



OCCULT DRESS Occultism is any nonmainstream Western system of spirituality that uses magic, the definition of magic being the way in which internal thoughts are used to effect changes in the outside world. Occultists, such as northern European Pagans (e.g., Wiccans, Druids, and witches) and ceremonial magicians (Cabalists, hermetics, and the like) practice magic as part of their religions. Occult dress is used when participating in magic rites, rituals, or ceremonies. Western occult dress has three primary functions: (1) to psychologically place the wearer in an extraordinary sense of reality; (2) to identify the status of the wearer within a social group; and (3) to indicate the beliefs of the wearer.

Clothing

Occult beliefs promote nudity as occult dress, because clothing is believed to impede the flow of magical energies through the body from the surrounding environment. Wicca practitioners and witches have traditionally performed rites in the nude to show their devotion to the Wiccan goddess. Due to modesty or weather, some occultists wear robes or tunics with bare feet and no undergarments. This latter dress is believed to still allow the flow of magical energies. Many covens and magical groups have set occult dress guidelines, using tradition or personal tastes as a basis for these guidelines. Occult dress, especially nudity, is not a common Western mode of dress, therefore it psychologically alerts and reinforces the awareness of special occasions and presence of magic for occultists. Each magical group sets the guidelines for occult dress. There is not a specific literature, although a magical group may draw inspiration from books, movies, or even more mainstream cultural practices.

Some occult groups don garments symbolically colored according to a ceremony or rite. For example, a Northern European Pagan coven may don white clothes to celebrate Yule rites and green clothes to celebrate Beltane festivals. Ceremonial magic groups, such as the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, have an extensive magical color symbolism, and thus certain colored clothing is worn for a specific ritual. This is done in order to mentally link the practitioner to the rites being performed, raising awareness and effectiveness of the spiritual ritual.

Occult dress is also used to indicate status within a group. Wiccan high priestesses of Alexandrian lineages indicate status to other initiates by a colored leg garter. Also, a waist cord may be worn in the same group to indicate the wearer having taken oaths pertaining to a level of initiation. Other occult groups, such as the Order of Bards, Ovates, and Druids, who originated in England, wear colored robes denoting rank during some occult ceremonies.

Cultural disposition is another motivation for specific occult dress. For example, Asatru practitioners may don tunics and mantles of historic Germanic styles to denote their affiliation to the ancient Teutonic religion. Celtic knotwork designs on clothing and jewelry may be worn to show an affiliation to Druidism and other ancient Celtic spiritualities.

Western occult dress tends to be self-manufactured (sewn by the practitioner or by a fellow occult member), or if technical skills are lacking, utilizes existing everyday clothing for a magical purpose such as a silk bathrobe purchased at a department store that could be worn in ritual as magical raiment.

Jewelry

Jewelry is used to indicate occult status or beliefs. A Wiccan priestess may don a silver tiara or crown emblazoned with moon-phase symbols, while a Wiccan practitioner or a Witch may wear a necklace with a moon or feminine symbol. Both silver metal and the moon symbolize the Goddess and feminine energies. A Wiccan priest may wear a headdress of antlers to symbolize fertility, fecundity, and the God of Wicca. A high priest or other practitioner may wear a necklace or torc decorated with appropriate spiritual symbols.

The pentacle, a disk emblazoned with a five-pointed star known as a pentagram, is commonly worn by many occultists as a token of affiliation to a nature-based pagan religion. The pentagram's points symbolize the elements of air, earth, wind, fire, and spirit, important concepts in northern European paganism. Another common indicator of a belief in a nature-based religion, especially witchcraft, is the Egyptian ankh pendant, worn as a symbol of eternal life.

Practitioners of Teutonic religions may wear an upside-down T-shaped "Thor's hammer." This symbol is

used as an overall indicator of Asatru, a name sometimes used for the Teutonic pantheon-based religion.

Tattoos

Tattoos may be used to indicate Pagan spiritual beliefs. Celtic knotwork and swirls are common designs employed as indicators of a nature-based religion. Tattoos can be utilized as proof of initiation or devotion. For example, some worshippers of Odin may get a tattoo of three interlocking triangles as a sign of their devotion to that Teutonic deity.

Contemporary Occult Stereotypes

The media generally depicts occultists wearing all-black clothing, especially black robes or cloaks, and having pentacles as jewelry. This stereotypical dress perpetuates the erroneous belief that the occultist is sinful or “evil.”

“Witch” stereotype. The “witch” is an enduring stereotype of female occult dress, exemplified by the Wicked Witch of the West from *The Wizard of Oz* and the witch antagonist from various Grimm’s fairy tales. The witch stereotype consists of ragged, all-black clothing, cape, conical wide-brimmed hat, and facial deformities. This stereotype originated in medieval Christianity’s attempt to denigrate practitioners of Western Pagan religions. The color black and physical deformities are associated with the concepts of evil and sin, hence the witch stereotype is “covered” in sin—black clothing and warts. Around the turn of the twenty-first century, the popularity of the *Harry Potter* book series by J. K. Rowling helped to alter the stereotype of the witch, replacing it with more diversified images and connotations.

