

Book Club #1 Pgs. 1-169

A. SUMMARY:

INTRODUCTION, CHAPTER 1, CHAPTER 2, and CHAPTER 3

The need to consume and buy more just to find an outfit for one event is getting out of hand. Within the introduction, it talked about too much and too cheap. We often overlook what we buy and often forget what we even have. To have self-awareness of our garments is something we have lost. With the easy and cheap available we may think it is no big deal to stock up and have a whole wardrobe of one-time wear outfits.

Fashion is one of the highest labor demanding industries in the world. There has not been a robot that can create garments for consumers. The seams and hems of garments are intensive labor and consumers come to believe it is just plain magic when all the new designs come along each season.

The Jazz Age raised the need for party clothes and patterns came out making it easy for individuals to create garments at home. As times changed, new looks, or the newest look of the week, were something everyone was on the hunt for. With the change of times, as well, people were able to wear whatever, wherever. Not only did people get to participate but dogs as well!

Dogs account for the fashion industry as well. I mean who would not need their dog in a cute, stylish outfit... Sustainability is becoming more recognized and on the rise. Famous designers started to take inspiration from all over, including grocery stores. A show on Autumn

14' presented handbags as household groceries. The ironic part being vending machines for garments. In Tokyo, there were vending machines at airports with suits and luxury goods. This comes to show the connection we have lost to clothing. Clothing is so convenient and easy to get so more consumers are buying more than what one would really need.

CHAPTER 4, CHAPTER 5

Luxury goods have been in existence since the creation of civilizations. From Egyptian queens, to Romans, to European royalty, it used to be commonplace for certain luxury fashion goods and accessories to be exclusively for the ruling class. Often, legislation was even put into place to enforce these rules. For example, King Louis XIV of France declared that only nobility was able to wear shoes with red heels, which signified their privilege in society. There were clear definitions of what was expected for each social class, which included how you dress, talk and act, and other behavior such as what you eat or how you spent your free time.

Luxury goods have always been for a very select few, but today there are a mere estimated 4,000 people that account for global haute couture. True couture is an example of extravagant dressmaking, hand embroidery and careful pattern cutting that takes hundreds of hours to complete, and costs multiple thousands of dollars. Many iconic luxury brands that are still popular today are so successful because they deliver product value that cannot be matched by anyone else. This is due to the careful craftsmanship they have refined and been committed to over the years, which is also accompanied by a price tag that reflects that value.

Luxury may not be a new thing, but by definition it is an indulgence, not necessity. The products that luxury brands produce today may not even be true luxury, as "Designer lipsticks

and perfumes carry substantial mark-ups and sell in far greater numbers than clothes,” (Press, pg. 57). Today, product judgements are based on perceived value, or more accurately which logo has been printed on its packaging. This can be traced back to the late 90’s, when dressing above your status became the norm, thanks to Carrie Bradshaw of *Sex and the City*. The rise of pop culture was accompanied with the not-so-new idea of being the next ‘It’ girl, created demand for middle markets with designer spin-offs and lower, mass markets that are now synonymous with ‘fast fashion.’ It became hard to distinguish between DKNY and actual Donna Karan products, and in 2012 D&G merged with the Dolce and Gabbana main line.

However, true luxury products will always stand the test of time because of their craftsmanship; they last decades and can be repaired when needed so it can continue to serve their true purpose. Brands like Hermes are more than just fashion brands and are not driven by marketing goals or profit margins. Unfortunately, due to the rise of capitalism, the luxury market is dominated by three multi-brand corporations: LVMH, Kering and Richemont. Collectively, these companies own almost all luxury brands except for a select few that have remained private-held, which include Hermes, Prada Group and Chanel. These corporations have pushed the middle market, filling their big city stores with smaller items, accessories, and cosmetics to appeal to this class, while keeping the exclusive, true luxury items tucked away upstairs for the ‘worthy’ customers. They also want to push the mixing of high and low culture, encouraging affluent consumers to shop at all price points, and earning thousands to millions of dollars from brand collaborations with luxury and fast-fashion retailers.

CHAPTER 6, CHAPTER 7

Chapter 6 explores the trend of luxury fashion brands collaborating with fast fashion retailers to create lower-priced collections. The author notes that these collaborations may seem like a win-win for both parties and generate sales. While the purpose of this collaboration is about elevating the low but diffusing the high-end brands, it would have negative environmental and social impacts. However, it argues that these collaborations also contribute to the problem of overconsumption by encouraging consumers to buy more clothes and to see fashion as disposable. The writer points out that fast fashion's business model relies on low wages and exploitative labor practices, which are perpetuated by these collaborations.

