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Damien Delille and Philippe Sénéchal, eds., *Modes et Vêtements. Retour aux textes*. Paris: Institut national d'histoire de l'art and MAD-Musée des Arts Décoratifs, 2020. 512 pp. Acknowledgements, figures, notes, bibliography, and index. € 39.00 (pb). ISBN: 978-2-916914-92-3.

Review by Kasia Stempniak, Hamilton College.

For many years, one was more likely to find cutting-edge scholarship on fashion studies in North America and the UK than in France. Recently, however, there has been a surge in dynamic and innovative research on the history of fashion in France. The creation in 2015 of one of the first journals on fashion history in the country, *Modes pratiques. Revue d'histoire du vêtement et de la mode*, and the 2018 launch of the French fashion research network *Culture(s) de Mode*, a collaborative effort by scholars, museum professionals and the French Ministry of Culture and Communication, cemented a new era of dynamism and interdisciplinarity in fashion studies. A recent publication that adds to this flourishing field is Damien Delille and Philippe Sénéchal's edited anthology, *Modes et vêtements. Retour aux textes*. A comprehensive overview of the study of clothing, this anthology stands out in its emphasis on the relationship between text and text(ile). What can the written word tell us about the study of clothing? How has writing about fashion changed over the past nine centuries? Through hundreds of carefully selected primary texts and around thirty critical essays written by scholars of fashion, *Modes et vêtements* answers these questions by foregrounding the role texts have played in understanding clothing and its significance.

At first glance, the book's subtitle "*retour aux textes*" might suggest that the anthology privileges the textual over the visual and, to a certain extent, that is the case. However, the "*retour*" referenced in the phrase is part of the editors' sophisticated approach to understanding the textual in the context of the visuality of fashion. In their introduction, the editors assert the need to "réinvestir la source primaire" so that we arrive at a better understanding of how fashion is intrinsically tied to virtually all facets of life (p. 7). *Modes et vêtements* prompts us to revisit and expand, in creative ways, the primary source texts we use. Indeed, the anthology accomplishes this goal through a rich and exciting collection of approximately two hundred sources from a wide range of archives that each in their own way demonstrate the economic, identitary, geographic, or aesthetic complexities of the study of clothing. From philosophical tracts to estate inventories to royal ordinances, *Modes et vêtements* digs deep into archives, both known and unknown, to assemble a stimulating encyclopedic collection of material in the history of clothing.

Over 500 pages long, *Modes et vêtements* is comprised of six thematic chapters that are further broken down into subchapters, each of which includes a short critical essay written by an expert

in the field (sociologists, museum professionals, scholars, etc.) and a selection of primary text extracts chosen by said expert that relates to the subchapter's theme. The critical essays are succinct and helpful in providing context for the assortment of primary texts that follow. Each critical essay is also accompanied by useful bibliographies that the curious reader can consult for more information. While the anthology emphasizes the textual, each chapter also contains a selection of visual images that are emblematic of the chapter's overarching theme. Scholars of fashion will no doubt have seen some of the images, including those from nineteenth-century fashion plates or Georges Lepape's illustration for *Gazette du Bon Ton* or photography by Sarah Moon, but *Modes et vêtements* also contains more surprising and rare images, ranging from Aztec manuscripts to portraits of French physician and activist Madeleine Pelletier to Italian futurist Giacomo Balla's costume drawings to a theatrical costume by Yannis Kokkos. These images are not discussed in the anthology rather, they serve as a visual *amuse-bouche* to help the reader enjoy and digest the critical essay and accompanying primary texts.

Part one, "Études visuelles: textes, images et objets vestimentaires," examines the history of various visual and textual instruments of the diffusion of fashion including fashion journals, photography, fashion shows, museums, and window displays. This chapter includes primary source texts from Christine de Pisan to correspondence between Adolphe de Meyer and Alfred Stieglitz on fashion photography to anonymous articles from eighteenth- and nineteenth-century fashion journals such as *Le Moniteur de la mode*.

In part two, "Économie: À la croisée des arts et de la consommation," the economic implications of fashion are mined through a broad set of texts on wide-ranging topics such as the sumptuary laws, courtly and ecclesiastical clothing, and the textile economy in the Netherlands and France. One of the anthology's strongest chapters, this portion includes several primary sources that one might not think to consult such as royal ordinances, business correspondence from fifteenth-century Germany, a Belgian estate inventory from 1438, and perhaps most surprisingly, a letter by Henri Matisse in which he muses on the styling of liturgical vestments.

