War and Fashion: The Influence of World War II on the Fashion Industry

By

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To my family, I love you all.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure

I

INTRODUCTION

The cataclysmic events of World War II altered the world in enormous and immeasurable ways. Millions died, there was tremendous property destruction, empires fell, and new powers arose. The war altered national and world industries and economies, transformed societies, and shaped popular culture. One industry that experienced dramatic change as a result of World War II was the fashion industry. Italy, Germany, France, and the United States all experienced significant challenges to their pre-war fashion industries as a direct result of the political, ideological, and material demands of the war. The ways in which each country navigated these obstacles would determine the future of fashion in each individual nation, as well as fashion on the international scene.

The International emphasis on fashion would not be what it is today if World War II had not influenced the fashion industries in Italy, Germany, France, and America. Italy and Germany, not significant names in fashion before the war, dealt with issues of nationalism, militarism, and identity through fashion, while dictated under fascism before and during the war. With the aid of America and the Marshall Plan, Italy and Germany became important names in fashion after the war. Although some of the best designers in Italy and Germany were complying with fascism while making a name for themselves, the quality of their work, not easily ignored, gained praise from America, earning them a permanent spot as top leaders in the fashion industry. Fashion in America, however,

strictly relied on France for its designs, before the war, and French fashion reigned supreme in the fashion world. During the war, however, America, cut off from all outside sources of fashion, as France and her fashion industry were under the occupation of Germany, resulted in the creation of an independent American fashion industry that would grow and prosper after the war. After the war, France, having made a name for herself before the war, was welcomed back with open arms by Americans. French fashion only increased in popularity, even though some of her top designers had collaborated with the Nazis while under occupation, quickly resuming her place as leader of the fashion world, allowing the French label to become a status symbol in America. Although France continued to be the leader of the fashion industry after the war, the events of World War II allowed Germany, Italy, and America to gain top positions in the fashion world alongside her.

The aim of this thesis is to evaluate the impact of World War II on the fashion world, assessing how fashion has become what it is today. Fashion in America today exists as a form of self-expression and a part on one's identity. My main objective is to understand how the events of World War II, including the restrictions and war demands in all four countries that allowed for improvements in artificial fibers and mass-production techniques, pushed fashion forward into a mass-produced, "democratized," representation of oneself and how European fashion has come to represent high fashion in America.

II

FASHION BEFORE THE WAR

Fashion in France and the United States before 1939, an unrestricted indulgence to those who could afford it, existed simply as a form of expression and amusement for women trying to escape the hardships of the depression. In Italy and Germany, on the other hand, fashion took on another meaning before the onset of war, aiding in the realization of fascist aims and ideologies.

Italy was the first country affected by the fascism that would trigger the Second World War. Mussolini came to power October 29, 1922, and stayed in power until assassinated on April 28, 1945.[1] The Italians who first accepted Mussolini wanted simply to restore law and order in Italy. Mussolini represented fascism as an alternative to complying with Marxism; his motto was "revolution" and he strongly promoted militarism, nationalism, and anticommunism in Italy, insisting the only way Italy could cure itself of chaos and come together would be under a single leader, himself.[2] Mussolini achieved many of his aims to increase order through the famed *Squadristi*, or "black shirts," formed in 1919, a paramilitary band of youth revolting against liberal organizations.[3] The black shirt would come to represent the terror inflicted on those who did not comply with Mussolini's objectives (figure 1).

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[1] Benito Mussolini, *My Rise and Fall*, with an introduction by Richard Lamb (New York: Da Capo Press, 1998), xiii.

[2] Edward R.Tannenbaum, "The Goals of Italian Fascism, "*The American Historical Review*, LXXIV, no. 4 (April 1969): 1185, 1189.

[3] Ibid., 2.

In prewar Italy, fashion under Mussolini's reign was employed in a search for national identity and women's roles in society. As Italy was only unified in 1861, the struggle for national identity was nothing new, but Mussolini intensified the quest for a new Italian identity. Italians knew they needed "to achieve what the Duce wants and, that is, create fashion."[4] Uniformity replaced individuality and uniforms became standard. Military uniforms became a fashion statement. Not only did military uniforms hold importance, but civil uniforms held significance as well, since they represented a way of fitting into society. Obligatory uniforms, sold as ready-to-wear by shops, could be personalized with belts, badges, brooches, and metals, available for purchase to individualize each uniform.[5] Even babies sometimes wore a *fez*, a militant hat worn in fascist Italy.[6] Military uniforms also had uniqueness about them. Unlike the uniforms of Nazi Germany, the Italian military uniforms under Mussolini were less suggestive of a new government, but included such

Figure 1
Mussolini's Black Shirts

[4] Eugenia Paulicelli, *Fashion under Fascism: Beyond the Black Shirt* (New York: Berg, 2004), 85.
[5] Ibid., 184.
[6] Ibid., 24.

fashionable touches as feathers, horsetails, and even sometimes accents of the color of innocence - white.[7] The elaborateness of the uniforms undoubtedly represented Mussolini's desire for Italy to stand out among nations (figure 2). The fashion business was so important to militarism in Italy that renowned historian Paul Fussell later wrote that, "the blame for their lost war falls not just on the troops and their officers but on their fashion designers."[8]

Figure 2
Mussolini in Uniform with Hitler

Eugenia Paulicelli, author of *Fashion under Fascism: Beyond the Black Shirt*, avows, "In the ideological plan of fascism, fashion was identified as a privileged terrain that would make a significant contribution to the achievement of the nation's sense of self."[9] Uniforms represented nationalism in Mussolini's Italy, existing as constant visual reminders to all Italians. Fashion became a key component to fascist aesthetic and ideology as a form of communication through propaganda.[10] Fashion helped align the regime's policies, consequently producing modes of individualism and creativity that foreshadowed the long-term future international success of the Italian fashion industry.[11] In right wing and nationalist belief, beauty and fashion, unable to coexist with democracy, could only exist under fascism, in Italy;

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[7] Paul Fussell, *Uniforms* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2002), 29.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Paulicelli, 75.
[10] Ibid., 25.
[11] Ibid.

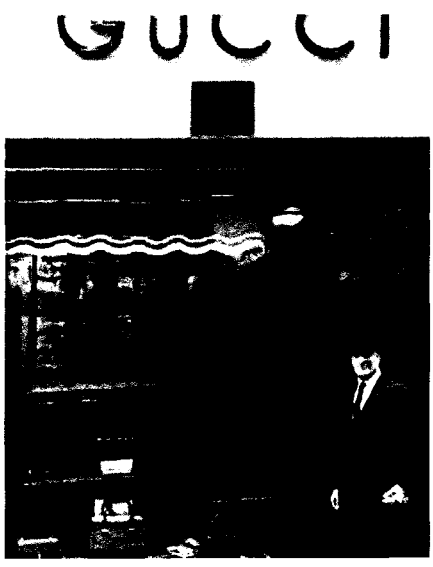

Figure 3
Gucci in front of his store, featuring his ever-famous bamboo handled bag

consequently, Mussolini's political aim to make over society became referred to as the expression "to fascitize."[12]

Mussolini also dreamed of creating an independent Italian fashion industry, which would take careful planning and manipulation. Regardless of the quality of Italian couturiers, most Italian women, before the war, got their fashions from Paris like their mothers and grandmothers had.[13] Breaking this dependence on French fashion would not be easy. In the 1930s, the state banned imports of fashion items, especially from France, to promote national style and the domestic manufacturing of clothing.[14] Some Italian designers, such as the legendary luxury designer Gucci, affected by the ban on imported leather, managed to make do with fabric.[15] Designers also heavily experimented with artificial fibers and unconventional materials for accessories. For example, Gucci experimented with linen, jute, and bamboo.[16] This worked out to Gucci's advantage, as his bags with bamboo handles became a "must have" in post-war years (figure 3).[17] Rayon, also utilized, was considered, "most modern of Italian textiles and the most Italian of modern textiles."[18]

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[12] Ibid., 78.
[13] Nicola White, *Reconstructing Italian Fashion: America and the Development of the Italian Fashion Industry* (New York: Berg, 2000), 75.
[14] Paulicelli, 20.
[15] Matt Haig, *Brand Royalty: How the World's Top 100 Brands Thrive and Survive* (Sterling: Kogan, 2004), 46.
[16] Paulicelli, 116.
[17] Haig, 46.
[18] Paulicelli, 108.

The ban on imports and reliance on artificial fibers before the war made it easier for Italy to adjust to the restrictions placed upon them once World War II began. Italy wished to form a consensus among upper-bourgeois women, encouraging them to buy and desire Italian products over French ones.[19] Just as in other countries, steering Italian women away from French clothing would not come as an easy task.

Mussolini had a plan for fashion and did not back down. Mussolini demanded art under fascism should be simultaneously traditionalist and modern, looking to the future, while remembering the past.[20] During the fascist regime, images of the past were fused with images of the future, often times placing ancient imagery with modern machinery.[21] In the words of Crum and Lazarro, authors of *Donatello among the Blackshirts: History and Modernity in the Visual Culture of Fascist Italy*:

> The Fascist regime shaped the various available pasts into a new myth of the nation...by homogenizing the differences among them, by subsuming them ambiguously into a narrative of continuity with classical antiquity, and by fusing the multiple pasts into a shared artistic patrimony. This patrimony encompassed the glories of Italy's different regions and histories.[22]

This state-imposed imagery of past and future made its mark on Italian fashion design as well.

Rosa Genoni, Italian dressmaker turned writer, teacher, and political activist, was one of the founders of the independent Italian fashion industry, deriving inspiration from the futurist movement of the early 20th century.[23] The futurist manifesto of 1914 declared

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[19] Ibid., 46.

[20] Roger J. Crum and Claudia Lazzaro, *Donatello among the Blackshirts: History and Modernity in the Visual Culture of Fascist Italy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 13.

[21] Ibid., 4.

[22] Ibid., 3.

[23] Paulicelli, 27.

fashion, "a work of Italian art, both uplifting and multipurpose, which, while intensifying and propagating the beauty of the race, will impose one of our most important national industries upon the world once again."[24] Mussolini and his fascist regime adopted some of Genoni's proposals, like the creation of the ENM, or national fashion body, which promoted Italian fashion and made an effort to regulate what women wore.[25] Genoni believed the mixture of art, science, and machines, paired with the Italian ideal of beauty, would give Italy greater imagination and pride.[26] According to Crum and Lazzaro, this sort of appropriation, or taking from the past, suggests its ultimate aim dealt with issues of identity.[27] The Italian fashion industry wanted to preserve Italian culture and protect it from "foreign influence and contamination."[28]

Mussolini stopped at nothing to realize his dream of an independent Italian fashion industry. Mussolini was so adamant about creating an Italian fashion industry independent from France that a *Commentary and Italian Dictionary of Fashion*, was produced by Cesare Meano in 1936 that aimed to eliminate all French fashion terminology and replace it with Italian words.[29] Even though the regime also intended for autarchic fabrics and fashion, creating a distinct Italian image, fashion houses and Italian women continued to take designs and fabrics from Paris, because "Italian decoration, fabric and other raw materials were often acquired by French couturiers at a low price

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[24] Ibid., 35.
[25] Ibid., 20-21, 28.
[26] Ibid., 30.
[27] Crum and Lazzaro, 6.
[28] Ibid., 26.
[29] Paulicelli, 57.

and then found their way back to the Italian market as French-produced clothes and sold at extortionate prices."[30]

To further promote Italian fashion, the state demanded that fashion houses, textile manufacturers and magazines work together in a manner previously unknown. Textile manufacturers promoted and supported the fashion industry not only by supplying materials, but also by paying for advertising, which was beyond the financial reach of most designers. Although the couture houses were not always pleased with the quality of the textiles provided to them, the situation worked well for the struggling couture houses and their joint effort with the textile manufacturers aided in promoting Italian high fashion.[31] Magazines publicized the growing links between designers and textile firms.[32] The standardization of this process, promoted by the ENM, aimed at erasing differences of gender, class, culture, and geography that existed in Italy in the 1920s and 1930s.[33]

Figure 4
The Giovani Italiano Italian Fascist Girls Organization training with javelins, 1940

Once standardization and expectations were set, the Italian market was able to head in a specific direction. As Mussolini's regime highly promoted sports and fitness, the Italian fashion industry naturally took to sportswear (figure 4). Interestingly enough, Emilio Pucci, famous sportswear designer,

[30] Ibid., 55, 29.
[31] White, 29.
[32] Ibid., 27.
[33] Paulicelli, 24.

happened to be best friends with Mussolini's daughter Edda, and he may have had some influence on the regime.[34] Italian fashion under the regime supported bright colors and casual elegance, suggesting sports and fashion could fuse to create a new clothing design that adapted to the life of the modern Italian woman, a working woman, no longer confined to the home.[35]

This ideology of the modern working woman, combined with Italy's desire for modern machinery and techniques, is what would later make Italian fashions so desirable to America and other countries whose women were going through the same type of social changes during the war. Additionally, Italian designers were known for their attention to detail and exceptional craftsmanship.[36] Their use of fabric, color, embellishment, and clean lines, distinguished Italian designers from their Parisian counterparts.[37] Not only were the Italians excellent at craftsmanship and aesthetics, they also kept up with the leading technology. As maintained by Maramotti of MaxMara, even during the war years, exclusive fabrics were immediately available, as the textile firms wanted to keep up with the ready-to-wear industry.[38] Genoni accurately predicted the success of mass-production, when she insisted:

> The machine will mould and shape raw materials according to the decorative motifs that the modern Italian genius has imagined. It will also lend itself to the *democratization, for those who are less well-off,* of those beautiful works that the hand of man once produced at prices so very high that they were the reserve of the privileged few.[39]

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[34] Ibid., 54.
[35] Ibid.
[36] White, 88.
[37] Ibid., 92.
[38] Ibid., 30.
[39] Rosa Genoni, "Vita d'Artenella Moda," *Vita Femminile Italiana* (October 1908): 1106-1107; quoted in Paulicelli, 31.

