



Fashion Victims: The Dangers of Dress Past and Present

By Alison Matthews David

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From insidious murder weapons to blaze-igniting crinolines, clothing has been the cause of death, disease and madness throughout history, by accident and design. Clothing is designed to protect, shield and comfort us, yet lurking amongst seemingly innocuous garments we find hats laced with mercury, frocks laden with arsenic and literally 'drop-dead gorgeous' gowns.

Fabulously gory and gruesome, *Fashion Victims* takes the reader on a fascinating journey through the lethal history of women's, men's and children's dress, in myth and reality. Drawing upon surviving fashion objects and numerous visual and textual sources, encompassing louse-ridden military uniforms, accounts of the fiery deaths of Oscar Wilde's half-sisters and dancer Isadora Duncan's accidental strangulation by entangled scarf; the book explores how garments have tormented those who made and wore them, and harmed animals and the environment in the process. Vividly chronicling evidence from Greek mythology to the present day, Matthews David puts everyday apparel under the microscope and unpicks the dark side of fashion.

Fashion Victims is lavishly illustrated with over 125 images and is a remarkable resource for everyone from scholars and students to fashion enthusiasts.

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Editorial Review

Review

As featured on *The Hairpin*, *The Independent*, *My Little Bird*, *New York Magazine*'s "The Cut," and *New Review Magazine*

"A highly engaging and thought-provoking book. Informative, entertaining and unsettling, *Fashion Victims* is a history of death by dress for fashionistas and scholars alike. Read it!" ?*Susan J. Vincent, University of York, UK*

"Combining narrative verve with a brilliant selection of pictures, *Fashion Victims* is both an engaging read and a 'useable history'. Meticulously researched, it wears its academic credentials lightly, and the story it tells is at once entertaining and startling. Fashion history will never seem quite the same again." ?*Caroline Evans, Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts London, UK*

"In this provocative and beautifully-illustrated volume, Alison Matthews David spans past and present, producers and consumers, Europe and the United States, to explore the many ways that fashionable clothing and accessories harmed and sometimes killed. A fascinating read and essential backdrop to concerns about today's globalized textile and garment production." ?*Clare H. Crowston, University of Illinois, USA*

"No book explores fashion as a seductive pleasure that kills like Alison Matthews David's *Fashion Victims*. With contaminated cloth, mercury-laden fur and toxic dyestuffs, poisoned fashion silently claims its victims - makers and wearers. This panoramic work outlines the hazardous substances used in fashion, both past and present." ?*Tanya Williams Wetenhall, The George Washington University, USA*

"Fashion historian David (Ryerson Univ., Toronto) examines how clothing caused death, disease, and madness during the 19th and early 20th centuries in France and North America, transmitting contagious diseases, emitting chemical toxins, and catching fire... compelling and sometimes disturbing ... does make a case for reexamining our fashion consumption in the 21st century and how that consumption hurts the environment and people, especially those in developing countries where most apparel is now produced."
-*Library Journal*

"If you happen to start reading this book, as I did, in bed on a leisurely rainy September morning, you may well suddenly feel a little suspicious of your own innocently striped nightwear ... This is an earnest and important book, generously illustrated and full of interest, retrieving heart-sinking horror from the historical record, and signposting a future that remains immensely troubling." -Shahidha Bari, *Times Higher Education*

"Laden with colorful pictures, artwork, articles, newspaper clippings, and ads, *Fashion Victims* puts it all on the table in its artful and intelligent layout ... the book is excellent for history enthusiasts and a must-have for anyone with an interest in fashion." -*Please Pass the Books*

"David's publication begs that we collectively examine the lengths we will go to for personal style ... David probes this idea, noting that fashion has long been a marker of social status as well as moral compass, two things that were taken very seriously in times like the 19th century. Even today this still rings true, as we still make judgments about a person's values based on their clothing choice, and luxury clothing and labels still act as a status signifier to separate us. Though we have moved past the times of arsenic imbued garments and

lethal dyes, David also notes the deadly dangers of the creation of fashion of today. Workers in unsafe conditions with little other options but to take jobs working long hours doing the same thing day-in and day-out, with disastrous long-term effects, are not looked over by David.” –Elizabeth Patterson, *Visionaire*

