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I would to thank Sybil Connolly and Jack Clarke who took time from their busy schedules to assist me in my research and provide me with valuable knowledge of the fashion Industry here in Ireland to which they have both contributed greatly.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank my committee and Jack Clark for their
help from their busy schedules to assist me in my research.
and I wish to thank my wife, Virginia, for her patience and
support during this time. I also wish to thank my friends
for their encouragement and support.

INTRODUCTION

Prior to the 1950's Ireland was not a country readily associated with High Fashion, in fact it was thought that the clothing trade was in its infancy dwarfed by the great international couturies working in England, France and Italy. There were few shops with sufficiently high quality stock to satisfy the demand of the few discerning wealthy women in Ireland. These women of wealth and social status travelled to London to purchase European designed clothes to fit their needs.

Jack Clarke was one of the few to cater for the Irish women's wardrobe. Clarke set up the first ladieswear manufacturing company in Ireland in 1932. By 1935 he was one of the foremost figures in the clothing trade in Ireland at that time, and by 1935 he had a work force of over 60 (the largest work-force in the manufacturing industry in Ireland at that time). And in this year he also added to his lucrative business, the retail shop **Richard Alan**, which was to be patronised by the best dressed women in Ireland who had previously bought their clothes abroad or used tailors for their very basic wardrobes.

In my following chapters I will discuss Jack Clarke's debut into the underdeveloped fashion trade of Ireland, and examine how his contribution of superbly cut and tailored ladies ready-to-wear garments not only satisfied the middle to upper class women of Ireland who could afford such quality, but also catered for the International market. I will go on to discuss Sybil Connolly (an ex-employee of Clarke's) who brought remarkable success to Irish design and occupied a position in the world of fashion that no other Irish based designer, let alone female retailer had reached. The work of any designer of prominence deserves discussion and analysis. Even more importantly the work of two such successful designers requires analysis and critical assessment in order to understand and evaluate their contribution, Internationally and historically. In my following chapters I will discuss this two most foremost figures who contributed greatly to Irish fashion design on the home market and on an international level. It is also interesting to try and understand, their exact appeal to fashion buyers and journalists and realise how they too can influence the fashion market.

The period in Irish fashion that I wish to discuss is virtually unrecorded. My richest source of material was from interviews with people who were, and indeed still are, a part of the fashion trade in Ireland since World War Two. I have interviewed Sybil Connolly; Ita Hynes; Post War fashion journalist in Ireland, who has great knowledge and who has written many fashion articles for The Independent newspaper from the Forties on: Leonara Curry; a fashion Consultant for The Irish Trade Board who came on various trips to Ireland from London after the war to advise Irish manufacturers on new techniques for ready-to-wear. She used to travel to Europe and indeed still does, to further her knowledge of the great European couturiers, and thus provided me with excellent information on both Irish and European designers of that time. My most valuable source of research came from Richard Clarke, son of Jack Clarke. Mr Clarke provided me with first hand information on his father and his business. He also discussed the early development of Sybil Connolly's success which is sparsely documented, at least by the press and magazine reporters, who never thought it important enough to discover the gradual rise through the ranks of the workroom staff.

For a critical and informative assessment of Sybil Connolly's work and role in the Irish fashion and International fashion trade, I referred to a B.A thesis from the NCAD library written on Sybil Connolly in 1985 by Moya Donnlán. I also used many press and magazine articles on Irish fashion of that time.

PREFACE

"Fashion is fascinating in that it reflects so closely the current and political and financial situation in Europe" ¹

After the stagnation of the Great Depression and the Austerity of the war years, the clothing industry all over Europe and America was expanding. European women still had to put up with shortages and lack of selection, but things were improving. Clothes rationing ended in England in 1949 and Fashionable women were increasing in most European cities. Ireland was no exception and during the immediate post war years it experienced an Economic boom. The census of 1951 recorded an increase of 5000 people between the years 1946-51. ² This increase was mainly confined to Dublin. It brought an end to over a century of National Population decline and provided ground that an era of moderate growth was dawning. One area that experienced from such changes was the Fashion area, the whole market expanded in Ireland.

The Irish Times defined the importance of Irish Fashion in an article stating:

" GROWTH OF AN INDUSTRY "

"In the past few years it has come somewhat of a surprise in both Government and Commercial circles to realise that Fashion is one of the most dynamic industries. The statics are there to prove it." ³

There was a surge of Irish fashion designers and manufacturers setting up in Ireland. Irene Gilbert set up her own couture house in the fashionable area of Stephens Green, Kay Peterson, Donald Davies, Neilli Mulcahy, Henry White and Ib Jorgenson were just a few of the Irish designers and manufacturers who were becoming known, not only in Ireland, but among trendsetters from the other capitals of Europe. The list of Irish designers, manufacturers and couturiers was increasing and Irish design rocketed after the war to a measure of International acclaim.

This was not a fast road to success. It was a long slow awakening, but the nucleus had always been there, for although Irish fashion had never reached international recognition till the Twentieth Century. Irish textiles was certainly recognized in the International market.

From the twelfth to the seventeenth Century our frieze, serges and linens were sold to England and the Continent. Cloth was even shipped to China. The arrival of the Huguenots added silk weaving to the traditional hand woven tweeds, poplin and handknits. Lace made a significant appearance in Ireland during the Eighteenth Century, but only in the Nineteenth Century during the famine 1845-1847 did the making of lace develop into an industry, in the neighbourhood of Carrickmacross. Irish designers had yet to reach international standards, although in London the haute couture list of names of Irish birth or origin suggests that it was not the creative talent we lacked but perhaps a market in which to adapt our designs. Molyneux, Digby Morton, Michael Fitzgerald (from Co Roscommon known as the Balanciaga of London) and John Cavanagh were all extremely successful abroad. In the mid thirties, and continued success throughout and after the war years.

JACK CLARKE'S DEBUT

The Irish fashion story begins with the home-based designer Jack Clarke, who in 1932 set up the first clothing manufacturing company in Dublin. The success of his business led him to open a retail outlet, which would be the chief supplier for his collection of high quality ladies ready-to-wear garments. An acknowledged perfectionist in the art of tailoring, Clarke produced the "County Wear" range which was synonymous in Ireland with chic yet provided practical ladies' tailored separates and coats.

Jack Clarke was a Limerick man, born in 1908 of Irish parents. He left school at an early age and began in the selling business at the age of seventeen, when he held a position in a wholesale warehouse in Manchester which "sold everything from a needle to an anchor".⁴

In 1927 at the age of nineteen he returned home and applied the contacts and experience he gained in Manchester to set up as a Fashion agent. He rented a small in South William Street, which was the centre of the rag trade then, and indeed still is today. He worked long hard hours till he achieved a successful

JACK CLARKE'S DEBUT

Jack Clarke's debut novel, "The Execution of Henry Jones," was published in 1951. The book is a hard-boiled detective story set in the South. It follows the investigation of a murder by a private investigator named Henry Jones. The novel is characterized by its gritty realism and its focus on the lower classes of society. Clarke's writing style is direct and unadorned, with a strong emphasis on action and plot. The novel was well-received by critics and readers alike, establishing Clarke as a major voice in the hard-boiled genre.

The novel is set in a small town in the South, where a man named Henry Jones is found dead. The investigation is led by a private investigator named Henry Jones. The novel is a hard-boiled detective story, and it is characterized by its gritty realism and its focus on the lower classes of society. Clarke's writing style is direct and unadorned, with a strong emphasis on action and plot. The novel was well-received by critics and readers alike, establishing Clarke as a major voice in the hard-boiled genre.

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reputation and expanded his business. He eventually employed his entire family.

In 1931 the Government had brought in a National Environment of Protectionism and Autarchy Act. An elaborate system of tariffs and quotas as placed on goods imported into Ireland. This was to stimulate native Industrial assets. The emphasis was on development of native skills, in other words to encourage a manufacturing Industry in Ireland. This put the agents in Ireland at a great disadvantage as it became too expensive to import foreign goods. Clarke realised that he could set up a coat and suit manufacturing business. He teamed up with the owner of a small furrer, Mr S Keys. Neither of them had design, sketching or sewing skills. They needed a skillful workforce to produce quality garments.

The East End of London had a large Jewish community that had left Germany between 1930-38, These Jews had no real single roots as they had been wandering since 1850, when they were captured in Egypt and had to leave, making their across the world they needed a trade to survive wherever they settled. They collected jewels as they travelled in the hems of their coats, enabling them to carry with them their wealth, thus many set up jewellers.

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In 1841 the Government had brought in a National
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...as they had been working since 1830, when
...in Egypt and had to leave, making their
...the time they needed a train to carry their
...they collected money as they traveled to
...costs, making them to carry with them
...and set up new mills.

Another trade they could travel with was the technique of sewing; they taught themselves the skill of sewing from many different cultures. Eventually the Jewish settlement extended to the East End of London and many settled there and set up clothing companies.

Ireland was not a Country with skillful sewing technicians, so Clarke travelled to London to import some of the Jewish people with sufficient experience and excellent knowledge of the clothing trade.

Although Clarke was not a designer he had an excellent eye for fashion. He would get his ideas from fashion magazines and communicate with his pattern cutters and dressmakers to produce under his rigorous scrutiny superbly cut and tailored coats and separates.

The company opened in 1932 but by 1934 Mr Keys left to expand his fur business in London. Clarke was now the sole owner of "County Wear". His talent as a perfectionist in the art of tailoring built up a very successful trade in Ireland. By 1935 he was supplying the main fashion outlets in Dublin. **Roches Stores, Arnotts and Tod Byrnes** were the chief outlets for the "County Wear" range. These began price cutting, in competition with each other.

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and Ted Byrnes were the chief outlets for the country
wear. These began to compete in competition
with each other.

It was a threat to Jack Clarke as stores were left with his stock unsold. To solve this problem and to satisfy his fast growing trade, he decided he needed an outlet supplying his own range. In this same year he purchased at a relatively cheap price a small shop in Grafton Street. He named it Richard Alan Limited, (after his two sons). The store not only stocked the "County Wear" range, he also imported the less expensive ready-to-wear dresses from London. He continued to supply to shops all over Ireland, but under a different system. He issued his garments with tickets stating the selling price, this had a 33% mark up so the garment had to be sold at this price. It meant his clothes were more expensive, but he sold on quality so the stores continued to buy his range. He developed a very successful trade within Ireland in a short period of time. There are few records / illustrations of Clarke's early work. See Fig. 1.1 & 1.2.

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Fig 1.1
Two models by "County Wear"
right: a travel coat in a
beautiful shade of amethyst
left : "Weekend" a cleverly
simple suit in fine gray wool.
1942.

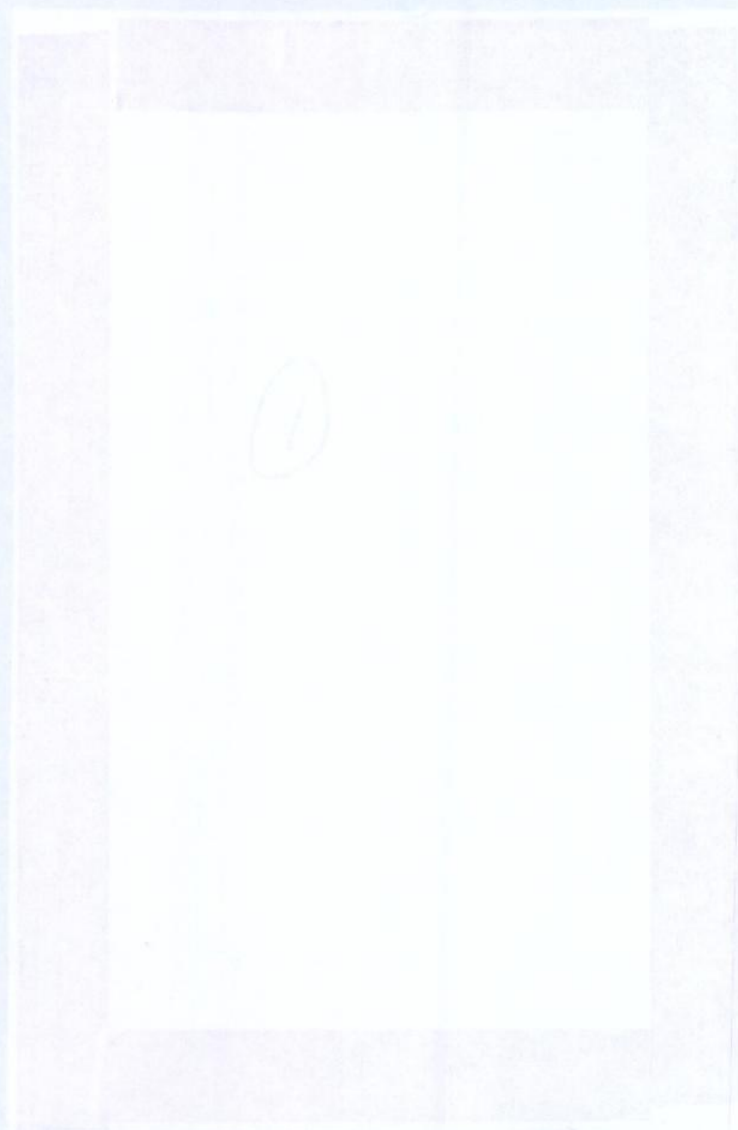
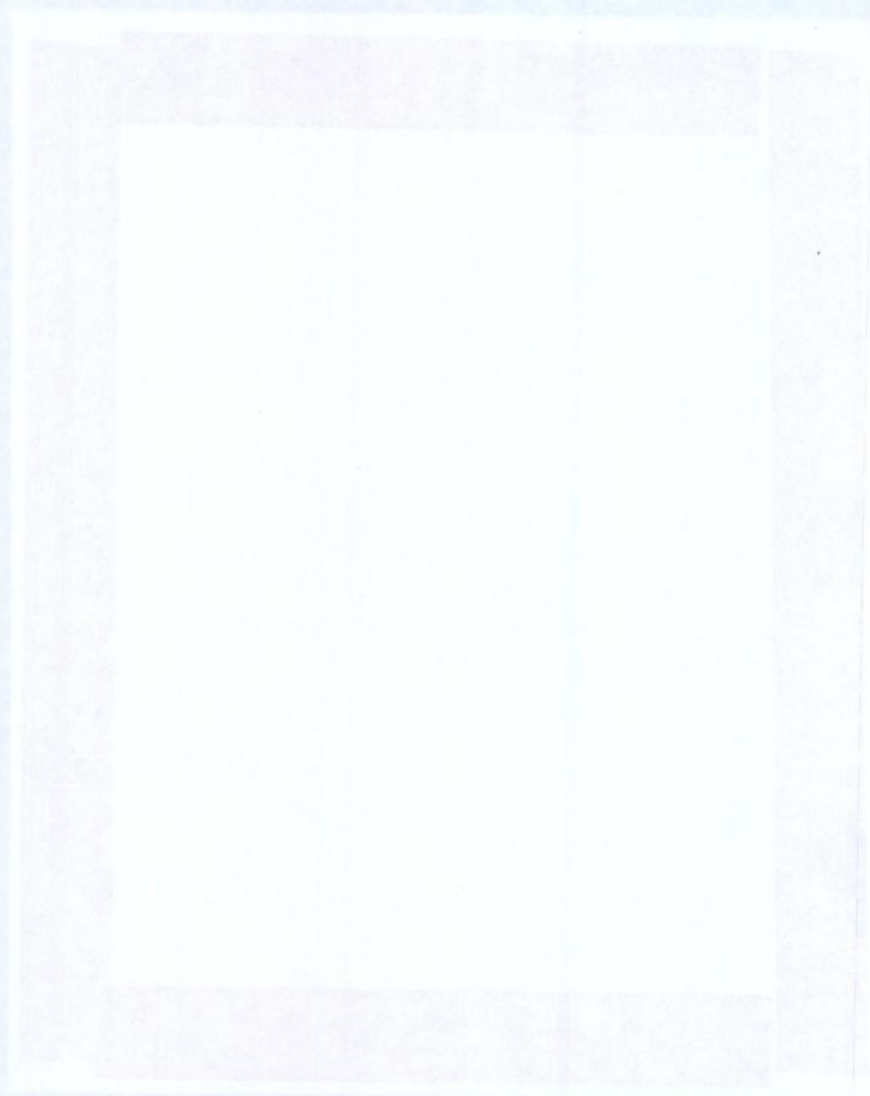




Fig 1.2
"County Wear" Winter collection of 1940.



Clarke had a God-given talent as a perfectionist, which was also a dreadful affliction. It was like a disease that denied him satisfaction with his business. He had achieved an excellent market within Ireland but by 1939 he was ready to challenge the American market. His acute business sense realised that America was a buying market. They had a much higher standard of living and always sought new fashions. He went to the Department of Industry and Commerce seeking a licence to export to the USA. They were very reluctant, as they could not understand an Irish man's ambition to break into the American fashion market when it was already well established at home.

Despite the Great Depression of the twenties America was beginning to create its own fashion. By the mid Twenties most of the important film companies had moved to Hollywood and there was much development of costume design departments in the Hollywood studios. Hollywood fashion production and society flourished in the mid thirties. Fig 1.3. By 1930 wardrobe departments of major studios had grown to be small factories that employed as many as two hundred workers. By then the creation of stars had become routine. A star was not born but made.

