



# Decolonisation: Fashion's Others





## **Rana Plaza, Bangladesh, 24/4/13**

### **1,129 dead**

Collapse of building housing garment factory  
producing garments for Benetton, Monsoon,  
Mango, Matalan and Primark amongst others



# **Creativity *is* POLITICAL**

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# DECOLONISING DMU

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A core element of our project work

<https://decolonisingdmu.our.dmu.ac.uk/>



# VESTOJ

THE PLATFORM FOR CRITICAL THINKING ON FASHION

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FICTION | INTERVIEW | NON-FICTION | OPINION | VESTOJ X FRIENDS | KEYWORDS

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OPINION

## DECOLONISING FASHION

*Defying the 'White Man's Gaze'*

by Angela Jansen

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*Keywords:* 'HERITAGE', FOREIGN OPPRESSORS, INDIGENOUS FASHION SYSTEMS,  
SELF-ORIENTALISING, STEREOTYPES, THE OTHER

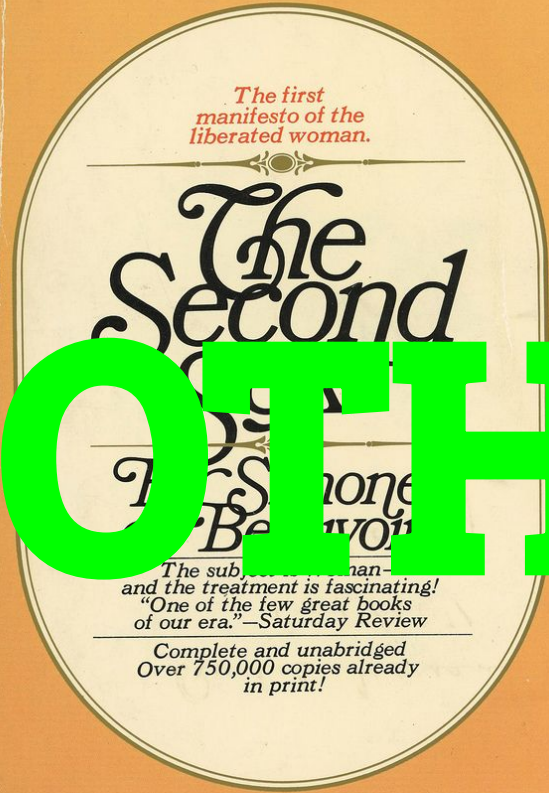
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Jansen, A. (2019) 'Decolonising Fashion', Vestoj, [internet] <<http://vestoj.com/decolonialising-fashion>>.



Fashion designers outside the established fashion capitals are repeatedly considered according to (the references they make to) their cultural identity, while European designers will rarely be asked to explain or justify their references in regard to their cultural/national identity (just imagine asking Nicolas Ghesquière to explain his French references in his work for Louis Vuitton). Today a designer can easily be born in Morocco, grow up in France, study in Brazil and work in Korea. Does this make his or her work Moroccan, French, Brazilian or Korean? The so-called ‘globally recognised signifiers,’<sup>2</sup> be it wax-print for African designers, bold colours for Latin American designers or minimalism for Asian ones, are not only a stubborn heritage of Eurocentric imperialist thinking, but also a persisting means to differentiate, diminish and exclude ‘Other’ fashions from the dominant Eurocentric fashion discourse (Jansen 2019).





