



To Die For: Is Fashion Wearing Out the World?

Lucy Siegle

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An expose of the fashion industry written by the Observer's 'Ethical Living' columnist, portraying current practice as inhumane and environmentally devastating. Siegle believes that, in spite of current problems, it is possible to be an 'ethical fashionista', and she sets out her ideas on how such a situation could be achieved."

To Die For: Is Fashion Wearing Out the World? Details

Date : Published May 1st 2011 by Fourth Estate (GB) (first published May 5th 2008)

ISBN : 9780007264094

Author : Lucy Siegle

Format : Paperback 339 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, Couture, Fashion, Environment, Sustainability, Business

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From Reader Review To Die For: Is Fashion Wearing Out the World? for online ebook

Jill says

The blurb on the back of the book states that it “peels back the layers of the global wardrobe to reveal the naked truth about the big name ‘it’ brands we swear by and the cheap clothes we can’t live without”.

I don’t know about you, but the blurb on the backs of books, combined with the front cover, are the two determining factors that make me want to open and read page one, or close it and move on.

That back blurb made me want to read on. Immediately. And I’m glad that I did. Because of the research-based and journalistic style of this book, I found it very credible. I also found it very compelling.

This book takes us on an interesting journey. And what was so fascinating for me was how it leads all of us who are on our individual, personal shopping journeys to a mega highway. A mega highway that has “global consequences” written all over it.

Full review [here](#)

Charlène Bennevault says

"We all have a part to play, and if you engage with life, you will get a new set of values, get off the consumer treadmill and start to think, and it is this great thinkers who will rescue the planet."

- Vivienne Westwood

Everything you want to know about the unsustainability of the Fashion Industry is in this book - offering a comprehensive explanation, really useful even though sometimes it was quite a tough piece to read. This is to the books what *The True Cost* is to the Documentaries about fashion.

One negative point is that this book is from 2010, therefore this is just the beginning towards the Sustainable Fashion way: is the industry still the same after 8 years?

Also something I am often finding in those books, or mostly not finding - is the importance given to solution. The book is ending on a really small chapter about the Perfect Wardrobe, giving ideas on how to build an eco-conscious closet - but even there, the author has to point out the negative (I am not sure I am sharing her vision about Vintage for example)...

Rachel Beaver says

Thought provoking, wardrobe shaming, research driving, habit changing.

Elizabeth says

A reformed fast fashion lover shows how the fashion industry is not sustainable or ethical. Through data from UN reports and life risking interviews with sweat shop workers and activists, Siegle reveals the gross violations of human rights that is the foundation of the world's most popular clothing retailers. She also gives a vivid account on the environmental degradation caused by the processing of man made and natural fabrics effect. The best part is she offers solutions; ethical retailers to buy from and ways to questions a brands supply chain. This book is dense but non-judgemental. It will change how you feel about shopping.

Marie Z. Johansen says

When I read "Overdressed" by Elizabeth Cline I was motivated to start make my own shirts again and I looked for more books about the true cost of what has, aptly, been called the "fast fashion" industry. I have never been an "on trend" shopper or clothing wearer. My tastes have always been a bit more prosaic and conservative and I have always preferred clothes that will be used for years rather than months.

Learning about how and why the cost of clothes have plummeted has been areal eye-opener to me and there are societal costs that I really have never thought about before reading this book. Lucy Siegel goes into some very interesting details about the various areas of fashion beyond cloth...leather, fur, wool, crocodile and snake skins as well cotton and synthetics. She covers the ethical questions of workers rights, and how devastation is wrought by the use of chemicals and dyes and the resultant pollution to earth and water.

I was especially interested to learn about why and how the cost of cashmere clothing has become a rock bottom bargain rather than the luxury fiber that I grew up with. The amount of pristine land that is becoming desert wasteland is stupefying and frightening.

There was SO much to,learn from this book...it will stay with me for a long time. These two books have forever changed my concept of the clothing I wear and I cannot help but think that anyone who reads it will also feel a dose of "comeuppance". There truly is a high cost for low cost fashion. Surely we can all at least give some consideration to the way that we spend our clothing dollars.

Fascinating, well researched, well written and slightly frightening; this is a book well worth the time to read. I got this through Inter-Library loan but will now be look for a copy to own and mark to my hearts content. Next reading is this genre is the book "Cheap"...