Why did the Italian fashion industry comply so readily with Mussolini's objectives? The Italian economic community may have chosen Mussolini's projected political solution because it seemed the best response to the diverse, complicated burdens of Italy's situation.[40] Many Italians went along with Mussolini's fascism in hopes of gaining a national identity and nationalized pride. The transformation of Italian fashion achieved its goal. Italian textiles under fascist influence promoted traditional textiles, such as embroidery and lace, as well as modern, more innovative ones, such as rayon, representing the regime's desire for Italy to be modern, while promoting the autonomy of the economy.[41]

In subsequent years, Hitler would make many of the same moves and desired many of the same aims as Mussolini when it came to fashion and national identity, yet according to Crum and Lazzaro, "Fascist Italy is generally distinguished from Nazi Germany in that Mussolini permitted, and even encouraged, the coexistence of a multiplicity of artistic trends, traditionalist to modernist, representational to abstract."[42] Through fashion under fascism, Italy has gained a mythological image of possessing an aesthetic sense that is absent from other European and Anglo-American cultures, which has kept her on the map in fashion.[43] Germany never created such a reputation.

Prewar Germany shared some similarities with pre-war Italy. Hitler came to power in January 1933 and proceeded to create a fascist state with enormous national and international goals. In Hitler's Germany, before the war, fashion coincided with

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[40] Harold James and Jakob Turner, *Enterprise in the Period of Fascism in Europe* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2002), 80.

[41] Paulicelli, 99.

[42] Crum and Lazzaro, 14.

[43] Paulicelli, 1.

nationalism. According to James and Turner, of *Enterprise in the Period of Fascism in Europe*, "Not readiness to back Hitler, but readiness to play into his hands, not political zealotry, but political myopia, constitute the real industrial contributions to the Nazi triumph."[44] Just as in Italy, the crises of bourgeois society, the state, and the economy, combined with a desire for national identity, produced fascist results.[45] Hitler was often referred to as the "German Mussolini," and rightfully so, as Hitler held many of the same goals as Mussolini, one of them being the desire to create a fashion industry independent from French influence, and to promote a strong national identity and international recognition.

Figure 5
Hitler Youth

Hitler held many other beliefs he wanted to incorporate into his plans for a new Germany. One of his strongest convictions, social Darwinism, or survival of the fittest, led Hitler to desire the greatest of everything for himself and the group which he believed was the "fittest race," Germans. Hitler and the Nazi party insisted Germany's problems before the Nazi seizure of power, both political and economic, were caused by Jews and Marxists, whom Hitler believed came to power under the parliamentary democracy he wished to replace with fascism.[46]

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[44] James and Turner, 28.
[45] Ibid., 7.
[46] Dietrich Orlow, *A History of Modern Germany, 1871 to Present*, 5th ed. (Upper Saddle River: Boston University, 2002), 173.

Under Hitler's reign, most children past the age of ten were required to join the Hitler Youth, while adults were forced to join the Nazi party, with men having to enter a branch of the armed forces or local squadrons (figure 5).[47] All of these groups required participants to dress in uniforms, and uniforms became a part of everyday life, symbols of support for the regime. The power Hitler gained as Führer, and his ability to force Germans to work together, created a sense of nationalism. Nonetheless, uniformity was the ideal cultural condition to Hitler, and men, women, especially those participating in the Red Cross, and children all wore militaristic uniforms in Hitler's Germany (figure 6). In fact, every September of Hitler's regime, at the Nazi national congress in Nuremburg, Germans by the hundreds of thousands marched in front of Hitler in a multiplicity of uniforms (figure 7).[48] Militarism took such a stronghold over Germany that uniforms became a fashion statement.

Figure 6
Youth girl in uniform

Although there were book burnings and restrictions on all forms of art, Hitler left fashion alone, as it was representational of national identity.[49] When fashion companies complied with Nazi standards, they were also complying with the new national identity Hitler desired to impose. Just as Mussolini wanted to rid Italy of French influence, so did Hitler. He too wanted to create an independent fashion industry, at the same time trying to set the standards for what a "German woman" should or should not be. While in the process

[47] Ibid., 186.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Irene Guenther, *Nazi Chic?: Fashioning Women in the Third Reich* (New York: Berg, 2004), 16.

of creating the new German woman, Hitler took many steps to modernize the fashion industry in Germany. For example, highly advanced in artificial fibers, the Nazi government extended production of artificial fibers, creating five regional production facilities, forcing textile firms to buy stock in the new companies, while requiring use of synthetic fibers in 20 percent of all clothing.[50]

In order for the German fashion industry to profit economically and politically on the international market, Hitler required industrialists to utilize his preferred methods. To increase productivity, many industrialists incorporated slave labor consisting of those imprisoned by Hitler's regime. Firms in occupied zones adapted, complying with slave labor, because they knew they faced replacement by doing otherwise.[51] According to James and Turner, "to date, there is little proof that industrialists suggested the system of 'leasing' laborers from the SS, but equally little that they hesitated to grasp it."[52] Industrialists cared little for the inmate workers they entrusted to the hands of the SS and the German Labor Front, allowing them to be "used up like any other raw material."[53] The reason for this, lies in the fact that many industrialists grew more scornful of the inmates who

Figure 7
Hitler surrounded by Germans in uniform

[50] James and Turner, 31.
[51] Ibid., 33.
[52] Ibid., 34.
[53] Ibid., 34.

had been treated so badly that they came to resemble the "sub-humans" the Nazis accused them of being.[54] As one can see, although some companies benefited from compliance with the Nazi regime, they also diminished all control to them.[55] Threats of state control for non-compliance and fear of losses led many industries to conform.[56] Now that Hitler had the industries under his control, what identity did he want Germany to display to the world?

Not only did Hitler desire a new fashion industry, but German women did too, or so it seemed. As early as World War I, German women decided they wanted their own German fashion, because "according to their fashion-savvy French enemy, the Germans were a nation of fat, unrefined, badly dressed clowns."[57] By the 1930s, the fear of scolding by the government for endorsing French products gave German women another reason to desire their own fashion. In *The ABC's of National Socialism*, German women were condemned for injuring the nation with egocentric expenditure by purchasing French cosmetics and "unnecessary" items from Jewish-owned department stores.[58] The Nazis insisted that German men wanted "real German women...not a frivolous play toy that superficially only thinks about pleasure, adorns herself with trinkets and spangles, and resembles a glittering vessel, the interior of which is hollow and desolate."[59] On the

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[54] Ibid., 35.
[55] Ibid., 33.
[56] Ibid., 31-32.
[57] Guenther, 21.
[58] Ibid., 92.
[59] Curt Rosen., *Das ABC des Nationalsozialismus*, 5th ed. (Berlin: Schmidt & Co., 1933), 197; quoted in Guenther, 93.

contrary, the Nazis believed that, "to be a wife and mother is the German woman's highest essence and purpose of life."[60]

Newspapers and magazines also informed German women of how they were to behave. German women were supposed to be concerned only with "*Kinder, Küche, Kirche,*" children, their kitchen, and their church.[61] Unmarried women who were selected to produce illegitimate children for *Lebensborn*, the SS "breeding program," were prohibited from wearing lipstick, plucking their eyebrows, or painting their nails.[62] Health and exercise were promoted, while cosmetics were deemed poisonous and unhealthful.[63] Hypocritically, cosmetics from France were discouraged, but advertisements for German cosmetics quickly made their way to magazines; *Sport im Bild* insisted, "some believe that the German woman makes herself up less! We say: more correctly! Or even better."[64]

Figure 8
Eva Braun

Eva Braun's actions foreshadowed the actions of the rest of Germany (figure 8). Although French and American cosmetics were condemned, Eva Braun, Hitler's lover, continued to use her favorite American cosmetics by Elizabeth Arden.[65] As much as Germany tried to stay away from French fashion, it proved impossible. German women did not want to become the homely, motherly figures Hitler

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[60] Ibid.
[61] Guenther., 95.
[62] Ibid., 99.
[63] Ibid., 99.
[64] "Man trägt wieder Gesicht," *Sport im Bild*, no.8 (April 18, 1933): 342-345; quoted in Guenther, 104.
[65] Guenther, 105.

wanted them to be.

The international ambitions of Hitler, like Mussolini, were irrational due to the fact that they were less geared toward gains on the international market, and more toward realizing goals of rearmament and expansion.[66] Like Mussolini, Hitler wanted to make a statement to the world about German greatness, employing fashion as a method of achieving his goal. According to Irene Guenther, author of *Nazi Chic?: Fashioning Women in the Third Reich,* "given the modern age of consumerism, media-driven politics, illusory substance, and mass culture in which Nazism thrived, much can be learned by exploring the important position accorded female fashioning in the Third Reich."[67] As important as fashion in the Third Reich is for historians, Guenther points out that the curiosity invoked by the negative associations of the SS uniform has left women's fashion of the Nazi period in Germany ignored in historical portrayals of the era.[68] The study of women's clothing in the Nazi era draws attention to the Nazi ideology of modernism coexisting with tradition; the Nazis exploited what was attractive for mass consumerism, while at the same time attempted to preserve and protect German culture.[69] Guenther suggests the study of fashion has become dangerous and inconsequential through the disregard and/or glamorization of the Third Reich.[70] Consequently, the topic of the German/Nazi fashion industry has not been given the attention it deserves, a fact made more complicated by continuing revelations about Nazi collaborations in banking and other industries.

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[66] James and Turner, 9.
[67] Guenther, 11.
[68] Ibid., 12.
[69] Ibid., 15.
[70] Ibid., 12.

In the United States and France, before the war, the circumstances were considerably different. The government did not dictate fashion as in Italy and Germany. Fashion, employed as an escape for women from the harsh realities of life, had recently evolved from the willowy boyishness of the 1920s to a new, more mature and sophisticated style in the 1930s, undoubtedly influenced by the international economic depression. The contentment brought on by the prosperity of the 1920s quickly came to a halt after the stock market crash of 1929, but fashion never ceased, especially for those who retained their wealth. The figure French and American women aspired to in the 1930s altered from shapeless to broad-shouldered, with curves and an accentuated natural waist (figure 9). Women in the 1930s invited curves and outfits were designed to draw attention to women's shape. French fashion continued to reign supreme in the fashion world, influencing designs in America and Europe.