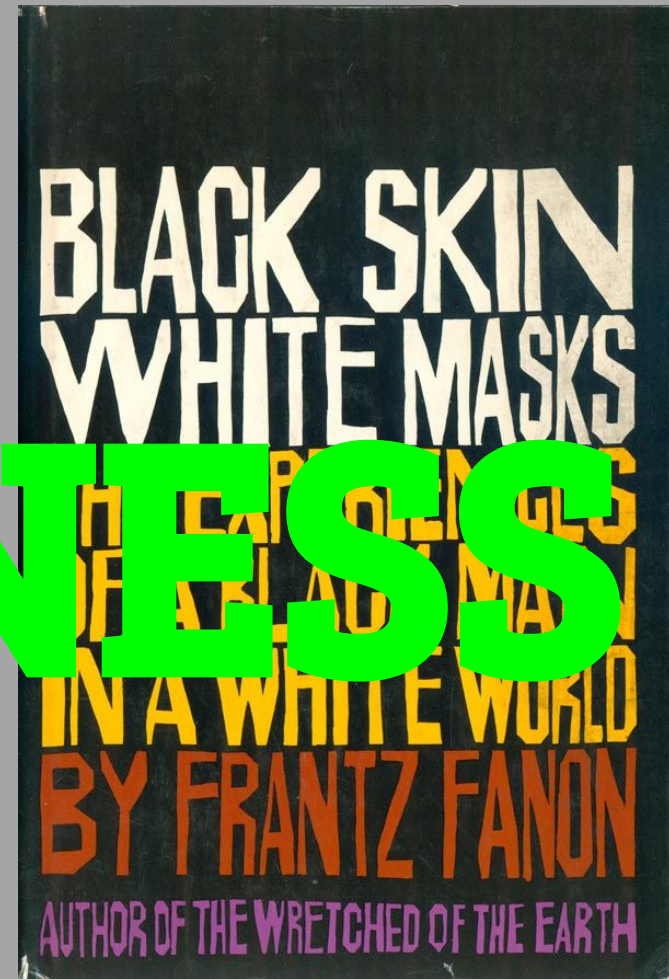
Simone de Beauvoir (1973 [1949]) *The Second Sex*

‘One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman’ (1973 [1949]: 301).

Woman Constructed as the Other of Man / Black constructed as the Other of White

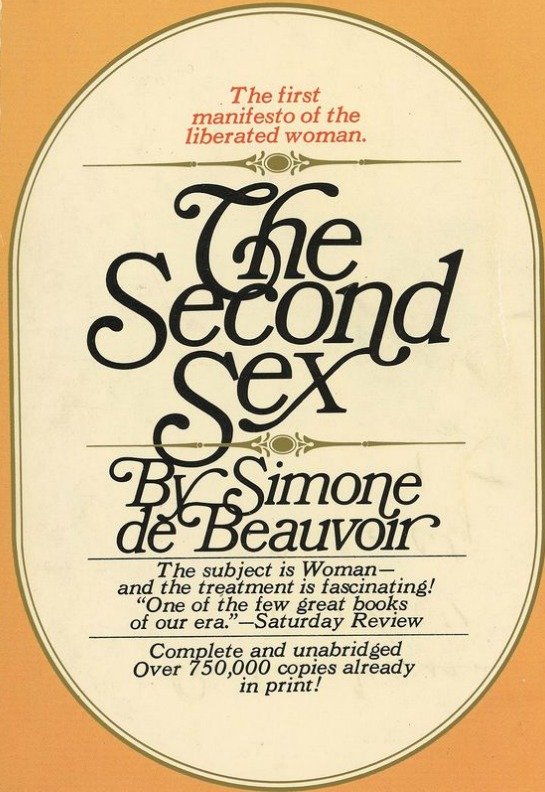
Frantz Fanon *Black Skin, White Masks*

‘That feeling of inferiority of the colonized is the correlative to the European’s feeling of superiority. Let us have the courage to say it outright: It is the racist who creates his inferior (p 69)



OTHERNES





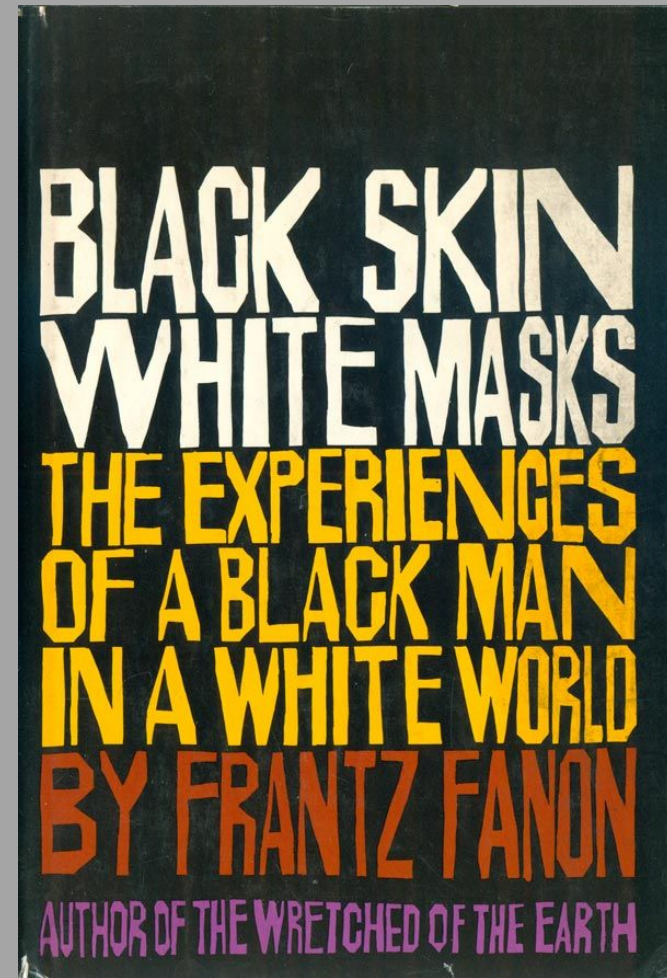
Simone de Beauvoir (1973 [1949]) *The Second Sex*