...had a long-ago friend as a professional ...
...also a successful ... it was like a ...
...of his ... with his business ...
...the excellent ... with ... but he ...
...ready to challenge the American market. His ...
...business sense ... that America was ...
...and a much higher standard of living and ...
...new ... He went to the ...
...and company seeking a license to export to the ...
...were very ... as they could not ...
...to Irish ... a ... to ...
...American ... when it was ...
...at home.

...the ... of the ... was ...
...its own ... By the ...
...of the ... had moved to ...
...and there was much development of ...
...in the ... Hollywood ...
...and society ... in the ...
...at ... of ...
...to ... that ... as many as two ...
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Costume designers not only contributed to film styles, but many of the successful ones influenced American fashion trends for decades: Gilbert Adrian, Orry Kelly, Travis Banton and the wonderful Edith Head were just a few who contributed their styles for evening and dressy events in town. Fig 1.4 & 1.5.

Perhaps the most innovative names in American Fashion belonged to those who worked in the area of Sportswear(casual wear). Tom Brigance at Lord and Taylor, Claire Mc Cardell, Vera Maxwell and Pauline Trigere were very successful. In New York the category of separates. It was to be this area of the market that Jack Clarke would challenge. Fig 1.6 to 1.9. Some English designers had also broken into the American market. From 1937, Coronation year, the English had built up a good export business with America. Many Americans were in London for the Coronation and buyers from several great stores were buying from design houses in exactly the same they had bought from the couture houses of Paris. Lachasse, a small couture sports-wear firm in London (founded by Irishman Digby Morton who designed there for 13 years before opening his own fashion house) sold many of their toiles to the Americans.

These designers not only contributed to film style, but also of the secondary ones influenced American fashion trends. The designers who influenced only B. H. Davis and on the contrary Edith Head were few and far between. Their styles for evening and dressy occasions in the 1930s and 1940s.

During the war the names in American fashion were not known to them and worked in the area of fashion design. The designers at Lord and Taylor, J. P. Gault, Vera Maxwell and Pauline Trigère were the most famous. In New York the category of separates was not in this area of the market that Jack Chase and others. The 1940s to 1950s some English designers were known to American market. From 1935 to 1940 the English had built up a good reputation. Many Americans were in London for the war and they had seen several great stores were in the same houses in the same they had seen the quality of the clothes because of the quality of the clothes. Some were in London (founded in 1910) and they worked and designed their for 15 years. Some were in New York and sold many of their clothes to the American market.

They had little knowledge of this way of selling and sold the toiles cheaply while knowing the Americans were taking the models back to be copied in America.

Lachasse still benefited from this, as the name became well known across America and their designer at that time, Hardy Amies, built up several business contacts which have served him to this day. Fig 1.10 & 1.11



Fig 1.3
Marlene Dietrich at her
most glamorous in the
veiled hat and fox fur,
she wore in the 1936
film " Desire "



Fig 1.4
Make up was heavy by
later standards

Hollywood musicals epitomised the
escapism of time. Fred Astaire &
Ginger Rogers dance their way
through many light-hearted films
Fig 1.5



INFLUENCES IN AMERICAN FASHIONS





Fig 1.6
Evening wear influenced by costume
design. Designed by "Irene " who
was the first costume designer to
sell her glamorous designs in
American department stores.

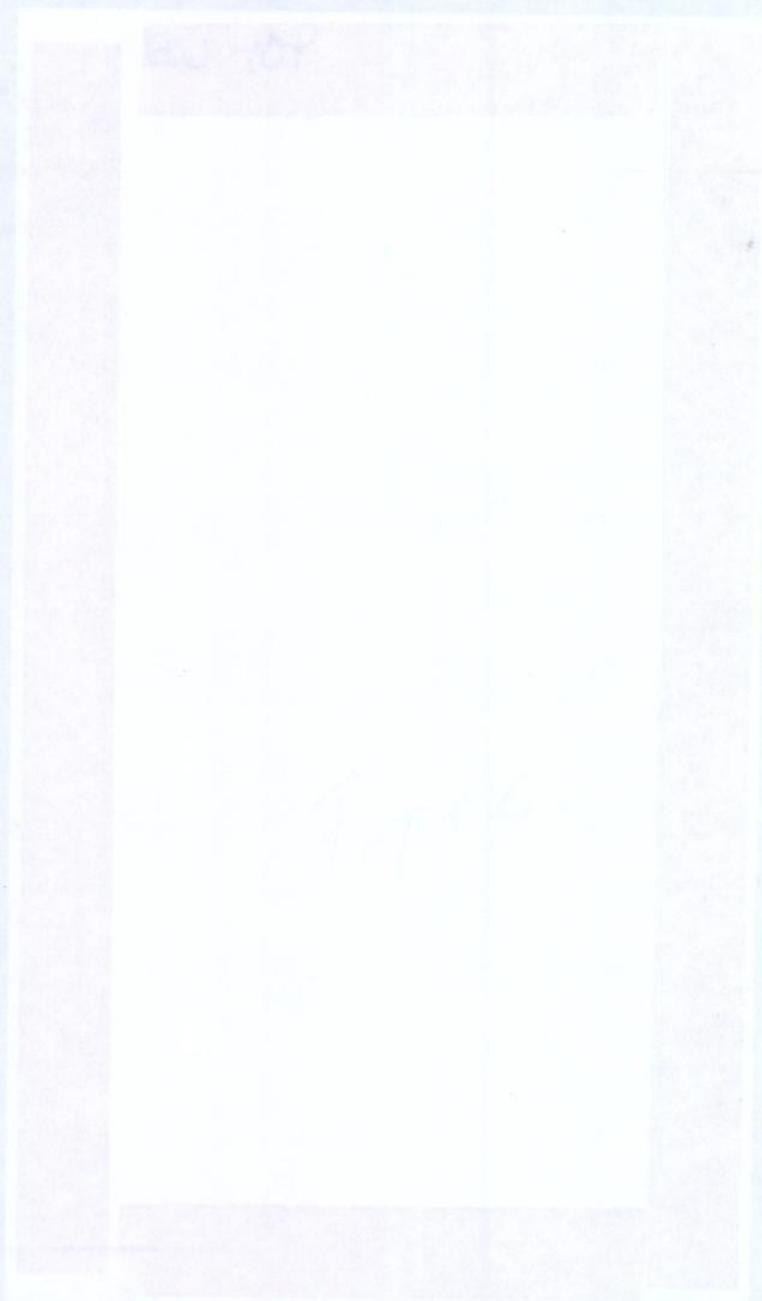




Fig 1.7
Designed by Pauline Trigere, 1940
who started designing in the 1940's,
and was able to benefit from the
new attitude and awareness in
American fashion.



Fig 1.8
Claire Cardells, 1949
narrowly pleated dress,
and wrapped around the
waist with her signature
spaghetti ties.

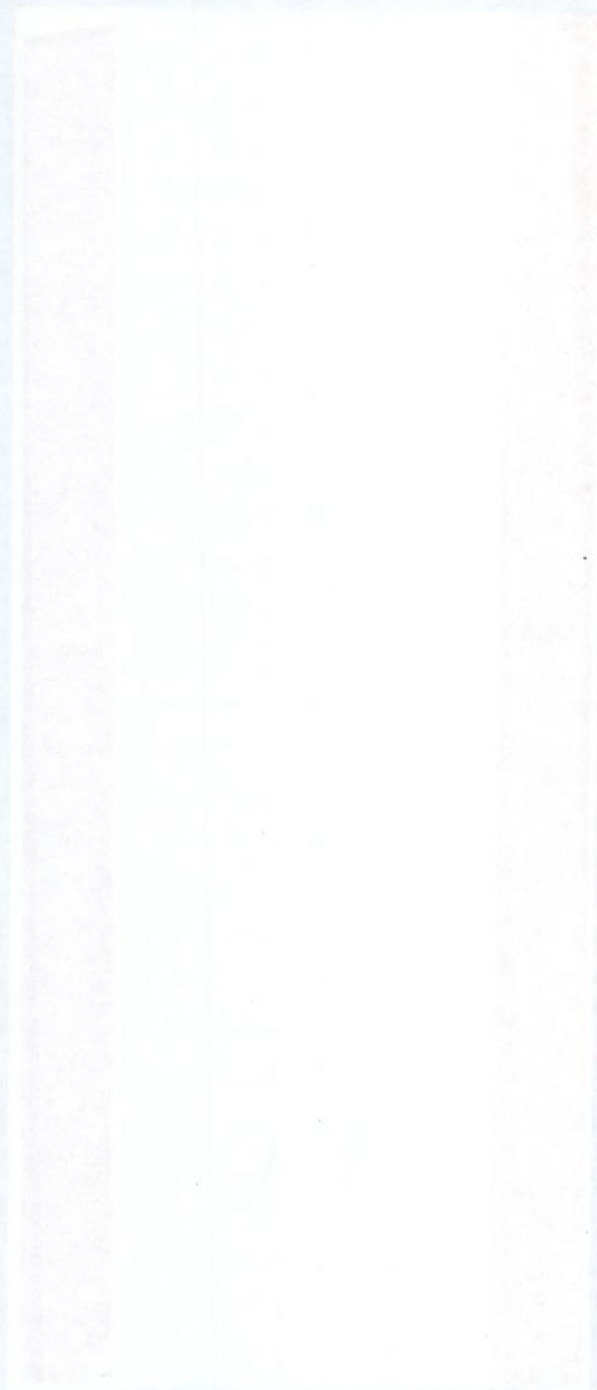
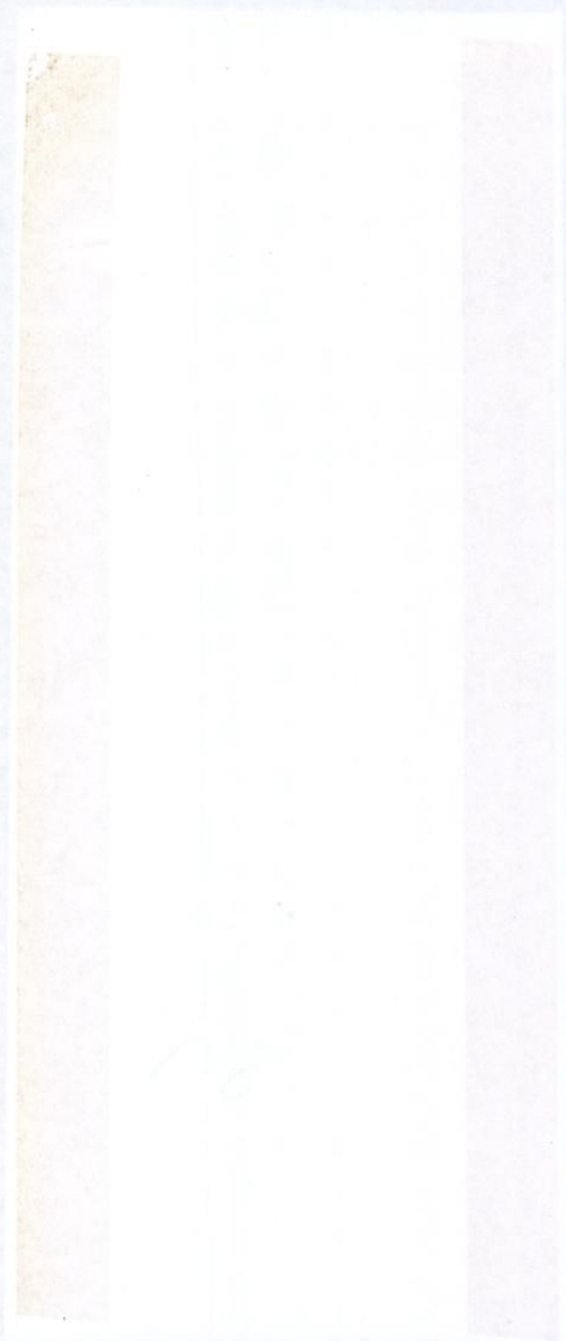




Fig 1.9
Vera Maxwell - Grey flannel suit 1938.

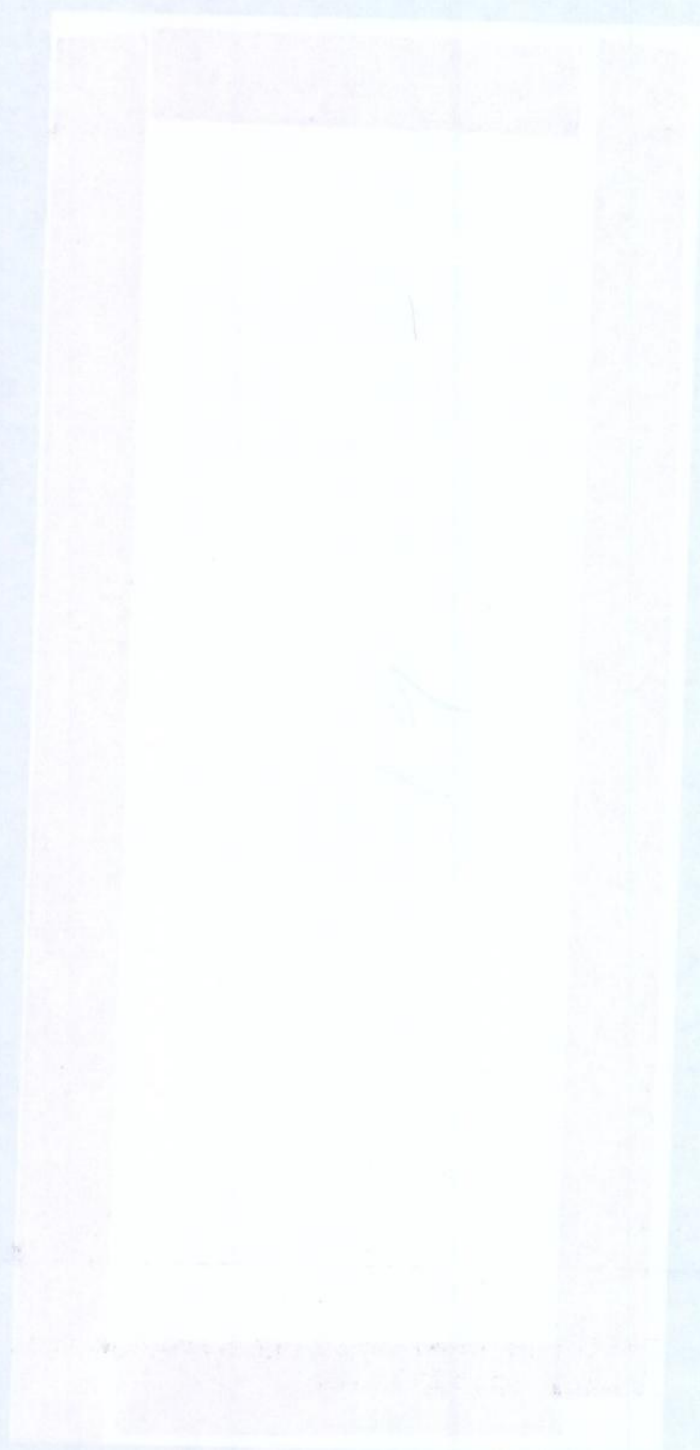




Fig 1.10
Tailored wool suit by Hardy Amies,
Vogue, April 1937.