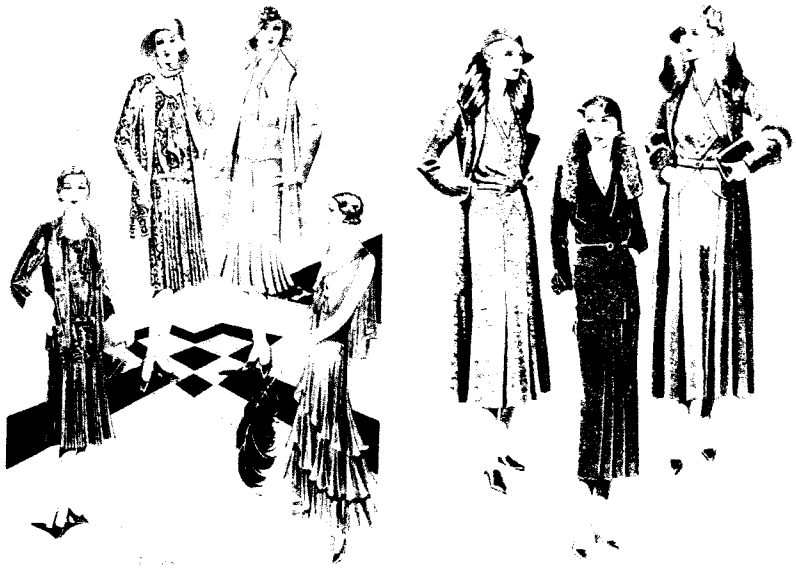

Figure 9
The contrast between 1920s (left) and 1930s (right) fashion

Women in France and America, before the war, owned outfits for all occasions: sports, as sports activity was very important; formal and informal evenings; day,

afternoon, dinner, and theater. The most influential outfit of the 1930s however, was the suit.[71] Women's suits normally consisted of a fitted jacket, which emphasized the waist and squared the shoulders with padding, covering a matching dress or skirt. Laced-up, boned corsets aided in achieving the look. Evening dresses were also very fashionable. The most popular style of evening dress, often ankle-length with bias-cut, straight lines, exaggerated shoulders, and a slim fit, regularly exposed the back and shoulders. Sweaters, blouses, and matching separate skirts, usually calf-length for daywear, were also staples of the 1930s wardrobe. Hats, belts, gloves, and heels polished the outfits. The style of the 1930s woman in the United States and France embodied maturity and class.[72]

Clothing upkeep also became easier for women in the 1930s, allowing for multiple outfits, due to the introduction of washable fabrics, artificial fibers, such as rayon, and improvements in manufacturing techniques.[73] Getting dressed became an easier task because the zipper, invented in 1891 by Whitcomb L. Judson, but not widely used until the late 1920s, was often incorporated into new designs, including those of high fashion.[74]

Figure 10
1930s evening gown

As for the most influential French designers of

[71] John Peacock, *Fashion Sourcebooks: The 1930s* (Thames and Hudson: London, 1997), 7.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Keith Eubank and Phyllis Tortora, *Survey of Historic Costume*, 3rd ed. (New York: Fairchild, 1999), 388.

the 1930s, three names stand out: Coco Chanel, Madeleine Vionnet, and Elsa Schiaparelli. Chanel started designing before World War I in Deauville, where she became very successful by pairing knit jackets with pullover sweaters, and sailor jackets with pleated skirts, and later moved to Paris where she became one of the most influential designers in France.[75] Before the war, Chanel was famous for her little black dress and her use of wool jersey in suits. Chanel was known for her ability to flatter a woman's natural shape and created unrestricting slip-on garments, free of fastenings, that made women's lives easier and their undergarments less constricting.[76] Vionnet, on the other hand, started as an apprentice at the age of thirteen in a dressmaker's shop.[77] After World War I, Vionnet set up her own shop where she became famous for the creation of the bias cut, which allows fabric more stretch to accentuate the curves of the body.[78] The bias cut was especially useful for the evening gowns that were so popular in the 1930s. Schiaparelli, an Italian designer working in Paris in the 1930s, was the first couturiere to use zippers in her garments and the first to design matching jackets

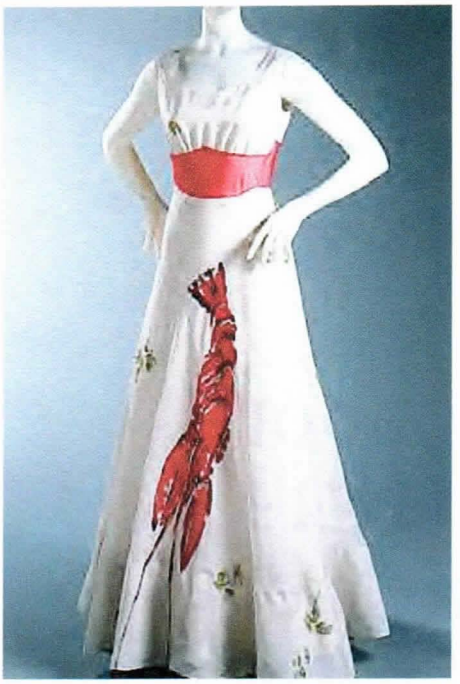

Figure 11
Schiaparelli lobster dress with
Salvador Dali print, 1937

[75] Ibid.
[76] Elizabeth Ewing, *History of Twentieth Century Fashion* (Lanham: Barnes & Noble Books, 1992), 102.
[77] Eubank and Tortora, 388.
[78] Ibid.

for evening gowns and matching skirt and sweater combinations.[79] Shiaparelli, known for her architectural designs, her work with artists, her "shocking pink" and her inventiveness, experimented with cellophane, straw, tree bark, and glass for use in fabrics (figure 11).[80] Other famed designers of French couture in the 1930's included, Lucien Lelong, Nina Ricci, Jean Patou who claimed he was responsible for the switch to longer skirts in the 1930s and Robert Piguet.[81]

Before the war, the designs of French couturists were sold to retail stores and private customers by the French trade association, the *Chambre Syndicale de la Couture Parisienne*.[82] French designs, often resold and copied, changed many hands to influence international fashion.[83] Therefore, a dress that originally sold in France for a hundred thousand francs could be copied and sold in America for as little as fifty dollars.[84]

In the United States, unlike in France, most designers worked in the ready-to-wear industry. America developed a ready-to-wear industry after World War I that surpassed that of other countries by almost ten years, resulting in large-scale manufacturing and the exporting of clothing to other countries, such as Great Britain.[85] Most American designers copied or altered French designs, creating new lines for each season, which would then be manufactured and sold all over the country.[86] The success of the designs

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[79] Ibid., 387-388.
[80] Ewing, 117.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Eubank and Tortora, 388.
[83] Ibid.
[84] James Laver, *Costume and Fashion: A Concise History* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1995), 246.
[85] Ewing, 122.
[86] Eubank and Tortora, 392.

depended solely on the number of orders placed by buyers.[87] Before the war, Claire McCardell of Maryland, educated at Parsons School of Design in New York, was probably the most influential American designer. McCardell, before designing under her own name in the 1940s, worked as head designer for Townley Frocks where she helped to make bias cut dresses, hardware fastenings, and matching separates as popular in America as in France where they originated.[88] French fashion was the only fashion for Americans before the war; American designers were simply puppets of French fashion, copying patterns and aiding in the popularity of French designs.

Prewar fashion held different meanings for different countries. Before the war, Italy and Germany used fashion as a search for national identity, while French and American fashion remained a means of representation and pleasure for elite women. French fashion, still the top in the fashion world, was banned from Italy and Germany in an attempt to promote German and Italian products, but was not easily kept away from women under Mussolini and Hitler's reigns. As these countries moved into World War II, fashion took a turn that would produce immediate and long-term effects for the fashion industries in Italy, Germany, France, and the United States.

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[87] Ibid.
[88] Ibid.

III

FASHION DURING THE WAR

The fashion industries in Italy, Germany, France, and the United States, altered by the affects of war, experienced changes that would shape the long-term future of fashion in Europe and the United States. Italian fashion continued and war restrictions on fabric sparked creativity in Italian designers. German clothing production continued for war efforts, but high fashion, seen as insignificant to most due to the importance of survival under bomb raids and a shortage of human necessities, experienced a period of stagnation. Fashion continued in France, but only through compliance with Hitler's regime while under occupation. In America, a new fashion industry was born, as Americans, cut off from the rest of the world, changed the face of fashion forever. World War II restricted fashion in the late 1930s and early 1940s, with fabric limitations and bans placed on importing and exporting, but fashion continued to move, temporarily closing old doors for some countries while opening new doors for others.

Although difficult, the Italian fashion industry continued to create new designs throughout the war, something that would greatly help post-war Italy. The reason for such diligence during the war, according to Paulicelli, is that the fashion industry "as a

community...were well aware of the importance of their role in the Italian economy and the creation and projection of an image and culture associated with the nation."[89] Another reason for Italian success during the war is that Italians were used to being cut off from other countries, as Mussolini had banned imports from other countries even before the war.[90] Designers, already quite familiar with having to make do, did not suffer as much in Italy as in Germany, France, and America. *Bellezza*, a high fashion Italian magazine established in 1941, published 'Collections Prepared for Foreigners,' an article that encompasses the desires of Mussolini and his regime in 1942. Previously people thought,

> that real elegance could only reach the Italian woman from across the Alps (France) or across the ocean (the United States)...The war put up barriers between Italy and those who considered themselves to be the centre of international fashion. These barriers acted like a green house and gave Italian fashion the strength to blossom.[91]

Italy suffered rationing and shortages during the war, but came up with diverse and alternative resources just as Germany, France, and America did. Many innovative steps were made in Italy to ensure the importance of fashion never ceased during the war. For example, due to the lack of fabric, magazines and dressmakers encouraged transformations, such as dresses and coats worn inside out for variety, mixing different tops with the same suit, and adding accessories, including pockets, to old clothes.[92] Designers also continued to seek alternatives to traditional

Figure 12
1940 Ferragamo platform and heel in "kid-covered cork"

[89] Paulicelli, 142.
[90] See Chapter 2.
[91] "Collections Prepared for Foreigners," *Bellezza*, 1942; quoted in White, 77.
[92] Paulicelli, 145.

materials. Artificial fibers replaced natural ones, especially leather. Ferragamo replaced his usual shoe materials with cork and clear plastics (figure 12).[93] Ordinary people who could not afford to by clothing used whatever materials they could find. In fact, Giorgio Armani, a famed designer, once recalled his mother making raincoats out of an abandoned parachute she found in a field.[94] Sometimes women would even trade food for fabric if need be.[95]

German fashion faced different obstacles, and with different outcomes. During the war, German manufacturers produced clothing for the war effort and fashion still possessed a militaristic theme. Germany, constantly bombed by the Allies, encouraged nationalism and militarism as main concerns for most Germans as a means of dealing with the war. Most people, mainly concerned with food and clean water, did not have fashion on the forefront of their minds in Germany. High fashion existed only in occupied France, but clothing production did not cease in Germany.

For the ordinary person in wartime Germany, clothing was a necessity and, just as in Italy, alternative solutions arose due to shortages. Although most people were simply trying to survive, the government published essays urging women not to give up on tasteful clothing or personal hygiene, but failed to offer a solution to women.[96] The government was simply concerned with nationalism and preserving the "ideal" German woman. Soap and washing powder, as well as food and clean water, hard to come by,

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[93] Ibid., 54.
[94] Ibid.
[95] Ibid., 145.
[96] Guenther, 246.

made it difficult for women to feel beautiful or fashionable. Not only did women have to find a way to clothe themselves, but many also had to carry around pamphlets, such as "10 Rules for Fighting Fires," in the event that a bomb would drop.[97]

Women also had a hard time living up to the "ideal" German woman because they had to work while men were away fighting the war. Women worked for war efforts, such as in nursing or in factories to produce war items. The factory woman hardly resembled the pre-war, made-up woman (figure 13). Women wore pants and men's jackets to stay warm, as there was a shortage of coal.[98] Those involved in nursing wore uniforms as soldiers did (figure 14). If a woman desired a dress, she would use a rationing coupon; if unavailable, women used fabric from men's suits, tablecloths, or old dresses to make new ones.[99]

Figure 13
German factory workers during
World War II

As for experimenting with alternative fabrics, Germany thrived on new ideas and artificial fibers. For example, Germans experimented with all types of things to replace leather, including the sacs of cow hearts, cow stomachs, and food materials.[100] Eventually, perlon, a wood-based fiber, and rayon

Figure 14
German Red Cross uniforms of
World War II

[97] Ibid., 246.
[98] Ibid., 252.
[99] Ibid., 147.
[100] Ibid., 240.

proved to be most successful, but even such materials as plexiglass made its way into fabric.[101] The cost of experimentation with fabrics caused the price of imported rayon during the war to double the price of cotton before the war.[102]Rabbit fur was also used and magazines gave suggestions to women, including how to make sandals using only straw, cardboard, and baste cording.[103] Germany did not celebrate the same success as Italy with cork shoes and resorted to using wood for shoes during the war.[104] The Nazis also began a propaganda campaign that insisted people should just "go barefoot," reverting to the "natural look."[105]

Hitler's regime made suggestions for how one should dress and behave during wartime, but their suggestions were impractical. Women had to make do with what they had, while trying to comply with the ideals of the regime, an impossible ideal given the circumstances. Fashion took a back seat in wartime Germany, as survival was the top priority of German people.