Warlock/Satanist stereotype. The “warlock/Satanist” from cinema, such as those in the 1970s’ *Hammer* horror films, is another Western occult dress stereotype. The male and female Satanist stereotypes typically wear pentacle jewelry, black robes, black hair, and black eyeliner; similar dress is used for the (male) warlock. Since Western cinema has historically dressed the villain archetype in all-black clothing, dressing the occultist in black visually communicates a sinister character to the audience.

Influences on Contemporary Dress

In the late twentieth century, some occultists wishing to be recognized in mainstream religious and cultural arenas adopted stereotypical occult dress—black robes, pentacle jewelry, black hair, and black eyeliner. While controversial among occult communities, they visually publicized and communicated occult membership and beliefs by wearing this type of dress.

Occult dress has also influenced subcultures. The dark-romantic Goths, some heavy metal music fans “head-bangers,” and a variety of vampire subcultures utilize elements of occult dress, especially stereotypical components, such as black clothing and pentacles. Occult dress styles are more commonly worn by these subcultures as a sym-

bol of subculture affiliation, rather than as an indicator of religious or spiritual beliefs and practices.

See also **Ceremonial and Festival Costumes; Religion and Dress.**

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OILSKINS Oilskin is a heavy cloth that has been made waterproof by being impregnated with a hot solution of oil, gum, and wax to ensure maximum protection under extreme conditions. It has traditionally been made into the foul-weather apparel worn by sailors and fishermen.

Like many pieces of outerwear, the oilskin was born out of necessity. Life upon the high seas was never easy for those on board ship, and sailors devised a number of protective garments to deal with extreme conditions. During the early nineteenth century, it became common for sailors to smear themselves and the clothes they were wearing with oil for protection from the cold and the continuous ocean spray. One sailor at the time, Edward Le Roy, discovered that worn-out sail canvas could be recycled as outerwear. He devised a method of painting the fabric with a mix of linseed oil and wax so that it would become waterproof and suitable to be worn on deck in foul-weather conditions. By the 1830s, the oilskin had become established as essential attire for rough weather at sea for sailors, fishermen, and lifeboat men. The oilskins appeared to have a yellowish hue owing to the linseed oil used to treat them. Overcoats, hats, jackets, and trousers were also produced in this manner. When sailors came to shore they would often still be sporting their oilskin attire, and the wearing of oilskins was adapted for use by people on land. As news of the effectiveness of Le Roy’s new discovery spread, oilskin coats were soon being made by colonists in Australia, and by members of the British army to protect their rifles during rainstorms.

The oilskin coat is often known as a “slicker” in the United States. Oilskin coats and trousers, now made of rubberized or plastic-coated fabric, are still widely worn by fishermen and those in other maritime occupations, and have become standard rainwear for young children. They typically are made in a bright yellow color, echoing the original linseed-oil hue of oilskin itself.

Cattle drovers in Australia developed a version with a fantail to protect the seat of the saddle and leg straps to prevent the coat billowing out or blowing off while riding in the harsh conditions of the outback. The coat, that would become known as the Driza-Bone (the name recalls the dried-out bones of animals often found in the deserts of the outback) also had extended sleeves to protect the wearer's arms when they were extended. Oilskins of this style are still worn by motorcyclists, fishermen, and water-sports enthusiasts alike; the Driza-Bone has become one of the iconic garments of Australia.

The Barbour is another version of an oiled and waxed jacket, the use of which has filtered through to the mainstream. Established in 1894, the Barbour Company's eponymous lightweight coats have become a byword for traditional British oilskins. Ideal for walking, yachting, and fishing, Barbours come in three different weights. The Barbour has also become synonymous with agriculture, owing to its durability, functionality, and most importantly, its warmth and protection from the rain.

Not only do oilskins work as functional pieces of outerwear, they also look as good with a pair of jeans and loafers as they do with working overalls, heavy-duty boots and other protective dress.

See also **Parka; Rainwear.**

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OLEFIN FIBERS Polyethylene and polypropylene are familiar to consumers who recycle as PP, HDPE, and LDPE in disposable plastic items. As fibers, the Federal Trade Commission classifies them as “olefins”; this is also the chemists' term for the ethylene and propylene used to make them. Depending on the way the polymer is made, polyethylene melts at 110° to 135°C (240° to 275°F), while the usual polypropylene melts at around 165°C (330°F). For this reason, the vast majority of olefin fibers are based on polypropylene, and even then, the low melting point is a limitation. Gel-spun polyethylene fibers are distinctly different and are discussed below.