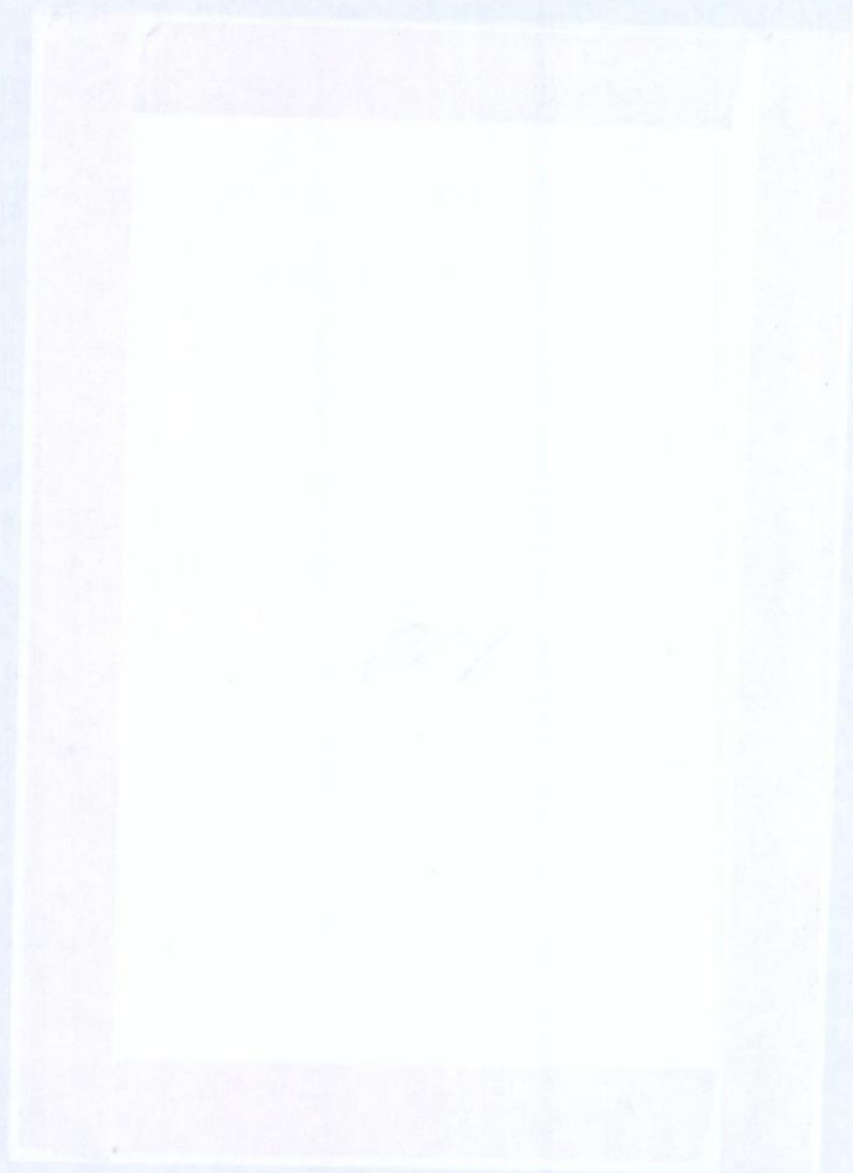
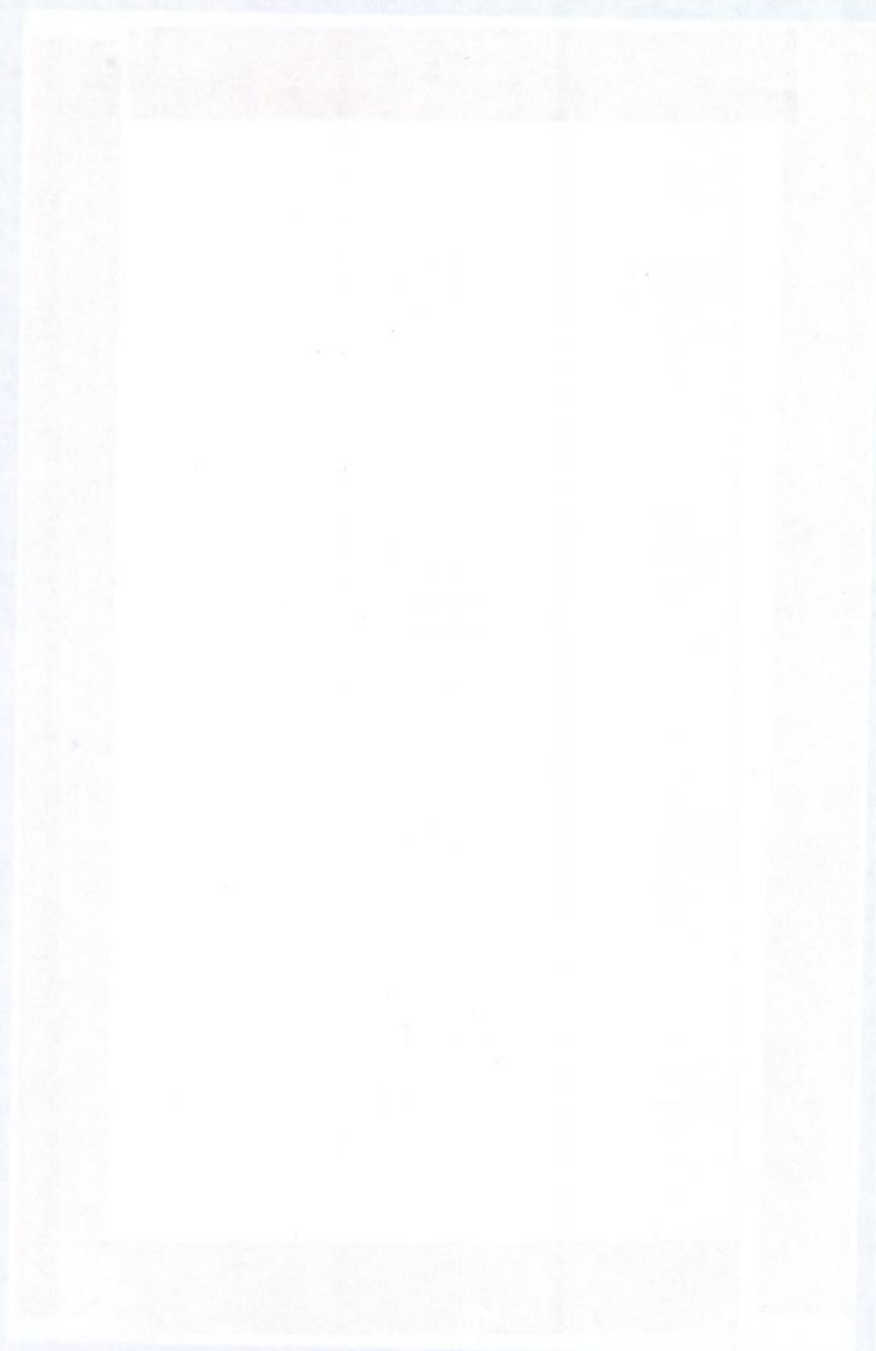




Fig 1.11
1939, Lachasse : wide revered
topcoat in Heather Mills' tweed.



THE EFFECT OF THE WAR ON FASHION

The Forties was an unique decade in twentieth century Fashion. The effects of the Second World War had made fashion less exclusive and clothes became more democratic, catering for a much wider market.

At the beginning of the 1940 although the War had been on for several months extensive bombing and fighting had not started. In France and London fashion designers were given special leave from the armed forces to complete their new collections. the couture houses presented their Spring fashion in February to an international audience in an atmosphere of "Business as usual" Fig 2.1. The American press who had expected to report sensational war news called this the "PHONEY WAR".

The Fashion for the 1940's were more practical than the frivolous styles of the 1939 but they were still designed for women whose lives had not been effected by the war. Hair styles continued to feature pinned up curls and rolls, hats were surprisingly fussy, Fig 2.3. The basic silhouette of the late 30's continued with wide shoulders and figure-fitting lines.

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But the tiny corseted waistlines that had been considered so important before, were quickly forgotten. Clothes had become more wearable. All day skirts were shortened to just below the kneecap, but for evening floor length dresses were still shown, Fig 2.2. In Vogue's report on the collections it was noted that

" Women are dining gracefully again in dresses that touch their toes" ⁵

In May 1940 Germany began the invasion of Holland, Belgium and France. The "Phoney War" was over. By the end of June, France was defeated and Paris as the International centre of Fashion had to close down. Paris under the German occupation was completely cut off from Britain and America. The couture houses lost a very important part of their market, although they showed small collections throughout the war years, and fashionable dressing was still seen. The German/s restricted both the production of textiles and the number of couture houses, so the collections were of necessity on a much smaller scale than before the war.

and the first concerned witnesses that had been interviewed
as anonymous helpers who had by far the most
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Vogue 1940,
Paris still showing
collections

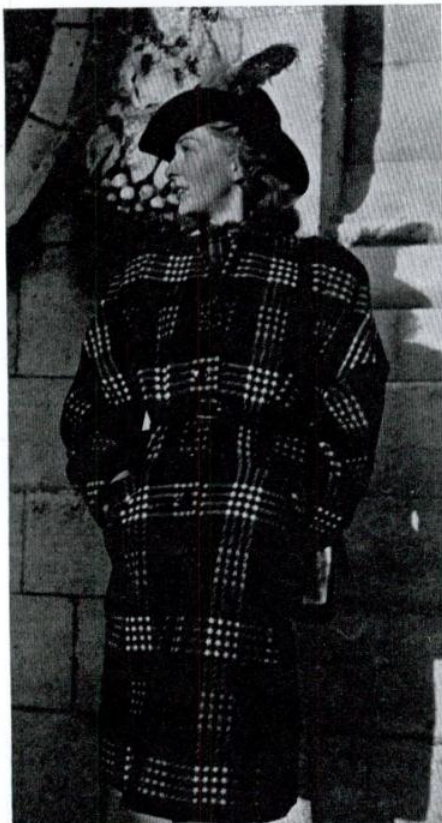
Fig 2.1



PAQUIN'S black wool suit, discreetly tailored, is exploited by its accessories: leopard muff-cum-shoulder-bag matching leopard skin revers; tambourine halo hat



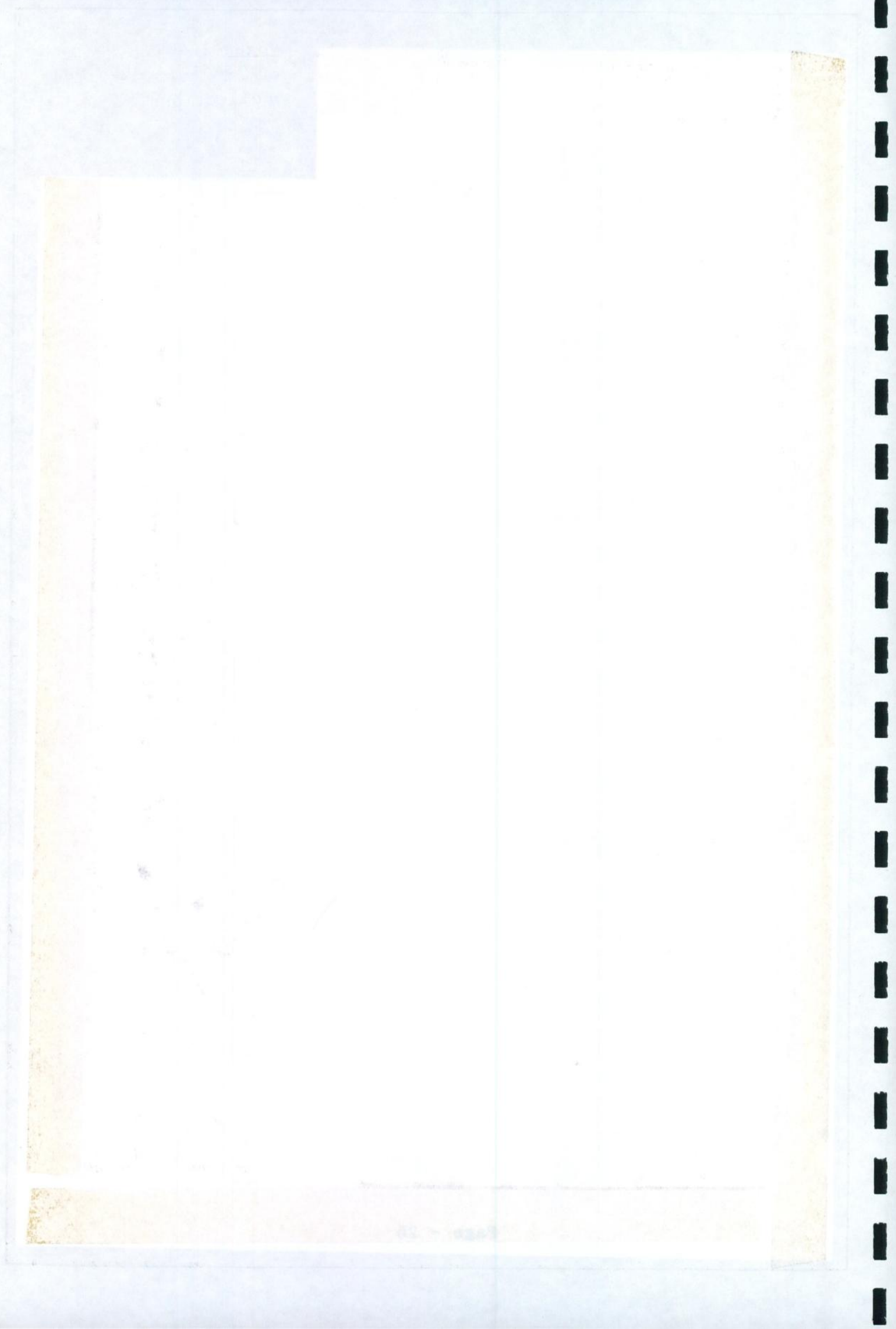
SCHIAPARELLI'S classic grey suit has snowstorm buttons; her black flowerpot hat wears a detachable skirt of velvet



MOLYNEUX'S topcoat is a large plaid: black, red and white, worn with a scarlet scarf, pulled in at the waist by a leather belt



MOLYNEUX'S tan tweed suit has a 5/6 length coat, fur lined and fur lapelled: with it, an aquamarine sweater, a draped rust hat