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Woman Constructed as the Other of Man / Black constructed as the Other of White

Frantz Fanon (1952) *Black Skin, White Masks*

‘That feeling of inferiority of the colonized is the correlative to the European’s feeling of superiority. Let us have the courage to say it outright: It is the racist who creates his inferior (p 69)





## The Art of Benevolent Racism

Rasheed Araeen

### I

Institutions have always been fundamental to human society: they are essential not only for its smooth running but also for protecting it from real and imaginary threats to its fundamental structures and values. In our modern society, cultural institutions in particular play a central role in maintaining order, through not only control and constraint of the creative activities but also by what Zygmunt Bauman calls, 'legitimate coercion'<sup>1</sup> — so that controls and constraints are not visible and 'opposition' is subdued to serve the system.

In a liberal and enlightened society, institutions provide and safeguard individual rights by encouraging and celebrating what is essential to the self-expression of its citizens, including their right of opposition. But if opposition that threatens the status quo cannot be subdued or absorbed by coercion or other means, institutional power can transform into absolute power and block opposition by excluding it from the very discourse in which the individual right to self-expression and opposition is enshrined. It is not unknown that art institutions often use a 'stick and carrot' strategy, reducing art and art scholarship to an illusory challenge. Having thus contained the potential of opposition or radical challenge, art institutions can do whatever they like; celebrate what is in their interest and ignore what may pose a threat to the established order.

In fact, art institutions today exert almost absolute control over the production, valuation and legitimisation of modernist or avantgarde art. No artwork, however innovative or ground-breaking, can be or is recognised unless it enters institutional space; any work which questions or challenges institutional structures can thus be prevented from entering its discourse and legitimising process and attaining the status of art. As a result, an artwork which is not institutionally recognised plays little role in the society in which it is produced and to which it is addressed.

However, my concern here is about a specific aspect of art institutional power, which still follows the linear trajectory that began under colonialism and incorporated racial views about the colonised, and how it affects the reception, recognition and evaluation of the contemporary artwork of those who are today no longer colonial subjects. I argue that the structural base of this power has not shifted; its perception of the colonised as the 'other' or

Araeen, R., 2000. The art of benevolent racism. *Third Text*, 14(51), pp.57-64.

<sup>1</sup> See Zygmunt Bauman, 'Scene and Obscene: Another Holy Contested Opposition', in this issue.



STATISTICAL INFORMATION FURNISHED BY CAPTAIN J. G. R. COLOMB, M. P. FORMERLY R. N. A. BRITISH TERRITORIES COLOURED RED

Walter Crane, Imperial Federation: Map Showing the Extent of the British Empire in 1886. Colour lithograph. Published by Maclure & Co. as a supplement to The Graphic, 24 July 1886.



**1497 and 1763** - English seamen reached places Europeans had not previously been. Britain then set up colonies and used them to trade all over the world. However the British used violence to take over these lands, many people were enslaved as a result of the expansion of the empire.

**1585** - The first English colonies were formed in North America - Sir Walter Raleigh organised a small settlement at Roanoke in Virginia, but it failed and in 1607, the Virginia Company founded a permanent colony at Jamestown in Virginia.

**1612** - the East India Company began to build up a small empire of trading posts in India.

**1620s** - The first English colonies in the Caribbean were founded in the 1620s. Colonialisation of St Kitts began in 1623 and then expanded to islands including Barbados and Antigua. English planters learned how to grow sugarcane and make sugar. The production of sugar needed lots of workers and the English began to increasingly use enslaved labour.

**1655** the English invaded Jamaica, which had previously been a colony of Spain. Jamaica formally became a British colony in 1670.