Some people, however, did benefit from the Nazi regime's ideological goals. Hitler's position as dictator meant that anyone who complied with his wishes had the opportunity for great success in Germany and in other countries after the war. Industrialists in Germany continued production for the war effort, making Germany the only axis nation that came close to the industrial output of America.[106] One example of a German industrialist who benefited from compliance with the Nazis, and has become a

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[101] Ibid.
[102] Ibid., 241.
[103] Ibid., 246.
[104] Ibid., 239.
[105] Ibid.
[106] Hughes and Mann, 142.

famous name in the fashion world, is Hugo Boss. After a bout with bankruptcy in his 1923-established family clothing business, Hugo Boss made a comeback during World War II.[107] Boss renewed his garment business by producing uniforms for the Hitler Youth, Wehrmacht, Storm Troopers, and the SS (figure 15).[108] It is most likely the factory was powered by slave labor, including prisoners of war and inmates of concentration camps.[109]

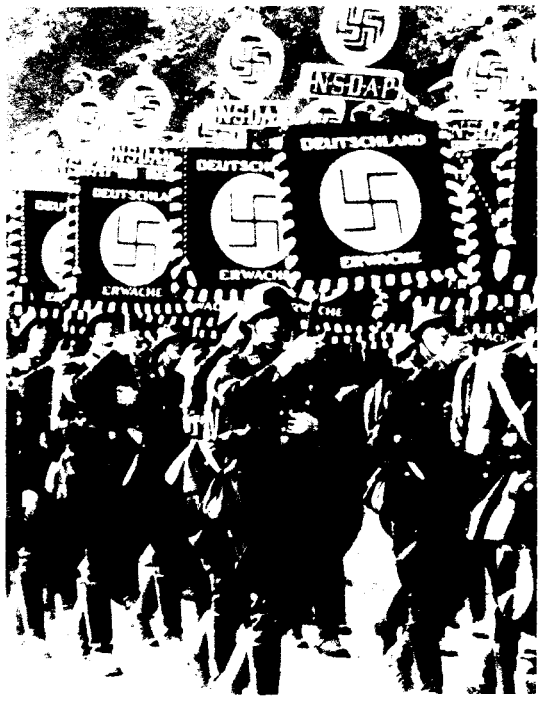

Figure 15
SS uniforms

Many industrialists like Hugo Boss were willing to comply with Hitler's strategies to personally profit and put Germany on the map, while promoting a new national identity. Most companies who complied with the regime immediately profited, and many enjoyed long-term success. To use German car companies as an example outside of, but not far from the realm of fashion, as cars have become accessories to fashion and representative of personal identity, Volkswagen, BMW, and Mercedes all greatly benefited from complying with the regime (figure 16). Volkswagen was fashioned from a vision Hitler possessed of an affordable car all Germans could own, therefore produced out of Nazi ideology, and was later used for the

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[107] Robin Givhan, "Fashion Firm Discovers its Holocaust History: Clothier Hugo Boss Supplied Nazi Uniforms with Forced Labor," *The Washington Post*, 14 August 1997, B01, http://americandefenseleague.com/hilknow1.htm (accessed September 10, 2007).

[108] Ibid.

[109] Ibid.

war effort.[110] Workers at Daimler-Benz had to take classes on "racial political questions," while working alongside concentration camp inmates to produce fighter vehicles for the war, including aircrafts.[111] BMW produced motorcycles for Hitler's motorcycle troops.[112] Many companies who supported the war effort in Nazi Germany went on to become top companies of the world. The ease in which German industrialists adapted to the circumstances presented by the Nazis is a warning and a reminder of how desires for profit and advancement can allow for effortlessness of manipulability.[113] German designers purchased their futures with the innocent lives of men, women, and children by complying with the regime, and designers in occupied France who wished to stay in business also found themselves giving in to fascism.

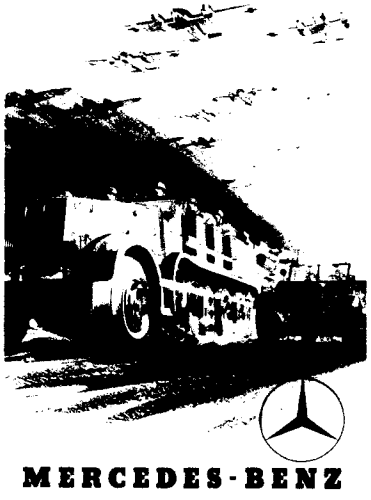

Figure 16
Mercedes World War II war vehicles

Germany invaded France in June of 1940, after Vichy (1940-1944) leader Phillipe Pétain signed a treaty with Germany in 1939 to escape the prospect of another war. The Vichy regime and Pétain came to power in France after military defeat caused the Third Republic to collapse.[114] After collaborating with the Nazis and the occupation, the French

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[110] Walter Henry Nelson, *Small Wonder: The Amazing Story of the Volkswagen* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1967), 49.

[111] Bernard P. Bellon, *Mercedes in Peace and War: German Automobile Workers, 1903-1945* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 229, 233, 240.

[112] Josephine and Ray Cowdery, *German Print Advertising, 1933-1945* (Rapid City: USM, 2004), 144.

[113] James and Turner, 36.

[114] James McMillan, *The Short Oxford History of France: Modern France* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 40.

fashion industry had to fight to keep fashion in France. German women wanted Parisian Haute Couture transported to Vienna and Berlin. Germans believed Parisian fashion had to go through Berlin before "a woman of taste can wear it."[115] Before the occupation, the French were happy to make fun of Germans who had to rely on rationing coupons to acquire their clothing, as it helped ease the strain of war.[116] To the surprise of French women, in 1941, a New York paper exclaimed, "American women who for years turned to Paris to discover the trends in dress are no longer looking in that direction."[117] The paper continued, "the artistic creation which flourished in the Rue de la Paix is dead;" soon the previously gloating French women would also have to partake in rationing, while many of their designers became involved with the Nazis in order to keep business moving now that they were cut off from America.[118] The Nazis aimed to control French designers like puppets in their hands.

Like Germany, France too had new ideas of how their women should dress and behave during war years. The government did not control the fashion industry as in Germany and Italy, but government commentary on fashion existed. As Vichy was contemplating its downfall, it blamed women for contributing to France's defeat, due to "the laxity of morals and the free and easy conduct that matched careless dress."[119] Some insisted the old regime was too relaxed, allowing women to somehow aid in France's defeat.[120] After France's defeat, the Vichy regime debated many issues concerning

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[115] Dominique Veillon, *Fashion under the Occupation* (New York: Berg, 2004), 86.
[116] Ibid.,16.
[117] Ibid., 87.
[118] Ibid.
[119] Ibid., 125.
[120] Ibid., 125-126.

women's fashion, including the wearing of pants and cosmetics. France wanted to redefine fashion, insisting heavy make-up and platinum hair were not French.[121] Those who did wear heavy make-up and bleached hair were seen as immoral and defiant to the Vichy regime.[122]

In keeping with the wholesome image of women, fashions were inspired by the dress of farmers' wives from the countryside, and from the French flag itself. The Vichy government promoted sports, childbirth, and hard work during the war. Support of the Vichy regime was seen everywhere, even in fabrics; the regime's icons, such as the baton, kepi, and battle-axe, as well as the colors of the French flag, were printed upon them, used to aggravate the occupier.[123] This clothing, incorporated into a popular movement, subliminally intended to inform the Nazis that fashion would stay in France; many women supported the Vichy regime through clothing to show pride for France instead of supporting Nazi control of the French fashion industry. Additionally, women were seen as walking propaganda posters by the Vichy government and the way they dressed was important in keeping Paris alive in the fashion world.[124] Elegance combined with national pride as women, often seen in uniform along the streets of Paris, adopted the pro-French fashions simply to insult the Germans.[125] Therefore, fashion, for French women, became a means of anti-fascist identity; clothing became a means of self-expression for everyone.

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[121] Ibid., 128.
[122] Ibid., 136.
[123] Ibid., 132.
[124] Ibid., 14.
[125] Ibid., 134.

Figure 17
French woman on a bicycle during the war

As for rationing during the war, French women were not exempt. For example, the bicycle became a necessary accessory, because the Nazi regime rationed Petrol for German war machines (figure 17).[126] The bicycle caused a revolution in fashion, as longer skirts and hats could not easily accommodate bicycling.[127] Shorter dresses, shorts, and trousers became the norm in the occupied zones.[128] By 1941, issued coupons and clothing cards caused French women to resemble the German women to whom they previously felt superior (figure 18). [129]

Luckily for the average French woman, rayon and other materials were available for use in place of rationed fabrics. Even fur became unavailable. In place of fur, rayon and fibranne, as well as skunk, rabbit, goat, mole, sheep, seal, and even cat skins prevailed, especially for warmth.[130] Women also began sewing old clothing together to make new outfits. Magazines urged women to find old curtains or men's jackets to create something new.[131] Rationing and restrictions on dress also forced most women and children to revert to wooden-soled shoes. Rationing was a part of

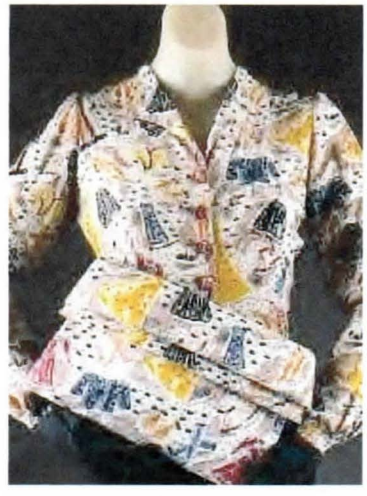

Figure 18
An evening blouse and handbag made of rationing coupons by Schiaparelli, 1940-1945

[126] Ibid., 28-30.
[127] Ibid.
[128] Ibid.
[129] Ibid., 39.
[130] Ibid., 36.
[131] Ibid., 58.

everyday life.

Although the extravagant days of the past were far behind them, Parisians still participated and dressed up for events while under the occupation. During the fashion parades, warm pajamas and housecoats prevailed over lace and lingerie.[132] As for the lack of stockings, women used dyes to cover their legs, just as Americans did. Women also fought against and ignored rationing by creating very tall, oversized hats that were not very becoming, but proved French women could still be humorous in harsh times.[133] Even as women suffered through the cold, scrounging for anything to keep warm, fashion and fashion shows persisted, offering a glimpse of hope to French women through the rough times of war.

Fashion shows continued under the occupation because French designers were still supplying to the privileged French and Nazi officers. France was described as, "no longer that dolled up idol demanding dances; she is now gravely injured and in need of constant care," but that did not apply to everyone in France.[134] To Americans and other countries involved in the war it seemed the French designers had not saved or heeded regulations like other countries had, continuing as if there was no war.[135] France continued making lavish garments for the Nazis, ignoring restrictions to appease the occupiers. The newly occupied Paris was even described as "fading away…she has

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[132] Ibid., 35.
[133] Ibid., 67.
[134] Ibid., 126.
[135] Patricia Baker, *Fashions of a Decade: The 1940s* (New York: Facts on File, 1992), 24.

fainted in her party dress…the Germans talk about Paris as if it were a toy they had just been presented with."[136]

France did everything she could to prevent the fashion industry from coming to a halt, as designers wanted to preserve their name as leader of the fashion world. According to Dominique Veillon, of *Fashion under the Occupation*, "by defending haute couture, France was defending a part of her industry that was also part of her culture."[137] Lucien Lelong, a famous French designer, fought back, insisting haute couture would be in Paris, or would cease to exist. The Germans agreed and let haute couture stay in France, believing it would "suffocate and die," leaving Germany on top in the fashion world, due to the lack of imports and materials.[138] In order to carry on, fashion houses had to coexist with the Germans, sometimes requiring close social relationships (figure 19). Lelong insisted the problems of the war should not hinder designer's ability to work, holding designers responsible for maintaining French fashion.[139] If designers wanted to continue

Figure 19
Nazi soldiers and German women in the streets of occupied Paris

[136] Veillon, 22.
[137] Ibid.,13.
[138] Ibid., 86.
[139] Ibid., 6.

production and the employment of their workers they needed to comply with the Nazis, since they relied on exports to Germany and Italy for the employment of their workers.[140]

During the occupation, the Germans allowed the fashion industry to sell to their old clientele without coupons, which kept 12,000 women, 97 percent of their workforce, employed.[141] Some French women questioned whether in a time of devastation it was okay to dress up, particularly with the ongoing occupation.[142] Lelong's biggest concern, offering his clientele innovative designs in spite of the current situation, kept the fashion industry moving.[143] Therefore, the occupation did not prevent couture; it simply required adjustment and adaptation to continue. Some things did change: "the number of models, the quantity of fabrics, the type of materials, even the line of the gowns, were all revised to take account of restrictions imposed by the Germans."[144] Moreover, Veillon claims, "it was certainly difficult in this period of the occupation to run a business without serving German interests; nevertheless, it was one thing to be forced to adopt this option, another to create it."[145] Some houses profited from their belief that the Germans would have a victory. Others, such as Chanel, Schiaparelli, and Molyneux, halted production for the years of the occupation.[146] German demand, a lack of raw materials, disturbance of former economic channels, and the black market evoked consequences for the apparel industry.[147]

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[140] Ibid., 23.
[141] Ibid., 90-91.
[142] Ibid., 108.
[143] Ibid., 11.
[144] Ibid., viii.
[145] Ibid., 105.
[146] Ibid., 100.
[147] Ibid., 141.

