchio and Robert Riley, The Fashion Makers (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1968), p. 45.

[59]Bender, op. cit., p. 203.

Parisian fashion scene and became the last word in chic. Practically all of his designs were white, sometimes edged or striped with contrasting reds, blues, or yellows; dresses were extremely short; heelless boots were mid-calf and white; hats had turned-back brims and tied under the chin; and pants were tight-legged, hip-slung, and in fabrics from flannel to lace.[60]

Although the mini skirts originated in London when the youth cult took over the fashion field, it took Courrèges to make them respectable, accepted and haute couture. Courrèges did it with good fabrics which were well cut and expensive.[61] The main features of his boxy, uncluttered look spread throughout the fashion world. After Courrèges big business discovered the selling power of pop fashion and used high fashion in their advertising.[62]

His straight, pared-down costumes with short skirts and boots had a strong influence on clothing design. His ideas were so simple and clear that they could be stolen and copied without a pattern. Almost none of the revenues from his designs came to him.[63] He has been copied more than any other dress designer. In despair over the botched copies of his work, he did not present a collection in the fall of

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[60]Meehan, loc. cit.

[61]Joseph Barry, "Letter from Abroad," McCalls, Vol. 94, No. 1 (October 1966), pp. 78, 81.

[62]Bender, op. cit., p. 55. [63]Ibid., p. 75.

1965, but closed down at the height of his success. He would find a way to produce his own ready-to-wear and sell his ideas to the public with some profit to himself and without having them caricatured.[64]

The Little Girl Look had considerable influence on all American ready-to-wear clothes designers. American manufacturers turned out Courrèges-type garments at all price levels and the market was flooded with adaptations of the space-age fashions of Courrèges. Mid-calf white boots, plastic skirts and jackets, angular seaming, crash helmets, and hemlines eight inches above the knees were everywhere. They were also copied for real little girls to be sold in the children's departments.[65] In 1965 and 1966 thousands of little feet stamped in little white boots.

In 1967 Courrèges staged a comeback and made a bid for the mass market. He sold ready-to-wear in his showroom one flight below his haute couture salon. He admitted the press, but banned manufacturers and buyers. The boots were gone. White bobby socks and round-toed, Mary Jane slippers replaced them for daytime wear.[66]

Skirts were still short but no longer shocking. He had abandoned his science fiction look and replaced his angular designs with curves. He showed scallops on the

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[64]Ibid., p. 202.

[65]Meehan, op. cit., pp. 29, 30.

[66]Bender, loc. cit.

necks and hems of youthful looking dresses and circle welts around the armholes of coats. He used checks and stripes, pastels, and bright reds and greens in addition to his familiar white.

In 1968 and 1969 more skin was visible in his creations. He showed see-through tops with jumpers, sequin jumpsuits, and beautiful herringbone tweed coats strapped and belted with vinyl.[67]

In 1970, in an effort to keep up with fashion's longer lengths, Courrèges took his good old basic shapes and lengthened them, maintaining his clothes could be worn either long or short. He failed to take into consideration he was still using stiff fabrics in the soft 1970's.

In the spring of 1971 Courrèges decided to do away with haute couture completely. His couture clothes would be an expensive ready-to-wear line.[69] Courrèges said, "With Chanel dead and Balenciaga retired, there is no more haute couture."[70]

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[67]Charles Moritz (ed.), "André Courrèges," Current Biography Yearbook-1970 (New York: H. W. Wilson, Co.), p. 101.

[68]Women's Wear Daily, Vol. 121, No. 18 (July 27, 1970), p. 13.

[69]Newsweek, Vol. 77, No. 6 (February 8, 1971), p. 86.

[70]Women's Wear Daily, Vol. 122, No. 15 (January 22, 1971), p. 8.

Chapter 5

CREATIVE FASHION DESIGN IN THE UNITED STATES

In the decade before World War II there were many skilled designers in the United States creating clothes for American women, but unlike the French designers, they received no publicity. Due to the snob appeal and charisma attached to French fashion, the manufacturers or stores who employed the designers, with very few exceptions, kept their names secret.[1]

When Paris fell to the Germans in 1940 these creative designers grasped the opportunity and freed American fashion from the domination of Paris until 1947 when Christian Dior's New Look again reestablished Paris as the fashion capital. Although hampered by government controls and regulations to conserve fabric and labor, the American designers' creative use of detail and draping made the slim short wartime silhouette look new.[2] Several fashion editors and merchants encouraged the use of American designer names.

The government of the United States has made no recognition of American fashion designers' contribution to the economy of the country as have the French and English.

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[1]Elizabeth Burris-Meyer, This Is Fashion (New York and London: Harper and Brothers, 1943), p. 172.

[2]Ibid.

To show appreciation of the outstanding achievement of American designers during World War II, and to promote and establish the identity of American fashion designers, an award was established in 1943 and sponsored by Coty, the cosmetic firm. The Coty American Fashion Critics' Award, called a Winnie, is the equivalent of the Oscar and Emmy awards of motion pictures and television. Three-time winners are elevated to a Hall of Fame.[3] Only nine designers have achieved this distinction in the thirty years' history of the Coty Awards.

MAINBOCHER

Main Rousseau Bocher was born in Chicago in 1891. When he was eighteen years old he decided to become an artist. He studied art at the Chicago Academy of Fine Arts and in Munich and Paris in Europe. When World War I began he did fashion sketching for a wholesale clothing manufacturer in New York until he enlisted in the army. His fluent German and French found him a place in the Army Intelligence Corps. Disguised as a singing student he trailed members of a drug ring who were supplying narcotics to American aviators.[4]

After the war he studied music for three years,

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[3]M. D. C. Crawford, One World of Fashion (New York: Fairchild Publications, 1967), p. 168.

[4]Maxine Block (ed.), "Mainbocher," Current Biography Yearbook-1942 (New York: H. W. Wilson, Co.), p. 559.

hoping for an operatic career. When ready for his debut in Paris, his voice failed. To make a living he took a job as a fashion illustrator for Paris Harper's Bazaar. Later he became editor of Paris Vogue.[5] In 1930 he left the magazine to go into the designing field for himself. When he became a couturier he combined his first and last names and gave it a French pronumciation--Mainbocher. He was an immediate success.

He received his greatest publicity in 1936 when he was chosen to design the wedding dress and trousseau for Mrs. Wallis Simpson who married Edward VIII, the English king who gave up a throne for the woman he loved. This was the most famous wedding dress in modern times. It was a two-piece style with a long, simple skirt and the first of the jackets that was not supposed to be removed. It made blue fashionable for wedding gowns.[6]

Mainbocher has been the only American to become a Parisian couturier.[7] He left Paris just ahead of the Nazi invasion and established himself in New York in 1940. There he profited by the wartime blackout of France as the fashion center of the world[8] and continued to make beautiful clothes

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[5]H. W. Yoxall, A Fashion of Life (New York: Taplinger Publishing Co., 1967), p. 61.

[6]The Kansas City Star, May 31, 1972, p. 21, col. 3.

[7]Madge Garland, Fashion (Baltimore: Penguin Books, Inc., 1962), p. 80.

[8]Time, Vol. 82, No. 13 (September 27, 1963), p. 61.

until he retired in 1971 at the age of eighty.