18th Century, the British were heavily involved in the Transatlantic slave trade. The British were responsible for the enslavement of millions of West Africans to work on Caribbean farms and sugar plantations.

# TATE & LYLE'S

## Packet Sugar

*"Net Weight  
without wrapper"*



**PURE BRITISH REFINED**



In addition, the 18th century saw Britain fighting a number of wars against France, and taking over colonies established by the French:

1713 - the British took over the French colony of Acadia (New France in northeastern North America).

1715 - Victories by Robert Clive, including the Battle of Plassey in 1757, drove out the French and established British control in India.

1756-1763 - During the Seven Years' War the British won Canada from the French with a notable victory coming from General James Wolfe's capture of Quebec in 1759.

1867 - Queen Victoria was declared 'Empress of India'.

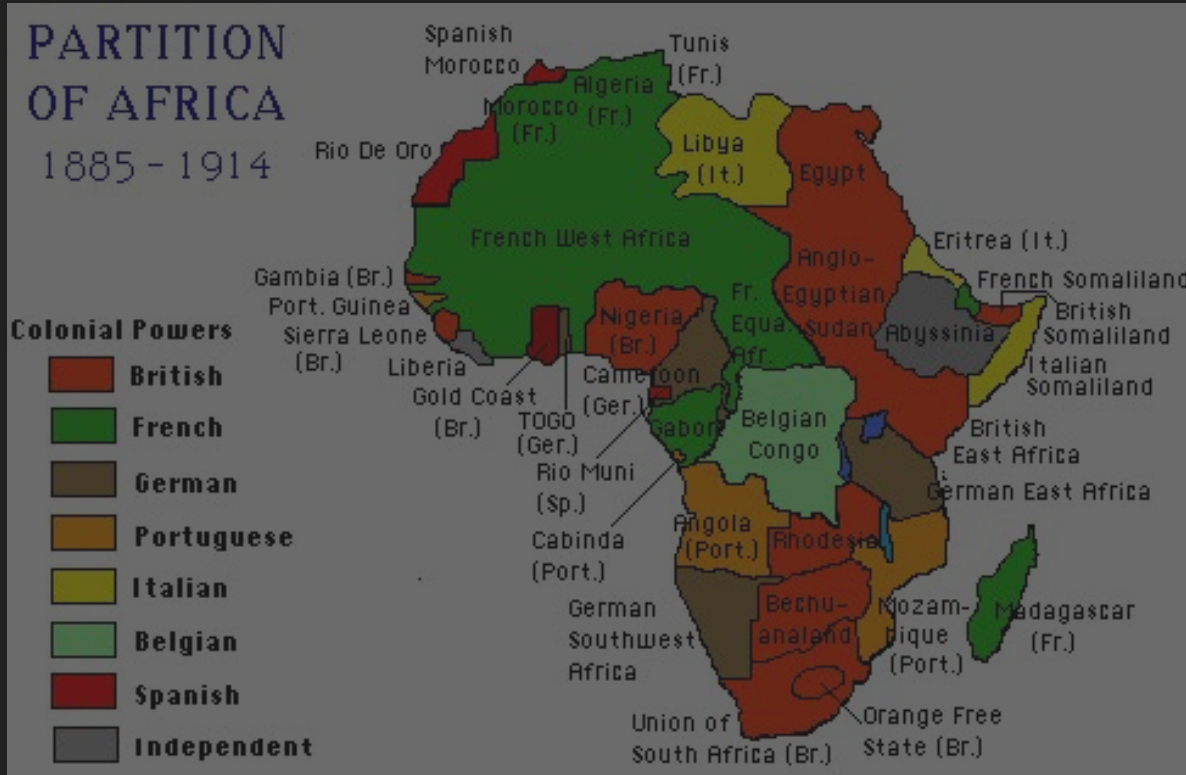
1947 - Indian Independence Act





1881-1919 - The 'Scramble for Africa' – Britain acquired colonies in Africa stretching from Cairo to Cape Town.

1919 - The Treaty of Versailles gave Germany's colonies, which included land in Africa and China, as 'mandates' for Britain and France to administer.