Even more devastating to the French fashion industry was the fact that Germans stole French designs, introducing them as their own. They also tried, though unsuccessfully, to take control of the French pattern publishing companies.[148] As French couture risked closure by German hands, the Nazis and the French fashion industry came to an agreement: for Germany to take France's haute couture, and sell it themselves.[149] France was backed against a wall, as imported Australian wool, American cotton, and silk from the Far East had been banned.[150] Instead of exporting clothing, however, Lelong sold ideas and patterns to other countries, but his fashion industry was still under full control of the Nazis.[151] Although French designers would have preferred the Nazis to leave their fashion industry alone, ultimately the Nazis kept the French fashion industry in business; moreover German advancements in the manufacturing of synthetic fibers aided France in the production of artificial textiles.[152] The soft, colorful artificial fabrics gave the French hope and a glimpse of happiness in a drab, rationed world.

Lelong and other designers were glad to get business from the Nazis. In fact, in 1941, Lucien Lelong and the daily papers, *Paris-Soir* and *Paris-Midi*, made a contract that would provide Lelong with free publicity in exchange for gowns made for specific people, including "companions or mistresses of men who made money under the Germans."[153] Due to the advantageous exchange rate on their end, the Germans went wild in the fashion capitol, buying everything in sight.[154] According to Guenther:

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[148] Ibid., 94-96.
[149] Ibid., 97.
[150] Ibid., 69.
[151] Ibid., 93.
[152] Ibid., 74.
[153] Ibid., 118.
[154] Ibid., 22.

> Nazi officials, visiting or on duty in Paris, frequented the better fashion salons for purchases for their German wives or French mistresses. Göring reportedly ordered twenty gowns for his wife from the *couture* salon of Paquin, Eva Braun used her connections to acquire French lipsticks, perfumes, and silk lingerie, and wives of the officers appointed to the German High Command in France utilized their newly claimed victor's status to order from the Paris fashion houses. Approximately 200 German women received the required special permission cards from the occupation authorities to buy *haute couture*.[155]

One possible reason for the willingness of Parisian designers to give in to Nazi requests was something Veillon refers to as "operation seduction," when the German soldiers first acted polite and caring, giving up their metro seats for mothers and the elderly.[156] When speaking of first impressions of the German occupiers, Veillon insists, "Yesterday's enemy, anxious to appear in a good light, curbed its appetite for conquest; for a time, the wolf donned lamb's clothing."[157] Thus, it is argued, complicity seemed less offensive when the enemy was on such good behavior. This did not explain all collaboration, however. Most French designers simply sought profit, but some Frenchmen, very open to the "aryanization" of French fashion, believed the French fashion industry would be "purified" once Jewish fashion houses disappeared.[158] Some establishments even willingly produced fur waistcoats for the Nazis, thus equipping the enemy.[159] Lelong later insisted dealing with the Nazis was the lesser of two evils, as they believed appeasing the Nazis was better than disrupting French fashion.[160] Lucien Lelong, the man who fought to keep Paris couture alive, passively resisted when Germans stopped exports from France, as he held fashion shows in the unoccupied

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[155] Guenther, 212.
[156] Veillon, 21.
[157] Ibid.
[158] Ibid., 102.
[159] Ibid., 104.
[160] Guenther, 211.

zones.[161] After the war, Lelong was to stand trial, but the charges against him were dropped, proving "how far some leaders of industry would go to safeguard the future of their sector, even if it meant compromising themselves with the Germans in the process."[162]

The experience of the fashion industry in the United States was, of course, significantly different from that of the countries of continental Europe. During the war, American women had to depend solely on American designers since fashion and supplies, as in Italy, Germany, and France, were extremely limited. The inability to rely on France for designs as they had in the past, as all exports from France were prohibited, gained American designers acknowledgement for the first time. World War II offered a new look and a new outlook for wartime women and designers in America, as they had to learn to adapt and make do with what they had, changing the face of the fashion world forever.

Fashion magazines declared that, despite the hardships of war, American fashion was still alive.[163] The absence of influence from the Parisian fashion world during World War II allowed American designers liberty to create more comfortable clothing, easily maintained by American women who had developed a newfound freedom from conventional female roles.[164] The American War Production Board censored the mention of Parisian fashion because it violated wartime restrictions on fabric; the question on

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[161] Veillon, 92-93.

[162] Ibid., 92-93.

[163] John W. Dower and others, eds., *Wearing Propaganda: Textiles on the Home Front in Japan, Britain, and the United States, 1931-1945* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 239.

[164] Susan M. Hartmann, *American Women in the 1940s: The Home Front and Beyond* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982), 195.

most people's minds was: "can New York fill Paris' shoes as the new heart of the fashion world."[165] Of course, some American designers, such as Claire McCardell, Charles James, and Normal Norell had their loyal fans and followers, but did they possess the leadership abilities necessary to control the fashion world?

A lot changed for wartime women in America. The issue of women's identities naturally arose during the war and America had her own ideas of who she wanted the American woman to be. Magazines continued to emphasize and promote femininity and the importance of a woman's beauty, but the comfortable, convenient clothing of wartime women "diminished features of women's adornment which sharply differentiated them from men."[166] There were apprehensions and opposition to the changes of women's lifestyles, which could be seen in magazines through the glorification of the mother and housewife, the emphasis on femininity, the stress on romance, and the forewarning about women in the career world.[167]

Figure 20
A 1944 Advertisement for the Women's Army Corps

A typical wartime woman in America possessed the attributes of a strong workingwoman by day, but felt pressure to readopt a feminine role in the evening.[168] Beginning in 1942, American women could join the American Army, though only to participate in non-combat, auxiliary forms of duty (figure 20). The uniforms worn by these new Army

[165] Baker, 33, 37.
[166] Hartmann, 196.
[167] Ibid., 204.
[168] Dower, 245.

recruits, as well as the military-style suits and outfits non-military American women wore to show their support for the war, which accentuated their small waists, big busts, and stocking covered legs, inspired a change in fashion. American women were often uneasy about the new demands placed upon them that required them to take on a slightly more masculine role, but relying on prewar beauty regimens served to lift their spirits. In fact, ads encouraged women to continue their desire for beauty, with such slogans as, "beauty is her badge of courage," posted by the New York Dress Institute to boost morale.[169] Coinciding with beauty promotions were the "we-can-do-it" campaigns, such as Rosie the Riveter, encouraging women to take charge of tasks their husbands left behind (figure 21). [170] The well-known Rosie the Riveter posters portrayed a strong woman doing a man's job, who was still feminine and very much a woman. As women's roles changed due to the absence of their male counterparts during the war, so did their shape, as can be seen in the transformation of the American fashion industry.

Figure 21
Rosie the Riveter

When speaking of fashion, discussing the female figure is always important. Unlike the flat, boyish figure that women craved after World War I, the women of World War II celebrated curves. In the late 1930's, fashion shifted its focus to the waist and constricting, laced up corsets aided in achieving the popular hourglass

[169] Ibid., 242.
[170] Ibid.

figure. One influence on the early World War II woman's figure was movies. Betty Grable, a popular Hollywood star during the war, became the popular pin-up girl for service men all over the world (figure 22).[171] Men enjoyed looking at the curvy figure of the World War II woman as much as women desired to achieve it. Another influence to the female wartime figure was tight-wasted military uniforms the new female Army recruits had to wear, which could consist of up to seven layers, including panties, a girdle, a slip, a shirt, a waistband, a jacket, and a belt.[172] This heavy layering at the waist may have required a corset to cinch in the abdomen in order to achieve the desirable hourglass shape. This popular shape continued in the United States until mid-war when replaced by a more naturally curved figure. The corset disappeared mid-war, possibly due to the discomfort of wearing a corset while working. Christina Probert, the author of *Lingerie in Vogue Since 1910*, attributed the disappearance of the corset and the hourglass figure to the probability that wartime food rationing made the corset less useful.[173] Either way, wartime women's silhouettes later altered to encourage a more natural, less constricting shape.

Figure 22
Betty Grable

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[171] Karen Bressler and Karoline Newman, *A Century of Lingerie: Icons of Style in the 20th Century* (London: Quarto, 1977), 130.

[172] Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs Galleries/Cyber Exhibits, "'This is my war too!' Women in the Military the Women's Army Corps," http://museum.dva.state.wi.us/Gal_Cyber.asp (accessed November 28, 2006).

[173] Christina Probert, *Lingerie in Vogue since 1910* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1981), 42.

Along with a more natural shape came shorter hemlines. The clothing staples of the 1930s, tailored suits, dresses, skirts and blouses, carried over to the 1940s, but skirts and dresses became much shorter and wider, due to fabric shortages, and the bias cut was no longer used (figure 23).[174] Necklines also changed from cowl necks to V-necklines to represent the "V for victory" campaign of the American government.[175] The 'V,' also printed on fabrics, such as the handkerchief, entitled "Airplanes in Formation," was a popular way to show support in the war years (figure 24).[176] Like French clothing during the war, American clothes represented anti-fascism for many women, helping to create a sense of clothing as self-expression. Another example of clothing as support for America and self-expression is the "Eisenhower jacket," a popular jacket based on military jackets worn at the waist with a fitted belt.[177] Not only was fashion changing, but textiles were changing as well.

Figure 23
Early 1940s daywear

Figure 24
"Airplanes in Formation" handkerchief

First appearing in 1938 was DuPont's creation of one of the most important fabric innovations ever created - nylon. Nylon, first shown at the world's fair in New York in 1939, only had a short reign in lingerie because nylon's strength and durability was needed for

[174] Eubank and Tortora, 398.
[175] Ibid.
[176] Dower, 54.
[177] Eubank and Tortora., 399.

parachutes, tents, towropes, and tarpaulins in the war effort.[178] Even so, nylon became extremely desirable among wartime women for use in stockings and lingerie.

An important discussion about World War II fashion in America is the difference between silk and the two silk look-a-likes used in the war, rayon and nylon. Rayon, used by Italy, Germany, France, and America during the war as an alternative to natural fibers, and the newly introduced Nylon, would eventually change fashion forever. As for Rayon, it replaced silk as well as other natural fibers during the war. Silk, naturally made from the cocoon of the silk worm, requires a very delicate process to produce the smooth, shiny, luxurious fabric many people still desire today. Rayon, on the other hand, is a synthetic fabric. In fact, rayon was the first manufactured fiber ever made, first produced in the 1850's. The reason rayon was desirable is because it is made from wood or cotton pulp, which makes it less difficult to make than silk, and can be made to look and feel like silk, but is cheaper to produce. Rayon came in a variety of blends with cotton and wool.[179] Manufacturers eventually had to rely solely on spun viscose rayon because cotton became

Figure 25
A 1926 advertisement for artificial silk

[178] Elizabeth Ewing. *Dress and Undress: A History of Women's Underwear* (New York: Drama Book Specialists, 1978), 153.

[179] Shirley Miles O'Donnol, *American Costume, 1915-1970: A Source Book for the Stage Costumer* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 132.

unavailable as well. Even in the 1920's Rayon sold at half the price of silk.[180] Rayon first came to the United States in 1910, known as "artificial silk" until later adopting the name "rayon" (figure 25).[181]

Silk was also the fashion for stockings until nylon came along. The reason women preferred the new nylon stockings introduced before the war, was that nylon looked just like silk, but was much stronger and more durable than its silk counterpart (figure 26). Although nylon is a synthetic fabric and is much cheaper to make than silk, like rayon, it sold as ten percent higher than silk stockings when they first came available for purchase by American women.[182] Before nylon's introduction, seventy million dollars worth of silk created eight pairs of stockings per American woman each year.[183] Although nylon sold for a higher price than silk at first, it eventually became a cheaper, more durable stocking, still used on a daily basis by many 21st century American women.

Figure 26
Nylon stocking
advertisement

Besides silk, other commonly used fashion items also became unavailable. Designers had to make do with alternative fibers and methods of construction. For

[180] FiberSource: The Manufactured Fiber Industry, "A Short History of Manufactured Fibers" (American Fiber Manufacturers Association / Fiber Economics Bureau, 1997-2005) http://www.fibersource.com/f-tutor/history.htm (accessed November 25, 2006).