Mainbocher's clothes were the most carefully made, the slowest to change, and among the most expensive in the world.[9] The absence of fads enabled his clients to wear his creations five to ten years. He was the first American designer patronized by American women on the Best Dressed List, and has dressed most of the women whose names appear on the list.[10] Although conservative and not considered a trend-setter, his innovations have endured because he always believed fashion should fill "needs." There is scarcely a single current and useful costume in modern fashion that he did not make first.[11]

In the 1930's he designed the strapless bodice which was used on many evening gowns, and a small tight-waisted corset to enhance his corselet waistline. Just before World War II he showed little girl dresses with petticoats, a forerunner of Dior's New Look.

During the 1940's the government commissioned the best designer in the United States, Mainbocher, to design most of the uniforms for their women--the WAVES, Women Marines, and Red Cross.[12] Always stage struck, he designed

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[9]Time, Vol. 98, No. 1 (July 5, 1971), p. 34.

[10]Geneviève Antoine Dariaux, Elegance (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1964), p. 58.

[11]"Mainbocher, New Clothes," Vogue, Vol. 142, No. 8 (November 1, 1963), p. 104.

[12]Garland, op. cit., p. 63.

the costumes for several plays, among them, One Touch of Venus and the wedding gown in The Sound of Music.

In 1941 he showed embroidered evening sweaters and the theater suit, a late day costume that could go anywhere. The short evening gown made its appearance in 1946--so practical to wear in taxis and jammed theater aisles. That same year he designed the little sleeveless shell, a blouse that "disappeared" under the jacket and would not detract from the lines of the suit.[13] His "little nothing" dress, constructed with four seams and a little band around the neck, was destined to be the forerunner of the shift.[14]

In 1958 he designed the first mackintosh with a gay flower printed lining, "something undreary to wear in the rain."[15] Previously he had lined suit jackets with the same printed fabric used for the blouses. Later coat linings matched their accompanying dresses.

In the early 1960's he lined coats with fur--a lamé evening coat with white mink and a tweed jacket with sable. He showed the safari dinner dress with four patch pockets, and waist-pleated slacks with tie-on skirts for party pajamas in 1968.[16] His 1970 suits showed his famous little

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[13] Vogue, loc. cit.

[14] Ninette Lyon, "A Second Fame--Good Food--Main Bocher," Vogue, Vol. 146, No. 9 (November 15, 1965), p. 155.

[15] Vogue, November 1, 1963, p. 104.

[16] Women's Wear Daily, Vol. 117, No. 53 (September, 16, 1968), p. 10.

blouses of figured silk surah or taffeta printed to match the jacket linings.

Fine sewing and the absence of fads have kept Mainbocher's clothes from the discards.[17] When he retired in the spring of 1971, he left an indelible mark on American fashion.

CLAIRE McCARDELL

Just before and during World War II, with Paris dead to the press, the talent of American designers was discovered and they finally received well-deserved publicity. These designers showed no interest in the high fashion of Paris,[18] but worked chiefly in ready-to-wear which had a vast and well organized wholesale market in the United States.[19]

Among a number of well established originals was Claire McCardell who designed for Townley Frocks, Inc., a large New York manufacturer.

Claire McCardell's interest in fashion began with paper dolls she cut from her mother's fashion magazines, and continued in her teens when she sketched and made her own clothes. After two years of college she attended Parsons School of Design in Manhattan and studied in Paris a year.

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[17] The Kansas City Star, March 1, 1970, Sec. C, p. 13.

[18] Bettina Ballard, In My Fashion (New York: David McKay Co., 1960), p. 171.

[19] Garland, op. cit., p. 80.

In New York she had several jobs sketching and modeling before she went to Townley Frocks as a model and sketcher. When Townley's designer died suddenly less than a month before the spring showing in 1931, Claire finished the collection. Then she began to experiment.[20]

Her first big success was her Monastic dress in 1938. It was loose-hanging, cut on the bias for better draping, and held to the body by a belt or a band. It filled an important need for casual dress in American fashion. Before, women had little choice between a cotton house dress and an afternoon dress. Soon cheap copies flooded the market and the monastic dress revolutionized the whole dress industry.[21]

Claire McCardell's belief that garments should have a reason led to her experimenting with separates, now the backbone of the American woman's wardrobe and an important basis for American sportswear design. In 1934, to cut down on luggage while traveling, she designed a five-piece wool jersey casual combination of interchangeable parts--halter, culottes, slacks, skirt, and jacket.[22] The possibilities were limitless--long or short skirts, shorts or slacks, bare tops or covered-up tops.

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[20]"The American Look," Time, Vol. 65, No. 18 (May 2, 1955), p. 89.

[21]Ibid., pp. 89, 90.

[22]Marjorie Dent Candee (ed.), "Claire McCardell," Current Biography Yearbook-1954 (New York: H. W. Wilson Co.), p. 423.

She designed things she needed herself and found that other women needed them too. More than any other designer, Claire McCardell created the casual American Look to complement the American way of life. Her creations were comfortable, practical, and fulfilled needs of American women.[23] She liked "buttons that button and bows that tie."

To quote Stanley Marcus of Neiman-Marcus in Dallas, "She is one of the few truly creative designers this country has produced, borrowing nothing from other designers. She is to America what Vionnet was and Grès is to France."[24] Like Mainbocher, when in Paris on vacation, she visited no collections lest she be influenced by them,[26] but, unlike Mainbocher, her clothes were moderately priced so almost everyone could afford to buy her things, while Mainbocher's were the most expensive in the world.

During World War II she designed a silk dinner dress with a matching apron for entertaining without maids, and a wraparound, easy-to-iron housedress of denim called a popover so one could look chic while doing housework. She started the vogue for ballet slippers of fabric to be worn with her gowns because they required no ration stamp in wartime.[26] She invented pedal pushers, leotards, and at-home

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[23] Newsweek, Vol. 79, No. 23 (June 5, 1972), p. 87.

[24] Current Biography Yearbook, loc. cit.

[25] Time, loc. cit.

[26] Hazel T. Craig, Clothing (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippencott Co., 1968), p. 99.

hostess gowns.

She made cotton denim fashionable and introduced hardware snaps and double stitching in everyday clothes. She made the first diaper swimming suits.[27] She put women into brief jersey bathing suits and amusingly mad play clothes. She made the jersey sheath an American uniform.[28]

Trademarks of McCardell styles were spaghetti-like ties, big brass hooks and eyes, and a daring use of color. She liked plaids and stripes, especially on the bias.

True to her beliefs in comfort and function, she broke away from the Paris trend and designed dresses without shoulder pads at least five years ahead of other designers.[29] Her bare-backed dress with a halter neckline of 1956 has been revived in the 1970's.

In 1955 Claire McCardell took a look at baby clothes with tight little sleeves, choking necklines, and too many buttons to button. She applied her easy-to-live-in, easy-to-get-into, easy-to-keep-in-shape principles to Baby McCardells. They tied to fit, had all-in-one sleeves with shoulder room, and opened for easy ironing. For fun she used polka dots and stripes instead of rosebuds and smocking.[30]

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[27]Bernice G. Chambers, Color and Design (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1951), p. 29.

[28]Ballard, loc. cit.

[29]Time, op. cit., p. 90.

[30]Claire McCardell, "What Shall I Wear?", McCalls Vol. 84, No. 2 (November 1956), p. 177.

The three to six group benefitted from her easy-going, uncluttered styles made with string ties, cutout armholes, high waists, halter tops, and unusual color combinations--all McCardell trademarks.

Her untimely death in 1958 at the age of fifty-three saddened many American women who were as proud of their wholesale McCardells as other women were of their Paris couture styles.