## EAST-AFRICAN TRANSPORT-OLD STYLE

'East African Transport Old Style', by Adrian Allinson, from the 'Colonial Progress Brings Home Prosperity' series of posters; 60 x 40 ins, displayed December 1930-January 1931; Waterlow and Sons Ltd;





## EAST-AFRICAN TRANSPORT-NEW STYLE

"East African Transport New Style", by Adrian Allinson, from the 'Colonial Progress Brings Home Prosperity' series of posters; 60 x 40 ins, displayed December 1930-January 1931; Waterlow and Sons Ltd



## A detailed historical illustration of the Crystal Palace in London, showing its massive glass and iron structure, the surrounding landscape with trees and buildings, and people walking around the base.



# The Transept



THE TRANSEPT

Illustration of the Transept, The Crystal Palace.



# Canada



CANADA.

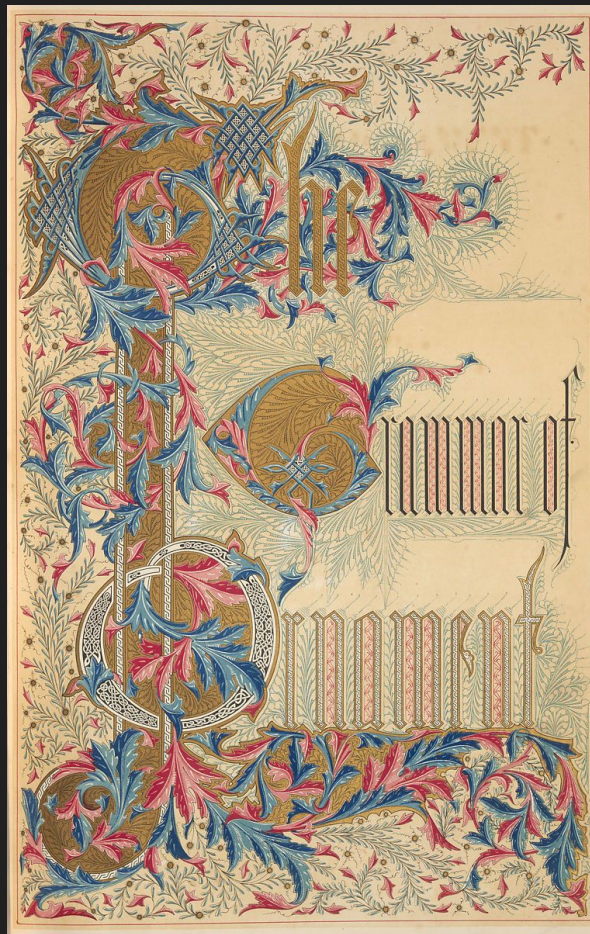
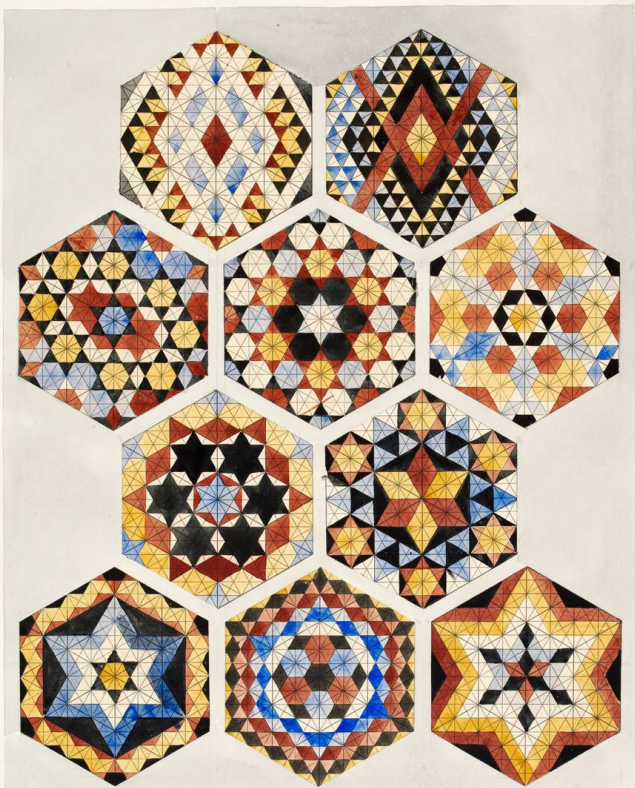
Dickinson, No. 118, New Bond Street.