[181] Ibid.

[182] David A. Hounshell and John Kenly Smith Jr., "The Nylon Drama" (The Lemelson Center for the Study of Invention and Innovation, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, 1998) http://invention.smithsonian.org/centerpieces/whole_cloth/u7sf/u7materials/nylondrama.html (accessed November 25, 2006).

[183] Ibid.

example, lace and machine embroidery from France were unavailable. Government restrictions on the amount of fabrics and materials used also narrowed design potential. McCardell, for example, replaced her usual materials by creatively incorporating denim, seersucker, and jersey into her war lines, designing comfortable clothing for the new working woman (figure 27).[184] Women, as in Germany and France, had to use government coupons to buy clothing. Daniel Delis Hill, the author of *As Seen in Vogue: A Century of American Fashion in Advertising*, showed that through these hard times, women found encouragement through *Vogue* magazine, which supported the war and even encouraged readers to sacrifice their clothing for "sackcloth" if needed to help Americans achieve victory in the war.[185]

Figure 27
Claire McCardell "pop-over" dress, 1942

In addition to the lack of silk, cotton, nylon, and rubber, there was also a shortage of zippers due to the need of metal in the war effort.[186] Through the shortage of supplies, women, by force, became creative. Schiaparelli, who escaped from France to America during the war, admitted to using chains in place of buttons, and dog leash fasteners in

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[184] Laver, 254.
[185] Daniel Delis Hill, *As Seen in Vogue: A Century of American Fashion in Advertising* (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2004), 70.
[186] Eubank and Tortora, 388.

place of conventional ones.[187] Nylon and silk shortages led some women in America and elsewhere to dye their legs with coffee or makeup to achieve the tanned look of stockings and an eyebrow pencil to draw a line on the back of their legs to imitate the line on the stockings they so desired (figure 28).[188] European women also desired these stockings and American GI's would impress European women with nylon stockings, as silk and rayon stockings were only obtainable through the black market.[189] Betty Grable even auctioned off a pair of nylon stockings for forty thousand dollars for the war effort.[190]Sometimes in war years, women became so desperate their slips had to have patches sewn over them, lace trim was only available from worn-out pairs of panties, and an old pairs of stockings were continually re-stitched.[191] Once again, American women made do with what they had.

Figure 28
Drawn-on stocking seams

As the contour and clothing of American women changed, what women wore under their clothes changed as well. As seen in Shirley Miles O'Donnol's book, *American Costume, 1915-1970: A Source Book for Stage Costumer*, women often began to wear panties and a bra instead of a corset, a combination still seen in the undergarment staples of today. In addition to the more natural silhouette were

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[187] Hill, 64.
[188] Bressler and Newman, 131.
[189] Ibid., 130.
[190] FiberSource.
[191] Farid Chenoune, *Hidden Underneath: A History of Lingerie* (New York: Assouline, 2005), 84.

square shoulders, eventually achieved by bras with shoulder pads built in to them. O'Donnol suggested the square-shouldered figures seen in wartime garments of women in the 1940s may have subconsciously represented the heavy burden endured by both sexes in World War II.[192] As the resources available to women changed and the amount of work expected of them heightened, their shape inevitably changed as well.

Aside from the change in women's figures, a very important change took place during World War II: American designers would finally gain some recognition. America's reliance on American designers started when French couturiers, who left Paris after the German invasion, attempted to ship their new lines to the United States, but were unsuccessful in their feat when exports from France came to a halt.[193] When Schiaparelli managed to escape to America, her friend Lucien Lelong told her to do everything she could in order to maintain the good name and high standing France held in fashion before the war.[194] Before the war, American designers, thought of as merely mimicking Parisian designers, did not gain recognition as fashion reformers. Fortunately, for these aspiring designers, international press coverage was not available to French couturiers during the war and, as a result, many American designers appeared in *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar*.[195] *Ladies Home Journal* also positively recognized American designers when it exclaimed, "America claims its own! This year, as never before, all eyes turn to New York for fashion guidance."[196] *Life* also praised American designers

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[192] O'Donnol, 114.
[193] Hill, 64.
[194] Ibid.
[195] Eubank and Tortora, 391.
[196] Wilhela Cushman, "New York Fall Collections," *Ladies' Home Journal*, Nov. 1940, 21; quoted in Hill, 67.

with an issue that featured ten American designers.[197] American designers finally received a chance to prove themselves to the world.

During the war, the fashion industry experienced a revolution, changing the industry forever. Italy worked diligently through the war, minimally affected by war shortages, which would aid them in the future. Germany, on the other hand, had little time for fashion, while trying to survive bombings and meet the demands of the war effort. France, cut off from the rest of the world, continued creating fashion under the control of the Nazis and fashion became a form of self-expression against fascism and Hitler's regime. In America, a new fashion industry was born and fashion took on a role of self-expression, as American women showed support for their country. The consequences of World War II on the fashion industry would change the meaning of fashion for Western women after the war.

[197] Hill, 67.

IV

FASHION AFTER THE WAR

After World War II, Hitler's and Mussolini's fascist reigns ended, one by suicide, one by execution, but the fashion that thrived to support their ideals under fascism would continue to reign supreme in the Western world of fashion. Companies in Germany that worked too closely with the Nazi party faced scrutiny from the Allies. Italy, on the other hand, gained close ties with America and the new American fashion industry. France was no longer occupied and could return to the fashion scene, but would she be welcomed back with open arms after some of her designers had contributed to the whims and fancies of Hitler and his regime? The United States aided Italy, Germany and France after the war, eventually providing them with the strength and recognition to become the top fashion industries in the United States and the rest of the Western world.

Directly following the war, the relationship between American consumers and the European market recommenced. The American fashion industry and European designers needed each other to survive; America gained culturally and commercially through contact with European couturiers and the couturiers benefited economically through relations with America.[198] The newly created American fashion industry of World War II, accompanied by the confidence and independence gained by wartime women, had changed fashion in the United States, but Americans quickly embraced European designers, who went on to be the top designers in the international fashion industry.

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[198] White, 152.

American assistance of post-war European fashion went beyond the mere consumption of European designs. American economic aid in the post war years, particularly distribution through the 1947 Marshall Plan, not only financed Europe's economic recovery, but also assisted in the recovery of the European fashion industry. The United States wanted to rid Europe of 'communism' and sought to do so by ending poverty through the introduction of mass production and mass consumption, something innately American.[199] The years after World War II, then, saw a cross pollination of sorts. American economic aid boosted the European fashion industry and facilitated the transplantation of American mass production techniques. At the same time, Americans were embracing European styles. Many firms, very successful due to the incorporation of culture and quality into their clothing, something appealing to Americans, became very important in the fashion industry because they could maintain style, culture, and quality while still producing items very quickly through something very American, mass-production.

This pattern is particularly clear in the case of Italy. After the war, Italy was left to deal with the destruction, inflation, and unemployment the fascist regime had left behind, the "huge moral and political task of rebuilding out of the ashes of fascism."[200] Due to the absence of an industrial foundation and the demand for new alternatives after the failure of fascism, Italy was particularly vulnerable to "Americanization."[201] According to White, "Marshall Aid, with its influx of American funds, machinery, and know-how, played a deliberate and key role in opening up new horizons for many firms and was a

[199] Ibid.,12.
[200] Ibid, 9.
[201] Ibid.,135.

strong impetus to modernization," aiding in Italy's economic miracle of the 1950s and 1960s.[202]

Before mass production and ready-to-wear, women either had their clothing made or they made it themselves. Mass production, due to wartime demands and cheaper fabrics, allowed the general public to partake in fashions that were formerly only available to a select few. According to Stuart and Elizabeth Ewen, authors of *Channels of Desire: Mass Images and the Shaping of American Consciousness*, "with synthetic, chemically produced fabrics listed high among twentieth-century achievements, the look and texture of royalty - silk, velvet, fur - became replicable, available to almost anyone who had a yen for fashion."[203] Mass production was successful because the desire for it was strong and its execution was relatively simple.[204]

Ironically, mass production provided the opposite of its intention; instead of promoting individuality, mass-production promoted mass-expression, causing original designs to lessen in originality.[205] Magazines and the advertisement industry also benefited greatly, adding more to the new age of consumerism. Even high fashion magazines showcased factory-made, ready-to-wear next to couture in the 1940s and 1950s.[206] Department stores were a very important aspect of the success of mass production, combining "practical concerns with a religious intonation, a touch of royalty,

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[202] Ibid.,19.

[203] Elizabeth Ewen and Stuart Ewen, *Channels of Desire, Mass Images and the Shaping of American Consciousness* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), 17.

[204] Ibid., 169.

[205] Ibid., 161, 168.

[206] Helene Reynolds, *20th Century Fashion, the 40s & 50s: Utility to New Look* (Milwaukee: Gareth Stevens, 1999), 5.

the promise that the mundane could be glamorous."[207] Women concluded they could have both: independence and femininity. Women desired comfortable clothing that still felt stylish, which invited a new look of casual elegance into women's wardrobes.

Although Italy borrowed from the United States when it came to manufacturing and design, their native traditions also survived in their revolution to a mass production society. Italian products were high quality, cosmopolitan, and of "high culture," appealing to those who believed in the prestige of the European label, had money to spend, and desired higher quality materials in their garments, differentiating them from American "popular culture," which appealed to those who wanted to be a part of trends by participating in the purchase of cheaper, mass-produced items.[208] The switch from rural to consumer capitalism in Italy that occurred after World War II created the association connecting high fashion and ready-to-wear that allowed Italian designers to meet the needs of the changing international market.[209] Small-scale Italian companies with a wish for manufacturing and product appearance put Italy on the map in the years following the war.[210] Italian designers like Ferragamo who came to America in the pre-war years fashioned the reputation that Italian products were high quality, one-of-a-kind goods. To kick-start what would become a long-term fashion relationship between Italy and the United States, in 1945, Italians purchased 150,000 raw bales of American cotton

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[207] Ewen, 45.
[208] White, 130-131.
[209] Ibid., 55.
[210] Ibid., 131.

with a $25 million loan, repaid through the export of finished products to America, an Italian-American relationship that continued throughout the years of the Marshall Plan.[211]

Italian fashion arrived on the American scene during a time when American women craved a relaxed elegance and Italians knew how to please them: with young, fresh, high-style casuals (figure 29). The success of Italian fashions in America can be attributed to a number of things. As previously discussed, part of the fascist regime's search for national identity included the promotion of women and sports, thus creating a strong sportswear industry in pre-war Italy. This style was very popular in America. According to White, "it could be said that the Italians took American casual sportswear, injected it with freshness and sophistication and sold it back to America with the prestige of a European label."[212] Italian designers produced separate collections for Americans due to alternate color preferences; the Italians knew their consumer well.[213]

Figure 29
Emilio Pucci ski sweater, 1947

Part of the appeal of European fashions was simply that Americans had the impression that a European label was somehow superior to an American one. For example, according to White, Italian models in magazines in the 1940s "appeared like ancient statuary in the niches of classical architecture, and the text was loaded with stereotypical generalizations of the Italian

[211] Ibid.,21.
[212] Ibid., 55.
[213] Ibid., 22.

people and culture."[214] Magazines emphasized the beautiful legs and feet of Italian women, playing to the "American ideal of Italy's grand and noble heritage."[215]

Affordability also drew American women to Italian fashion. American movie stars and producers made films in Rome, discovering along the way that Italian clothes were just as beautiful, yet cheaper than the clothing in New York or Paris.[216] Italian movie stars, such as Sophia Loren, who co-starred in films with such actors as Frank Sinatra, Cary Grant, and Clark Gable, also influenced the American desire for Italian fashion (figure 30).[217] Italian fashion opened a door for fashion conscious American women to break their dependence on the French fashion they had so loyally followed, exposing a new industry that was equal in quality to Parisian designs, but available at a lower price. America had the funds Italy needed, and Italy had the identity and European prestige Americans so desired. The high price of Parisian fashion, then, was a major factor in the popularity of Italian fashion in American tastes in the postwar period.

Figure 30
Sophia Loren

[214] Ibid, 164.
[215] Ibid.
[216] Ibid., 48.
[217] Life in Italy, "Italian Influence on American Glamour," http://www.historyofashion.com/historyofashion/pucci.html (accessed December 2, 2007).