The American Look has had lasting influence abroad, especially in Italy where it has influenced designers of sportswear. American clothes must keep up with our fast modern pace; must be comfortable in station wagons, sports cars and planes; must be functional for sports and for entertaining without maids.

NORMAN NORELL

Norman Norell was born in Noblesville, Indiana, in 1900. From the age of thirteen he knew he wanted to be a designer. After high school he went to New York where he studied at the Parson's School of Design and the Pratt Institute. In 1962 the Pratt Institute awarded him an honorary Doctor of Fine Arts degree.[31]

The turning point in his career came when he won a one hundred dollar prize in a blouse contest. He was advised to change his name to get theatrical work, so the

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[31]Sheward Hagerty, "Where the Shape Lies," Newsweek, Vol. 60, No. 4 (July 23, 1962), p. 65.

first three letters in "Norman" plus "ell" for the "L" in Levinson became Norell.[32]

Norman Norell started his career in 1922 as a costume designer at the New York studio of Paramount Pictures where he designed for silent film stars Rudolph Valentino, Gloria Swanson, and Mae Murray. When the studio closed he did costumes for Broadway musical productions. Next came a job with Brooks Costume Company, making costumes for vaudeville acts and burlesque strippers. This background could account for the theatrical quality in his evening clothes.

He got his first big break in 1928 when he went to work for Hattie Carnegie, one of New York's most elegant custom-order houses. There he studied the patterns and construction of French clothes, learned the fundamentals of good design, and what fashion really was all about.[33] He remained with Hattie Carnegie for thirteen years, but when he disagreed with her over the costumes he was making for Gertrude Lawrence to wear in Lady in the Dark, he lost his job.

He joined Anthony Traina's wholesale firm as designer where he went right on designing beautiful clothes as well as the most expensive in the ready-to-wear market. Traina furnished the money and manufacturing skill. His first collection for Traina-Norell in 1941 made him an

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[32]Stanley Frank, "Style King of Ready-to-Wear," The Saturday Evening Post, Vol. 235 (October 20, 1962), p. 79.

[33]Ibid.

overnight success in the fashion world and the Traina-Norell label soon became a status symbol among American women. When Traina died in 1960 the business became Norman Norell, Inc.[34] In the March 17, 1972 issue of Women's Wear Daily Norell announced he now owns all the stock in the firm.

The disappearance of Paris models due to World War II brought a number of creative designers such as Claire McCardell and Norman Norell to the attention of the fashion world.[35]

Some of the seemingly avant garde styles Norell launched during the Traina-Norell period have become classics. He designed the chemise dress as an answer to wartime shortages twelve years before Paris made it fashionable. His leopard print was a shocker in 1944. From 1954 on his house has been famous for his sequined sheaths for evening. The evening shirtdress, the fur trench coat, the Empire dress, and the basic wool jersey of the 1950's were also introduced under the Traina-Norell label.[36]

Norell's first collection in his own name in June, 1960, was received with as much enthusiasm as his first collection for Traina-Norell in 1941. The shocker this time was the culotte, a divided skirt for town wear. The culotte

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[34]Eugenia Sheppard, "Norell Appeals to Women in Top Income Brackets," The Kansas City Star, July 11, 1971, Sec. C, p. 3.

[35]Garland, loc. cit.

[36]Charles Moritz (ed.), "Norman Norell," Current Biography Yearbook-1964 (New York: H. W. Wilson Co.), p.321.

looked like a conventional skirt when standing, but divided for ease in walking and getting in and out of cars. It was and continues to be most appropriate for the active life of modern women.[37] Dinah Shore wore a wool culotte on her opening television show.

Norell does not make garments for individual customers as in the French tradition. Mainbocher was the last designer in the United States to operate in this manner. Norman Norell and James Galanos, the only other non-custom designer in Norell's price league, classify themselves as ready-to-wear manufacturers. They sell at wholesale to their select retail clientele.[38] About one hundred outlets sell Norell garments.

Norell presents two collections a year with 150 to 175 garments for each one. His ideas come from everywhere. He buys the fabrics first, always searching for the best. After making numerous sketches, he works in fabric on a live model or on a special dummy which has shoulder blades and sloping neck muscles.

He supervises each step of production. Each garment is made individually and almost entirely by hand. A fast girl can make three dresses a week. A tailor may take half a week to make a jacket. High labor costs help make the

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[37]Ibid.

[38]Jeannette A. Jarnow and Beatrice Judelle, Inside the Fashion Business (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1965), p. 72.

Norell label the most expensive ready-to-wear in the world. His clothes are as expensive as custom-made creations of Parisian couturiers.[39] In 1971 his simplest dress cost $500 and evening gowns, on which each sequin is sewn by hand, go up to $5,000.[40] Norell will not sell designs for copying as the French houses do. This would cheapen the line.[41]

All shape comes from work done inside the garment. The construction is always faultless, the silk linings elegant, and the utmost attention is paid to the proper buttons and other details.[42]

Because of the simplicity of line, many women can wear his clothes. Norell's styles look young, but they are bought by women in their thirties and up. He designs for a figure, not an age. To make sure they are not worn by the wrong person, he makes them in sizes six to fourteen. A few designs may be ordered in size sixteen.

As a true style leader, Norell is often seasons ahead of his time, appealing to the woman with fashion daring.[43] Extreme as he is, Norell is not a faddist and his clothes seem to stay in style forever. His customers are

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[39]Frank, op. cit., p. 76.

[40]Sheppard, loc. cit.

[41]Jarnow, op. cit., p. 74.

[42]"Notes from the Mannequins' Carbine at Norell," Vogue, Vol. 141, No. 5 (March 1, 1963), p. 166.

[43]Jarnow, op. cit., p. 128.

proud to wear fifteen-year-old Norells. Those who can afford them collect Norells as they would first editions.

Norell's famous sequined dresses for evening have turned up repeatedly. He was the first to take the divided skirt out of sportswear, make it into high fashion, and sanction it to be worn on the street. He was the first to put pantsuits into high fashion. He has become noted for tunics, the shirtwaist dress for evening, and jumpers. He has lined suit jackets with quilted wool to make coats unnecessary. He has made simple daytime dresses dramatic by using brilliant color. He has made the pussy-cat neck bow another trademark.[44]

His designs are hailed by the leading fashion editors as the trend-setters in the American fashion industry.[45] The Norell Look rivals Paris in determining what American women will wear. He is closely watched by other designers both here and abroad.[46] He is the most frequently copied in the American wholesale market. He has become one of a few American dress designers considered equal by many of the Paris couture, and comes closest to influencing the course of fashion in the French manner. His position is as authoratative as that of any Paris designer.[47]

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[44] The Kansas City Star, February 6, 1972, p. 50.

[45] Frank, loc. cit.

[46] Jarnow, loc. cit.

[47] Bernard Roshco, The Rag Race (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Co., 1963), p. 210.

JAMES GALANOS

The father of James Galanos came to this country from Greece and became a restaurant owner instead of following his dream to be an artist. James Galanos was born in 1924 in a small town in New Jersey.[48] He knew he wanted to be an artist from the time he was a youngster. When he was fourteen he decided he would design clothes. His parents encouraged him and helped him financially until he was established.