For so many of these items many celebrities are collaborating with designers to promote the brand, but even none of them ask about visiting factories of fast fashion items. In one hand, even though items of fast fashion are not designed to last, it is surprising that there is still a massive blogpost dedicated to and large queues of people shopping them.

There is a sophisticated marketing machine behind fashion. Later, in the chapter study showed that designer clothing with visible branding affects perception of the wearer. This means the value of an artwork can change depending on who has created it even though the art itself remains the same.

Despite all these concerns, there are some potential benefits to these collaborations, such as introducing fast fashion consumers to more sustainable and ethical luxury brands, such as H&M's Conscious Collection, have made efforts to be more sustainable and transparent.

Chapter 7 starts with talking about Think Act Change encouraging people to step up and commit to do something as a time to wake up.

The author describes poor working conditions, the inhumane practice of live plucking, in which feathers are ripped out of live birds multiple times over their short lives, causing them immense pain and distress. She notes that despite the cruelty involved, the use of down feathers in fashion continues to be widespread due to their insulating properties and popularity among consumers.

However, this chapter also highlights efforts by some companies to move away from the use of down feathers and towards more sustainable and ethical alternatives. For example, Patagonia has created a traceable down standard that ensures the humane treatment of birds and tracks the origin of the feathers used in its products. In addition, some other brands like north face and IKEA which producing feather filled items are completely against live plucking. Yet there are some countries like China, Hungary, and Poland, where live plucking is legal, are raising great concern. Over the years different kinds of animal skin and fur have been used for keeping humans protected against cold weather, squirrels, reindeer, foxes, bears, sea lions, etc.

But only ethical practices should remain in designs such as entirely recycled out of animal hair and skin.

Overall, this section encourages readers to consider the ethical implications of the materials used in their clothing, including the sourcing of down feathers, and to support companies that prioritize animal welfare in their business practices.

CHAPTER 8, CHAPTER 9 -

Chapter 8 focused on the use of fur, and its controversy within the industry. The use of fur is not new in fashion, in fact it dates back hundreds of years. The concern of fur and use of animal products is really amplified when it is introduced to mass production. There are a multitude of concerns activists and consumers are pinpointing, such as ethical sourcing, false labeling, and animal rights. The book explained the consumer infatuation of fur being an indicator of luxury and status, "People buy fur because it makes them look sexy and expensive" (pg.115) when analyzing this point further, the author makes the point "Fur is about luxury, vanity, and exploitation."

This chapter also studies the acquisition of these textiles- different pelts come from different locations globally due to wildlife available, but even with organizations like the international fur trade federation (IFTF) and PETA, not all mills adhere to the guidelines and ethics set. In fact, the book goes on to discuss the ethical implications of farming vs. Trapping animals for their fur. The book provides the statistic that less than 15% of fur harvested each year is wild. Meaning- more than 80% of fur produced is from farms. These fur farms are essentially comprised of stacks, and rows of small wire cages containing multiple animals per crate, crammed into a factory. These animals are exposed to abuse in terms of feeding and living conditions (the book provides a much more graphic explanation). The abuse then carries to the actual point of harvest where some animals are exposed to gassing, lethal injection,

electrocution, or even brutally snapping their necks. Worse than this, animals are also skinned alive. Video evidence of factory workers in China were shown tearing the fur out of live Angora rabbits. This event specifically caused many brands to back track on their fur use. H&M, for example, offered any of the customers that had purchased any of their products made from Angora to be returned for credit, even if the product was bought many years prior. Think of it almost as damage control since they can't go back and prevent the use of animal fur altogether.

Some companies have recognized the importance of ethical production in this area and forego their furs. others you could say turned a blind eye. One example is Fendi, a brand that is well established by their use of fur, to the point the FF logo has been said to stand for "Fun Fur." Other companies selling fur products have also come under fire for incorrectly labeling their product types, and origins, or excluding the label all together which is highly illegal. In this chapter the author went on an "undercover mission" with Pierre Gryzbowski to study how different stores advertised and labeled their fur products- they found stores to discern labels on fur products or sell bad quality almost rotting fur in a Bergdorf Goodmans. One quote that really stood out to me from this chapter was "For a civilized society, the way we often exploit and mistreat our animal resources is hideous."