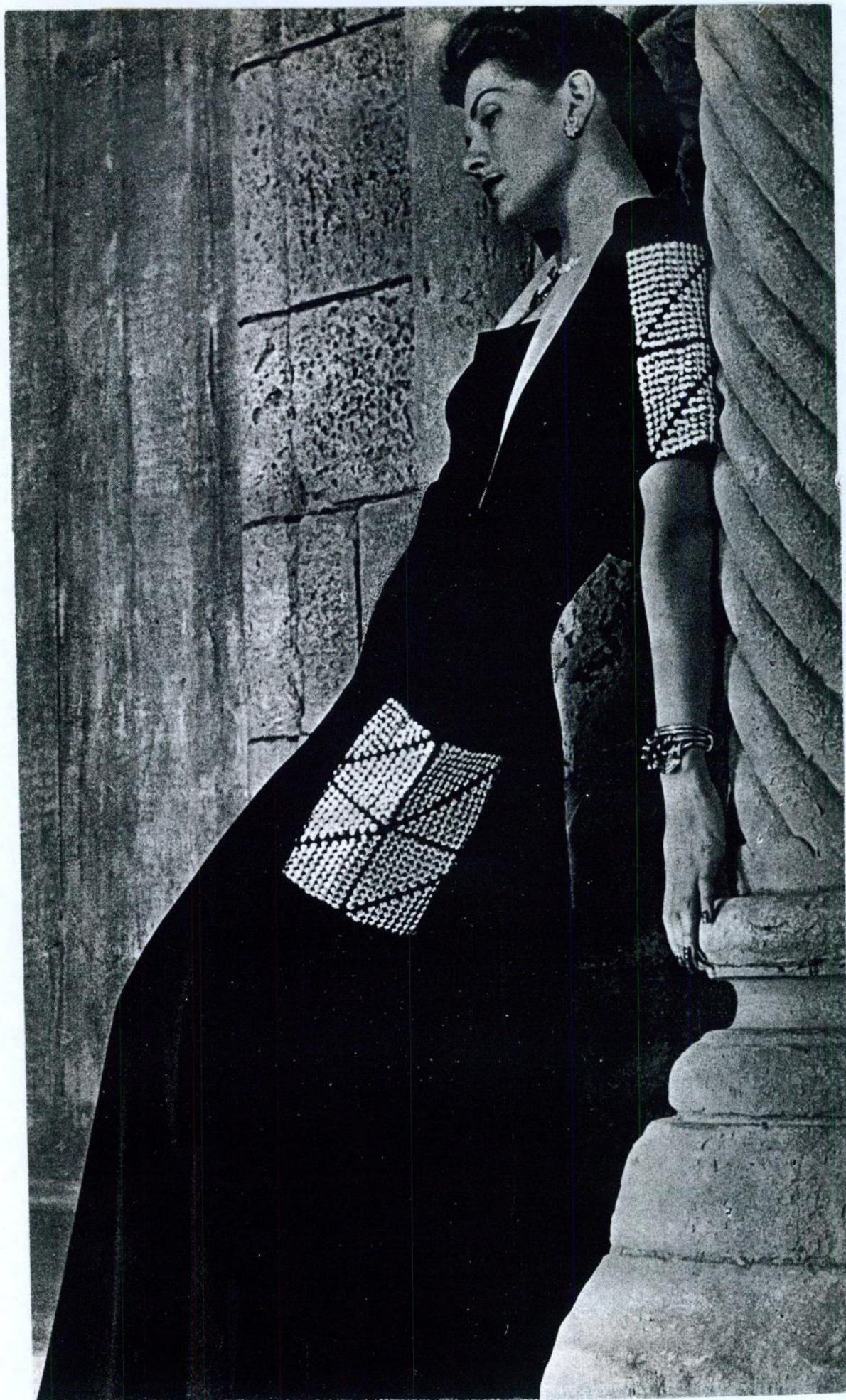


Fig 2.2 Vogue 1940, " Dining Gracefully".
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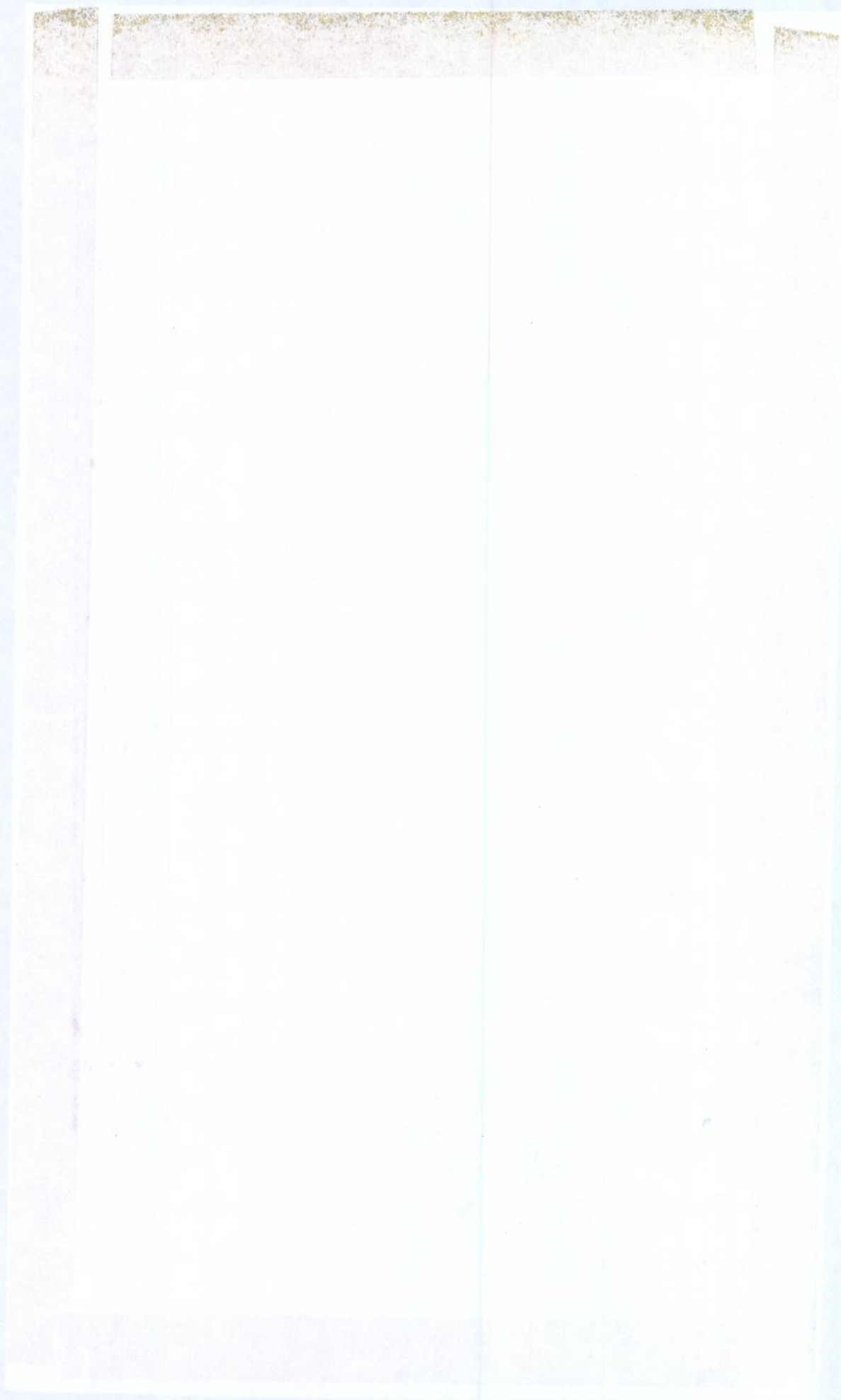




Fig 2.3
Vogue 1940, Schiaparelli,
shocking pink roses rambling off
the bonnet, is an example of
the "suprisingly fussy hats"
during the war.

Fig 23

Both British and American governments sought to take advantage of the situation by encouraging their couturiers to gain dominance in the fashion field. The British Government persuaded all leading London designers to create a joint collection in 1941, which was to be sent to South America, with a display of luxurious clothes which were strictly for export only, and not available at home in England. Hardy Amies was given leave from the army to design part of the collection. The experiment was so successful that it was decided to give British couture a voice in dealing with new war time problems.

Shortages of fabric and labour made rationing necessary; most wartime Governments imposed various restrictions limiting manufacturers and designers in the amounts of fabric that could be used in the making of a garment. This also banned unnecessary trimmings and ornaments and limited the number of models that could be introduced.

However the picture was not entirely drab. Manufacturers were allowed to produce a small number of clothes free from restrictions on fabric and style for those who could collect the necessary number of coupons to buy them.

Top designers applied their talents to bring a little style to utility garments, Fig 2.6. In 1942 the British Board of Trade introduced the "Civilian Clothing Order" which was to promote the Utility Scheme. It called upon couturiers to design models to show that clothes would still be attractive and fashionable despite restrictions, which could all be put into mass- production. It gave opportunities to design very well, for the simple dress is often the apex of elegance, Fig 2.5. Molyneux, Digby morton, Bianca Mosca, Peter Russell and Worth all collaborated to create coats, suits, dresses and overalls. But it was Hardy Amies who showed that considerable ingenuity could be used to produce an interesting garment from a limited amount of material, using checks in a counterpoint of straight and bias arrangement he produced a clever innovative design that captured the public's attention and imagination Fig 2.4.

During the war years many women were encouraged to make their own clothes. Newspapers and magazines carried regular articles including "Make do and Mend" on how to alter and renovate existing clothes. The fashion magazines gave more space to knitting patterns and styles for the home dressmakers. The thin issues of Vogue always had attached pattern books, and women found they could make clothes, thus giving themselves the opportunity to

have as many pleats or frills as they wanted. This gave more style and individuality than the stereo-typed designers in the shops, particularly when clothes became subject to extensive regulations.

Although Ireland was not directly effected by the war, similar restrictions were imposed on manufacturers and designers. It was mainly family-owned businesses that survived in Ireland throughout World War Two and indeed are still leading a successful business today. Cleo was first opened in 1936 as a retail outlet, selling woven garments to the tourists to Ireland. Mrs Ryan, founder of Cleo began to buy fabrics in Guineys and sent them to dressmakers through to make up dresses for her shop, but what pulled her business through the war was her knitwear, the raw materials were available in Ireland and coupons were not needed to purchase knitted garments. Barnadoes & Sons Limited, founded in 1812, Ireland's oldest manufacturing furriers, The Vards who were also furriers and Henry White's were other family run businesses that struggled through the war, the latter actually setting up his coat and suit manufacturing company during the war in 1941. What brings businesses down in time of recession is the cost of overheads. In the family businesses these were eliminated and so the survival risks were less dramatic.



Fig 2.4
Utility suit, in blue, brown
and cream tweed, by Hardy Amies.
1942.

Fig 2.5
Austerity can be elegant as shown
below by Molyneux in this grey
flannel suit. The only touch
of decoration, being the rounded
lapels and pockets.



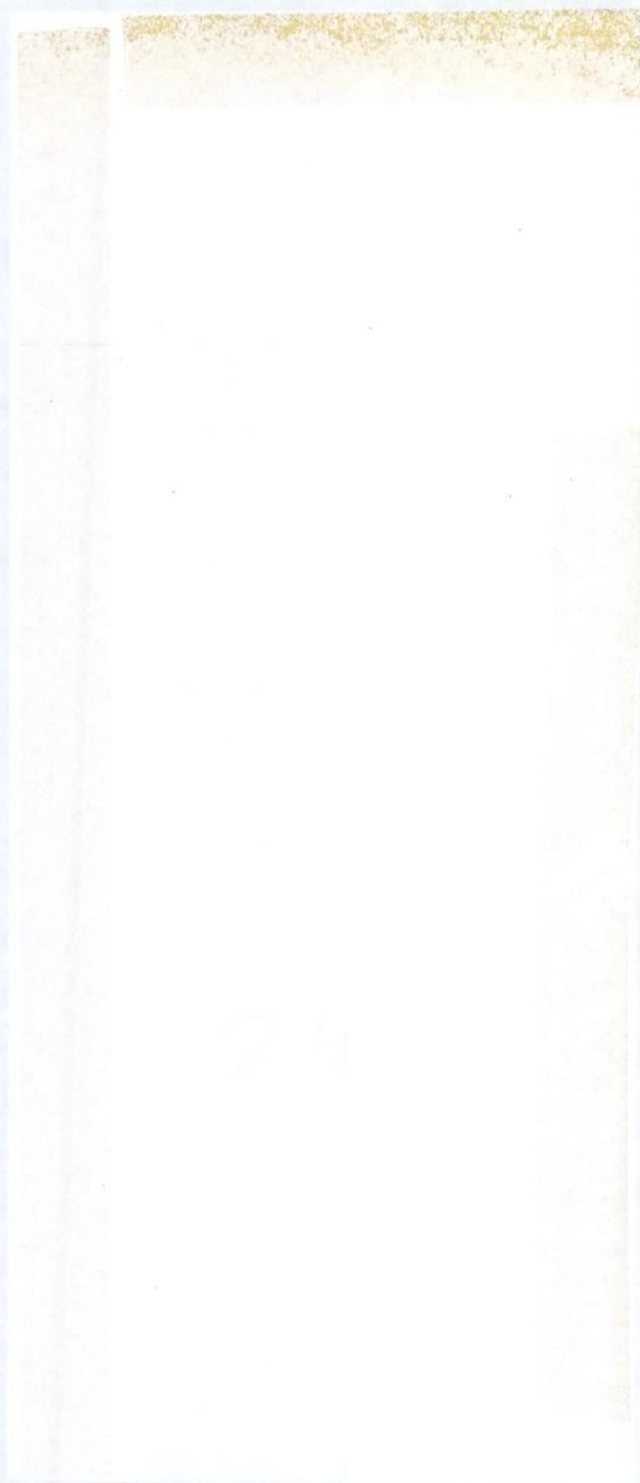
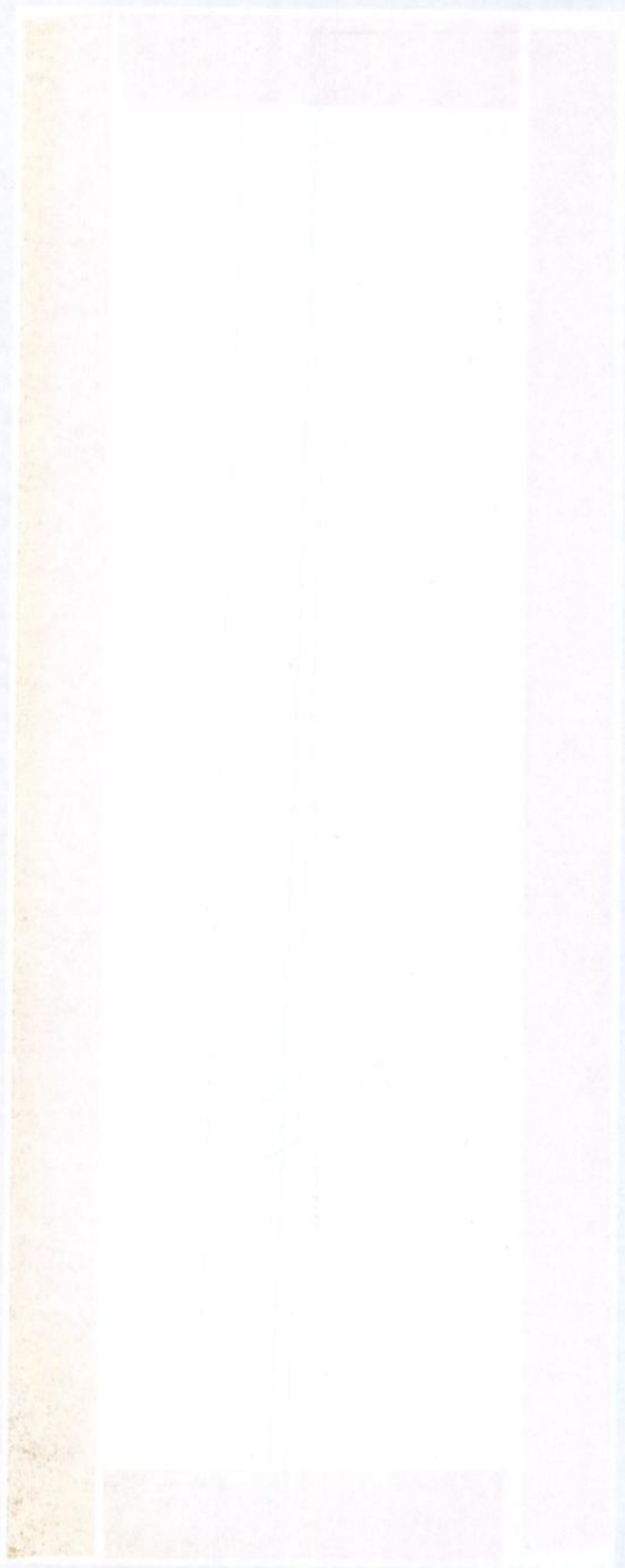




Fig 2.6
Vogue 1944, Molyneux,
Black crepe dress,
Mustard belt, unpresseed
inverted pleat, in sleeves
and bodice.

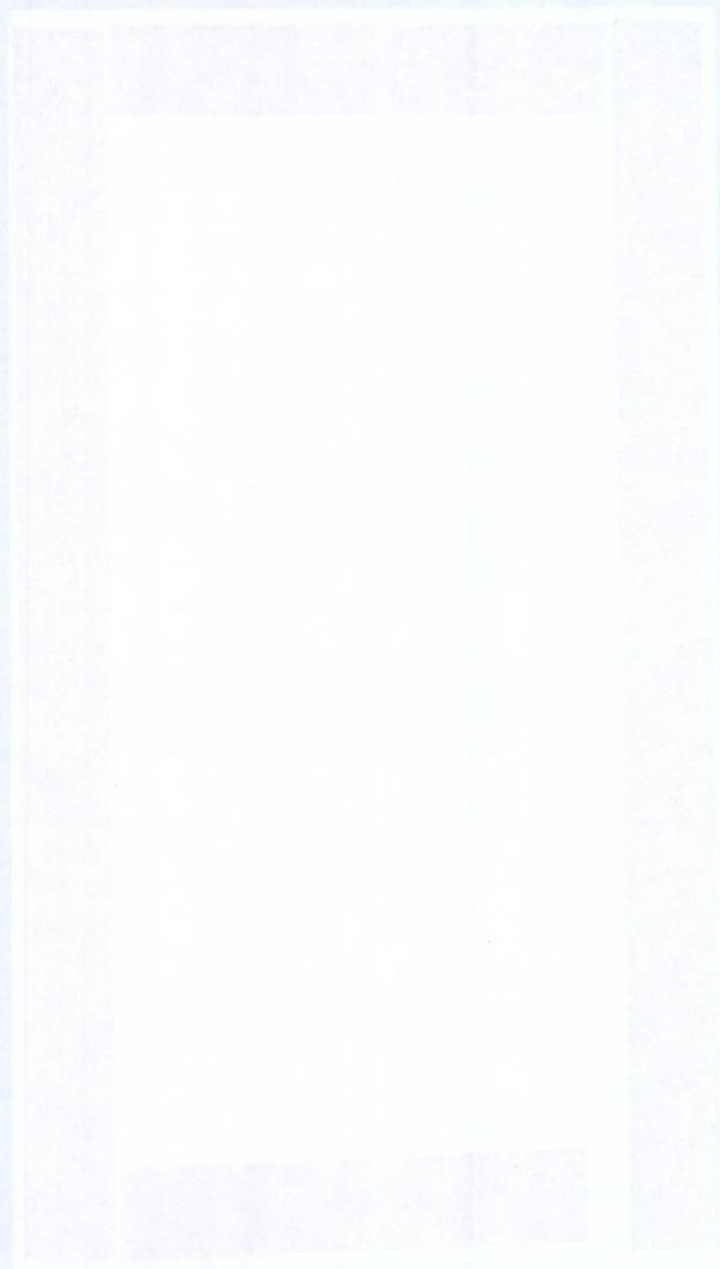




Fig 2.7



Fig 2.8
Carmen Miranda, the dynamic singer and dancer helped to make mid-riff styles and turpens famous.

Rita Hayward was famed for her long red hair which she tossed provatively in the film " Gilda ".
Fig 2.9



In contrast to wartime Europe, America was a fashion Utopia, where glamorous fashion and stylish clothes were readily available.