Italy continued to prosper in the fashion industry in subsequent decades as well. According to White, "by 1954, the total export market of Italian apparel textiles (mainly luxury silks) was worth over $4 million and by 1960, almost $35 million."[218] By the 1960s, Italy was in a league of her own, having become an international competitor, leaving American techniques and machinery in Italian production negligible.[219] Italy has only continued to rise economically and influentially in the world of fashion. For example, according to Hoovers, a company that provides financial information on major businesses, Gucci's top competitor is Hugo Boss and Dior's top competitors include Gucci and Chanel (figure 31). Therefore, Gucci, Dior, Boss, and Chanel are all competing against each other.[220] Italian fashion has come to rival French fashion in the 20th century. German fashion also came to rival French fashion, but took a little longer to gain recognition in the fashion world.

Figure 31
A 2007 Gucci ad

German fashion halted after the war, due to the horrific nature of the Holocaust. In the years directly following the Second World War and the Holocaust, many historians, overcome with anger over the horror of that event, held biased analyses

[218] White, 24.
[219] Ibid., 23.
[220] Hoovers, http://www.hoovers.com/hugo-boss/--ID__91222--/free-co-factsheet.xhtml (accessed September 10, 2007).

against those involved in the corporate aspect of Nazi dictatorship, assuming corporations who worked for the Nazis condoned or were involved in the Holocaust.[221] These ideological setbacks, as well as the German desire to ignore or suppress their involvement in the Nazi era, delayed impartial research into industry under Nazism.[222] Many large corporations have veiled their involvements, attracting suspicion. Therefore, not much information exists about the fashion industry in Germany directly after the war. What is known is that the Allies scrutinized many German companies. For example, Hugo Boss "is alleged to have been ostracized as an 'opportunist'," and he was "stripped of his voting rights and fined Dm 80,000," after the fall of the Third Reich.[223] Due to the horror of the Holocaust, and the Allies' desire for an explanation, German designers could not return to the fashion scene as quickly as Italian and French designers, but they did not follow far behind.

Figure 32
Dior stockings licensed in Germany

Even if German fashion production was lacking directly following the war, fashion still existed and fashion shows continued to appear in Germany. For example, Dior continued to promote his designs in Germany after the war, licensing seven types

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[221] James and Turner, 26.
[222] Ibid., 27.
[223] Tina Marie O'Neill, "Hugo Boss Accounts Under Fire as Business Falls," *The Post.IE The Sunday Business Post Online*, 2 August 2002, http://archives.tcm.ie/businesspost/2002/06/02/story585628.asp (accessed September 10, 2007).

of accessories for manufacture in Germany (Figure 32).[224] Dior greatly desired to continue the German-French relations that existed during the occupation. In a speech given during a trip to Germany, Dior declared:

> Permit me to express the sincere wish that the exchange between the Paris fashion industry and the German textile and garment industry may substantially contribute to further improvement of German-French relations...on which we all hope that our two countries, which are already united in mutual appreciation and admiration, will co-operate to the utmost.[225]

Figure 33
The Krupp family shown attending Dior's 1954 fashion show in Essen

When asked in a post-war interview why he wanted to go to Germany, Dior responded: "my primary concern was to renew contacts with a capital that still had something to say to the world and is known for its exuberance."[226] The many fashion shows Dior held in Germany after the war were organized as benefits that donated their proceeds to French and German charities.

Some big-name Nazi collaborators attended Dior's fashion shows, such as the Krupp family (figure 33). The Krupp family was greatly involved in the Nazi party, having contributed 4,738,446 marks to the Nazi Party, often publicly endorsing Hitler's expansionist aims (figure 34).[227]

Figure 34
Krupp during the war

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[224] Adelheid Rasche and Christina Thomson, *Christian Dior and Germany, 1947-1957* (Stuttgart: Arnoldsche, 2007), 124.

[225] Ibid., 194.

[226] Ibid., 200.

[227] International Military Tribunal, "Blue Series," http://www.holocaust-history.org/works/imt/01/htm/t136.htm (accessed September 10, 2007).

Von Bohlen and Alfried Krupp also employed prisoners of war from occupied countries for slave labor to manufacture arms for use against their homelands.[228] Records indicate that by 1944, Krupp employed just under 55,000 foreign workers and close to 19,000 prisoners of war who were "underfed and overworked, misused, and inhumanely treated."[229] When the scrutiny of German companies was over, they were back to enjoying fashion again from one of their old favorite French designers from occupied France, Dior.

Figure 35
A 2007 Hugo Boss ad

Although not much information exists about the German fashion industry directly following the war, one can clearly see their achievements in today's market. As for the German company Hugo Boss, it has blossomed, like the Italian companies, from the ashes of fascism (figure 35). Hugo Boss regularly hosts multi-million dollar events, such as that recently held at the Russian embassy, laced with caviar

[228] Ibid.
[229] Ibid.

and vodka for German celebrities, following Berlin's fashion week.[230] In 1997, Hugo Boss was producing an annual income of $535 million.[231] In terms of last year's profits, Boss was just below Armani, taking in 1.5 billion euros.[232] When asked about the international expansion of Hugo Boss, in a 2007 interview with *Der Spiegel*, Bruno Sälzer insisted profits are rising, which will allow Hugo Boss to match Giorgio Armani this year.[233] Sälzer contends, "the German buys a Mercedes because he believes it to be the best car, and he chooses Boss because he thinks it is the best suit."[234] In the quote above, Sälzer refers to the car and suit Germans believe to be the best, but in reality, Americans also believe Mercedes to be the best car, and also, as the numbers show, believe Boss to be among the best of suits.

Hugo Boss's shadowy past has not seemed to affect the company at all, as it ranks among the top competitors in today's fashion industry. When asked if Hugo Boss customers know the original Hugo Boss was a Swabian clothes maker who manufactured Nazi uniforms, Sälzer replied, "a few years ago there was a major, representative survey, in which people were asked to associate various brands with just one concept, and Boss was associated with fascination." "What more do I need to say," added Sälzer.[235] Not everyone agrees. Unfortunately for Hugo Boss, when people look at a Nazi uniform they do not see clean lines and great design, they see the hate associated with the violent crimes of the Nazi regime. Kenneth Jacobson of the Anti-Defamation League insists, "we

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[230] "There is a Global Taste for Upscale Fashion," *Der Spiegel Magazine*, 23 July 2007, http://www.spiegel.de/international/business/0,1518,496458,00.htm (accessed September 10, 2007).
[231] Givhan.
[232] *Der Spiegel.*
[233] Ibid.
[234] Ibid.
[235] Ibid.

shouldn't criticize them, but encourage them...the most important thing is to set an example for the future, you can't redeem the past otherwise."[236]

The devastating effects of World War II naturally impacted the French fashion industry as well. Though French *Vogue* had ceased to be published for four years, because its editor, Michael de Brunhoff, refused to collaborate with the enemy, it was the first to reappear once it had gained permission from the Allies who liberated Paris.[237] French designers, criticized at first by Americans for having cooperated with the Nazis, received America's forgiveness for the sake of fashion. Many designers emerged from the war with new lines to offer, but two who made the most impressive marks in Western society were Christian Dior and Coco Chanel.

After years of rationing and "make do and mend," women in the Western world were left yearning for something new and upbeat. When launching their new post-war lines, Chanel was returning after a long absence from the fashion scene and Dior was opening his first solo fashion house. Although producing dissimilar reactions, the end of the war, in providing mass produced fashions and new looks for women, afforded new beginnings for Christian Dior and Coco Chanel. As Dior put it, "Europe was tired of dropping bombs and now only wanted to set off fireworks."[238]

Before opening his own fashion house in 1946, Dior worked for Lucien Lelong, the designer who fought to keep the Parisian fashion houses open during World War II. Apparently, while working for Lelong, Dior dressed Nazi officers' and French

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[236] Givhan.

[237] Carolyn Hall, *The Forties in Vogue* (New York: Harmony Books, 1985), 11-12.

[238] Christian Dior, *Christian Dior and I*, trans. Antonia Fraser (New York: E.P. Dutton and Company, Inc., 1957), 57.

collaborators' wives.[239] Dior was not idle during the war and, if anything, improved his skills while working for Lelong. Influenced by a co-designer at Lelong, Pierre Balman, and his success of opening his own house, Dior began to dream up what would become the House of Christian Dior. Marcel Boussac, a French textile entrepreneur, offered Dior a job and accepted Dior's suggestion to open a house in his name: *Maison Dior*. Dior hesitantly accepted Boussac's offer, refused it, and then reaccepted after speaking to a fortuneteller who assured him his new house would "revolutionize fashion."[240] Dior's new fashion house would make him a world-renowned name that would never be forgotten.

Dior's house opened December 15, 1946 and he showed his first collection in the spring of 1947, after carefully hiding his designs from everyone, as to make his first showing the first time anyone saw his new line.[241] Dior declared, after the war, that he hoped to portray nothing but happiness, which he insisted was absent from the usual post-war clothing he so often

Figure 36
The new look

[239] Design Museum, "Christian Dior," http://www.designmuseum.org/design/christian-dior (accessed April 20, 2007).
[240] Dior, 19-22.
[241] Ibid., 34,42.

observed.[242] Dior called his first collection "Corolla," because he wanted his models to resemble flowers (figure 36).[243] Harper's Bazaar is the one who coined the title, "the new look," that would come to describe Dior's work.[244]

Dior was careful to select his new look from his many ideas, as he claims his designs "should take the form of a reaction against the dearth of imagination;" he wanted his new look to be like buildings and architecture, geometric and emphasizing the hips and bust.[245] Dior employed asymmetrical, geometric designs for his new look, transforming the pre-war fashion of formless outfits padded shoulders and just below the knee skirts, to a style that accentuated women's feminine shape.[246] Dior's new look was one of poise, but confidence. A fitted jacket, with a skirt of mid-calf length, full and flowing, accentuated the curved hips. An exotic hat completed the look, along with gloves and pointed high heels.

Dior's first show was an instant success in Europe. One fashion historian attributes Dior's immediate success to the fact that women were so fashion-deprived they jumped at Dior's new look without question.[247] Dior, on the other hand, attributed his successes to luck, which he says was foretold by a fortuneteller in 1919, who told him his successes would come from women, to the fact that his "own inclinations coincided with the spirit of sensibility of the times," and because he "brought back the neglected art of

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[242]Ibid., 16.

[243] Nigel Cawthorne, *The New Look: The Dior Revolution* (Edison: The Welfleet Press, 1996), 109.

[244] Edmonde Charles-Roux, *Chanel and Her World: Friends, Fashion, and Fame* (New York: The Vendame Press, 1981), 352-53.

[245] Dior, 39-40.

[246] Madsen, 277.

[247]Madsen, Alex. *Chanel: A Woman of Her Own* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1990), 273.

pleasing."[248] Dior's new fashions gave women a fresh look after years of dullness and hardship.

In addition to craving a new look, women wanted something luxurious, formerly forbidden during the war: fabric. Fabric was a central focus of Dior's outfits. Dior's new look included padded bras, softer shoulders, and a full skirt that was "twelve inches from the floor" and could have as much as thirty yards of luxurious fabrics, a great change from the two and a half yards women had available to them during the war (figure 37).

Figure 37
Dior measuring the new length

This meant longer, fuller skirts, softer shoulders, and a more accentuated bust for women who wore Dior's new look. Dior used wool and silk, both formerly unavailable during the war, and pleated fabrics in shades of black, gray, and blue.[249] To complete Dior's new look, several accessories were required: high heels, gloves, a broad-rimmed hat, and a purse.

Although Dior's new look was extremely successful, there were critics. For example, women in Paris protested the new look because of the price of the new dresses: forty thousand francs, which at that time was a little under half a years pay for a teacher.

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[248] Dior, 15, 45.
[249] Cawthorne, 114.

They also thought that excessive amounts of fabric were wasteful.[250] As for Dior in America, some women simply did not like the length or shape of Dior's new look. The newfound comfort and ease of clothing found in the closets of wartime women deemed "the American look" prevented them from latching on to Dior's new look as quickly as European women did.[251]Additionally, in America, when Dior unleashed his new look, gossip arose about his collaborations with the Germans.[252] Many fashion conscious consumers shunned French fashion because they believed French profits went straight to Berlin.[253] In fact, Several groups across the United States, one called "The Little Below the Knee Club," tried to persuade women not to buy Dior's longer styled new look, but their attempts were unsuccessful (figure 38).[254] According to Patricia Baker, "Rumor had it that Dior had only included a longer length because it would bring increased sales for his financial backer, Marcel Boussac, the textile industrialist."[255] According to some critics, Dior brought back femininity and the true female shape. This "natural" look could only be achieved with corsets, padded bras, hip

Figure 38
Women protesting the new look

[250] Ibid., 113.
[251] Hartmann, 204.
[252] Baker, 24.
[253] Ibid., 37.
[254] Deirdre Clancy, *Costume since 1945: Couture, Street Style and Anti-Fashion* (New York: Drama Publishers, 1996), 11.
[255] Baker, 57.

pads, and even boning used inside his garments to create a form-fitting shape.[256] Critics believed padding, boning, and corsetry were unnatural.