Chapter 9 discussed the evolution of the retail industry. The birth of retail was in the early centuries with trade, and it evolved into city markets where people would shop for local resources. In the early 20th century, the concept of department stores took off. One of the first large-scale retailers was Marshall Fields & co. The different offerings of products that could be found in one store were a big interest to consumers. Other retailers such as Neiman Marcus, and Macys started at this time as well. As the retail industry grew, the importance of the

customer experience is what made a brand stand out. The book calls out luxury stores such as Louis Vuitton, or Hermes for their well-known “customer experience” people wanted to feel rich and luxurious in these spaces, and they came to these locations in reach of that. The book also discusses the rise of malls and brick & mortar locations. Malls were appreciated by consumers for the many stores in a small vicinity. The overload of sensation provided from the music, lighting and advertisements were almost trance inducing and the author compared it to zombie like behavior from consumers (The Gruen transfer) where the consumer loses consciousness and buys up products in a mindless state because “shopping!.” Malls were all the rage at one point in time, in fact between 1950-2005, 1,500 malls were built in the US. After 2006, none. The downfall of malls can be contributed to the rise of Ecommerce. Consumers liked the ease of the ability to buy products from everywhere, anywhere. At first shopping was all based around the consumer experience, and now its primary objective is that of ease. Don’t get me wrong, experience is still important, but now brands have to figure out how to deliver that experience to a customer’s doorstep. One luxury company, Net-A-Porter accomplishes this with its upscale packaging. Ecommerce may force brands to think outside the box in ways to enhance their customer experience, but in the digital age we are in if you are not online, you are basically out.

CHAPTER 10

Chapter 10 was about many different topics that all rely on the determination of living and becoming successful. During the nineteenth and the early twentieth century, immigrants from Eastern Europe had the background knowledge in selling and making things. This was due to them previously owning small business and being good and making certain products. As well

them having the motivation of becoming successful, so they hustled and became the employers to founders, to which many famous brands have come from this mindset. Brands like Ralph Lauren, which was founded by Ralph Lifschitz from a first-generation immigrant parent. The brand Calvin Klein was founded by Calvin Klein and Barry Schwartz who had Jewish immigrant parents. While their company boomed, they sold their products and made money through licensing their jeans to a third party, called Puritan Fashion Corporation. This corporation still benefited from them paying royalties to the point where in one year they sold around \$500 million worth. Making the brand Calvin Klein become one of the most successful brands.

While in New York City, there was a “mob ruling” that was ran by Thomas ‘Tommy’ Gambino. He ran the *Consolidated Carriers Corporation trucking company*, which was a monopoly. They would be the only people who would deliver garments throughout the city and everyone in the city knew, the business nearly grossed \$50 million.

There were threats of rat-infestations and small pox that was believed to be spread by clothing and it was a problem throughout the industrialization world. Around that time in London, they also had problems of their own. For one, it was reported in Kingsley work called *Cheap Clothes and Nasty*, he visited attics that around 6 men who lived with their children and wives and worked in stitching orders. Which to many, their concern was their suffocating living circumstances and that many working were all sick and weak due to the lack of food rations given out by the bosses. This type of working condition, that is now known as sweatshops coexisted with those who got paid reasonable wages.

Even if this was seen in London, New York also has horrible working conditions. One was run by a factory called Triangle. Majority of their workers were new immigrants, given cheap wages and most of them being teenage girls. To the founders of Triangles, they simply saw the life of their employees as cheap and a property. In one of the buildings they own, there was one elevator out of four that worked, which had caused many deaths when there was a fire that had started on the eighth and ninth floor. Many of their workers jumped out of the windows and some had burned to death since their doors to the outside were locked.

As time passed, there was an increase in American apparel companies who have benefited from having different parts of the garment being made in several countries at a lower cost. Those countries were used based on how much a dollar equivalent would be.

B. Reflection on the section as a consumer of fashion goods:

Taylor: I would have to say I do become forgetful of how bad fast fashion and overconsumption is for the environment. Overall, it is an eyeopener to read and learn more about how shopping can become over-excessive. It is something all consumers and individuals need to become more aware of.

Emma: I really enjoyed reading this section. I take pride in my shopping habits, and I do try to consume as ethically possible, because I know how ugly this industry can be under the glitz and glamor. For a long time, I have advocated against buying from fast fashion giants like Shein, Romwe etc. due to the negative environmental and human rights implication against those companies, but I found this section to be very informative, and I still learned a lot of valuable information that I will continue to use in my shopping habits. I recognize we should not just consume to consume but distinguish a want from a need.

Nahid: I am so grateful to get the chance to read this book, it opened my vision and made me think about my consumption habit of fashion goods. I went through my wardrobe and started donating my inactive items to share shop. I am more aware of buying from ethical brands that I learned about them, this not only is beneficial to me by having long lasting items, and makes me a conscious consumer, but also benefits the environment, one less fast fashion consumer!

Jaiden: This section was extremely interesting to read as a consumer. I have grown up from the perspective that it is normalized to consume as much as possible. With the rise of the Internet and YouTube especially, excess has been seen as something that is desirable. From shopping hauls that began with Forever 21 and have transitioned to SHEIN, to “mukbangs” of celebrities

ordering entire fast food restaurant menus. It makes me re-evaluate the purchases I have already made, and mindful of the things I choose to purchase in the future. I want to consume things that are going to add meaning and value to my life and were not created at the expense of another, whether it is fashion goods, food, or any other good or service.