Olefin fibers are cheap. The polymer is melted for extrusion through a spinneret into fiber. Olefin production is a relatively simple operation that small companies

can undertake. Most olefin fibers have a round cross-section. They have strength comparable to nylon and polyester with a fiber tenacity of 5–7g/d (grams per denier). If olefin fibers are stretched or crushed they bounce back well; they have good resilience and recovery properties. Olefin also doesn't absorb moisture, and the fiber is the lightest of all the common fibers. Its g/cc density is 0.92 (grams per cubic centimeter). This means that fabrics of a given bulk are lightweight, and olefin materials float in water. Weather resistance is limited, but stabilizers are added to render this deficiency unimportant in practice. The fiber is undyeable, and while much research has been undertaken to achieve dyeability, few of these modifications have proved commercially successful. For this reason, most colored olefin fibers are produced by the inclusion of pigment in the melt before spinning, in a process commonly called “solution-dyeing” (although it is technically neither a solution nor a dyeing process). The undyeability can also be viewed as inherent stain resistance, and together with the good resilience, abrasion resistance, low density (i.e., good cover for a given weight), and low cost make olefin a realistic alternative to nylon for carpet fiber, and olefin is widely used in upholstery fabrics for the same reasons. The strength is sufficient to make olefin ropes and cords useful, and coupled with low biodegradability and low cost, makes olefin fibers a good choice for geotextile applications.

The lack of moisture absorption translates into “wickability,” and olefin fibers have thus been used for athletic and hiking socks, cold weather underwear, and diaper liners. In many instances, polyester, which also has a very low moisture retention but is dyeable, has taken over those end-uses. Low cost renders the material disposable, and olefin has been used for disposable surgical gowns. It has tended to replace cellulosic fibers such as jute in carpet backing and in sacking.

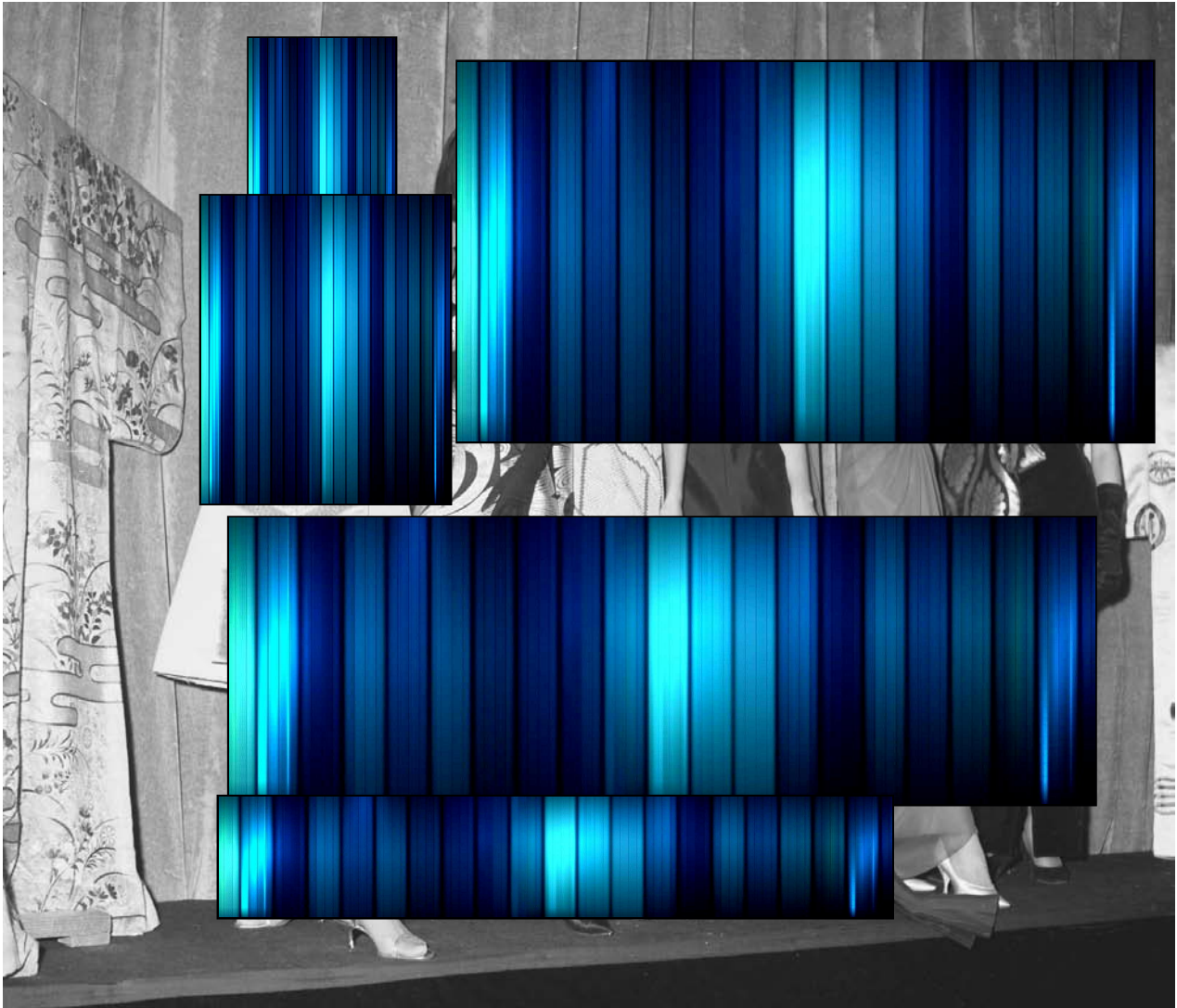
The technique of gel spinning has been used to produce polyethylene fibers in which the polymer chains are highly aligned along the length of the fiber. One commercial example is sold as Spectra. The excellent alignment gives the material a very high strength, some 3 to 4 times stronger than polyester, and of the same order as para-aramid fibers such as Kevlar. Like Kevlar, it is thus useful in cut protection, ballistic protection, and sailcloth. While the lower weight of olefin is an advantage, the low melting point may be considered a limitation.