Part three, "Objets de savoir: la constitution d'une discipline," offers important insights into the ways fashion has been theorized across the arts, from the *beaux arts* to the field of sociology. The last two sections focus on the first part of the chapter title, "*objets de savoir*," and specifically highlight dress reform movements and theater costumes. Given this chapter's focus on disciplinary questions, it is unsurprising that the majority of texts featured are philosophical in nature with entries by Émile Durkheim, Georg Simmel, Roland Barthes, and Pierre Bourdieu. One will also find fascinating accounts of fashion from Giacomo Balla's *Futurist Manifesto of Men's Clothing* (1914), as well as from primary sources that have been translated for the anthology, including Austrian writer Raoul Hausmann's 1924 entry on masculine fashion for the avant-garde Berlin journal, *G: Material zur elementaren Gestaltung*.

Part four, "Identité: les cultures de la mode," offers a fascinating journey into the ways that fashion has constructed and deconstructed notions of identity, gender and the body through police ordinances, suffragette literature, memoirs by designers, and twentieth-century scholarly texts. Exploring fashion as a "*vecteur*" of identity, this chapter includes reflections on women and clothing, masculinity and clothing, and sportswear and clothing.

"Géographie: aux frontières du vêtement," the fifth chapter, explores the sartorial exchanges between Chinese, Japanese, Indian, South American, and African societies. Some of the highlights

in terms of primary sources in this chapter include manuals on geography and history from the Renaissance to the nineteenth century, as well as official records of the Qing dynasty.

The final part of the volume, “Figures: la production de la mode,” addresses the production and selling of clothing in France from the 1600s to today. In addition to royal ordinances from Louis XIV, manuals on perfumery and tailoring from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and reflections from designers like Rose Bertin, Gaston Worth, Paul Poiret, and Christian Dior, this chapter also contains more recent discussions on fashion and technology by Sarah E. Braddock Clarke and Jane Harris and on fashion and the environment by Bradley Quinn.

By offering a broad historical overview of the mechanics of fashion, while privileging the interdisciplinary dimension of fashion, the anthology captures the evolution of fashion, especially in the European context. It is encyclopedic in scope yet allows opportunities for the reader to plunge into detail through the selected texts. Indeed, the wide-ranging scope of primary texts is one of the many strengths of this volume. While scholars in fashion studies will be very familiar with the texts by Philippe Perrot, Gilles Lipovetsky and Georg Simmel, they will perhaps find use in lesser-known ones like twentieth-century philosopher Edmond Goblot’s essay on fashion and sociology or Moroccan feminist Fatema Mernissi’s reflection on body inclusivity.

In presenting an assortment of voices through these primary texts, *Modes et vêtements* also privileges the importance of the individual. In discussions of fashion history, there is a tendency at times to get bogged down in explanations of vast systems, mechanisms, and institutions (‘industrialization,’ ‘ready-to-wear,’ ‘designers’) to the detriment of the individual. *Modes et vêtements* reminds us that fashion is inextricably tethered to networks of individuals—the creators, producers, and distributors of fashion and clothing.

In the introduction to the anthology, the editors identify their methodology as a decentered and interdisciplinary approach that emphasizes reflections that are inherently “*transversales*,” “*transhistoriques*,” and “*transculturelles*” (p. 18). The anthology presents an exhaustive reading of transhistorical texts on fashion, yet the transcultural aspect of the readings could be further developed in the future. In a volume as expansive and encyclopedic as *Modes et vêtements*, one might expect to find more discussion on the colonial networks of labor and power that were instrumental in propelling the global clothing trade. The fifth chapter on “Géographies de la mode” includes important accounts of the history of fashion across all continents, but one wonders how much the anthology could be strengthened if texts explicitly discussing the role of empire in the diffusion of goods were added. Perhaps these types of questions can be addressed in a future anthology.

While *Modes et vêtements* leaves room for future additions that lend more attention to the colonial and postcolonial dimension of fashion, especially in the Francophone world, the anthology is a valuable addition to the field of fashion studies. The book breathes fresh air into the field by re-centering the archives and by reminding us how creative scholars of fashion can be with their choice of archives. While interdisciplinarity has become a buzzword bandied about in so many different contexts that it has almost become a hollow term, this anthology shows, in concrete ways, how fashion is fundamentally cross-disciplinary. The accessibility of the primary texts included in the anthology, due in large part to the critical essays that accompany them, renders the anthology a highly useful source for not only scholars of fashion, but also for educators and students of fashion and history. Assembling and organizing the materials for this anthology was

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no doubt a herculean task for the editors, but their careful curation and reflection has resulted in an invaluable addition to the study of the history and ideas regarding clothing. *Modes et vêtements* prompts us to see fashion as not only a social, economic, and cultural phenomenon, but also as a way of understanding the world.

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