Criticism did not hurt Dior's reputation in America, however. His look was the epitome of femininity to women of the 1950s. Dior's new look was so popular he even had to implement a waiting list because the outfits could not be made as fast as they were ordered.[257] Less fortunate women, who did not buy into the messages the anti-Dior groups were sending out, would make dresses imitating the new look by sewing onto their hems or making one dress from two.[258] The popularity of Dior's new look in America can be attributed to pent up consumer demand and the desire for a fresh, yet sophisticated look.

Unfortunately, Coco Chanel's comeback was not originally as successful as Dior's new look, which is surprising due to her great success early on in her career. Before 1939 and the onset of World War II, Chanel was famous for her "little black dress" and her perfume, Chanel No.5 (figure 39). Chanel's name was known throughout the world and was even endorsed by celebrities such as Marilyn Monroe. Her popularity suffered a setback with the appearance of her

Figure 39
A 1920s ad for Chanel no.5

[256] Cawthorne, 111.
[257] Dior, 47.
[258] Valerie Steele, *Fifty Years of Fashion: The New Look to Now* (Paris: Yale University Press, 1997), 13.

new line in 1939. This new line was influenced by and resembled the military uniform.[259] At the start of the war, Chanel put her design business on hold to make packages for the soldiers, spending the remainder of the war at the Ritz hotel in the company of her German lover.[260] In addition to having a love affair with a Nazi, Chanel highly supported the Vichy regime, regarding the French Resistance as criminal.[261] During the war, Chanel was arrested and accused of supporting the Nazi party and fled into exile in Switzerland for over a decade.

In 1953, Chanel decided to make a comeback at seventy years of age, after designing a taffeta, crimson gown made from a curtain for Baroness Marie-Helene de Rothschild, which won her the admiration of everyone at her party.[262] After creating the dress for Rothschild, Chanel realized she wanted to return to the fashion industry and reopened the House of Chanel. Chanel desired to take her classic look and revamp it, entering a world of fashion that was considerably different from when she had first entered it. Alex Madsen, the author of *Chanel: A Woman of Her Own*, said Chanel " didn't 'create,' she liked to repeat."[263] After all, Chanel always said, "Couture isn't an art, it's a business."[264] Chanel repeated her old designs, adding new fabrics, because her old designs had always brought her success. New fabrics, such as rayon and nylon, as well as other washable and drip-dry advancements, allowed Chanel to make a fashionably late entrance into a revolutionized world of mass production and ready-to-wear, especially in a time when

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[259] Veillon.,7.
[260] Ibid.,11; Guenther, 210.
[261] Baker, 11.
[262] Madsen, 281.
[263] Ibid., 286.
[264] Ibid., 286.

her sales were slipping, as they never had before. Pierre Wertheimer, co-owner of Chanel No.5, was worried about her return - an unsuccessful comeback or the enfranchisement of her name would undoubtedly hurt the prestige of Chanel No.5, arguably the most famous perfume in America - but he decided to back her with half of the money needed to launch her new line.[265]

By the time Chanel made her comeback, Yves St. Laurent was designing his first solo collection for Dior. Laurent's main piece was a simple black dress, consisting of wool and silk, with narrow shoulders and a wide hemline. Chanel, known in the fashion world as the creator of "the little black dress," responded to Laurent's new collections with, "the more he copies me, the better taste he displays."[266] Chanel thought designing for women was no place for a man, but the post-war revolution had undoubtedly included a switch from women dominating the fashion scene to men.

Figure 40
The Chanel look

Chanel premiered her first new line on February 5, 1954, as five was her lucky number and she liked to show everything on the fifth (figure 40).[267] Fashionistas and the press were so curious that her show was packed a half-hour before it started. Chanel did not disappoint, but her new line surprised her audience. Chanel's runway was a vision of

[265] Ibid., 183-85.
[266] Ibid., 298.
[267] Ibid., 287.

slow, posing figures, unlike Dior's fast and frisky girls, adorned with accessories. Unfortunately, people had grown accustomed to Dior and were shocked to see the simplicity of Chanel's designs. According to Karl Lagerfeld, the designer who took over for Chanel and is currently designing under her name, "by refusing to change or grow with the times, she hoped to block out reality."[268]

Compared to Chanel's boyish figure of the past, Dior's new look fulfilled the feminine desires of women after World War II. Women no longer wanted to portray the independent de-feminized woman of World War I. Women wanted their husbands and boyfriends to return from the war to find their wasp-waisted wives and girlfriends waiting for them. Dior's outfit was successful because it made women feel special again. Dior's new look, although achieved by corsetry and padding, gave women what they desired: a small waist, curvaceous hips, and a shapely bust. Times had changed and Chanel's look did not change with it. Chanel did eventually regain her place in the spotlight, however, after readjusting to the new fashion scene of the fifties in her second line. Even though Chanel did not gain immediate success, the prestige of the European label allowed her to make a comeback in the fashion industry (figure 41).

Figure 41
A 2007 Chanel ad

[268] Andrew Bolton and Harold Koda, *Chanel: The Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York: Yale University Press, 2005), 15.

For Dior and Chanel, new opportunities to be in the spotlight of the fashion world arose from the depressing ashes of World War II. Dior took the opportunity to make a new look in his new house, to which he was awarded a spot in fashion history and fashion's future. Chanel took the opportunity to reinvent herself in a new age of fashion, after being criticized by the women of the 1950s, who were generations beyond her most successful times. Although Chanel and Dior did not gain the same results, they both created new looks after the war that would reserve their names in the fashion world for decades to come.

Even after the war, French fashion continued as a form of self-expression for French women and for American women as well. American women aspired to have French clothing, as it became a status symbol and a sign of wealth and luxury. France, of course, had long been established as a country who fashioned chic clothing, therefore inspiring the use of "French-sounding" labels in the United States and elsewhere on domestically produced items, a practice that is still found today.[269] Paul Poiret criticizes American labeling when he insists Americans do not understand value, relying only on labels. As per Poiret, "to sell common merchandise under the name Poiret seems to them a happy and fortunate notion."[270] France has become synonymous with luxury in America.

The success of French, Italian and even German designers in the United States after the war does not mean American designers were ignored. Many great American designers resulted from the war. One designer, Frederick Mellinger, is still recognized

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[269] Paulicelli, 40.

[270] Paul Poiret, *King of Fashion: The Autobiography of Paul Poiret* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1931); quoted in Ewen, 160.

today. Mellinger served in the war and came back to start designing lingerie in 1946 and created Frederick's of Hollywood in 1947. Mellinger's designs were extremely popular among Hollywood movie stars. Frederick made women feel sexy with such items as the first-ever padded bra, which Mellinger designed in 1947, and the equally enticing push-up bra, which Mellinger was the first to create in 1948.[271] Claire McCardell's denim, jersey, and seersucker continued to gain in popularity after the war, even though they were used as replacements during the war (Figure 42). Maidenform became a household name in 1942 when Ida Rosenthal, the co-founder of Maidenform, patented an adjustable strap fastener that stayed in place once adjusted.[272] Even famous engineer Howard Hughes was interested in lingerie during the war. He designed a metallic, bosom-enhancing bra for Jane Russell to wear in *The Outlaw* (1943). The film faced banishment from the movie screens for six years due to the risqué nature of this bra.[273] These designers changed the way women felt about their bodies and changed the stereotype that portrayed American designers as lesser than their French equivalents.

Figure 42
A sundress by Claire McCardell, 1956

Although Chanel, Dior, Gucci, and Hugo Boss are still top companies in America today, they ironically may not have survived to become so successful if it were not for

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[271] Bressler and Newman, 46.
[272] Maidenform, "The Maidenform Story," http://www.maidenform.com/custserv/custserv.jsp?sectionId=40 (accessed November 29, 2006).
[273] Bressler and Newman, 46.

the Americans who financially bailed them out from behind the bars of their postwar economic burdens. The United States stood alone as the only country to financially profit from World War II.[274] Today Americans are still supporting the European market by strongly contributing economically to the French, Italian, and German fashion industries through clothing purchases. Dior, Chanel, Gucci, and Hugo Boss, all names involved in the ideology of Mussolini and Hitler's regimes, are the biggest names in the fashion in the twenty-first century and continue to reign supreme in America. The question is: why?

Fashion is very important to one's identity as clothing and style alone influence first impressions and initial reactions, becoming an outer portrayal of one's inner identity. Many feel fashion is important as it creates a sense of individualism and belonging at the same time. Since ready-made clothing was customary for American women by the outbreak of the Second World War, women have been sharing mass-produced fashions for over sixty years.[275] Society has always told women who they should be in order to be an acceptable part of the social order and since mass-production has increased the availability of fashion, women have desired to be the woman they see in commercials or magazine ads; identity has evolved into a lifestyle based on conformity and consumerism.

Mass production, the "democratization" of fashion, and the use of clothing as self-expression, created a huge demand for fashion after the war and allowed European fashion to grow in popularity in America. As mass production in America has lessened the quality of clothing, turning out garments as quickly as the styles change and fashion is reproduced so that all levels of society can afford to purchase the trends, European

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[274] White, 11.
[275] Ibid., 42.

clothing has become synonymous with quality and artisanship, continuing to carry the reputation it gained after the war. The advancements made in artificial fibers and mass production during the war due to war shortages and war needs changed the face of fashion forever. Ironically, the devastation of World War II in Europe did not lead to devastation in the European fashion industry. In fact, much the opposite occurred: European designs became "the" must have items for American and European women, and for those who could not afford the real thing, there were always cheaper, Americanized, mass-produced copies.

Figure 43
Hounds-tooth jacket of
Dior's 1948 collection

Figure 44
A 2007 (Dior's 50th
Anniversary) by Galliano

V

CONCLUSION

The study of fashion is important because fashion, especially today, exists as an indication of identity and self-expression. Before World War II, fashion in France and America mainly existed as a form of amusement for an elite few who could afford high fashion. Less fortunate people made their own clothing and fashion existed for them only as well as they could sew and design. Still for others under the fascist regimes of Italy and Germany, fashion existed as a form of national pride and unity dictated by the government to promote militarism. Before the war, fashion meant many different things.

During the war, everything changed. America gained an independent fashion industry while cut off from France, and advancements in mass-production due to war demands quickly made it possible for everyone to afford fashion. High fashions gained the ability to be copied at an extreme pace, albeit not always of the same quality. During the war, fashion became a means of national identity in Italy and Germany as support for their regimes through uniforms, military style dress, as well as colors and fabrics dictated by the regimes. Conversely, in France and America, clothing styles became a means of self-expression and anti-fascism, occurring through choice rather than force, resulting in the use of fashion as identity.

The advancements made in artificial fibers, during the war, due to rationing and war shortages made it easier for mass-produced items to look and feel like the original

designs they copied, but cost a lot less. Now all levels of society could participate in fashion due to the never-ending cycle of quick trends and fashion evolution, but clothing lost its value. In the world of mass-production and mass-consumption, price and quality have taken a back seat. America, more advanced than other countries in mass production, and last to form an independent fashion industry, did not carry the reputation for high quality clothing that European countries did. After World War II, Italy, Germany, and France gained a reputation for higher quality clothing that has carried over to today's society.

France quickly regained her name in the fashion world because she was highly trusted before the war, continued designing throughout the war, and made a quick comeback after the war. Hitler and Mussolini only employed the best of the best, because they wanted to make a name for their countries under fascism, resulting in a reputation for quality and an international desire for German and Italian clothing as well. America worked very closely with these countries in getting Europe back on its feet after the war and never lost its connection with them; at least as far as the fashion industry is concerned. America's ability to create mass trends, matching the affordability of all levels of society, formed the "pop-culture" that exists in modern day America. Now everyone can participate in trends, yet high fashion is still only available to those who can afford the exorbitant prices of famed European and American labels.

The resulting consequences World War II placed on the fashion industry changed fashion from a luxury only the privileged could afford, to a form of self-expression and personal identity for everyone in America, important for social interaction and fitting into

society. As European fashion became synonymous with luxury and quality after the war, the involvement in fascism by European designers was ignored, welcoming European designs back into the stream of trends Americans utilized to express themselves. The restrictions and hardships of World War II brought new meaning to fashion, allowing the incorporation of clothing into feelings of self-worth and belonging in today's society.

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