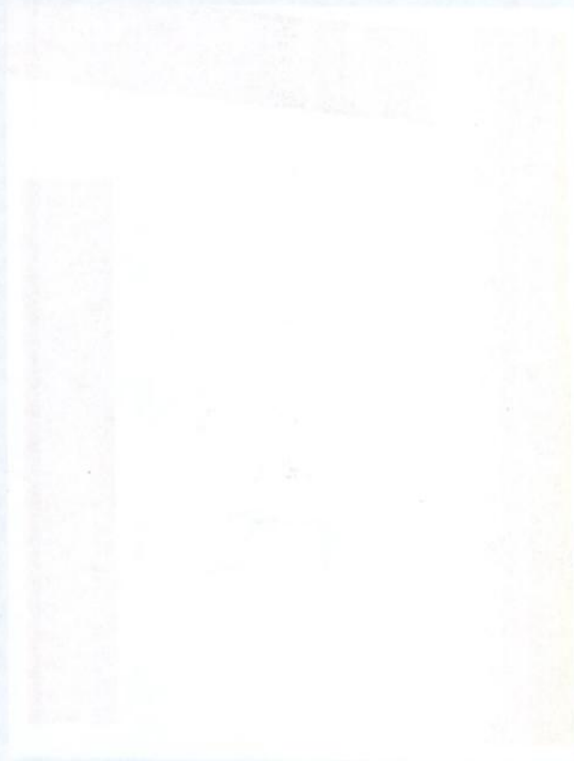
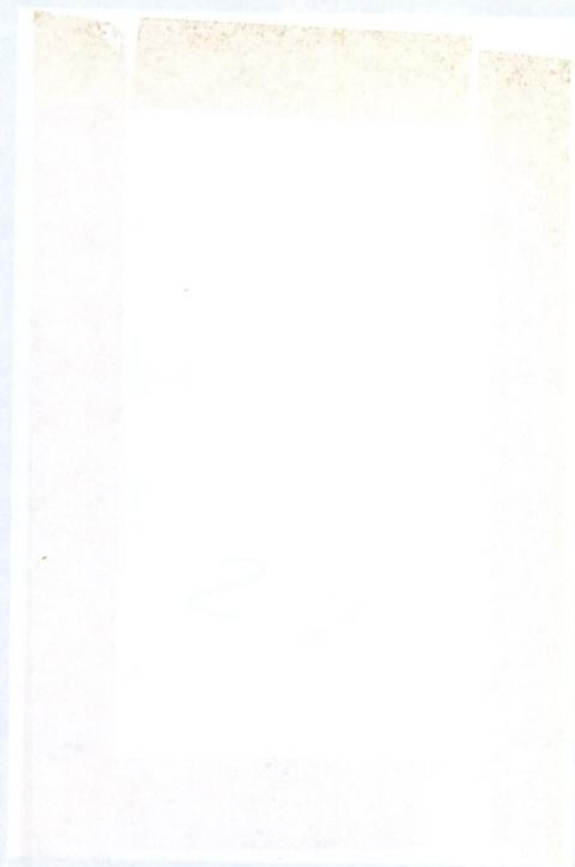




Fig 2.10
Costume designer Adrian Gilbert
is generally credited with devising
the broad shoulder silhouette, which
proved so compatible with wartime
regulations.

210

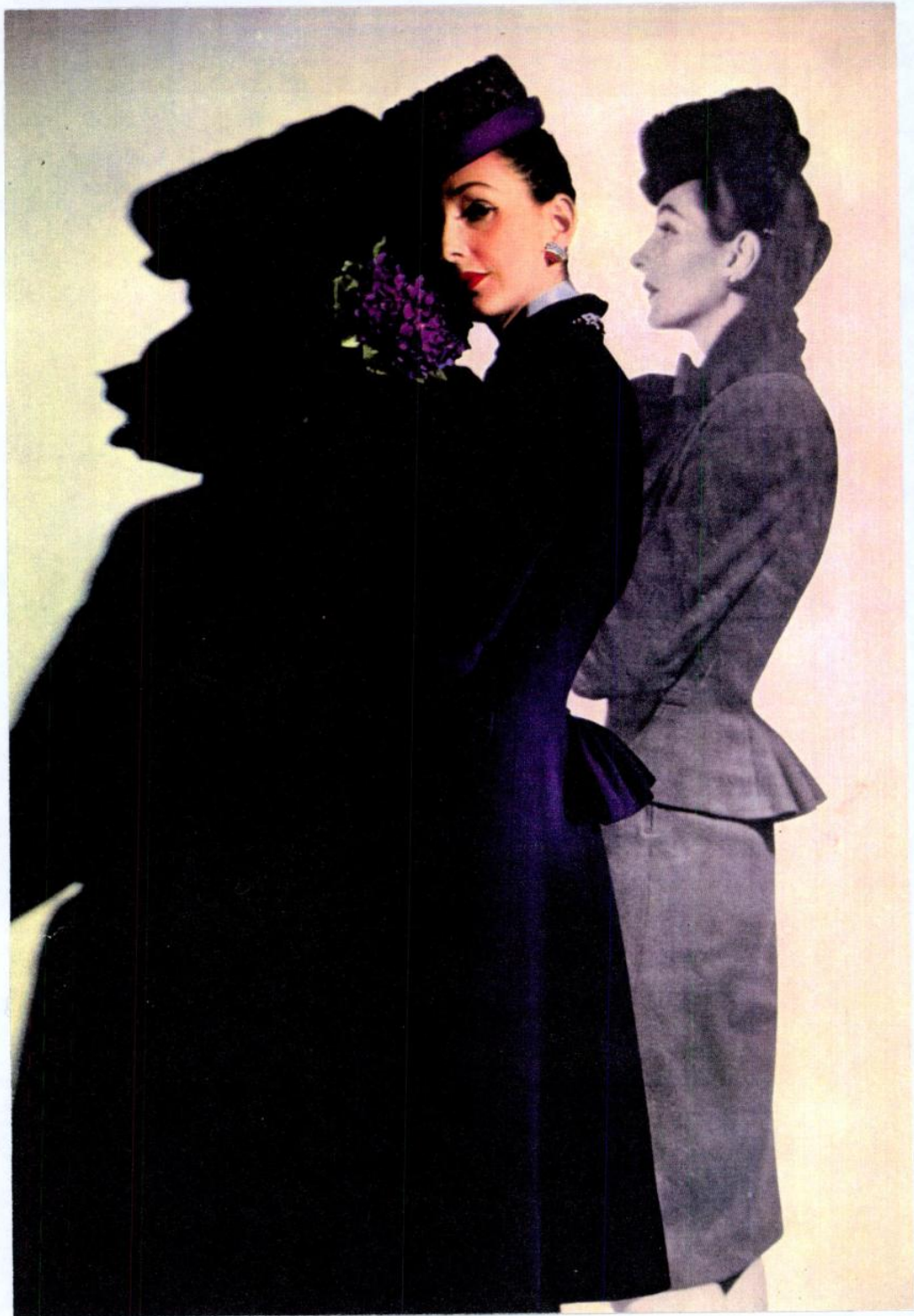
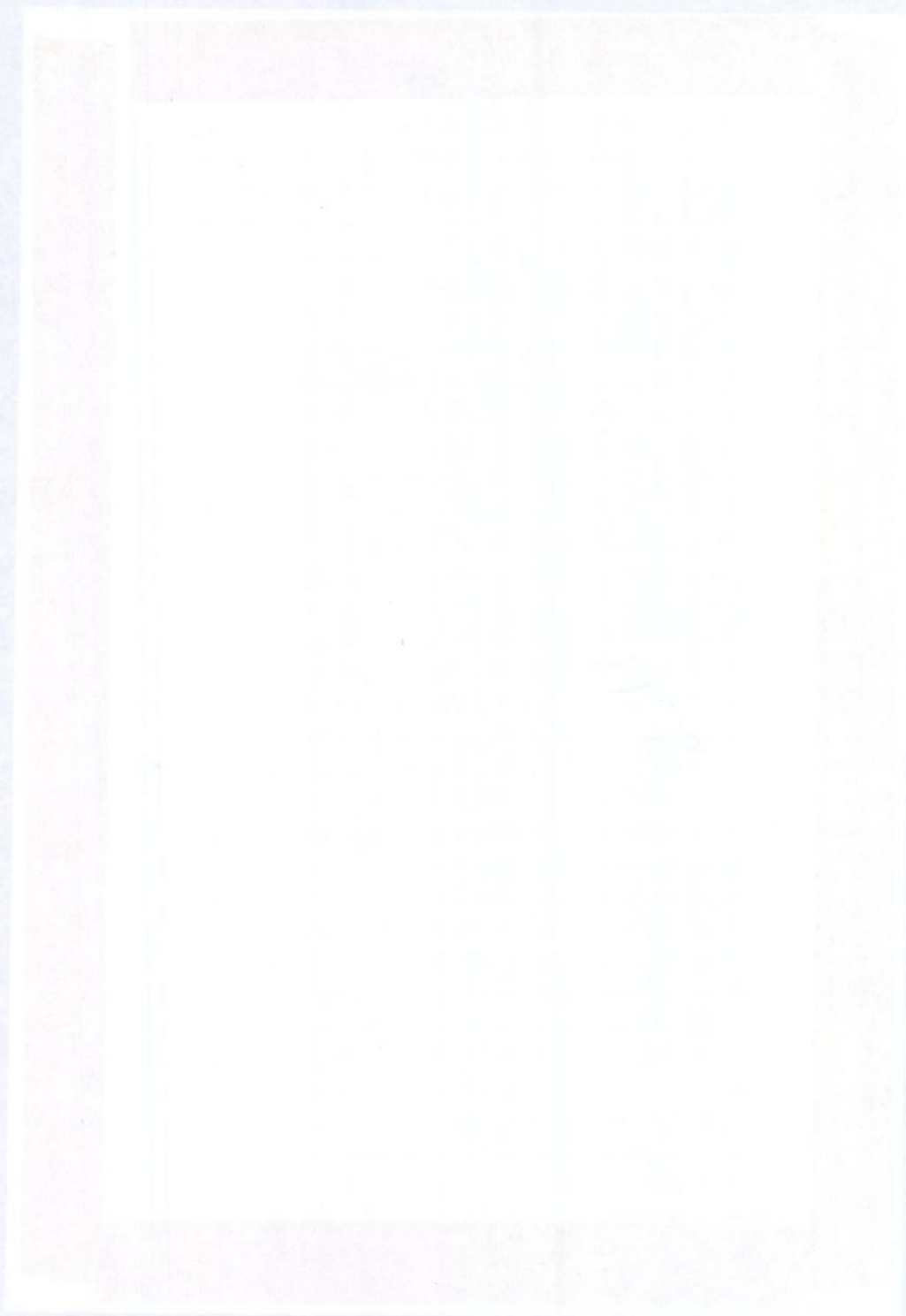


Fig 2.11
America was developing a style of their own.
Vogue 1944



THE EXPANSION OF THE IRISH FASHION TRADE

After World War Two the whole fashion market in Ireland expanded. The companies that made it through the war were now adding to their businesses. During the war Jack Clarke managed to make contracts in America. Now that the war was over, he set about building up an export trade with the USA. Ireland was developing a small fashion empire. Designers and manufacturers realised there was a market for Irish designs. Soon the names of Irish designers and manufacturers were becoming known. Irene Gilbert set up her own fashion house in 1946, in the fashionable Stephens Green area; she produced couture garments of excellent quality and imported French handsewers to show her girls how to sew a really fine seam, Kay Peterson's brilliant colour sense jolted the weavers out of their masculine-minded salt and pepper, brown sugar and porridge colour sternness. Neilli Mulcahy made an impact with her sporting clothes. In Cork, Sheila Mullally was designing for Elizabeth James, the first lady to sell off the peg clothes in Cork. Donald Davies introduced linen-fine tweed skirts and dresses which anticipated the shift, while Ib Jorgensons glamour clothes

struck another new line. Henry White and his partner Jack Toohey's tweed ensembles were the classics. The list of up-and-coming Irish designers was increasing. Although these received substantial success on the home and foreign markets, none reached the status and International recognition of Jack Clarke. So what was it that made Jack Clarke's business such a success over these fellow competitors. Was it...

" The loving care he puts into the manufacture of his garments" ⁶

That built him such an outstanding reputation and excellent market in Ireland and America. I think not ! Clarke had quite a rare talent for such a creative person; he was also such an acute business man, and had a great understanding for the fashion market (especially the American market). His ability to manipulate his clothes to suit the American market was quite remarkable and very successful.

Clarke had made some valuable contacts in America during the war, and continued to pursue his ambition to export to America. After all, in the Forties, the average American was enjoying an income fifteen times greater than the

average foreigner. Most American were weary with the Depression and foreign wars and bored with Politics.

Bursting with their enforced savings from the Second World War, Americans wanted to enjoy their new found prosperity and victory. A new era seemed open for them offering not only increased income to ordinary Americans, but a chance for education and greater status. It was good market sense to adhere to their needs, as this was the buying market.

Many wealthy Americans travelled to Europe for French and English designs. Because they had to stop over in Shannon they began to take advantage of this to view the Irish Fashion Industry, and a number were attracted to the high quality and style of "County Wear" range and the various other European designs that Clarke stocked in Richard Alan. Jack Clarke got a taste for the American market and by 1947, he had achieved his goal and launched his first "County Wear" line in Ambercrombies on Fifth Avenue in New York. Such a store attracted a high class clientele, e.g the Hemmingways and the Rockfellers thus it was not long before the demand for "County Wear" increased in America and before long Clarke's clothes were sold in many of the high class stores throughout America. The chief outlets

were Lord and Taylors of New York, Gimbels Bros. of Philadelphia and Magnums of California. He established a reputation for quality cut and superb tweeds.

As his business grew so too must his work force, and by 1949 Clarke realised he needed a designer (a European designer at that). Paris was regaining its position as Fashion capital and London designers had built up an export trade with America from 1937, Coronation year, when many Americans travelled to England. Clarke was not a designer and with the success and speedy growth of his business he felt it necessary to introduce fresh new ideas. Since his business was expanding to International spheres, so too was his competition. Clarke kept a close eye, to keep up with The constantly growing competition.

Gaston Mallet was a young French Canadian from Montreal, who had worked and studied in Paris after the war. His studies complete, he joined the staff of Pierre Balmain. On leaving Balmain he opened his own salon in London for a short period, and subsequently designed costumes for films and theatrical productions including Greer Garson's film, "The Miniver Story (1942)". It's believed that Mallet came to Ireland to avoid conscription to army after the war.

Mallet's work attracted the attention of Clarke; now whether it was because he was one of the few European designers in Ireland at that time, and Clarke knew it would be an innovative venture to collaborate Irish and European design, or whether he was employed for his talent as an innovative designer, I very much doubt. Because although the collaboration was extremely successful Mallet's collection hardly broke new ground in the Irish Fashion Trade. He never really departed from the general silhouette or lines dictated by his more famous French and English counterparts. He used mainly imported fabrics with a particularly "Irish" feel for colours-soft, muted shadings, grey tones of pastels, subtle variations on the new fine tweeds which were currently emerging.

"If we could sum up Gaston Mallet's collection of coats and suits we should choose the adjective "sensible", in no way meaning dull or prosair or ultra practical, but meaning that rare thing - a collection of coats and suits eminently suited to the vagaries of our climate and designed clearly for town and country wear, faultless cut and the finest tweed and suiting added lustre to the selection of coats and suits which were shown".⁷

County Wear

welcomes

GASTON MALLET

who has come to Ireland

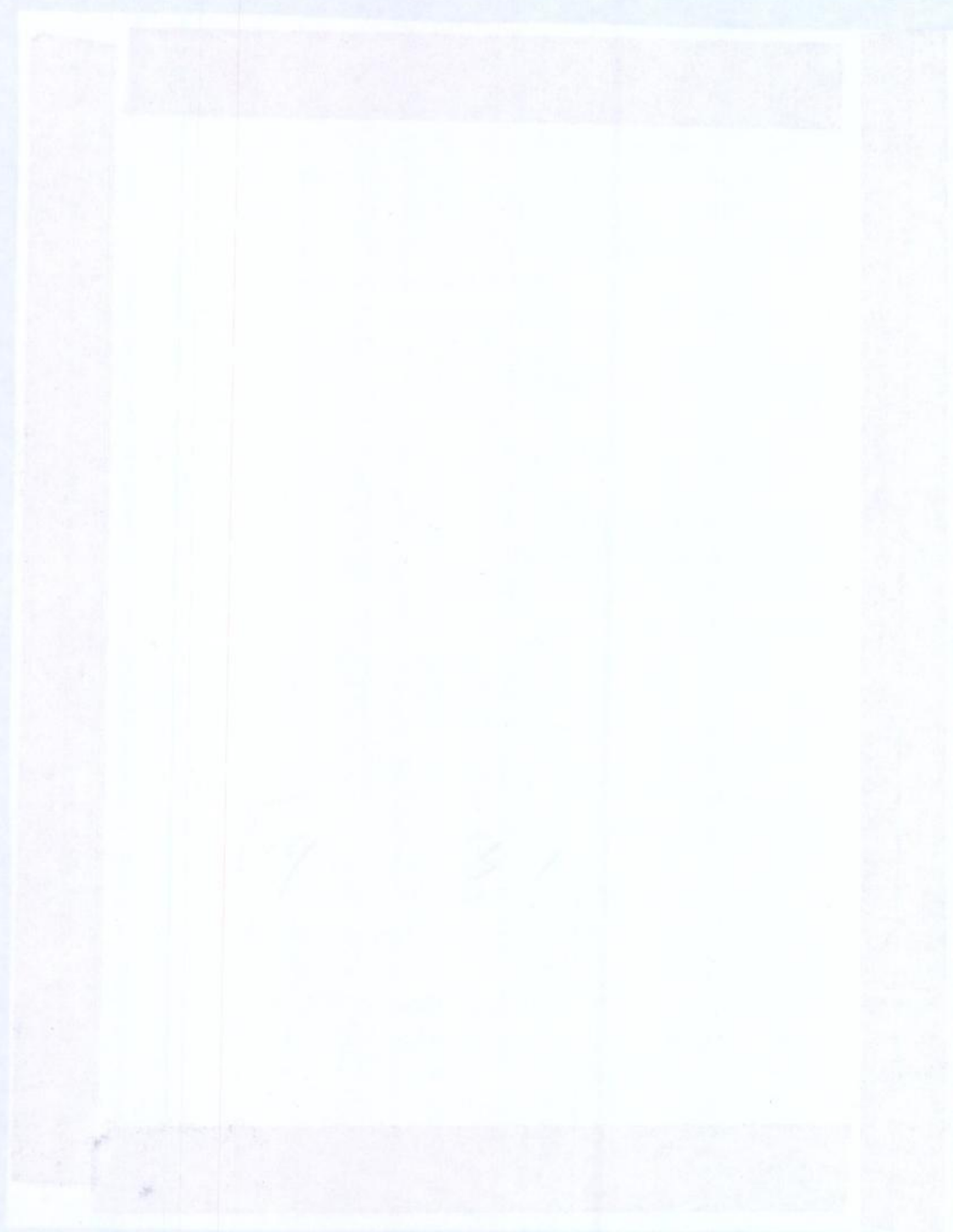
expressly to design

for them

A Spring Collection

Fig 3.1

Tatler and Sketch January 1950.