Heather says

Wow, this was a really fantastic book. I recommend it to anyone who wears clothes. Seriously, everyone should read it. While it is unfortunately very UK-centric in terms of the stores and brands referenced, enough of the information and concepts apply in North America that it doesn't matter. And I learned that they have a different word for tank tops in the UK and clothes aren't hung from racks in the stores, they're hung from rails and I always appreciate learning something new when I read! But really, that's just the tip of the iceberg in terms of the new things I learned from this book. For example, I didn't even know Uzbekistan produced cotton, let alone forced teenagers to pick cotton on a massive scale. Or how terribly damaging the cotton growing industry or leather tanning industries are. But the thing I really loved about the book was how after

exploring all the problems with fast fashion, how she presented really solid and practical ways of addressing the problems. Things I felt like I could really apply in my life, changes I could actually make to the way I shop. And if everyone read this book and applied the things she suggests, we could actually make a difference and avert the disaster that fast fashion is forcing the world toward. Read it!

Claire says

A well researched insight into the fast fashion industry and it's hidden cost.

An inspiring read.

Siegle has more passion for environmental issues than I (being more concerned about the people involved in the process personally). There was the odd time as I read that I started to wonder what exactly the author thought we could do (as there was so much about what isn't helpful or isn't enough), and as you might expect the author writes from a rather privileged position which can occasionally blind her (it would seem) to the difficulty of actually having a budget - she writes frequently of her own purchases and she can rest assured she has a lot of buying power compared to your average consumer.

Overall worth the time and definitely a book that will change the way you think (at least about your clothing)

Olivia says

Really interesting and well researched book. Perfect for anyone who enjoyed Stacey Dooley's documentary and wants to dig a little deeper. Has given me food for thought in many areas.

Dierregi says

Once upon a time "*fashion*" was only for the upper class. Clothes were custom-made to fit the bodies of rich patrons, who could pay for top quality fabric and workmanship. Fashionable patterns filtered down slowly, so that the lower class could copy them and produce their own clothes with lesser materials. Dressmaking was slow and expensive, both for the rich and the poor. For this reason quality was important. Clothes and accessories were made to cherish and to last.

When mass-production arrived, it was welcomed as democratic. Besides, it created jobs. Unfortunately, in the course of a few decades, the economic miracle turned into a monster. Nowadays, fast fashion is a fire-spitting dragon destroying the world behind it.

This book illustrates very clearly the environmental and ethical crimes committed in the name of profit. Fashion and elegance do not even enter into the picture. Never before there was such a huge offer of clothes and so many badly dressed women. Females who have no idea whatsoever of what suit their bodies but are just slavishly buying into the never ending heap of crummy clothes that fill the high street.

The author got interested in fast fashion because she writes a column about green living and like most of us, considered only the environmental footprint left by food consumption. She candidly confessed of not even knowing of which fiber most clothes were made of, nor knowing how to take care of them (which I found weird, but unfortunately true for too many people).

Each chapter deals with ordinary items we all own (cotton garments, shoes, leather jackets, etc...) and describes in details their destructive and exploitative nature. For instance, cotton is a crop that grows mostly in Africa. It is bought for a pittance and then moved to Bangladesh where it is processed into clothes by women and children, also paid a pittance and working under constant threat and pressure. Then the finished product is shipped back to Europe (or to the US) to hit the high street.

If you ever wondered how it is possible for high street shops to boast about weekly arrivals, it is because in developing countries a horde of semi-slaves is forced to produce whatever is considered the micro-trend of the moment (the right cut or color). It is not uncommon for these people to work 12 hours shifts assembling low-quality, cheap clothes that will barely last a season.

Cotton, wool and leather are all chemically treated to produce accessories and clothes. Clothing industry includes also tanning, which is a notoriously polluting process. Chemical dyes are extremely bad for the environment. To complete this destructive and monstrous process, since fast fashion dictates that items should have a fast rotation - also because most of them would not last longer than a season - there is also the problem of dealing with discarded items. This implies an additional trip of used clothes back to Africa and more pollution, as said clothes are eventually used as poisonous land fillers.