After high school graduation he went to New York where he enrolled in the Traphagen School of Fashion. He studied art and draping for eight months, then left to find a job in a dress house. He found it was impossible to get a job without experience and the only way to get experience was to have a job. He even offered to work without pay in order to get the experience he needed.[49]

He kept showing sketches of his original dress designs and occasionally sold a sketch to a house who had no full-time designer. One manufacturer did a half a million dollars' worth of business on a design he had bought from Galanos for five dollars. Sometimes his designs were stolen when he was asked to leave his sketches for consideration. He began to notice dresses in shop windows made from his

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[48]Beryl Williams, Young Faces in Fashion (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippencott Co., 1956), p. 49.

[49]Ibid., p. 52.

designs and bearing the label of the house where he had left his sketches.

He was determined to be a designer. He was without a job for nearly five years except for the sale of an occasional sketch for five or ten dollars.

He heard a young designer was needed on the West Coast for a new dress house. The new business never materialized, but he found a job working for Jean Louis, head designer at Columbia Studios. After sketching for seven months he went to Paris and obtained an apprenticeship at the House of Piguet.[50] Galanos' designs were the best sellers that season. He was asked to stay another three months on a student visa.

Galanos accepted a job in a Seventh Avenue sportswear house, but resigned when he found he could not experiment with some of his own ideas. This time he was unemployed for a year.

He tried to find work in California at the film studios. They were interested in inexpensive dresses, not the elegant and beautiful dresses made in the French tradition.

With Jean Louis' advice and a loan, Galanos made up a few designs and called on the Saks-Fifth Avenue store in Beverly Hills. The buyer admired the dresses but was afraid her customers would not buy an expensive dress with an unknown label. Nevertheless, she ordered a dozen. Galanos

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[50]Ibid., p. 58.

wrote letters to buyers in New York and other cities. Neiman-Marcus of Dallas was the only store that answered. Their buyer was willing to take a chance and the new company of Galanos Originals was on its way to success.

Galanos took a dozen dresses to New York and showed them in a hotel room. The metropolitan buyers admired the dresses but did not buy. The next time he took his collection to New York he showed them in a beautifully decorated apartment that had been loaned to him. He was swamped with orders. This was in 1953.

In the fall of 1955 Life magazine featured Galanos and his designs. It had taken fifteen years of struggling for him to reach his goal, sometimes working fourteen to eighteen hours a day.[51]

Galanos designs for the woman who has money, is tall, slim, and willing to be daring. He cuts in sizes six to twelve, but will make a fourteen or sixteen on order.[52] People who buy his clothes are in their thirties and up. His clothes are elegant and sophisticated.

James Galanos is a true designer, a fanatic perfectionist, and a shrewd businessman. He runs a one-man show. He chooses the fabrics, executes the designs, oversees the manufacturing, and handles the selling. He even designs the hats for his shows himself.

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[51]Ibid., p. 66.

[52]Marilyn Bender, The Beautiful People (New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1967), p. 169.

He uses the most beautiful fabrics he can find. When he goes to Paris twice a year it is to buy fabrics and trimmings, not to see the French collections. In 1960 he obtained the rights to the unexecuted fabric designs of Bernard Dufy and had them printed on silk crepe and chiffon.[53]

Galanos has a special feeling for contemporary fashion. He does not take a best seller from last season and try to update it. He never looks back. He's always looking ahead.[54] He ignores Paris trends and has become an important fashion direction of his own. What he designs one season can be traced through the wholesale the next.[55]

In the midst of Courrèges' futuristic craze in 1965 Galanos stated, "I'm dressing women for here and now and not for outer space," and showed a collection of soft and girlish fashions.[56] He was never led astray by the hippie look. He remained consistent and just kept making contemporary clothes.

According to many women the tailoring and workmanship of Galanos' clothes excel that produced in the finest houses of Parisian haute couture. Much of the credit should go to the staff of his West Coast factory where his ninety

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[53]Charles Moritz (ed.), "James Galanos," Current Biography Yearbook-1970 (New York: H.W. Wilson Co.), p. 150.

[54]Women's Wear Daily, Vol. 124, No. 26 (February 7, 1972), p. 4.

[55]Ballard, op. cit., p. 283.

[56]Moritz, loc. cit.

workers include Japanese, French, Viennese, and Syrians.[57] Several persons may spend a week or more on a single dress. James Galanos and Norman Norell make the most expensive ready-made clothes in America and their standards are equal to the best in the Paris couture.[58]

Galanos has mastered the art of dressmaking. There isn't a stitch, a seam, an underpinning, a new technique that he can't do.[59] The bias cut is a favorite. He shapes his clothes without relying on complex darts. He steams and stretches the fabric on a dress form. This is an old technique seldom used today because it is time-consuming, costly, and requires the most skillful hands.[60]

According to John Fairchild in The Fashionable Savages, Galanos' greatest contribution is his "passion for finding new seams and new ways to put a dress together."[61] His originality and craftsmanship make it almost impossible to copy his work in cheaper versions. His designs do not make instant fashion but his ideas infiltrate fashion through other designers' collections.[62]

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[57]The Kansas City Star, loc. cit.

[58]Bender, loc. cit.

[59]John Fairchild, The Fashionable Savages (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1965), p. 107.

[60]Walter Vecchio and Robert Riley, The Fashion Makers (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1968), p. 131.

[61]Fairchild, op. cit., p. 108.

[62]Bender, op. cit., p. 173.

The way James Galanos cuts dresses shows his mastery of soft construction. Significant marks on fashion include the horseshoe neckline on suits and the ruffled natural dress. He has made some of the most beautiful chiffon dresses in the world. He usually features tans, grays, browns, whites, and especially black. Occasionally he shows strong bright colors. When he uses prints they are in muted tones. He designs coats, dresses, and suits, but it is for his late afternoon and evening dresses that he is most admired. James Galanos and Norman Norell are rated as the top designers in the United States today.

RUDI GERNREICH

Rudolf Gernreich was born in 1922 in Vienna, Austria between the wars. His father was a hosiery manufacturer who died when Rudi was eight years old. As a child he hated school and wanted to become a painter. He was introduced to fashion in his aunt's dress shop. Here he sketched the clothes, learned about fabrics, and learned what not to do--bows, godets, and frills.

When he was twelve an English designer saw some of his sketches and offered him an apprenticeship in London. His mother thought he was too young to leave home.[63] They made plans to send him to Paris to become an apprentice in a major couture house, but when Hitler's armies threatened,

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[63]Charles Moritz (ed.), "Rudi Gernreich," Current Biography Yearbook-1968 (New York: H.W. Wilson Co.), p. 141.

Rudi and his mother joined other Jewish refugees and fled just before the Anschluss in 1938. Rudi was sixteen when they settled in Los Angeles. He attended Los Angeles City College and Los Angeles Art Center School.

Gernreich saw a dance recital given by Martha Graham and became fascinated with modern dance. He dropped art and spent the next six years with the Lester Horton Dance Troupe as a dancer and costume designer. The costumes he designed were the first real clothes he had ever created.[64] Dancing had a great influence on his concept of design. "I became less interested in the static details, the decoration of clothing, and more concerned with how they looked in motion."[65] Dancing made him aware of what clothes did for the whole body and not just the part that was clothed. Later the total look he created reflected this concept.

From 1948 to 1951 he worked as a free lance designer for firms on the east and west coasts, but the fashion industry was not ready for his avant garde ideas. Nobody knew what to do with his crazy sketches. The manufacturers expected more designs in the Dior tradition which had proved so successful.

Rudi produced an experimental collection in 1949 and several buyers were interested, but he had no knowledge of

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[64] Time, Vol. 90, No. 22 (December 1, 1967), p. 78.