See also **Acrylic and Modacrylic Fibers; Fibers; Techno-Textiles.**

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Women wearing dresses by Japanese designer Chiyo Tanaka. After World War II, the West showed a re-emergence of interest in other cultures, and Asian designers began to make an impact in the fashion world. © BETTMANN/CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

ORIENTALISM The Orient has been a source of inspiration for fashion designers since the seventeenth century, when goods of India, China, and Turkey were first widely seen in Western Europe. While the use of the term “Orientalism” has changed over time, it generally refers to the appropriation by western designers of exotic stylistic conventions from diverse cultures spanning the Asian continent.

Though luxury goods have been filtering into Europe from countries like China since ancient times, it was not until the great age of exploration that a wider array of merchandise from cultures throughout Asia found their way to the west. For example, the importation of Chinese ceramics exploded in the seventeenth century. Not only did these wares remain popular for centuries, they also inspired the creation of stellar ceramic compa-

nies like Sevres in France and Meissen in Germany. Even plants, like the legendary flower from Turkey that led to the “tulipmania” craze in Holland and the brewed leaf that became the status drink of the well-to-do and evolved into the ritualized “high tea,” fueled the love of all things from Asia.

It was in the realm of fashion that the impact of “Orientalism” could also be profoundly felt. Platform shoes from central Asia led to the creation of the Venetian chopine in the sixteenth century. Textiles from all over Asia, primarily China, India, and Turkey, inspired the creation of fashions like the *robe à la turquerie* in the eighteenth century. This was a more extraordinary phenomenon since the fear of Turkish Islamic invaders was a constant and imminent threat. Coupled with the threat of an invasion was a diametrically opposed view: the ro-

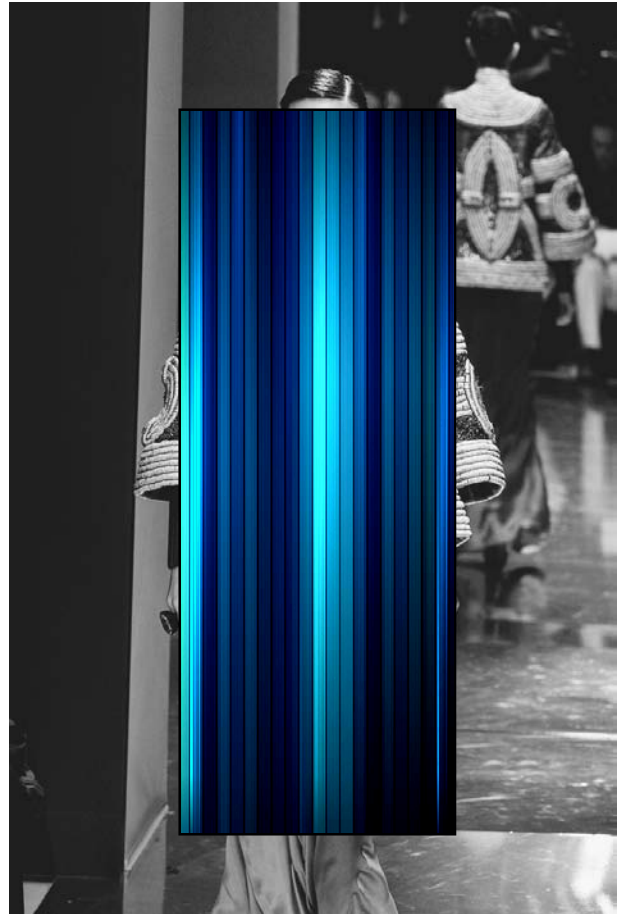
romantic notion of a far-distant land, such as Cathay (or China), filled with genteel philosophers and lovers of art. This idealized impression of China would continue until the rise of the industrial revolution and European colonialism in the early nineteenth century. The gritty reality of ever-increasing business transactions between East and West, as well as the ever-encroaching military dominance by European powers in Asia was firmly cemented by the middle 1800s.

As Queen Victoria ascended the throne of England 1837, then the most powerful empire in the world, she oversaw an eclectic art style that would come to dominate the remainder of the nineteenth century. The Victorian era brought together many historical European styles of the past, Gothic and Rococo for example, which were sometimes surprisingly combined with elements from cultures like Japan. The end result of one amalgamation, Gothic and Japanese, led to the creation of the Aesthetic Movement. Fashion gowns reflected this blend: smocked robes like medieval chemises were embroidered with asymmetrically placed floral motifs of chrysanthemums, two distinctly Japanese design elements.