Tunisia





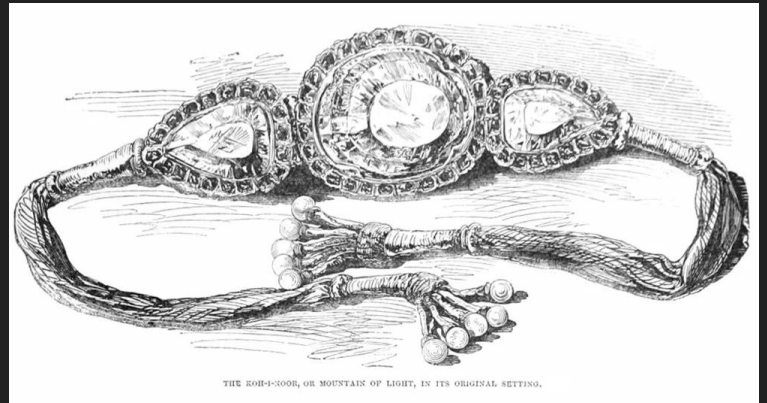
Owen Jones (1856) The Grammar of Ornament

Designs for tiles in Islamic style, Owen Jones, about 1840 – 50,





The Koh-i-Noor (1851)



<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/true-story-koh-i-noor-diamondand-why-british-wont-give-it-back-180964660/>





The India Exhibit  
with Ivory Throne





# Collecting and empire trail

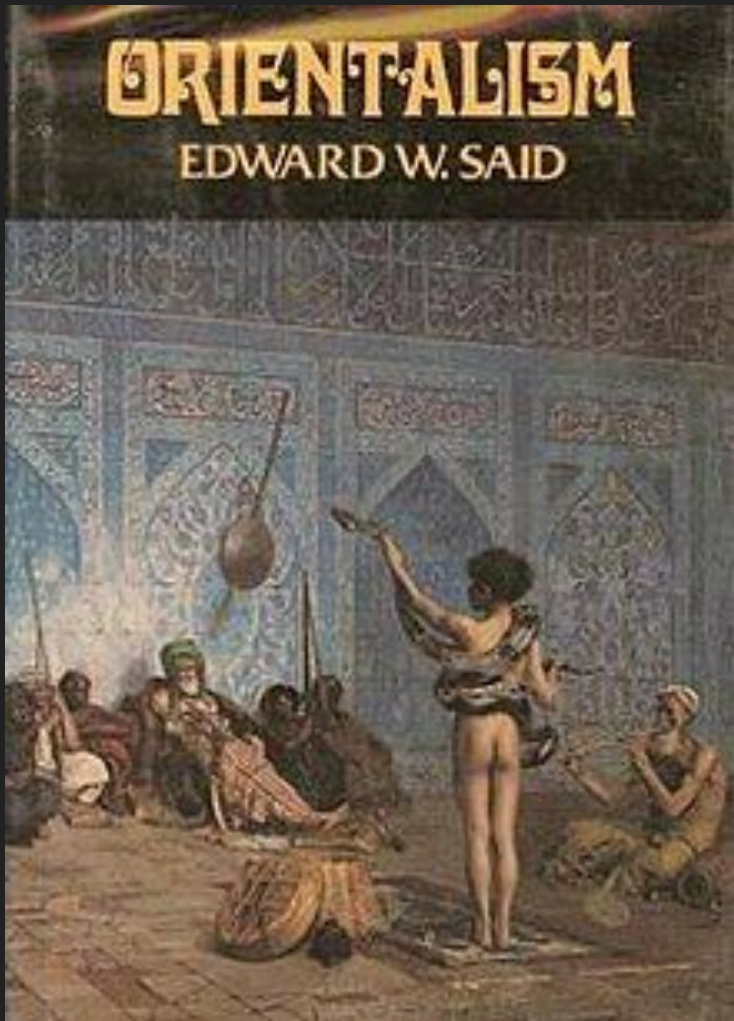
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<https://www.britishmuseum.org/visit/object-trails/collecting-and-empire-trail>





Said, E. (1978) Orientalism, NY: Pantheon.

Western systems of representation have built an image of the non-West as-

- Infante
- Exotic
- Lawless
- Degenerate
- Stagnant
- Inferior

These systematic representation are built upon 'mimicry', and validate the West's sense of superiority, therefore justifying colonialism.

Cover image: The Snake Charmer (1880), by Jean-Léon Gérôme.