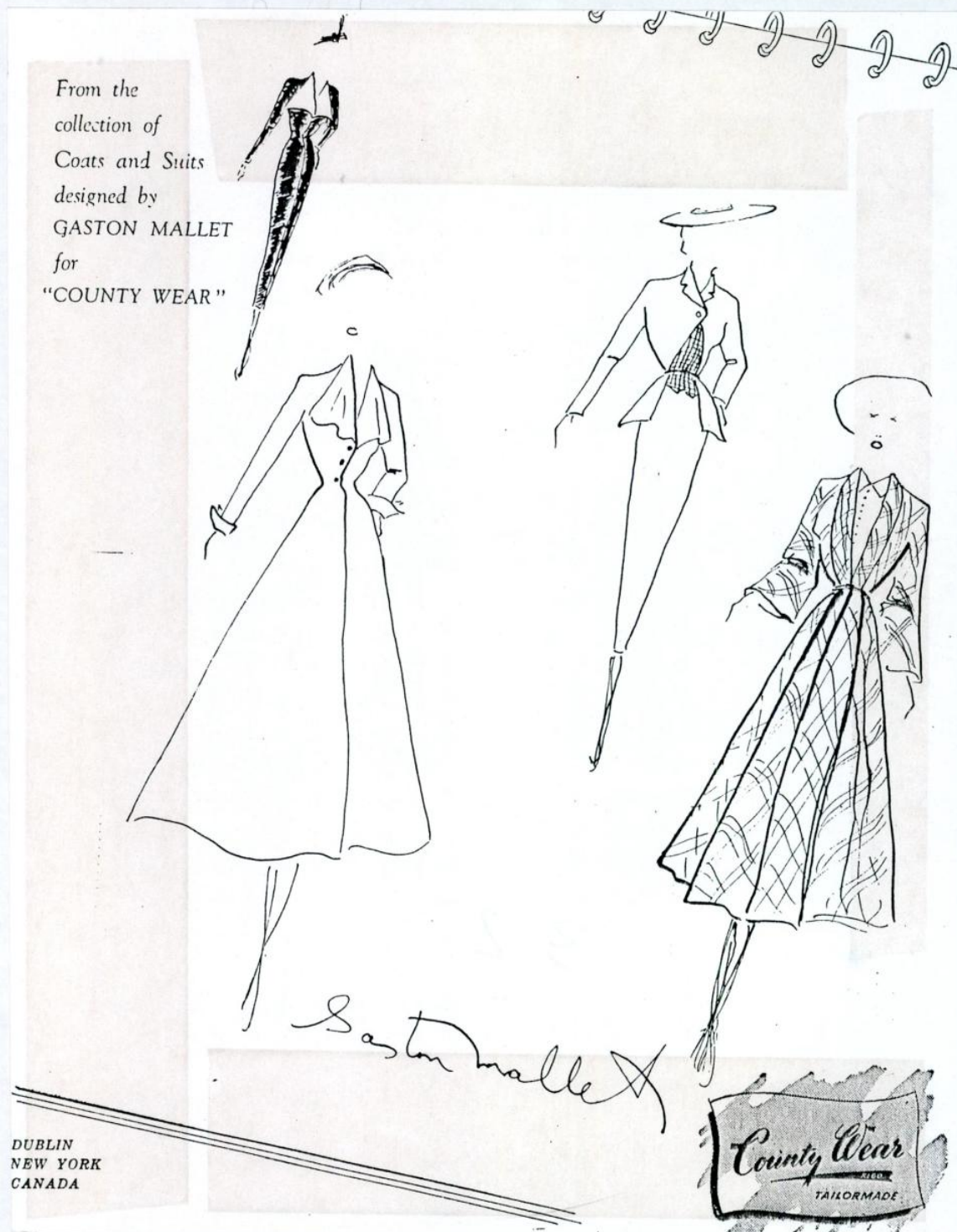
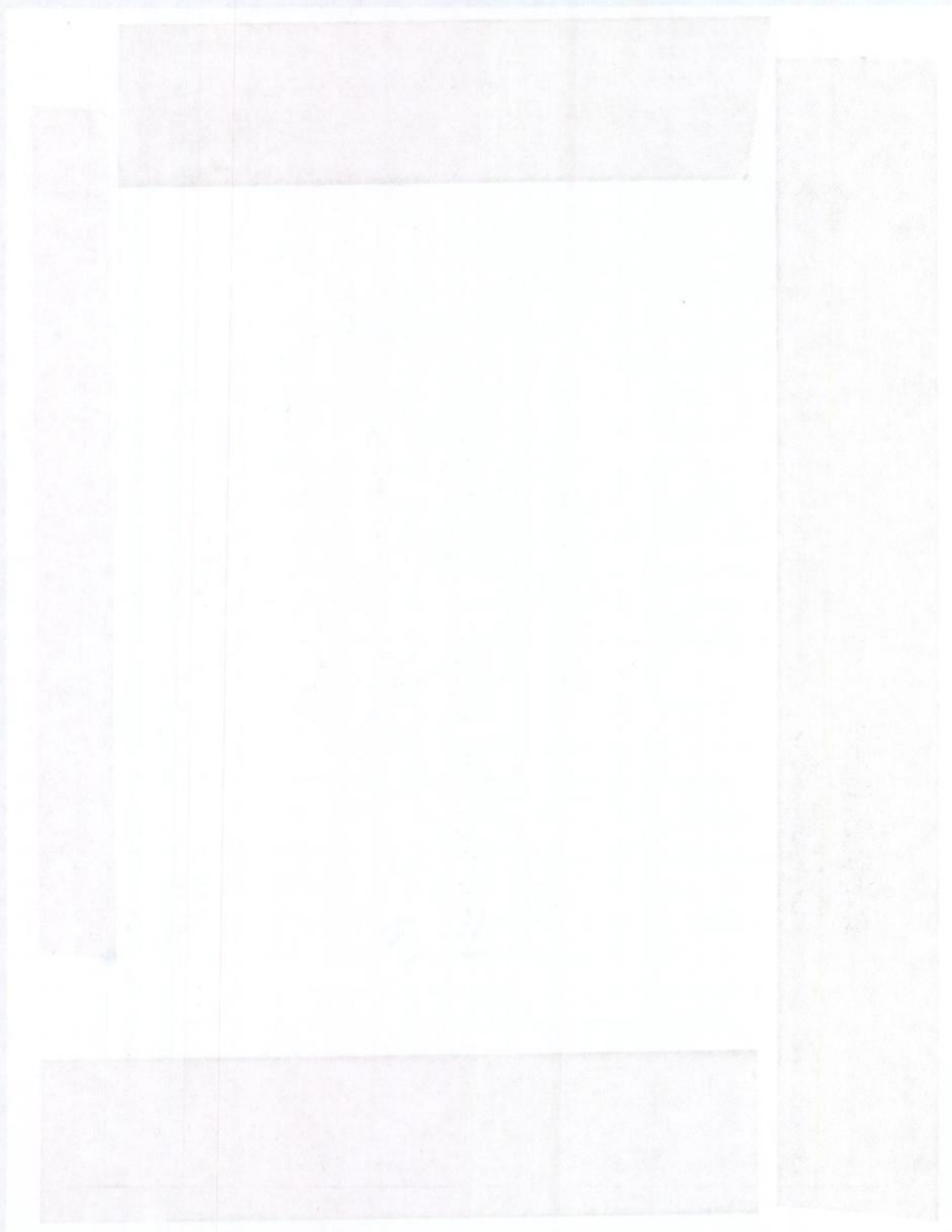


Fig 3.2
Social and Personal, February 1950.





AT SELECTED STORES THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY



Fig 3.3
Social and Personal, February 1950
Advertisement promoting Gaston
Mallet's image.

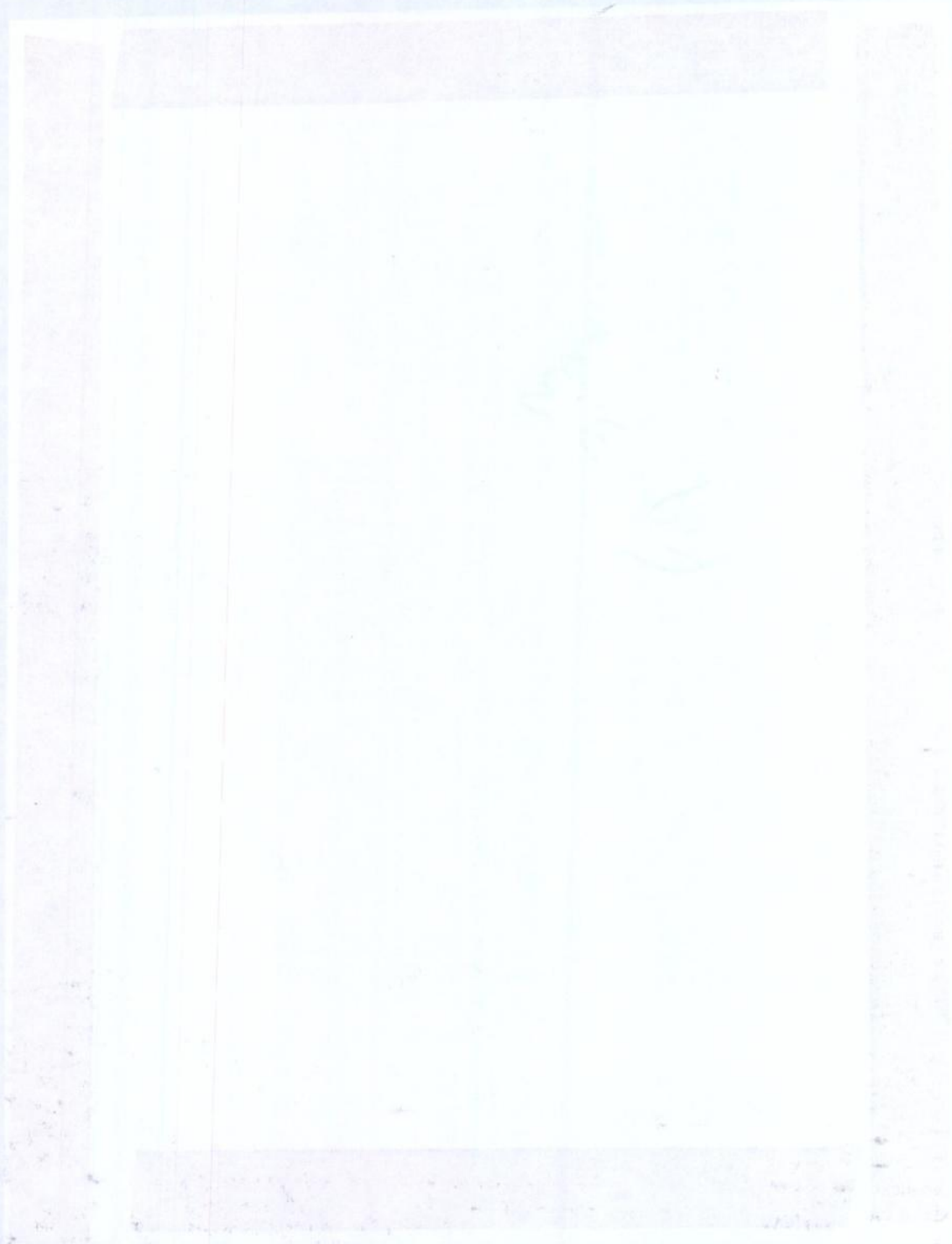




Fig 3.4
Social and Personal, April 1950
Mrs Robert Beatty, wife of film
and stage star Robert Beatty
wearing a "County Wear" travel
coat, which she chose for her
personal wardrobe.

3.4

The new designer and couture salon set up above Richard Alan were launched simultaneously and received excellent press reviews at home and attracted attention in New York when a small article appeared in Woman's Wear Daily on his collection and newly-found affiliation with Richard Alan / "County Wear". Advertisement and the clothing labels now introduced Gaston Mallet as the designer, Fig 3.1. Americans related to a name rather than an impersonal label such as " County Wear". Clarke understood this and issued the new labels.

At this time a striking similarity in shape, detailing and use of fabric can be seen between Mallet's work and that of other European designers who were also producing styles which resembled these "County Wear" designs (suits and coats were rigidly tailored, always slim fitting with accentuated bosom and waist, Fig 3.9 to 3.13). This was in total contrast to the full skirted retrospective elegance of Dior's " NEW LOOK" of just a few seasons previously. These slim suits were in mainly ways similar to the severe style of Utility clothing during the second world war, but with more important differences - a more feminine and subtle shaping and detailing.

The first part of the paper is devoted to a review of the literature on the topic. The second part is devoted to a description of the experimental design and the results of the experiment. The third part is devoted to a discussion of the results and the conclusions of the study.

The results of the experiment show that the subjects who received the treatment group showed a significant improvement in their performance compared to the control group. This improvement was observed in all the measures of performance that were used in the study. The results of the study suggest that the treatment group was more effective than the control group in improving performance.

It was Mallet's choice of fabrics that appealed to American markets. His light weight linens and tweed were indigenous to the American climate.

"In America for instance, these light-weight tweeds are essential because central heating is universal. And remember - American women lead very active lives, they don't want to be weighted down by cumbersome clothes" 8

But what made his collection such a success was the fact that Mallet kept the cut and use of fabrics similar to "County Wear" which it had become famous for in Ireland and America. When the American "career women" of the 1950's meant having a good job became somewhat of a glamorous anomaly. The stylish working women occasionally surfaced in movies and in novel medium of television, Mallet's collection eminently suited for the "career women" chic, yet understated, elegant in a selection of fabrics. Clarke sold his garments for these qualities, but to compete with the ever-growing International market, he had to manipulate his collection to suit the American markets. Clarke made different sizes for the American market, as American women were a different shape to the European women (this was a mistake that many competitors overlooked i.e Henry White); hence they were only successful in the European market.

Clarke also upgraded his presentation. Gone was the local photographer, making way for a top fashion photographer from London / Dick Dormer, who made his presence felt immediately Fig 3.5 to 3.8; he suggested professional famous models to complement the clothes hence models were flown over from London and top Irish models used for photo-shoots and collections. The new look was very professional and appealed to the press and the public, indeed the fact that Richard Alan was associated with such professional models and photography was a success in itself.

The collaboration of Mallet and Clarke was remarkable and by all means unique. It was one of the first collorations in Irish fashion to team up the design talents of abroad with Irish tailoring and technical skills. The result produced highly fashionable, sellable and indeed beautiful clothing. It also showed the very obvious potential that existed in Ireland for the development of a sizeable fashion Industry. This partnership opened doors and paved the way for many more Irish designers to come forward.

In 1952 Mallet left Clarke's business when he received an excellent job offer [^] a bridal company in the United States. When Gaston Mallet departed, he left a vacuum in both Richard Alan and more generally the fashion business in Ireland.



Fig 3.5
The Irish Times, January 1950
 P.C Taylor photograph.



Fig 3.6



Fig 3.7
Tatler and Sketch, May 1950
 Richard Dormer's photographs
 are more professional, and
 appealing to an International
 market.



Richard Dormer

From the "COUNTY WEAR" collection of travel coats
designed by GASTON MALLET

Fig 3.8
Social and Personal, September, 1950
A Richard Dormer photograph, also
Gaston Mallet's name is now introduced
to advertisement.