“We think of drop dead gorgeous clothes as deadly only for our wallets. But they can kill. And have ... From hats laced in mercury to entangled scarves and easily inflammable fabric Matthews-David reveals the darkest side of fashion ... Half-terrifying, half-fascinating, *Fashion Victims* is an eye-opener ... beautifully illustrated too.” -*Beautiful with Brains*

“The term ‘fashion victim’ conjures up images of people shopping till they drop, of clothes mavens obsessed with the latest looks and labels. But sometimes the phrase is literal. The new book ... by Alison Matthews David, offers a deadly tour of fashion history: from diseased uniforms to poisonous pigments, flammable skirts and more. Here, some of the biggest sartorial tragedies of all time.” –Mackenzie Dawson, *NY Post*

“Get your hands on a copy. It’s fantastic.” - Rachel E. Pollock, *La Bricoleuse*

“Most of us have dealt with the pain of squeezing into a pair of too-tight jeans or nursed blisters from ill-fitting shoes. But imagine putting on a dress or hat, knowing very well it’s coated in poison. That’s the reality that Alison Matthews David brings to light in her new illustrated book, *Fashion Victims: The Dangers of Past and Present*, a fascinating but gruesome look at how some of the most beautiful and stylish garments produced throughout Western history have also been the most lethal.” –Sue Carter, *Toronto Metro*

“As far as wardrobe scares go, it doesn’t get much more dramatic. Naomi Campbell falling off her giant Vivienne Westwood platforms (a story that is included in Ms. David’s book) has nothing, for example, on the tale of the arsenic-laced green dyes in clothes and accessories of the late 19th century, whose poison leached into the wearer’s skin ... Though this is all, on one level, clearly alarmist, and it would be wrong to draw a general conclusion from the evidence presented that fashion does more harm than good, it’s nevertheless eye-opening. Which was, it turns out, Ms. David’s goal ... she said her point was not to indict the industry, though she acknowledged the book could be read that way, but rather to cause ‘people to take a second look at what they buy, and think about the other people it may have touched.’ ... researching the book, which took about a decade ... included not only delving into fashion archives but also into old medical texts and digging garments out of storage and having them analyzed and tested in various modern laboratories.” –Vanessa Friedman, *New York Times*

“... full of interesting photographs of the clothing under discussion. It also had drawings from the time showing the work conditions of those making the items and illustrating the dangers to the wearer ... I’d recommend this book to those who are interested in the details of fashion dangers of the last 200 years.” –Deborah White, *Different Time Different Place*

“Focusing on the mid-1700s to the 1930s, the book is an astonishing and sometimes gory account of the ways in which clothing has killed, either by accident, by design, or through treacherous manufacturing conditions. This dark history is presented alongside a series of illustrations from the era, which show just how dangerous dressing could be.” -*Atlas Obscura*

“Alison Matthews David’s *Fashion Victims: The Dangers of Dress Past and Present* examines fashion’s fearful past, when crinolines were a serious fire hazard (Oscar Wilde’s half-sisters found out the hard way) and the aniline dye in eyelash and eyebrow tinting was blinding style-savvy users.” –Alison Nastasi, *Flavorwire*

About the Author

Alison Matthews David is Associate Professor in the School of Fashion, Ryerson University, Toronto, Canada.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Trevor Wright:

The book *Fashion Victims: The Dangers of Dress Past and Present* make one feel enjoy for your spare time. You may use to make your capable far more increase. Book can for being your best friend when you getting anxiety or having big problem with your subject. If you can make studying a book *Fashion Victims: The Dangers of Dress Past and Present* to get your habit, you can get much more advantages, like add your current capable, increase your knowledge about several or all subjects. You are able to know everything if you like open and read a e-book *Fashion Victims: The Dangers of Dress Past and Present*. Kinds of book are a lot of. It means that, science guide or encyclopedia or other individuals. So , how do you think about this publication?

Stanley Roman:

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