What makes the whole procedure tragic, beside of unethical treatment of humans and animals, exploitation and pollution is the fact that cheap clothes are not even "*fashionable*". They are ill fitting, low value garments, of declining quality. As I found out: I used to buy my shirts in a Spanish high street store. I still have a couple of shirts I bought ten years ago, but those bought more recently tore within a couple of months of usage. Needless to add, I don't buy there anymore.

The only saving grace and cheering episode of this gloomy story is the last chapter, where the author gives lots of useful advice on how to break the destructive cycle of buying into fast fashion. Follow her advice. I surely did.

Amy says

Ahh, I finally got hold of this book. It's hard to find; neither my library nor Amazon carries it. I ordered it through Powell's (shipped from the UK). I wouldn't be surprised if this book's publication was actively suppressed in the U.S. This book is for you if you want to know:

- How a \$20 dress at H&M got to be that cheap
- Why we're buying more clothing, not less, now that it's cheaper than ever
- If there are other factories like Rana Plaza in Bangladesh (YES. And many garment industry moguls go through the trouble of setting up an entire fake factory which conforms to the US/European company's safety and labor regulations, while of course the real work is done elsewhere)
- Whether cotton has a lower ecological impact than synthetic fibers
- Why cashmere is everywhere now
- What it's like to work in a garment factory
- How to buy clothing that is made ethically and with the lowest impact on the environment

If you're thinking this book sounds like a downer, don't write it off yet. Siegle is a great writer and offers compelling stories to make her point. Here's one of the most memorable:

"A fashion industry commentator watched in horror as she saw one satisfied customer emerge with six or seven brown paper Primark (similar to H&M) bags full of clothes. It was raining heavily, and as the young

woman proceeded down Oxford Street one of them broke around the handles and folded cotton flopped onto the pavement. Naturally the journalist expected the girl to bend down and collect the brand new clothes, but no. She just walked on. Fashion was apparently so expendable it had turned into litter."

Claudia says

I read this book as part of my Fashion degree, and despite reading certain tragedies in the newspaper which the fashion industry causes, this book really hit home and opened my eyes to the hideous 'fast fashion' game. This isn't a sweet novel, nor is it just another fashion coffee table book. This book will change the way you shop and how you view the 'glamorous' world of fashion. I also blame this book for my dropping out of my fashion degree!

Rachel says

We know the horror story behind our clothes, and yet we shrug - perhaps guiltily, but still - and carry on, myself very much included. The practices of modern fashion are obscene, as is our endorsement of them, as is the fact that this is all the accepted norm.

It truly boggles the mind when you take a long, hard look at the ins and outs of the whole horror show through a book such as this one. Yet 'To Die For' manages not just to be readable, but a masterclass of balance: Siegle is both friendly and frank, unflinching in her presentation of bleak stats and stories but also infectiously enthusiastic in sharing real, grounded hope and optimism. She is about what is possible and how, inspiring not demoralising; 'To Die For' is written the way it needed to be, which is some achievement.

Throughout reading, with and away from the book, I was thinking, looking things up, reconsidering, strategising. It spurs you to action. We each individually need to accept our place in, and current endorsement of, the system as is - regardless of how we simultaneously sleepwalked and were forcibly cajoled there - and work out a personal plan of change. This is how we begin to effect change as a whole, and we have to, because fast fashion has a body count like a world war and is determined to add to that the planet itself.

I love clothes, my friends, but not at this cost. No freaking way.

Angela Wilson says

This book made me really aware of the human and environmental cost of fast fashion. I don't tend to buy that many clothes but when I do I never think of the fabric, or its dye, or how the sequins or embroidery were placed on it, or who made it, and if they get fairly and humanely treated and paid.

Ethical clothes shopping is confusing. I have dabbled with it in the past but always gave up and went back to the high street. It is hard to know where to shop for ethical fashion and it's even difficult as to what "ethical" means. There are so many factors from environmental to animal welfare to human rights. Lucy Siegle's in depth research, common sense and clear writing style has equipped me with knowledge so I now know what kind of things to look out for and what kind of questions to ask. This is a subject that fascinates me and I

have already bookmarked lots of websites and ethical clothing companies to look into.

Unfortunately it seems that the high street has a long way to go in terms of holistically ethical fashion. I think I might be shopping a lot more on the internet from now on.