The influence of Orientalism on fashion could be seen in many other ways, both frivolous and profound. For example, the fad for harem pants from Turkey appeared in the form of fancy dress costume at balls, just as the Zouave costume of North Africa found its way into the wardrobes of some Southern soldiers fighting in the American Civil War and the closets of European ladies. On the other hand, items of dress from Asia would become essential for women through the mid-nineteenth century. Kashmiri shawls, originally woven in India then exported to the west in the late eighteenth century, became a ubiquitous part of the neoclassical costume. The shawl was often paired with a white columnar dress made of diaphanous, finely woven Indian cotton. Its popularity inspired many weaving companies in Europe to create their version of this essential nineteenth-century wrap, later known as the paisley shawl.

The Orientalism trend reached an apex in the early twentieth century, and the sources for this mania for “all things oriental” ranged from nostalgia for the legends of Persia and Arabia, as popularized by “A Thousand and One Nights,” to the Paris debut of Sergei Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes in 1909. This burst of Orient-inspired creativity in the realm of fashion also had lesser-known sources, including the avant-garde art movement Fauvism and Japanese kimonos made expressly for the western market.

French couturiers, such as Paul Poiret and Jeanne Paquin, were inspired by the Ballet Russes’ performances of “Cléopâtre,” “Schéhérazade,” and “Le Dieu Bleu.” This Russian dance company took Paris by storm with their revolutionary choreography, music, and costume and set designs by the Russian artist Leon Bakst (1866–1924). In addition to these fantastic costume



Model in Scherrer 2004 haute couture design. Asian and other ethnic influences began finding their way back into fashion lines in the 1960s and continued to make an impact into the early 2000s. AP/WIDE WORLD PHOTOS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

shapes and opulent decorative elements, couturiers incorporated the vibrant color palette of Fauve artists such as Henri Matisse. Not only did designers create garments with Orientalist influences, so did the modistes: turbans topped with aigrette or ostrich plumes and secured with jeweled ornaments were paired with either neoclassic columnar gowns or fantastical lampshade tunics.

Clothing created more in the realm of craft by artists such as Mariano Fortuny and Monica Monaci Gallenga also fused historical European and Asian styles into cohesive aesthetic statements. Using silk velvet as a base, both Fortuny and Gallenga precisely incorporated textile patterns from East Asia and the Islamic world for their creations. The importance of craft also fueled the European and American fad for batik cloth. Both the technique for making resist-dyed fabrics like batik and the motifs perfected in cultures like Indonesia were created by artisans on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean in the 1920s.

Marie Callot Gerber (1895–1937), the venerable head of the leading couture house Callot Soeurs, was

another innovator who readily embraced Orientalism. She was inspired by the kimono and created some of the earliest versions of harem pants. From 1910 to the outbreak of World War I, acclaimed beauty and woman of style, Rita de Acosta Lydig, worked with Gerber to create versions of Oriental costumes that were composed of vests made from seventeenth-century needle lace that topped trousers or one-pieced garments that were full and loose over the lower part of the torso before tapering over the calves. Often called the tango dress, after the dance craze imported from Argentina, this style was popularized by couturiers like Lucile (Lady Duff Gordon, 1863–1935) and by fashion illustrators. The house of Callot would go on to lead the 1920s trend for embellishing the columnar dresses of the era with rich embroideries that readily copied Persian and Chinese design elements.

Also influential were exhibitions and expositions geared specifically to exhibit products of France's colonies. One of the first was a major exhibition of Moroccan art installed at the Pavillion de Marsan in March, 1917. The exhibition also forecasted far larger things to come: the Exposition Coloniales, held in Marseilles in 1922 and in Paris nine years later. These shows not only generated public interest in non-Western cultures, but also projected France's commitment to imperialism. According to art historian Kenneth Silver in his publication *Esprit de Corps*, the exposition of 1922 expressed a "less than covert sense of racism." The French were still recovering from the devastating effects of World War I as late as 1925, and there is little doubt that these exhibitions and expositions allowed them to publicly display not only their high position in the modern world, but also their dominance over a vast array of Third World cultures.

Many of the centuries most noted couturiers in France were readily absorbing the influences of the Colonial Expositions of 1922 and 1931. It was the first time that many had direct access to art from such remote countries. This exposure to ethnic dress gave them a far more profound understanding of non-Western dress, primarily objects from Asia. This understanding would enable a few enlightened couturiers to create both new fashion silhouettes as well as imbue their designs with a fundamentally different construction that emphasized the textile rather than complex tailoring.

Marcel Rochas, for example, was directly inspired by dance costumes from the Balinese court, as seen in his broad-shouldered garments of the season immediately following the 1931 Exposition. His "robe Bali," a black silk dress with a broad and square collar trimmed in white pique, is interesting in that it follows the silhouette of a non-Western garment but uses typical European colors and fabrics. Madame Alix Grès also created her version of a Balinese costume in 1937. Jacques Heim designed a sarong-style bathing suit inspired by the Tahitian exhibits in the 1931 Exposition. These sarong suits, in a radical departure from contemporary bathing-suit construction, were made not of knitted wool but with draped woven

cotton. *Harper's Bazaar* made mention of these sarongs and his *pareos* from later collections. By the mid-1930s, Hollywood costumer Edith Head designed a version of the sarong for actress Dorothy Lamour in a series of comedic films starring Bob Hope and Bing Crosby. As noted earlier, all these designers' ethnic-inspired work of this period was not based on non-Western construction techniques, but rather their inspirations came from overall cultural impressions.

