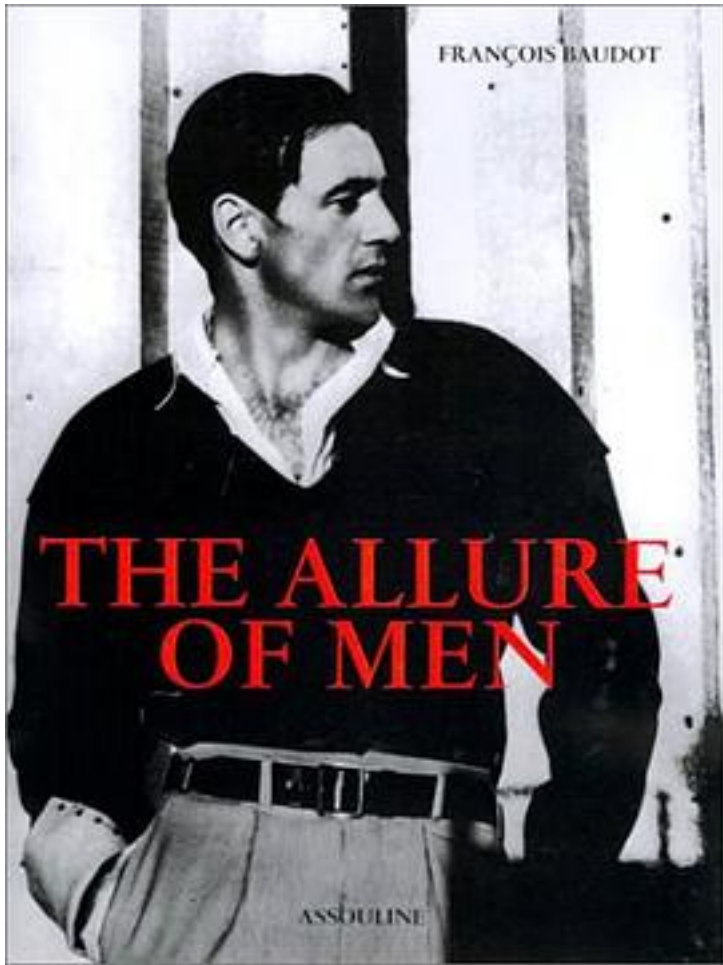


The Allure of Men



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著者:Francoise Baudot

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In scholarly words and stunning, mostly black-and-white photographs, stylemeister François Baudot uses the coffee-table book format to pose an important fashion

question: How in the world did the vain modern male give up colorful clothing? As he puts it, "How is it that those 17th century birds of paradise ... turned themselves into jet-black crows?" Baudot says it was the Sun King's fault. Louis XIV, mad for frills and flounces, made everybody who was anybody in France circa 1650 wear billowing shirts with lacy sleeves, plumed hats, polychrome silk stockings, "breeches so voluminous that they made walking a problem," high-heeled shoes, "their bows shaped like a windmill's sails," garters, ribbons, makeup, rings, and miserably hot, outrageously expensive wigs. Louis made fashion "lose all contact with reality."

What could possibly come next? Revolution! "The Louis XIV effect was not to be reproduced.... Thenceforth, in his dress, modern man could now only proceed by way of successively and irreversibly discarding things."

This sounds like a lot of French philosophical jive, but the photos Baudot adduces of fashion-plate men--movie stars, politicians, artists, and anonymous guys--do bear him out. Compare, say, the intricately embroidered getup of the Nawab of Bahawalpur in India, or T. Philips's renowned painting of that mad dandy, Lord Byron, with the book's main procession of men in customary suits of solemn black. England's Prince Philip, looking imperially slim in 1950s London, has much the same stylistic allure as James Joyce posed in his most famous picture in Paris in the 1920s. Mao and de Gaulle evoke similar auras of scary power precisely by renouncing outward sumptuousness for authoritative sartorial abstemiousness. Gary Cooper and Jimmy Stewart, Errol Flynn, Fred Astaire, JFK and Bobby, Prince William at Eton, even fatally flamboyant Jean-Michel Basquiat in the full flower of fame--these men resemble so many distinguished penguins. Even the naked men in the book--Sudanese Nuba tribesmen circa 1949 and Yves Saint Laurent launching his "Y pour homme" perfume in 1971--can be seen in terms of the male expression of power by emphatic understatement in dress.

Ultimately, it's tough to sum up Baudot's thesis. But the man sure knows how to pick cool photographs. --Tim Appelo

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