Satkar Ulama says

This is one of the most interesting fashion books I have read. Interesting because it exposes fashion industry from another side, revealing the unseen, the unethical, and what major fashion firms have hidden from consumers. The first chapters discuss about unethical conducts fashion companies do, from raw material exploitation and labor enslavement for the sake of extreme profit maximization. This somehow reminds me of Eric Schlosser's *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal*, except that Siegle explores not only fast fashion industry, but overall fashion world.

Siegle's discussions are greatly thought-provoking that makes you want to hate fashion industry. But, hey, to hate fashion industry is nearly impossible, because you live with their products, so you directly contribute to their money-making processes. Siegle comes up with some suggestions for getting rid of unethical fashion (fashion whose designing, sourcing, and manufacturing cycle don't harm labor and the sustainability of the ecosystem, don't damage the environment, don't use hazardous chemical substances, and don't involve animal cruelty), by paying a premium for ethical fashion, and purchasing pre-loved clothes.

But here's the thing. Paying a premium may be the best idea, but can only be done by those with good income level, yet clothing is basically a primary need. Also, ethical fashion products might as well be unavailable in many places. Purchasing pre-loved dresses is also understandable, but for luxury fashion goods, the price can still be unaffordable. Try looking for authentic Dolce & Gabbana dress or Fendi clutch on some websites and you'll see the relatively higher price, because again, the sellers sell quality. It is true, the first thing to do is change our perspective about fashion industry and slowly reduce our clothing purchase frequency, as what Siegle also proposes in this book.

Another thing I found interesting (and worth arguing) from this book is the reviews on its back page. Yes, to see Livia Firth's name there promises a quality of this book, even though some (or maybe most) people know her as Mr. Darcy's spouse. But why *Vogue*? A magazine that promotes fashion goods that the author herself describes as unethical. *Vogue*'s Editor in Chief, Anna Wintour is famous for her signature fur coats, and not to mention fashion items shown on every single spread in the magazine are most likely to be unethical too. This doesn't make any difference with Naomi Campbell whom Siegle criticizes here (Campbell modeled for PETA yet she carried purses made of animal skin).

I like the overall message of the book. But to change one's perspective is not enough without changing behavior too. And this book lacks discussion that can help changing consumer behavior towards fashion products. But to be generous, I am giving this book three stars.

Boiling says

4.2/5

I read this book because I liked 'Overdressed' and was looking for similar books. I found it quite interesting and informative especially the breakdown on different materials and their environmental and ethical impact.

On one hand, I am glad that clothing has become democratized and accessible for all but on the other hand, I am appalled at the rate of our consumption. When I walk in malls in south east Asia, everybody seems to be shopping every day and fast fashion stores like H&M, Uniqlo are always crowded and full and people are buying stuff every single day.

I did not know that cotton had such a sordid back story in terms of ethics and environmental impact and it is my preferred material of choice.

So, what can we do?

- Shop less and buy only what you need and regularly use. I have seen women are surprised to discover bags of new clothing in their own wardrobes after an year of purchase. Avoid that.
- Organize your closet regularly to see what you have and use it.
- Shop from sustainable brands. I am not in a position at this point in my life to do that and I still buy from fast fashion brands - however, I buy less and try to get good quality for the price.
- Mend, alter - doable for some things. But sometimes, I have found that the tailoring costs more than the dress which puts me off altering or repurposing.
- Vintage and thrifting - This is something I am not a big fan of and Asians generally do not like second hand stuff. Also, taking into consideration the tropical climate where everything gets moldy very quickly here, even in a matter of months, I am not convinced to take this path coz I can already visualize the fungi. I just don't like using stuff that has been owned by people I do not know and used for a long time by them. Also, I do not really see good thrift finds here. Only crap.

The author focuses a lot on India and Bangladesh (like the manufacturing practices, factories, ethical issues) while China appears gets a mere mention in some paragraphs as an afterthought. The way it is written, one would think that Indian and Bangladesh are contributing the largest amount of exports to the fast fashion industry while in reality, it is China that has 42-46% of textile and clothes exports in terms of global trade while India is a mere 5-6% in comparison. I felt that the author (who is British) had some colonial hangover and focused much more on India when she should have examined and visited factories in China to understand how the industry works.

Note on this edition: The book had to be held open by both hands and the font size was tiny. I wish it were bigger.