Vogue (1965) Orientalism edition  
Vogue Italia (2011) Orientalism edition  
<https://www.vogue.it/en/trends/trend-of-the-day/2011/01/orientalism>

[www.Vogue.it](http://www.Vogue.it)      [It](#) [En](#)

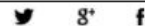
# VOGUE

TRENDS | *Trend of The Day* | *Orientalism*

## *Orientalism*

Spring/Summer 2011 relaunches the Orient

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Tag TRENDS - TREND OF THE DAY - ORIENTALISM







Vogue Singapore launch issue 2020

28 Global editions of Vogue



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A MACAT ANALYSIS

HOMI K. BHABHA'S

# THE LOCATION OF CULTURE



Bhabha, H.K., 2012. The location of culture. London: Routledge.

Third Space of enunciation

Colonizer and colonized are interdependent

Hybridity makes claims for the purity of any culture meaningless



8th August 2017

Text Dominic Cadogan

SHARE



Backstage at Marc Jacobs SS17 Courtesy of Marc Jacobs

## Marc Jacobs admits SS17 dreadlocks were 'insensitive'

The designer was criticised for cultural appropriation following the show which featured mostly white models

<https://www.dazeddigital.com/fashion/article/37002/1/marc-jacobs-admits-ss17-dreadlocks-were-in-sensitive-cultural-appropriation>

# CULTURAL APPROPRIATION





Title Unknown Techno Navajo  
Quilt Oversized Crop Tee

**\$29.00**

Ziff, B.H. and Rao, P.V. eds., 1997. Borrowed power: Essays on cultural appropriation. Rutgers University Press.