[65] Gloria Steinem, "Gernreich's Progress," The New York Times Magazine (January 31, 1965), Sec. 6, pp. 18-22.

manufacturing and no means to produce the clothes.

His chance came in 1952 when he joined Walter Bass, a tailor of classic women's suits. Gernreich designed, Bass handled the business details, and the line of loosely cut, tightly belted dresses they produced was sold exclusively in Jack Hanson's boutique in Beverly Hills, Jax.[66]

As Gernreich's reputation grew and more stores wanted to sell his youthful, adventuresome clothes, he severed connections with his partners and established his own firm in 1959 so he could design and market his own goods. In 1964 he changed the firm's name to Rudi Gernreich, Inc., with offices in Los Angeles and showrooms in New York.

Rudi Gernreich and James Galanos are the two in America most respected by European designers who would prefer to maintain the illusion that American design is watered-down French.[67] Gernreich has the reputation as the most extreme, the farthest-out of all American dress designers.[68] But the fashion predictions he makes usually come true.

The women who wear Gernreichs are young, lean, flamboyant, and sophisticated. His clothes satisfy a longing for the weird and the dramatic.

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[66]Time, op. cit., p. 80.

[67]Bender, op. cit., p. 169.

[68]Lewis H. Lapham, "The Great Idea Boy," The Saturday Evening Post, Vol. 238, No. 3 (February 13, 1965), p.75.

Gernreich has become known for his bathing suits and his different looking sports things. But the design that made him famous overnight in 1964 was the topless bathing suit. It was a pair of knitted trunks held up by a pair of stringy straps. He had predicted in Women's Wear Daily that women would be wearing topless swimsuits within the next five years. About the same time Emilio Pucci of Italy made the same prediction. In order to keep ahead of Pucci, Gernreich designed one for Look magazine. Look published the back view. Evidently The New York Times didn't consider it came under "all the news that's fit to print" and dropped it in the wastebasket. Women's Wear Daily published the front view in the smallest size and that photograph was reproduced on a television network.[69]

Gernreich had meant the suit as a prophecy and never dreamed women would wear it in public, but orders poured in. He sold 3,000 of them. He was criticized by the Vatican, the Kremlin, and many of the American clergy. Police in Chicago and Los Angeles arrested bare-breasted women on beaches.[70] The topless publicity lasted three months, which is a long time on Seventh Avenue, but it brought Gernreich recognition in the fashion world.

Gernreich has designed youthful, free-flowing clothes that follow the natural form of the female body. In 1954 he introduced the tank suit. It was the first swimsuit

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[69]Bender, op. cit., p. 178. [70]Ibid., p. 177.

with no inner construction. It was a flimsy garment that resembled a gym uniform.[71] As a result a few years later women of all ages were preoccupied with diet and exercise.

His next significant contribution after the topless was to take the armor out of the brassiere.[72] The No-Bra bra of a transparent knitted jersey was made without boning or elastic. The silhouette was soft and natural instead of the old uplift.

Next came the No-Sides bra for dresses with deep armholes, the No-Front bra with a sculptored front for slit-to-the-waist dresses, and the No-Back bra which was anchored around the waist instead of the rib cage.

By 1964 skirts were well above the knee in Europe but Rudi Gernreich and Jacques Tiffeau were the first American designers to hike hemlines above the knees. The mini skirts did not really catch on here until the summer of 1966. From a shocking three inches, Gernreich's hems eventually reached twelve inches above the knees.[73]

Gernreich's mini skirts made fashion news with the total look. He was the first designer to show colored stockings. He coordinated the dress with matching hosiery and sometimes a hood. By 1966 he advocated being totally coordinated from the skin out. He showed tiger and cheetah printed outfits--hoods, printed calf jackets and matching

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[71]Ibid.

[72]Ibid., p. 179.

[73]Ibid., p. 181.

skirts with matching Banlon jersey dresses and even matching bras and tights.[74]

Gernreich introduced a transparent shirt in 1964, but customers did not accept it until 1968 when Yves Saint Laurent and other European designers decided to promote see-through clothing.[75]

Capitalizing on the current vogue for exposure, Gernreich playfully cut holes in the most unexpected places in his dresses and swimsuits. He used bold and clashing colors, and was the first to combine dots and stripes in a costume.[76]

He introduced vinyl clothes. He used clear vinyl straps and vinyl inserts on bathing suits to make them the nudest since the topless. In 1968 he showed mini dresses with clear vinyl inserts.

Gernreich has been responsible for the wool knit swimsuit, body decals, unisex jumpsuits, the machine-gun bullet belt, decorating legs with patterned hosiery, double knit wools with matching leggings and patent shoes the same color. He has designed signature scarves for Glentex and a hosiery collection for McCallum consisting of knee socks, pantyhose, and hosiery with decals, tassels, and plastic or mirror discs.

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[74]Ibid., p. 175.

[75]"See Through-Break Through," Life, Vol. 65, No. 16 (October 18, 1968), p. 61.

[76]Time, op. cit., p. 70.

By the end of 1968 the bare look was gone and Gernreich was showing covered-up designs but he was using fabrics in bold geometric patterns to attract attention. He had also come to the conclusion the designer should give women the basics of a fashion wardrobe, then let them design their own outfits with scarves and chains.[77]

In 1969 he took a year's sabbatical which he spent in Tangier, Paris, and the Hollywood hills.

When Life magazine asked him to make some predictions for the 1970's, Gernreich submitted fourteen sketches. He showed a preview in his main showroom in Los Angeles. He advanced his unisex concept by eliminating all sexual variations in clothes. He designed functional heavy-ribbed leotards and water-proof boots for cold, wintry weather. He showed mini-mini skirts and pants for both sexes to be worn with bare chests when weather permitted. Jewelry was also utilitarian--a belt to hold something up or together, or a wrist watch for information.[78] To do away with the present cult of eternal youth, he designed caftan-like robes for older people which were boldly patterned and in stunning colors.[79] He predicted the elderly would have a cult of their own.

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[77]Moritz, op. cit., p. 143.

[78]"Fashion for the 70's," Life, Vol. 68, No. 1 (January 9, 1970), pp. 116-18.

[79]"Finale for Fashion?", Time, Vol. 95, No. 4 (January 26, 1970), p. 39.

Gernreich has stopped producing for himself. The clothes were becoming too expensive and he didn't want to cater to the very small percentage who could afford them. The clothes he designs for Harmon Knitwear are either minis or pants, mostly pants, and the prices are logical for today.[80] Gernreich's clothes have always been moderately priced. He hopes whole costumes will become inexpensive enough to be worn briefly, then thrown away. He believes clothes are no longer status symbols, but should be for fun and never again dominate the woman.[81]

Rudi Gernreich set the pace of the 1960's. He was the most colorful and the most exciting in the flamboyant world of fashion design. He had his face on the cover of Time in 1967, the first fashion designer so honored since Claire McCardell in 1955. He was the sixth designer elected to the Coty Hall of Fame which originated in 1943.

He is now interested in lower-cost, mass-produced, utilitarian clothes. He is also interested in furniture design and environmental design. He has been designing car interiors and airplanes. He finds this more interesting than marketing clothing. He thinks fashion is dead.[82]

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[80]Ellen Melton, "Fashion Will Go Out of Fashion," Forbes, Vol. 106, No. 6 (September 15, 1970), pp. 30, 32.

[81]Time, December 1, 1967, op. cit., p. 77.

