

Hawaii and Hawaiians within the domain of American hegemony on their own terms.

John McDonough

Kathy Peiss. *Zoot Suit: The Enigmatic Career of an Extreme Style*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011. Pp. 238. Paper \$19.95.

The zoot suit is tied to Mexican American and African American youth as a symbol of resistance to political authority. Kathy Peiss, Professor of American History at the University of Pennsylvania, argues that historians have too easily labeled the wide-legged pants and matching long coats as a mark of resistance. Instead, Peiss explores the circumstances that determine how style may or not may be political, honing in on this particular fashion. Drawing on newspaper articles from around the country, she focuses on reshaping how cultural historians have traditionally looked at the significance of the zoot suit before and after the Los Angeles Zoot Suit Riot of 1943. Rather than simply retelling the story of the riots, the book chronicles how this particular style appeared long before the disturbances, took over American culture, and only then drew attention to racial tensions, becoming a symbol emulated throughout the world.

Although its origins remain a mystery, it is known that the zoot suit style did not begin as a political statement. Following traditions of self-display, young men wore the suit to stand out. However, with America's entry into World War II, the zoot suit's oversized style conflicted with the War Production Board's restriction on textiles. Despite the WPB's limits on textiles manufactured for civilian use, the style continued to spread throughout American society. Men who wore these suits stood out at a time when Americans looked for savings wherever possible. The

WBP eventually implemented tighter restrictions on menswear, specifically aimed at the zoot suit, and in effect prohibiting its production. These new restrictions made zoot suiters targets. Many wearers of the style were accused of being unpatriotic since the suit stood in contrast to the crisp, tight military uniforms. People looked to soldiers as beacons of hope during World War II, and anyone threatening that hope was cast as an outsider. Peiss emphasizes that adoption of the zoot suit was not limited to young African American and Mexican American men, many other marginalized groups, including working class white men and even women, wore the style.

While Peiss dedicates a chapter to the Los Angeles Zoot Suit riot, she focuses on why the Los Angeles incident was a unique occurrence, rather than the defining moment for the style. The West Coast experienced mass immigration from south of the border, causing racial tensions between whites and Mexicans. Adding to these frictions, the suit served as an identifier for many young Mexican-American men. The riddle of the riot lies in analyzing these racial tensions. In East Coast and Midwestern cities the same problem did not arise. Instead, the problems associated with the zoot suit there dealt with masculinity and patriotism.

Drawing mainly on newspapers as primary sources, the study convinces in arguing that the press and police were a major force in defining the style as a form of deviance and rebellion. The press and police criminalized the style and those who embraced it, primarily young men of color. Peiss points out that many zoot suiters did not leave much evidence explaining why they wore the style. The opening chapters of the book provide a counterrepresentation of the zoot suit, offering an insight as to how the style became unpatriotic for economic reasons rather than the traditional narrative of racial conflict.

This book is suitable for individuals interested in American history, cultural studies, and fashion history.

Jaqueline Navarro

Carole A. Myscofski. *Amazons, Wives, Nuns, and Witches: Women and the Catholic Church in Colonial Brazil, 1500-1822*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2013. Pp. 320. Hardcover \$55.00.

Carole Myscofski, Professor of Religion at Illinois Wesleyan University, argues that colonial Brazilian women were instructed on how to fill their role in society according to both religious and state authorities. Amazons were forced to become either wives, nuns, or witches due to the rigid structures of patriarchal society. Moreover, not every woman was worthy of marriage and skin color was closely related to honor. Chastity was an absolute necessity for honorable women, compelling the creation of alternate models for the vast majority of women who did not fit the ideal.

The book is organized thematically, exploring different roles women occupied. Historical background of pre-colonial Brazil sets up the discussion of the Amazons and their place in society prior to European contact. This contact would prove to be the stepping stone to understanding why Europeans placed restrictions on the women of Brazil. Amazonian women were not considered honorable because European colonizers saw them as sexual and open, almost masculine in some regards, which was intolerable in European eyes. Myscofski takes special care in examining chastity, highly prized by Europeans for ensuring paternity of descendants.

Myscofski juxtaposes the Christian ideal of a religious, chaste, obedient, European wife with both the societal viewpoint and individual women's interpretation. Women's subjection is an important theme, including concu-