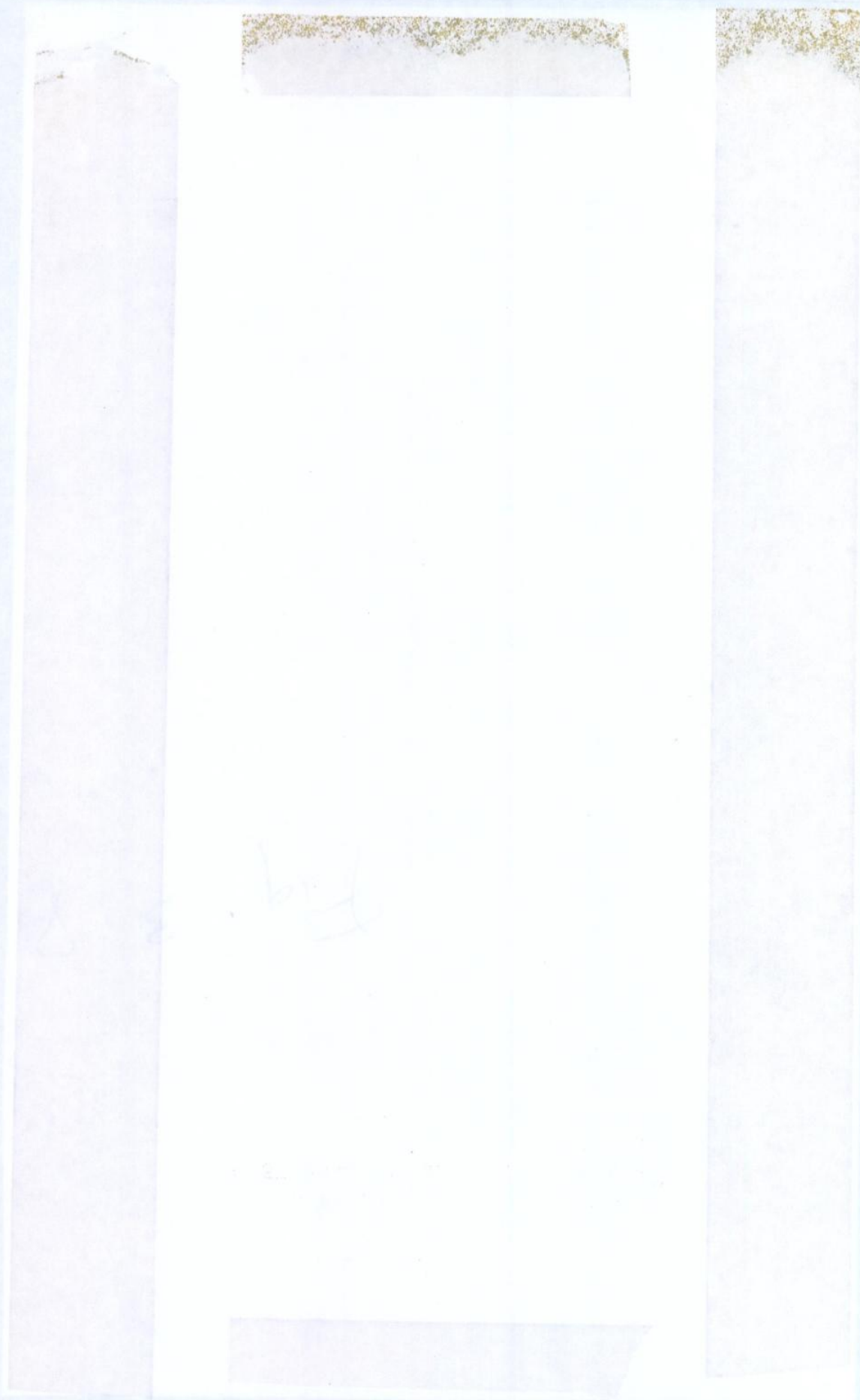




Fig 3.9
Pierre Balmain swing coat 1950
Very similar to Mallet's coat

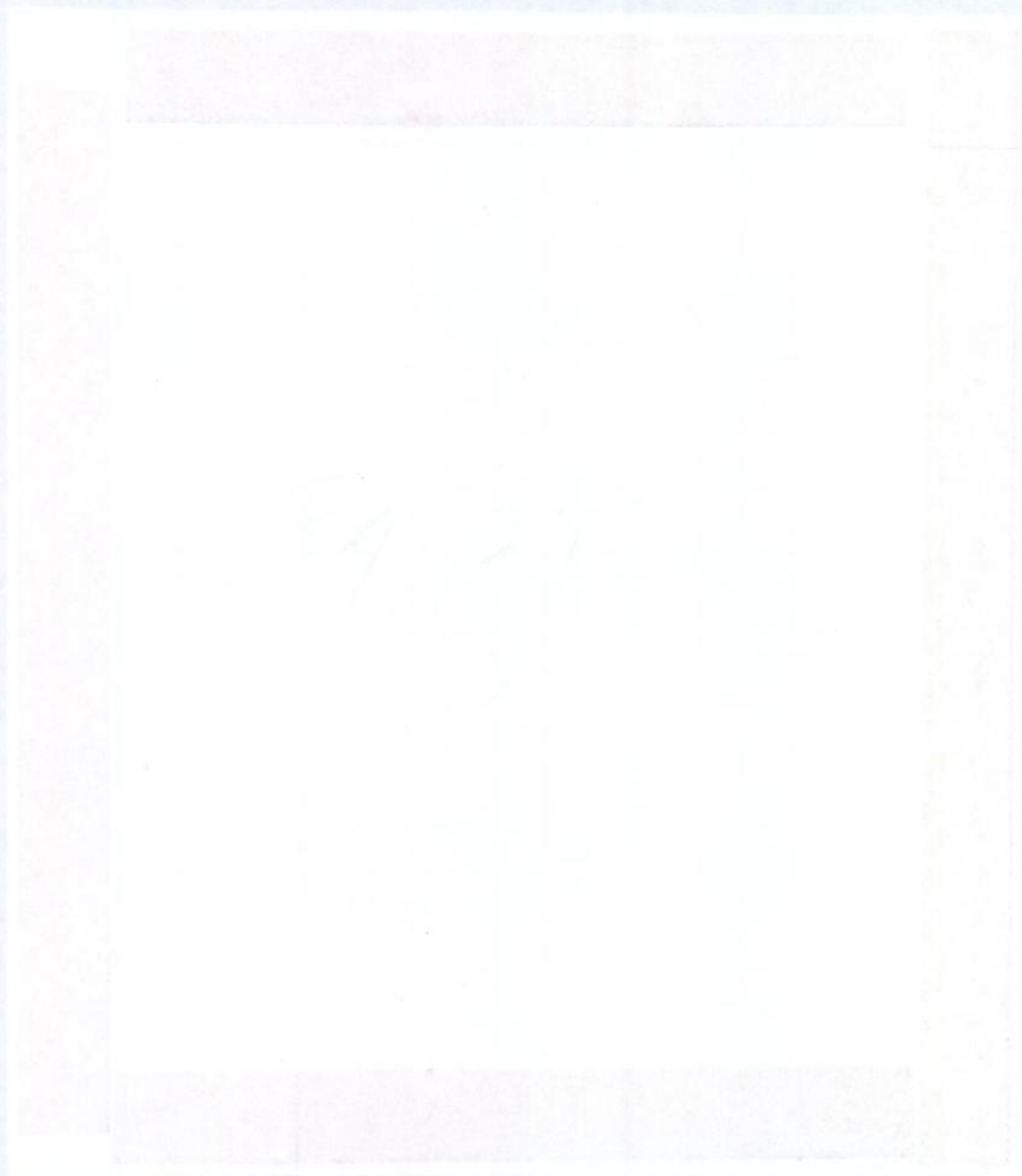
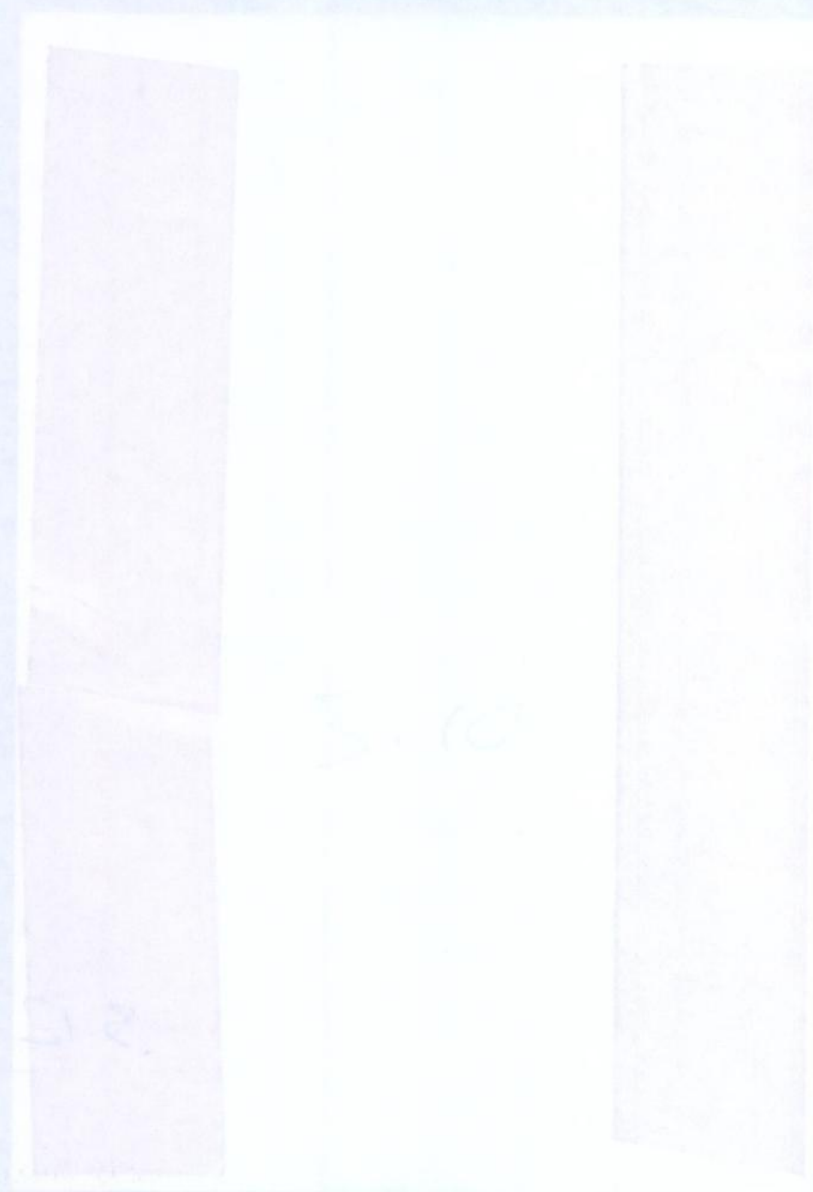




Fig 3.10
Hardy Amies : Topcoat in black
velor, " Eminence " with more
rounded shoulder, and padded
hips, the curves emphasised by
pockets. The trend to a more
feminine line.



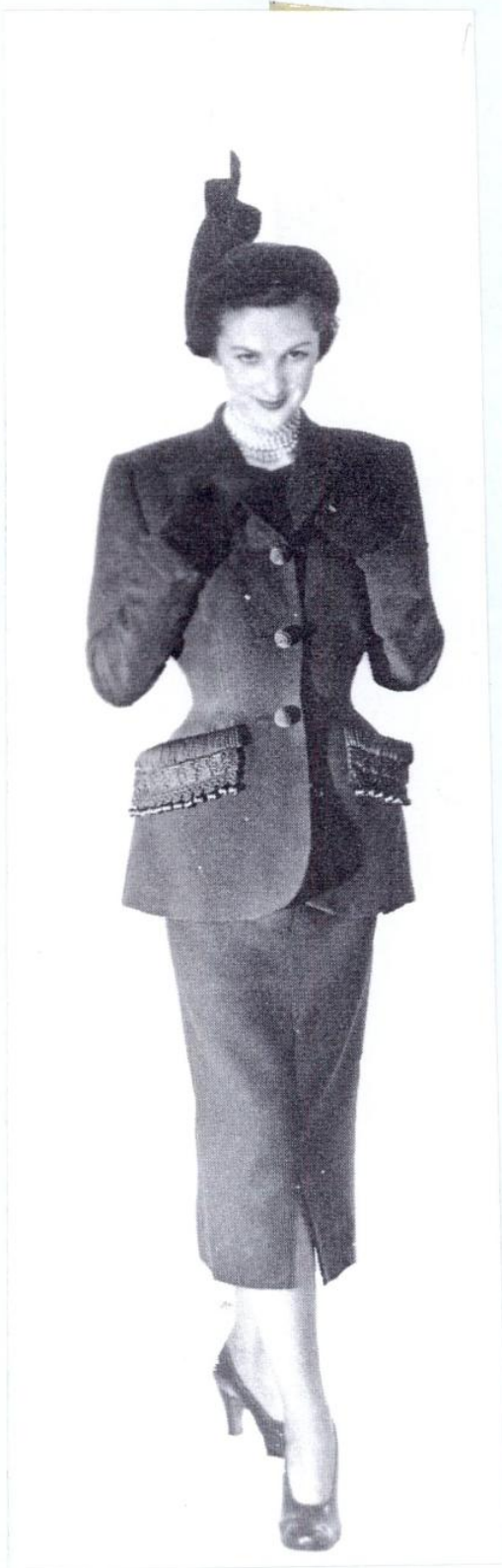


Fig 3.11
Rigidly tailored suits
in fine wools with the influence
of the " New Look " 1950's.



Fig 3.12
Hardy Amies " Easter Sunday "

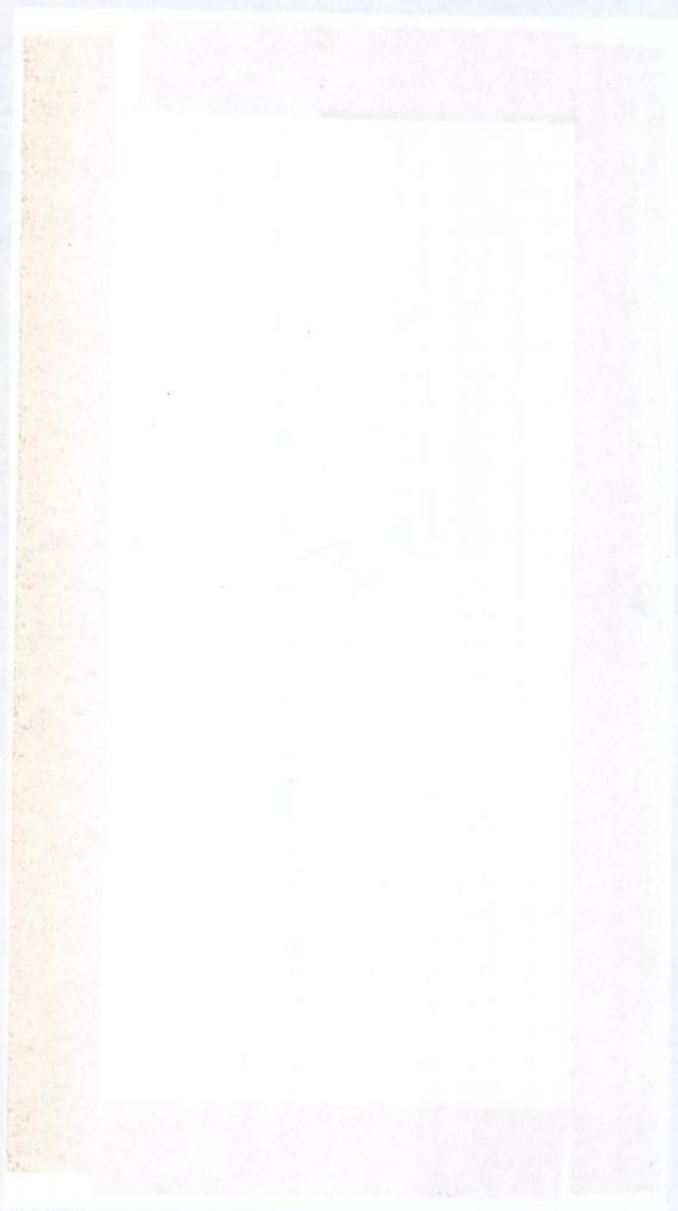
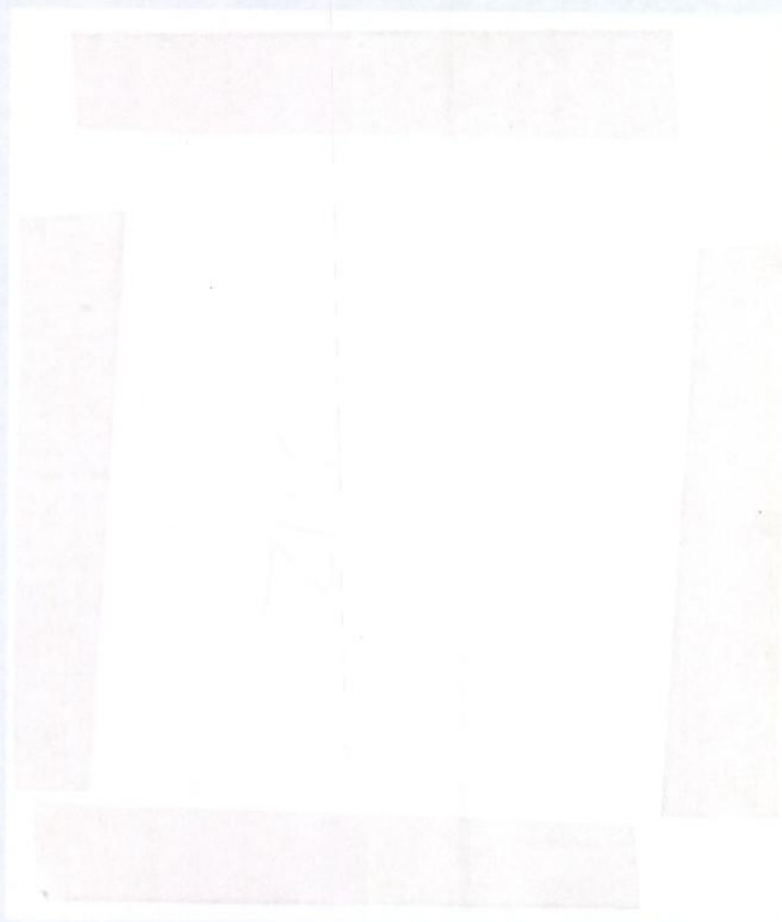




Fig 3.13
John Cavanagh coats
and suits were formal
and ladylike, with hats
and gloves, 1950.