[82]Digby Diehl, "Q & A, Rudi Gernreich," West Magazine of The Los Angeles Times (January 30, 1972),pp. 16-18.

BILL BLASS

One of the most prominent designers on the American fashion scene today is Bill Blass. He was born in Fort Wayne, Indiana, in 1927. His father died when Bill was five, leaving the mother to raise Bill and an older sister. Bill played football in high school and sketched for the school newspaper, but never discussed his fascination for the fashions in Vogue and Harper's Bazaar, nor his intention to become a dress designer. After graduation from high school he left Indiana for New York and never went back.[83]

He attended Parsons School of Design a short time, then dropped out to work as a sketcher for David Crystal, a sportswear manufacturer. World War II interrupted his career for three and one-half years, but it gave him his first glimpse of Paris.

After the war he went to work in the Seventh Avenue dress house of Anna Miller, a sister of Maurice Rentner. When Maurice died the two firms merged under the Rentner name. In 1959 Blass became head designer, then vice president of Maurice Rentner, Inc. In 1970 he became sole owner of Bill Blass, Inc., a complex licensing firm that handles his business dealings with manufacturers who hire him to design products for them. These include Blassport sportswear, swimsuits, luggage, children's wear, menswear, watches,

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[83]Nora Ephron, "The Man in the Bill Blass Suit," The New York Times Magazine (December 8, 1968), Sec. 6, p. 187.

scarves, rainwear, hosiery, furs, paper patterns, and sheets and towels, in addition to the dresses, coats, and suits for Bill Blass, Inc.

Bill Blass is a good businessman and makes extensive public appearances around the country with his clothes. He also gives lectures on fashion to groups of women. He likes the social scene and his contact with women who wear his clothes has been good for business. He knows the fashion leaders, how they live, and what they want to wear.

Blass designs for the socially prominent women in the United States who are not obsessed with fashion and don't have time for fittings. They are active women who are involved in their families and communities. His clothes are for now. They are youthful without being "mod", sexy without being vulgar.[84] He has also done the costumes for Barbra Streisand's television appearances and wedding gowns for social occasions.

The firm, Maurice Rentner, Ltd., had a reputation for dressing the amply proportioned woman. When Bill Blass presented his first collection after he became head designer in 1959, he gave the buyers his young look instead of the expected matronly look.[85]

Blass is not a tailor; his strength lies in his color sense. He has combined checks with plaids and stripes

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[84] Newsweek, Vol. 65, No. 23 (June 7, 1965), p. 57.

[85] Ephron, op. cit., p. 185.

with tweeds most effectively. He is inspired by fabrics. He goes to Europe twice a year to select fabrics and to see the collections. He does research abroad and considers Paris a laboratory of ideas. He can make a trend from Paris go in the United States.[86] He sketches at home, has the designs worked out in his workrooms in muslin, then in the design fabric. After the original is perfected, duplicates are made and patterns for all standard sizes.

His daytime clothes for women are simply tailored, brilliantly colorful, and easy to wear. For evening he designs soft, feminine clothes, using lace and ruffles, his favorite embellishment and his trademark. He is considered one of the first Romantic designers in this country, the first to revive ruffles and lace. He started using ruffles in 1961 as a reaction against severe clothes for women. However, he devotes himself equally to ruffles and to his tailored clothes. As Bill Blass says, "There's no one way to look anymore."[87] A new Blass trademark is his use of white camellias in addition to his ruffles on long taffeta evening gowns.

Two advertisements which appeared in the 1960's did much to promote Bill Blass' popularity. He designed an antique white Chantilly lace dress for the model, Jean

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[86]Bender, op. cit., p. 127.

[87]L. E. B. Hadley, "Man a la Mode," The Saturday Evening Post, Vol. 241 (April 6, 1968), p. 30.

Shrimpton, to wear in a Revlon advertisement to promote Worldly Young Innocents' Lipsticks. The model held a teddy bear in her arms and looked childish and pouty in her baby-fied dress, thus capitalizing on the whole youth craze. Women called the Revlon Company, demanding to know where they could buy the dress. Blass put it into production and sold 1,600 of them, making it the best selling and most publicized dress in Seventh Avenue history. A series of A. T. & T. advertisements showing a group of models surrounding Bill Blass and wearing his designs had a caption which read, "Fashions by Bill Blass. The Trimline Phone at Your Bell Telephone Co."[88]

In 1967 Blass designed his first menswear collection. His clothes appealed to the conservative, over-forty men, a group who have been resistant to fashion change. His clothes have been a major factor in bringing about the downfall of the gray flannel suit, white button-down collar shirt, and rep tie.[89] Among his customers are men active on the political scene and television. A menswear trademark is window-pane checks. He uses his initials as a design motif.

Bill Blass has won many awards in the fashion industry and in 1971 was admitted to Coty's Hall of Fame, the equivalent of the Nobel Prize in fashion.

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[88]Ephron, op. cit., p. 191.

[89]Helen Carlton, "The Man Who Made the 'Scarsdale Mafia' Suit," Life, Vol. 66, No. 23 (June 13, 1969), p. 67.

Chapter 6

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Within the usual limits of generalizing from any single piece of research, the following examples from the information gathered indicate fashion is no longer a French monopoly, but rather an international association.

HYPOTHESIS I

The results of the present study support the position that the influence of American fashion designers on the designs of sportswear and separates in America has been greater than the effect of Parisian fashion designers since 1945.

Virginia Pope, a noted fashion editor of The New York Times, gave an address in 1964 on The Development of American Creativity in Fashion in which she explained America's lead in playclothes throughout the world. The United States has always been a country of sport-loving people with vast playgrounds provided by nature. The young designers who were promoted and advertised during World War II when Paris fashion was blacked out, turned their talents to sportswear. Throughout the world America took the lead in playclothes and an enormous market developed.[1]

Claire McCardell started the separates movement with her first important experiment in 1934 when she designed interchangeable separates for travel.[2] She brought individuality and prestige to American sportswear. Her promotion of separates also helped introduce into business clothes some of the flexibility of sportswear.[3] Separates became a mainstay of American sportswear design and in 1972 were still recognized as the dominant trend on Seventh Avenue.[4] The influence was also felt abroad, especially in Italy where the American Look[5] influenced Italian designers of sportswear.[6]

Other designers who helped give the American market supremacy in the casual field during the 1940's were Tina Leser, Bonnie Cashin, Clare Potter, and Tom Brigance.[7]

In 1943 Elizabeth Burris-Meyer acknowledged France had taken up American sport and casual clothes and stated

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[1]Jeannette A. Jarnow and Beatrice Judelle, Inside the Fashion Business (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1965), p. 70.

[2]Bernard Roshco, The Rag Race (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, Co., 1963), p. 112.

[3]Karlyne Anspach, The Why of Fashion (Ames: The Iowa State University Press, 1967), p. 348.

[4]"The American Look," Newsweek, Vol. 79, No. 23 (June 5, 1972), p. 87.

[5]Author's note: see page 101 for definition.

[6]"The American Look," Time, Vol. 65, No. 18 (May 2, 1955), pp. 85-90.