The output of "ethnic" garments by fashion designers was to drop off significantly during the 1940s and 1950s as the influence of exotic cultures on fashion had already begun to diminish around 1934. Inspired by the play "The Barrets of Wimpole Street" and the Hollywood film version, couturiers like Madeleine Vionnet, to cite but one of many examples, began to create modern versions of nineteenth-century Western dress. This trend dominated fashion from the late 1930s through the 1950s. The revival of historical styles offered an escape from the pressures of the Great Depression of the 1930s and helped assert the growing sense of nationalism in Europe at that time. Also a factor in the United States was strong anti-Japanese sentiment during and after World War II.

Fashion periodicals of the 1940s, 1950s, and early 1960s seem to indicate only a minimal interest in foreign dress for most designers, as compared with earlier decades. However, a strong revival of ethnic influences arose during the mid-1960s, as the fashion world responded to the purposeful rejection of standard, mass-produced fashion by young people. The young people known as "hippies" ushered in a style noted for its free-form mix of fashion elements from around the world, particularly the Middle East, India, and Native American cultures. Coupled with this renewed interest in non-Western cultures was the emergence of Asian designers. For the first time, Japanese creators like Hanae Mori not only made fashion, they began to influence the work of western designers.

After World War II, other Asian garments began to find their way into the fashion mainstream. One example is the quintessential twentieth-century Chinese dress—the *qipao* or *cheongsam*. This figure-revealing garment worn by a range of urban Chinese women since the mid-1920s has become known in the Western world as the "Suzie Wong" dress, deriving its nickname from the infamous, fictional prostitute in Richard Mason's novel, *The World of Suzie Wong*, published in 1959. Born in the tumultuous years of early Republic China, the *qipao* (meaning "banner gown" in Mandarin) or *cheongsam* (meaning "long dress" in Cantonese) is a true fashion hybrid that fused the elements of traditional Qing Dynasty court dress, Han Chinese costume, and the modern European silhouette. Despite its respectable status in China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong, the *qipao* came to represent in the Occidental mind a two-pronged, stereotypical view of Asian women—subservient, obedient, traditional, on the one hand, and exotic, sexual, even menacing, on the

other. Films such as *Love Is a Many Splendored Thing* (1955) and *The World of Suzie Wong* (1960) are tales filled with textual excess whose narratives featuring Asian-Caucasian sexual liaisons use the *qipao* to uphold and sometimes subvert culturally accepted notions of race.

Perhaps it is those provocative elements of the *qipao* that have made contemporary reinterpretations of it so prevalent in the early twenty-first century. European or American designers, along with Chinese transplants like the New York-based Hong Kong native Vivienne Tam, have been creating their popular versions of Chinese-inspired fashions since the late 1990s. Examples range from the lavishly embroidered Neo-Chinoiserie gowns by John Galiano for Dior, Miuccia Prada's minimalist remake of the Mao jacket, and the body-revealing corseted mini *qipaos* by Roberto Cavalli. It is clear that the continued fascination with Orientalism continues into the twenty-first century.

See also **Japanisme; Qipao.**

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OUTERWEAR Outerwear attire is worn over other garments and is generally designed to protect wearers from inclement weather or other adverse environmental conditions, although some outerwear is primarily ceremonial in function. Humans have worn outerwear garments since prehistoric times, but the word “outerwear” has been in use only since the early twentieth century as a general term for this type of clothing. Any garment worn over the day, evening, or work attire of a given period is technically an outerwear garment, with styles ranging from simple shawl-like drapes to jumpsuits that cover the entire body. Fashionable outerwear, however, does not include protective work garments, so this entry focuses only on those outerwear styles worn with regular day or evening clothes.

Although there is no definitive evidence, it seems probable that the first outerwear garments were fur skins used as final body wrap. By the late Paleolithic period (c. 40,000 B.C.E.), skins were being cut and sewn together using bone needles and thread made of animal hair or ligaments. The first sewn outer garments were probably fur capes, designed to fit over the shoulders. This assumption is supported by the existence of wooden “toggle” pieces discovered in European graves of the Magdalenean period (15,000–8,000 B.C.E.), positioned to act as the front closures for a garment worn over the shoulders. In outerwear intended for warmth, the fur was worn next to the body, whereas if the garment's function was primarily ceremonial, the fur was worn outside, as in the leopard skins seen much later in depictions of Egyptian priests of the eighteenth dynasty (1580–1350 B.C.E.).