Chantal:

As a consumer of fashion goods, before reading this book and during the reading, I found myself more in shock as to how the world is run by power and greed. Although in this industry many benefits from this motto but the other half doesn't. Which is why I have never supported and try not to support many fast-fashion companies or those who give their employees harsh working conditions. Although I know this will not very much benefit me from an economic standpoint, I choose to believe that buying through those standards, I would give my money to the correct people. Although nowadays the best thing you can do to help the world and the people working in those harsh conditions is not buy at all.

C. Reflection on the section as a future fashion professional:

Taylor: As a future fashion professional, it is important to consider why you need a garment. It is also important to consider what resources you are using. The chapter on fur stuck out the most to me. It is difficult but necessary to learn about where your garments come from. Fur is something that can become classified as animal cruelty, and it is not something necessary to include in one's garment. So as a future designer, I will be aware of what materials and fabrics I use and how they may impact the environment.

Emma: As a future fashion professional, I really take all of this information to heart. I want to be able to help this industry become more ethical for the environment and human rights of those working in the field. One of the reasons I chose this profession was because I realized how horrible the fashion industry can be, and I want to be a part of the change for the better. It's important to consider the resources you use, who you work with, and even the impact the product will make at the end of its lifecycle. Consumers need to think more about fashion as a lifelong product if it's made to last, not something that will be discarded after 2 wears.

Nahid: As a current and future fashion professional, I have always tried to create a design which is more practical with less waste. This is my sustainable practice. I opine creating an item with waste material is a waste of time and resources like electricity. I have never tried to make something unusable even for showing my skills, I believe the world needs art, but this art should not be a threat to that world. I always tried and will try to create a quality item that lasts longer in a closet and can be worn many times. I have always reused materials of vintage, pre used items, fabric scraps in my designs. Moreover, in future, as a fashion professional I will promote sustainable clothing practices to whoever is uneducated in this area of sustainability.

Jaiden: From the perspective of the book, it seems that since the three major corporations have taken hold of the couture houses, fashion has not been the same. Fashion has become more about high turnover rates and pushing consumers to buy more products that they do not need. As a future fashion professional, I want to challenge all companies, not just luxury, to create products that are based on longevity and quality. Why are we encouraging consumers to buy things that they do not need, things that are going to be disposed of, and things that cause harm to the environment? (The answer is Capitalism).

Chantal:

As a future fashion professional, I can't help but think that the world of fashion is super saturated. From that standpoint, I believe that companies should stop thinking about what the next big trend is going to be since most of their designs create waste and are unethical towards the way we gather our materials. Which is why protecting the earth and people has shaped the way I think about what route in this career field I want to take. I want to be able to work for a company that has the same viewpoint as me. I find it important that we all take a step back and see if what we make, or buy is really needed for technicality or for it to just be stored at the back of our closet.

Response One:

I think considering the obsession consumers have to buying clothes is an important aspect within the book. I can say I am one to over consume. When it is at reach and accessible it is hard not to want to buy more. I believe the most important part of getting consumption down is to make consumers aware of what their actions of overconsumption can cause to the environment. I believe coming up with a way to help consumers only purchase what they need and to use it for a long time is start to help overconsumption and the disposal of clothing. Since there is still no way to completely get rid of what has been made, there should be more companies that are willing to recycle and reuse. Like Patagonia does. They take old clothing and resell it. That is a great starting point. Another consideration that can help overconsumption is how labor intensive the industry can be. There are so many regulations that are not followed and if those rules and regulations are more predominant and noticed, it could help slow down production, which can be both a negative and a positive. The negative would be companies can lose money. A positive would be the industry slowing down, which also makes consumers slow down as well.

Response two:

As I was reading the book and came across the increase in dog clothing, I was shocked. I always knew dog clothes existed, but I assumed it was only in pet stores with the few selections I had always seen. There are dog clothing stores solely for the purpose of dressing dogs; not even dog food or necessities. This is yet another example of fast fashion as you had addressed. This leads me into my next discussion, which is the PETA. The rise of real fur in clothing led to the realization of animal cruelty. I think a way to slow down production within the industry is to approach it the same way PETA approached animal cruelty when it came to using animal fur in the industry. They found alternatives to slow down the production of real fur and I believe if we find a way similar but more directed towards overconsumption, consumers will come to realize the harm it really does. Since celebrities and influencers have such a huge impact on the world it would be beneficial if they speak up and talk about what fast fashion and overconsumption

does to the world. We need to readdress the way we consume and think about where and how these products are made and disposed of.