[7]Bettina Ballard, In My Fashion (New York: David McKay Co., 1960), p. 171.

that with the exception of sport clothes, American fashions differed little in silhouette from the French.[8]

Bettina Ballard, a former fashion editor of Vogue, asserted that American sportswear designers could afford to be free from Parisian influence because they made better sports clothes than Paris did.[9]

After World War II, when Paris regained its influence, the Americans remained leaders in the field of sportswear and casual clothes--a category of dress in which the French had little interest until recent years.[10]

The most famous bathing suit designer in the world, Rudi Gernreich,[11] not only showed a topless swimsuit in 1964 but also launched a transparent shirt the same year. Then other designers promoted see-through designs, but the customers refused to buy until Yves Saint Laurent and other prestigious European designers decided to back the nude look in 1968.[12] And who but Rudi Gernreich could have designed the look of total coordination from the skin out in the fall of 1966 as cited on page 81?

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[8]Elizabeth Burris-Meyer, This Is Fashion (New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1943), p. 159.

[9]Ballard, op. cit., p. 288.

[10]Marilyn Horn, The Second Skin (Boston: The Houghton Mifflin Co., 1968), p. 367.

[11]"Up, Up and Away," Time, Vol. 90, No. 22 (December 1, 1967), p. 78.

[12]"See Through Break Through," Life, Vol. 65, No. 16 (October 18, 1968), p. 61.

The modern move to suburbia has created a gigantic market for playclothes, sportswear, and separates. American designers have responded with beautifully cut pants, shorts, and culottes.[13] California designers have been inspired by the well known enthusiasm for out-door living on the West Coast.

In the opinion of Bernard Roshco in his book, The Rag Race,

> How much Paris influences the styles most American Women will wear is difficult to compute. The more expensive the dress, suit, or coat, the more likely it is to have been influenced by the prevailing Paris trends. Paris has very little influence on the vast range of spostswear.

HYPOTHESIS II

Contrary to the author's expectations, the findings did not support the second hypothesis that the influence of American fashion designers has been less than the effect of French designers on the designs of dresses, suits, and coats since 1945. Even though French influence appeared to be greater, further examination of the data provided additional evidence of the creativity of American fashion designers.

Examples will be cited to prove American fashion designers equate French designers in creativity in spite of a reluctance on the part of American consumers to accept new fashions unless decreed by Paris.

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[13]Rosalie Kolodny, Fashion Design for Moderns (New York: Fairchild Publications, Inc., 1968), p. 103.

American designers have sometimes tried to offer a completely new silhouette only to have it rejected by the buyers. But when Paris "invents" that same silhouette a year or so later, the buyers are all eager to accept it.[14] According to The Vogue Sewing Book on pages 102 and 103, "American designers no longer have to take a back seat to those in Paris . . . . American collections are as news-making as those anywhere in the world."

Mainbocher showed little girl dresses with petticoats just before World War II, but they did not become fashionable until Dior sponsored them in the 1950's.[15]

Claire McCardell designed dresses without shoulder pads five years ahead of time. However it was necessary for those dresses to be accompanied by separate shoulder pads for those American women who feared to deviate from the broad-shouldered look still prevalent in Paris fashions.[16]

Norman Norell introduced the chemise in 1944 as a solution to wartime restrictions on fabrics--twelve years before it was adopted by Paris designers,[17] and, in turn by fashionable women. In 1944 Norell was selling his own version of the New Look in an attempt to innovate new fashion

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[14]Roshco, op. cit., p. 210.

[15]Madge Garland, Fashion (Baltimore: Penguin Books, Inc., 1962), p. 50.

[16]Time, op. cit., pp. 85-90.

[17]Charles Moritz (ed.), "Norman Norell," Current Biography Yearbook-1964 (New York: H.W. Wilson, Co.), p. 323.

silhouettes.[18] He showed the Empire dress two years before it became fashionable in 1958.[19]

When wartime restrictions were lifted on the use of fabric in the United States in the fall of 1946, Seventh Avenue designers lengthened the skirt.[20] But it was Christian Dior who was given credit for the New Look in 1947. Gilbert Adrian, the Hollywood designer who was the first American designer to gain acceptance as a fashion innovator on a par with Paris couture, and Claire McCardell, creator of the American Look, had designed similar fashions, but they had none of the fanfare which accompanied Dior's opening.[21]

Women had worn shorts and slacks for several decades but it was not until Norman Norell designed the trend-setting culotte suit in 1960 that divided garments made the transition from sportswear to sophisticated town wear. A year later Paris showed skirts tailored to look like culottes.[22] By 1964 the French designers were decreeing more trousers for women. André Courrèges made his tight-legged, hip-slung pants in every fabric from flannel to lace in 1964. In February, 1964, he made the prediction, "Women

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[18]Roshco, op. cit., p. 206. [19]Ibid.

[20]Marilyn Bender, The Beautiful People (New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1967), p. 201.

[21]Hazel T. Craig, Clothing, a Comprehensive Study (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippencott Co., 1968), pp. 99, 151.

[22]Roshco, op. cit., p. 140.

don't wear pants to the office yet, but they will." Norman Norell had suggested the same thing four years before with his knee-length culotte.[23]

In 1965 Yves Saint Laurent made a visit to New York to launch his perfume, Y. He visited the Army-Navy surplus stores on West Forty-Second Street and, on his return to Paris, put the pea jacket in his collection. Other inspirations from his American trip were football helmets, pop-art dresses, neckties and gangster suits, nailheads and vinyl.[24] Even Saint Laurent's Mondrian Look of 1965 was already on Seventh Avenue and Glamour Magazine had published a dress showing a Mondrian treatment a few days before his collection.[25]

Yves Saint Laurent and Marc Bohan of Dior's showed mid-calf length coats in July, 1966--two months after Jacques Tiffeau of the United States lowered the skirt.[26]

French fashion designers lived on inspiration from the United States and Great Britain during the 1960's--Scottish kilts, mini skirts from London's Carnaby Street, and fashions of the American college girl which took Paris by storm in 1966--sweaters, coats worn with knee socks, and moccasins. Young French designers have been obsessed with American industrial technology and pop culture. Pierre Cardin featured industrial zippers and girlish jumpers in

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[23]Bender, op. cit., p. 202.

[24]Ibid., p. 221.

[25]Ibid., p. 220.

[26]Ibid., p. 162.

1967, ideas from Seventh Avenue.[27]

Paris has been influenced by American mass production techniques. The new trend for the Paris couturiers is the design of ready-to-wear to supply their own boutiques in addition to their couture collections.[28]

Claire McCardell, Norman Norell, James Galanos, Pauline Trigère, Rudi Gernreich, and Bonnie Cashin have won awards for their unadulterated American fashion inspirations. Norell has become a leading pace setter in the world of fashion and one of the few American dress designers to be considered an equal by many of the French couturiers.[29] He is often seasons ahead of the time and is closely watched by other designers.[30] American buyers now accept Norell's originals and his position is as authoritative as that of any Paris designer.[31]

According to David Schwartz, head of Jonathan Logan, Inc., the largest dress corporation in the world, "Norman Norell has the best reputation for fashion in the United States . . . . as good as Paris.[32]

According to John B. Fairchild, Chairman of the Board and Publisher of Women's Wear Daily,

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[27]Ibid., p. 217.

[28]Kolodny, op. cit., p. 93.

[29]Moritz, op. cit., p. 321.

[30]Jarnow, op. cit., p. 128.

[31]Roshco, op. cit., p. 210.

[32]Jarnow, op. cit., p. 72.