Just as wraps of fur had done in the earliest societies, lengths of cloth draped or wrapped around the body served as outerwear garments in the early Middle Eastern, Egyptian, Greek, and Roman civilizations. In Greece, both men and women draped a length of fabric called a himation over their tunics. Soldiers wore a short cape called a chlamys, made from a fabric rectangle wrapped around the left arm, and clasped by pins at the right shoulder, leaving the edges open along the right arm. In Rome, the himation became the pallium, and semicircular as well as rectangular fabric pieces were used for capes, as in the *paenula*, which also had a hood. Another ancient outer garment was a poncho-type cape, in which a slit was cut as an opening for the head; the Roman version was called a *casula*.

As noted, capes—sleeveless garments hanging from the shoulders—date back to prehistory with various styles developing over time. In European countries, from the time of Christ to the eighteenth century, capes, cloaks, or mantles—the words are generally used interchangeably—were the primary outerwear garments for both sexes and for all ages and economic classes. These garments were variations on the forms worn since antiquity, and of different lengths and styles depending on the era and/or their



Frock coats and top hats, ca. 1916. The men depicted in this poster are wearing frock coats and suits designed by the American Century Clothing Company. Various styles are shown here, including double- and single-breasted “Prince Albert,” as well as one- and two-button frock coats. © HISTORICAL PICTURE ARCHIVE/CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

wearers’ rank. For example, wealthy people wore capes lined and trimmed with fur both for extra warmth and as a status symbol. Outerwear garments were also sometimes worn indoors as well as outside, for added protection against the cold in unheated buildings. Ceremonial outerwear, robes of state, and robes for chivalric orders were impressive mantles made of luxurious fabrics and furs.

Occasionally, new garments came into fashion that were part of stylish daywear with an outerwear character, such as the coat-like over-gowns worn by aristocratic men and women in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The men’s gown developed from the long gowns worn by men in the Middle Ages and, by the 1490s, versions were being worn over the new short doublets. The gown was open in front to show the doublet and was typically sleeveless or with short sleeves to reveal the doublet’s sleeves. Portraits of Henry VIII from the 1530s show him wearing flaring, knee-length examples over elaborately slashed doublets. Like the male version, the women’s over-gown was usually open in the front and sleeveless or with short sleeves so that the under-gown and its sleeves would show from beneath. The women’s style was worn in the third quarter of the sixteenth century and originated from the Spanish *ropa*, which itself may have had Oriental origins. Because these gowns were part of current fashion, they were not outerwear in the same sense as capes. The gowns certainly provided additional warmth for their wearers, but, unlike capes, did not afford overall protec-

tion from the elements. For men, the gowns went out of fashion by the 1570s and for women by the 1580s.

Modern fashion trends toward complex clothing styles and rapid style changes, which were set in motion during the Renaissance, did not affect outerwear to any extent until much later. The most significant changes for outerwear took place during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, with sleeved coats and jackets slowly superseding capes as the primary outerwear garments for both men and women.

In men’s fashion, this progression begins in the late seventeenth century with a new outerwear garment, the greatcoat, also called a surtout. The origins of the greatcoat are unclear, but it is generally thought that it developed from workmen’s clothing, possibly the *hongerline*, an overcoat worn by French coachmen in the late 1600s. It was the English, however, who popularized the greatcoat, obscuring its working-class beginnings and tailoring it into a fashionable garment. Greatcoats were worn over men’s suits and were cut fuller, looser, and longer than the suit coats they covered. Over the century, as suit coats lost fullness in their skirts and sleeves, so too did greatcoats become more streamlined in cut. By mid-century, greatcoats had also acquired their most distinctive feature—tiers of two or three wide cape-like collars. Although many men still wore cloaks, greatcoats had definitely become the more stylish outerwear option by 1800.

Informal short outercoats, or jackets, were the other important development in men’s outerwear in the eighteenth century. These garments, which had many style variations, also originated from working-class clothing and resembled sleeved waistcoats. Because of their obvious working-class associations, jackets did not become popular among the upper classes until the century’s end. By the 1790s, however, fashionable young men were wearing jackets for hunting. One such style was the spencer, probably named after George John Spencer, second Earl of Spencer, who first sported one of the fitted, waist-length jackets.

Women’s outerwear coats and jackets have their roots in the seventeenth century, when women first adopted elements of male dress for riding. In the late 1600s and early 1700s, the style of women’s riding habit coats and waistcoats were taken directly from men’s suit coats and waistcoats, except that the women’s garments were cut to go over full skirts instead of breeches. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, women’s riding coats were slightly above knee-length and when open, revealed a waistcoat of almost equal length. By mid-century, riding coats had shortened to about hip length, becoming fitted jackets, and riding habits were regarded as outerwear suitable for both riding and traveling. Women also wore a variety of jacket-style bodices for informal daywear; however, unlike riding habit jackets, these garments were not considered outerwear.

Another garment patterned after menswear, in this case the greatcoat, came into fashion for women in the late 1770s. Called a riding greatcoat or redingote, this garment was a floor-length coatdress with a fitted bodice and long, fitted sleeves. Many variations of this style were worn into the 1790s, some with the skirt attached only at the bodice back or to its sides, revealing a decorative petticoat in front. In spite of its name, the redingote was not intended for riding; it was an informal day dress that was also acceptable as outerwear for walking or traveling. At the end of the century, shawls, especially fine woolen examples imported from India, came into vogue as decorative indoor-outdoor accessories. Despite these innovations, capes persisted as the main outerwear garment for women, especially during very inclement weather.