**Cultural Degradation**

**A form of Domination**

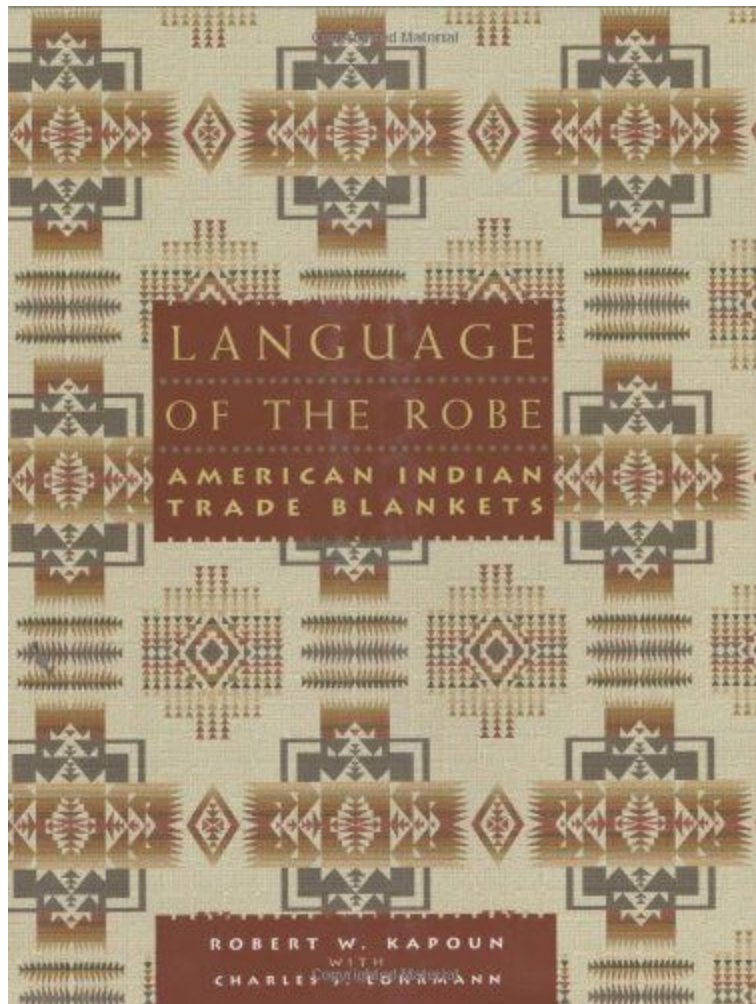
**A Destruction of Difference**

**Cultural Deprivation**

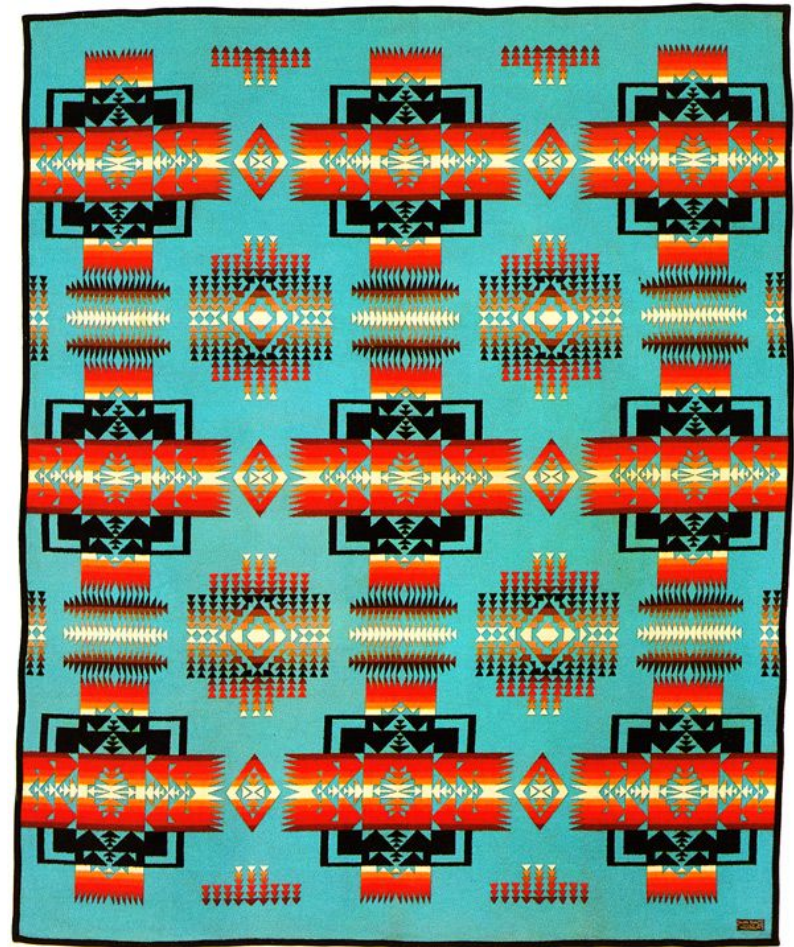
You Might







(1992)



Native American Nine element robe, introduced as a trade item by Pendleton 1920s





Title Unknown Techno Navajo  
Quilt Oversized Crop Tee

\$29.00

Eicher, J. B., & Erekosima, T. V. (1980). Distinguishing non-western from western dress: The concept of cultural authentication. *Proceedings of the Association of College Professors of Textiles and Clothing*, Washington, D.C. 83-84.

**Selection:** when an artefact is identified and adopted by the new culture

**Characterisation:** occurs when meaning is given to the new artefact

**Incorporation:** when the new artefact is given a functional role

**Transformation:** occurs when the artefact is altered from its original to make it distinct to the new culture

**Cultural Appropriation:** occurs when a dominant culture imitates a less-dominant culture with the aim of mimicry or to assert authority



LIFE + CULTURE

## Naomi Campbell, “Vogue Africa” Is A Bad Idea | Here Are 5 Reasons Why

by [Eric Otieno Sumbwa](#) - Published on 09/04/2018

<https://griotmag.com/en/naomi-campbell-vogue-africa-is-a-bad-idea-here-are-5-reasons-why/>

1. Inmapancy — insufficient geographical knowledge (Krause)
2. Ownership
3. Telling Our Own Stories
4. The Politics of Validation
5. Reinventing the Wheel







UK Vogue (2017)

Edward Enninful - editor in Chief 2017 -Present







Althea McNish (1960s) Golden Harvest (L) and  
Tropic ®. Designs for Liberty,





Photography Sean and Seng. Courtesy of Wales Bonner

FASHION | By Mahoro Seward | 23 January 2021, 1:32pm

## Wales Bonner creates its own bold new language for AW21

The lives and works of Caribbean poets and intellectuals, and British sartoriality come together to create the label's most powerful collection yet.

[https://i-d.vice.com/en\\_uk/article/z3vg78/wales-bonner-paris-fashion-week-aw21-collection-review](https://i-d.vice.com/en_uk/article/z3vg78/wales-bonner-paris-fashion-week-aw21-collection-review)



Grace Wales  
Bonner F/W 2015





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Long Sleeve Football Jersey

£100.00

WALES BONNER

Lovers Track Pants

£220.00



Tri Knit Roll Neck

£130.00

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Lovers Track Pants

£220.00



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- Ziff, B.H. and Rao, P.V. eds., 1997. *Borrowed power: Essays on cultural appropriation*. Rutgers University Press.