> James Galanos is considered an international designer for international women. He sets trends . . . . but his great contribution to fashion is his passion for finding new ways to put a dress together . . . . In the area of technique he has no equal, even in Paris.[33]

CONCLUSIONS

From the data obtained it would seem reasonable to assume the French designers will no longer dominate the fashion scene. During World War II designers in other countries gained in prestige and loosened the hold of Paris to some extent. However, according to Rosalie Kolodny, professor of Apparel Design at the Fashion Institute of Technology, ". . . definitive changes still originate, most of the time, in France."[34]

A few isolated instances have proved non-acceptance of Paris-decreed fashions. In 1958 the chemise or sack rose and fell within a period of twelve months. It was the first important fashion in history to be killed by American men. They rebelled against having their wives resemble tubes of tooth paste or sausages.

In 1970, despite a much publicized promotion by the Paris couture, women refused to accept the Midi and the garment industry suffered great financial losses.

Paris designs are still respected by American manufacturers and designers. Twice a year the fashion press,

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[33]John B. Fairchild, The Fashionable Savages (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1965), p. 107.

[34]Kolodny, op. cit., p. 96.

APPENDIX

FASHION GLOSSARY

Adaptation. Garment similar to an original couture model.

A-line silhouette. A slight flare at the side seams.

American Look. The look of the casual American, expressing the informality of American life and the very active day of the American woman; comfortable ease.

Avant garde. Original and startling unconventional designs, ideas, or techniques during a particular period.

Battle jacket or Eisenhower jacket. Waist length, single-breasted, belted jacket with turned collar and buttoned-cuff sleeves. Used by the United States Army in World War II.

Best Dressed List. An annual list of the ten best-dressed women in the United States.

Boutique. A small retail store where distinctive accessories and special ready-to-wear are sold. Often a part of a couture house.

Bustle or back fullness. Excess material of the skirt massed high in back and reinforced by a pad of horsehair. Accent on the size of the hips.

Chemise. Dress which hangs straight from the shoulders to the hem, with no tuck at the waist. It may hang loosely or be sashed.

Chic. Originality and style in dress.

Civilized Clothes. Classics or clothes that make sense; natural, beautiful, relaxed clothes.

Classics. A long term fashion; functional clothes which can be worn in many ways and for a long time.

Collection. Group of models shown by one designer.

Copy. A reproduction of a model, made outside the house that made the original.

Coty Fashion Award. Annual awards bestowed on outstanding designers in the United States.

Couture. Custom dressmaking industry. Sewing or needlework, products of a seamstress.

Couturier (fem. couturière). Dressmaker; designer; usually one who has his own dressmaking establishment.

Culotte. A divided skirt which looks like a conventional skirt when wearer is standing, but divides for ease in walking and getting in and out of cars.

Custom designer. One who makes a garment for a particular client using either an original design or one that has been adapted to the client's figure.

Custom made. Made to a customer's special order; cut and fitted to individual measurements.

Décolleté. Cut low at neckline, exposing neck and back or neck and shoulders as in formal evening dress.

Empire style. The mode of the First Empire, 1804-1814. A semi-transparent chemise gown worn over a sheer slip, with long or short sleeves, low décolletage, and belted under the bosom.

Empress Eugenie hat. A small coquettish hat with tiny ostrich plumes.

Fad. A short-lived fashion, quickly accepted and quickly dropped.

Fashion. The particular style that is popular at a specific time; a style followed or accepted by many people.

Fashion cycle. The rise, popularization, and decline of a fashion.

Godet. A triangular insert in a skirt for extra width or flare.

Gore. A tapering piece of cloth to give extra flare, usually seen in gored skirts.

Haute couture. Dressmaking in its highest form and creation, most fashionable and expensive. The most important dressmaking houses in Paris.

H-silhouette. Bloused bodice, straight waistline, and straight skirt making it resemble the letter H. Dior, 1953.

Hemstitching. A decorative space at the top of a hem, usually on sheer fabric.

Hobble skirt. A very narrow, tapered, ankle-length skirt, sometimes only a yard around, making a slit at the side necessary for walking.

Hoop. A circle or circles of stiff material designed to spread the skirts of a woman's dress.

Hot pants. Short shorts.

Jerkin. A waist-length, sleeveless, close-fitting jacket.

Jumpsuit. A one-piece garment combining a top and pants, sometimes joined by a self belt.

Kilt. A short skirt of clan tartan, hanging in pleats from waist to knees.

Lavaliere. An ornament hanging from a chain, worn around the neck.

Leotard. A knit body garment of stretch nylon reaching from neck to toe. Adopted from a costume worn by dancers and acrobats.

Line-for-line copy. Exact copy of a style originated by a foreign couturier.

Longuette. A synonym for midi skirt; longish, somewhat long, too long.

Mary Jane slippers. Young girl's party shoes, cut low and secured to the foot with a single strap.

Mass production. Production of goods in quantity--many at a time as opposed to one at a time.

Maxi skirt. Ankle length for skirts.

Merry Widow. A trade name for Warner's corset to help women achieve Dior's New Look.

Midi skirt. Mid-calf length for skirts.

Mini skirt. Skirt length between the thigh and knee.

Mode. Synonym for fashion.

Model. A sample or original garment from which orders are taken.

Monastic dress. A loose-hanging, bias-cut, casual dress, held to the body by a belt or a band. McCardell, 1938.

Mondrian Look. Use of bold blocks of color in dress design similar to the Dutch artist's painting.

Original. Design created to be shown in a collection.

Pannier (basket). A form of hooped skirt worn over an elliptical hoop; flat in front and back but very broad at the sides.

Pea jacket. A heavy, short, dark blue coat worn by sailors.

Peg-top silhouette. Skirt with bouffant fullness around the hips, sloping in to the ankles. 1912.

Popover. A wraparound easy-to-iron housedress.

Prêt-à-porter. French ready-to-wear apparel.

Ready-to-wear. Apparel which is factory produced or mass produced as opposed to apparel made to a customer's special order.

Robe de style. An evening fashion featuring a tight bodice with a bouffant skirt, ankle or floor length.

Sack. A non-fitted chemise with no waistline. 1957.

Salon. Showroom in which collection is shown.

Separates. Parts of the feminine costume; coat, jacket, skirt, blouse, pants, shorts, sweater, or jumper--all of which are planned to coordinate in design and color; each part interchangeable.

the Smoking. A variation of the pantsuit, modeled after a man's dinner suit or of velvet with lace ruffles.

Style. A type of product with distinguishing features, cut, or design which distinguish it from another type of the same product.

Seventh Avenue. A synonym for New York City's garment industry.

Style piracy. The use of a design without the consent of the originator.

Tank suit. Swimsuit not bolstered by inner construction.

Toile. Muslin copy of a design, often purchased by firms who wish to copy but not to import original models.

Topless swimsuit. Pair of knitted trunks held up by a pair

of stringy straps. Gernreich, 1964.

Topper. A fingertip length straight jacket, longer than a shirt, shorter than a coat.

Total look. A dress coordinated with matching hosiery and sometimes a hood; a coordinated costume. Gernreich's mini skirt of the 1960's.

Trapeze. A short, unbelted shift, fitted at the bosom and widening into a flared skirt. Yves Saint Laurent, 1958.

Trend. The direction in which fashion is moving.

Tunic. A dress of shorter length than the basic skirt over which it is worn.

Waist cincher. A foundation girdle introduced to wear with Dior's New Look of 1947 to produce the tiny waist; short above and below the waistline.

Watteau gown. A garment with loose folds or box pleats falling from the shoulders in back, becoming part of the skirt, and gores in the front with no defined waistline.

WWD (Women's Wear Daily). Trade publication of the women's fashion industries.

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