In the nineteenth century, rapid changes in women's dress determined whether capes, coats, jackets, or shawls were the fashionable outerwear choices at any given time. While capes continued to be worn throughout the century, shawls, coats, or jackets were sometimes more in vogue than the time-honored cape. This was especially true in the early nineteenth century when shawls and innovative jacket and coat styles predominated over capes. The most important new fashions were the spencer jacket, charmingly adapted from menswear for the narrow, high-waisted dresses of this period, and long overcoats, called pelisses, that mimicked the neoclassical silhouette of the dresses beneath.

Capes resumed their former importance by 1830 because capes were more accommodating than jackets or coats over dresses whose sleeves had ballooned into the leg-of-mutton style. Even after sleeves deflated in the mid-1830s, capes, styled in a myriad of new designs, continued as the dominant women's outerwear garments for the next thirty years. Shawls were also popular for daywear into the 1860s, especially large ones with paisley designs. Jackets again came into vogue in the 1850s and 1860s, including fashions with fur-trimmed, fitted bodices and knee-length full skirts for winter and short summer styles that flared out over hooped skirts. It was also in this period that fur garments with the fur on the outside, not as a lining, were introduced. Another jacket fashion, the dolman, was cut to accommodate the bustles of the 1870s and 1880s. Although not as popular as jackets, full-length coats were worn from the 1870s to the early 1890s, later losing favor to capes during the mid-1890s revival of the leg-of-mutton sleeve. Throughout the century, muffs and tippets, fur or fur-trimmed neck wraps, accessorized stylish outerwear.

For men, the greatcoat continued as the most fashionable outerwear option until the 1840s. New styles appeared in mid-century, including the Inverness coat, a loose coat with an arm-length cape; and the paletot, a boxy, thigh-length jacket. From the 1830s to the 1890s, when men wore suits consisting of a skirted frock coat, a waistcoat, and trousers, the frock coat, although it was technically daywear, could also serve as outerwear except

in severe weather. By the 1890s, the sack suit was replacing the frock suit for daywear and the sack suit jacket (the forerunner of modern men's suit jackets) was effective as lightweight outerwear. The winter overcoat of choice over both frock coats and sack suits was the Chesterfield, a topcoat cut similarly to a frock coat but longer, looser, and without a waist seam. Capes went out of style early in the century for daywear but endured as outerwear over formal evening wear.

Wool or fur outerwear provided significant protection from the cold for centuries, but similarly effective protection from rain was only made possible by technological advances in the nineteenth century. In 1823, Charles Macintosh, a Scottish chemist, patented the first viable waterproof fabric, consisting of two pieces of wool cemented together by rubber dissolved in coal-tar naphtha. This invention had great potential but had the serious drawbacks of becoming stiff in cold weather and sticky in hot. These problems were resolved when vulcanized rubber was invented in 1839 and Macintosh produced the first practical raincoats; in England, Macintosh or "Mac" raincoats are still worn today. From the mid-nineteenth century to today, further technological developments have led to man-made materials with increasingly effective waterproof and heat-retention properties, such as vinyl rainwear and acrylic furs.

Many forces shaped twentieth-century outerwear fashions. As in earlier centuries, the day and evening attire worn under the outerwear affected the look and cut of the overgarments, but sports, ethnic influences, the development of unisex styles, and new materials also played important roles. After centuries of predominance, capes were no longer the most ubiquitous outerwear garments. Men continued to wear capes for evening wear until mid-century, and women's capes were produced for both day and evening wear, but by the 1920s, capes constituted only a very minor part of the outerwear market. Throughout the century, the most basic outerwear options for both sexes were single- and double-breasted overcoats with notched collars. The men's versions often resembled their nineteenth-century precursors, while women had more diverse choices—coats fashioned in bright colors, new materials, and with contemporaneous style details such as padded shoulders.

Primarily worn by women, twentieth-century fur outerwear had a checkered record. Fur was a luxury item in the early 1900s, but fur and fur-trimmed garments became more affordable by mid-century due to the mass marketing of cheaper furs. In the 1960s, there was a fad for "fun furs"—inexpensive pelts, made up into a variety of trendy jackets and coats. However, escalating labor and material costs, plus the concerns of animal-rights activists, led to price increases and lessened popularity of real fur garments by the 1990s. Fortunately, refinements in man-made furs have allowed fur to continue its long-standing role in outerwear fashion.

OXFORD MONK'S CLOTH

The proliferation of new jacket styles for both sexes was the most significant outerwear development during the twentieth century. Whether ethnic-influenced anoraks and parkas, military-influenced pea and bomber jackets, or tailored blazers derived from men's suits, jackets are indispensable and versatile additions to everyone's outerwear wardrobe.

See also **Blazer; Coat; Duffle Coat; Jacket; Parka; Rainwear; Windbreaker.**

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Colleen R. Callaban

OXFORD MONK'S CLOTH. See **Weave, Plain.**