SYBIL CONNOLLY

One such designer who benefited greatly from both the arrival and the departure of Gaston Mallet was Sybil Connolly. Miss Connolly joined Jack Clarke's fast-growing business as a shop assistant in 1940. She had returned to Dublin after her training in Bradleys (a leading English couture house in London which catered for royalty and the aristocracy Fig 4.1) was interrupted by the war. Her training at Bradleys was suited for couture work, but it also equipped her for the retail side of a business and this proved beneficial in her work. With a combination of favour from Clarke and hard work, she eventually became manageress/director of Richard Alan at the age of 22. Among her duties as a manageress was the supervision of the production of a small collection of dresses produced in the workrooms set up above the Richard Alan store. During the war Sybil Connolly developed this into a couture workroom, catering for the wealthy clients that frequented Richard Alan, and required couture dresses, as they were in short supply during the war. These workrooms did not reach their full potential until the arrival of Gaston Mallet who affiliated the two collections. Sybil Connolly learned a lot from Gaston Mallet's experience and she worked alongside him when designing the evening wear

range. His departure left a gap for Sybil Connolly to fill while his arrival had opened many doors ~~for~~ which Miss Connolly was to pursue. She was a strong mature women with a highly developed sense of good taste in both clothing and interior decorating ~~which~~ instilled in her from an early age, when she accompanied her mother to buy clothes created by the English and French couturiers. It was these qualities and her strong determination that convinced Clarke that she could take Mallet's position.

Miss Connolly's design concept was immediately and recognisably different from that of Mallet: romantic ball-gowns in the grand manner in total contrast to Mallet's slip sophisticated dinner gowns. Her evening wear was predominantly more innocent, more romantic, young, fresh and quite traditional. She designed with one eye on current English and Parisian trends and the other on the practically minded, rather conventional customer. Sybil Connolly's first collection was very successful and from this affiliated collection, ~~it~~ two designs were chosen by Rosemary Sheehan, (a free lance Public Relations woman for the American market who was an adviser for Jack Clarke) to represent Irish fashion design at an International revue in America. From "County Wear" was chosen a top coat in black and white check cut on flaring lines with push up

sleeves and velvet trimmed collar Fig 4.2. A grey full and chantilly lace dress by Sybil Connolly was chosen. This was to be the first taste of International acclaim and recognition to touch the new Irish couture and its new-found star Sybil Connolly. Others to be included in the show were Dior, Fath, Desses, Amus and Morton:- an impressive occasion on which to make a debut.



Fig 4.1
"County Wear" top coat
in black and white check,
chosen for International
Revue in America, 1952.



Fig 4.2
"Irish Washerwoman" - the outfit
that captured the imagination of
American buyers and public, 1952.

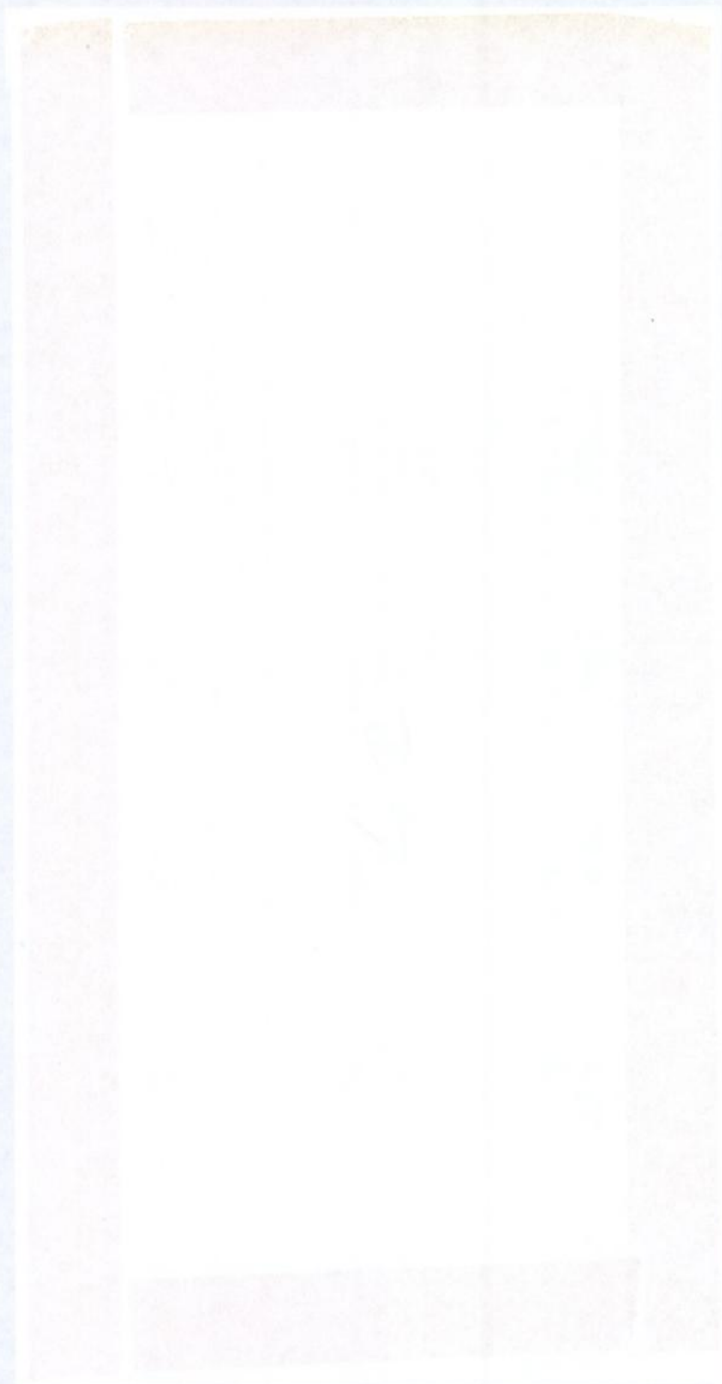




Fig 4.3
Hardy Amies, Vogue 1949
was also included in the
Fashion Revue in America 1932.





Fig 4.4
Connolly was showing along side
some couturiers as Jaque Fath
in the Fashion Revue in America.

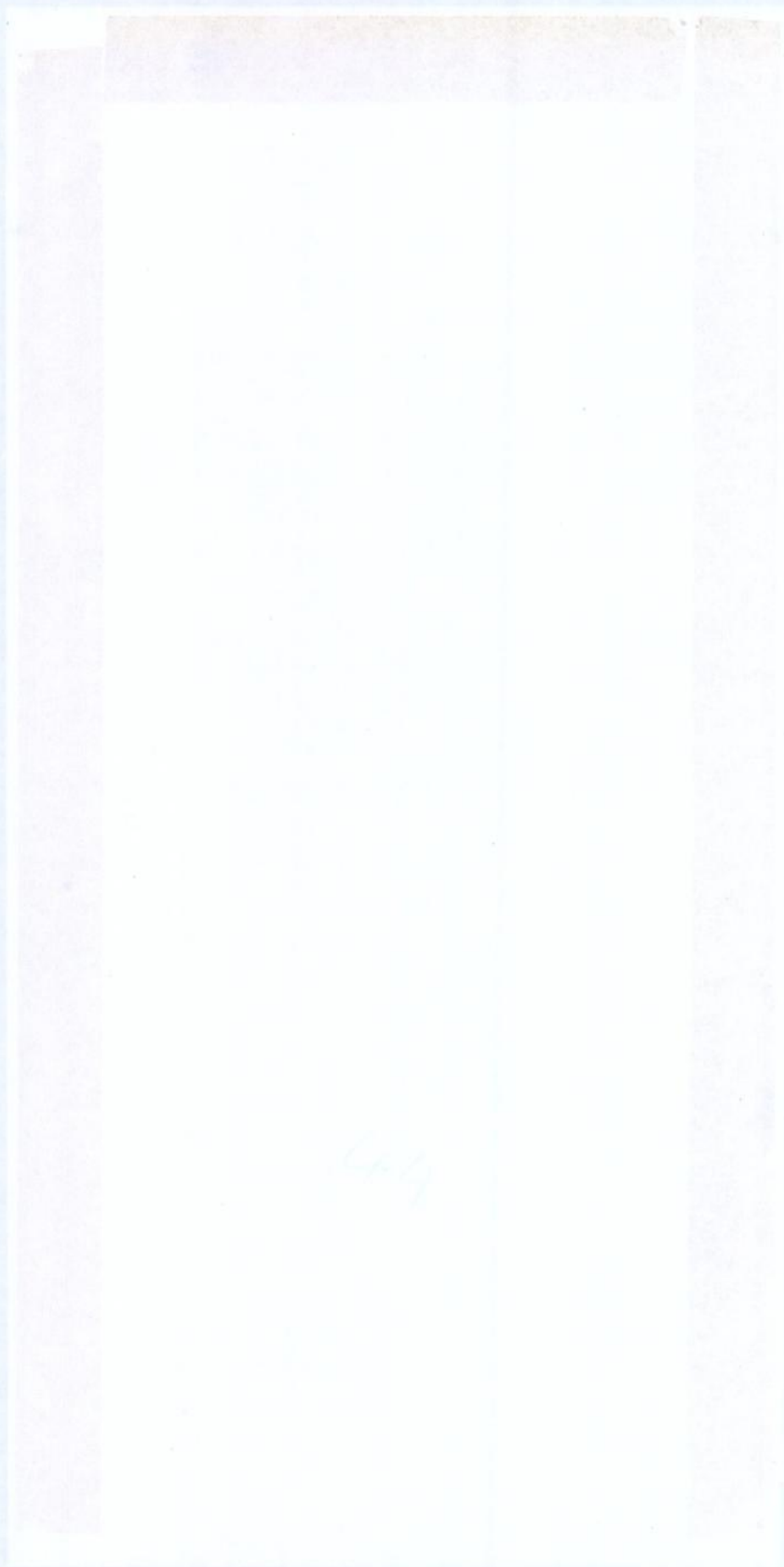
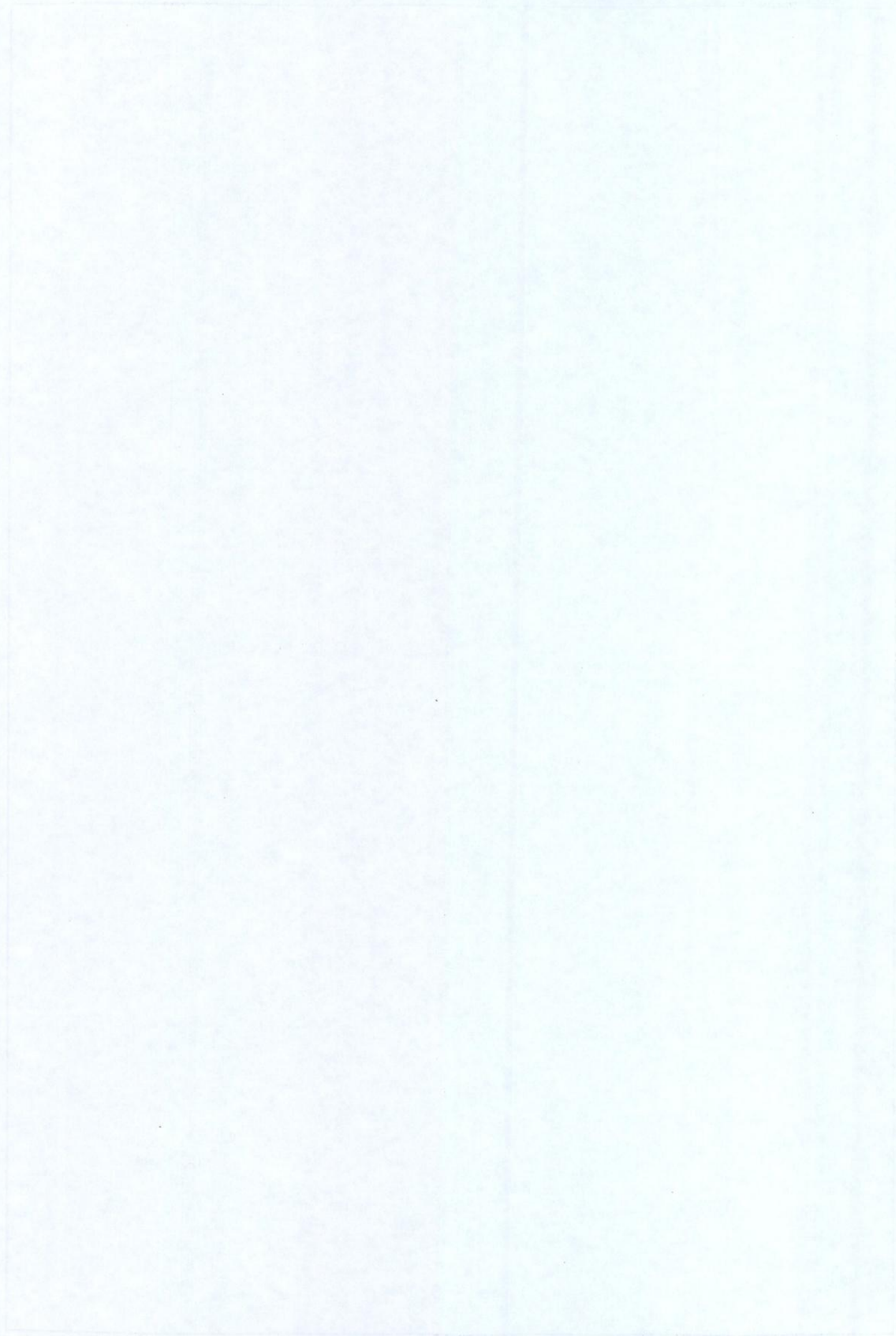


Fig 4.5



This show proved to be a great success for Connolly and Clarke. The Philadelphia Fashion Groups interest was aroused by the Irish garments which completed favourably at the fashion revue in the U.S.A with French and English competition. A group of Fashion journalist's buyers and consultants were on their way to the French collections and there was a strong chance that they might pay a visit to Ireland on route.

Clarke had already built up a well-established reputation in America, but the Philadelphia Fashion Group were International experts who had a lot of influence in the Fashion World. For him it was a chance to further his market and gain press coverage with International recognition. For Sybil Connolly, it was a chance for her to either establish herself or ruin her career. Her determination forced her to prepare a collection worthy of the distinguished fashion experts.

From a well known source I discovered that Sybil Connolly cut her garments from a French collection by Jaque Patou, a highly coutured collection that was enroute to America via Dublin.⁹ It is unknown how she managed to get possession of this collection (most likely through some connection in C.T.T as they were promoting the Americans' tour) but I know that her patterncutters worked through the night to

copy these garments before they flew to America the next morning. She reproduced styles from this collection but added her own originality through her use of fabrics. Alice Neill, an interior decorator for Gimbels, who would be taking part in this trip said: prior to her arrival

" we are interested in tweed, linen and lace, we shall go to some fashion shows but most of all we are looking forward to the horse show" ¹⁰

Connolly catered for the needs of the American fashion experts and produced a collection where indeed the fabrics, linen and lace were the most outstanding features. Clarke supplied the beautiful tweeds in his "County Wear" collection.

"Donegal tweeds, lace, linen, poplin were fashionable into elegant clothes which the most dress conscious woman in the world would enjoy wearing " ¹¹

At the Richard Alan store the show was presented in an exceptionally International manner.⁷ Top models were flown in from London especially for the occasion - Barbara Goalen, Fig 4.6. Seigon and three Irish girls at the top of their profession - Pat O'Reilly, Anne Gunning, and

Sheila Wilson. Connolly insured that everything would complement her clothes to create an atmosphere and image that would be remembered, she even flew to London to purchase accessories designed in the top couture houses of Paris and sold in London. It was on this trip that she discovered an interesting technique. Bette Alan who designed accessories for the couture houses of London was designing belts and accessories based on pleated linen; an 18 inch piece of linen was pleated to tiny pleats and placed on the bias and crossed over to create interesting designs. Sybil Connolly picked up this technique and took the idea back to Dublin; she developed it into evening wear dresses and it became a well known trait of Sybil Connolly for the following forty years.

The models, accessories and even many designs may have been drawn in from abroad but the fabrics of linen and pure Irish tweed workmanship had a very distinct flavour, that contributed greatly to the success of the evening (and indeed preserved the image that contributed to Sybil Connolly's success). To quote, the show was an unmitigated success, unexpected by the audience of the visiting fashion group.

" I was one of an embarassingly large male audience to see these very glad rags put through

their places. And I congratulate Sybil Connolly, Richard Alan's designer, for elevating Irish materials to the rare brittle atmosphere of Paris, London and New York" ¹²

The usual format also prevailed:- separated into two sections, daywear, coats, and suits and separates by Jack Clarke and Sybil Connolly cocktail and eveningwear by Sybil Connolly. The daywear section was a great hit with the American women who loved the weights and colours in traditional tweed. This allied with superb craftsmanship and stylish design in clear colours proved irresistible to these seasonal buyers and journalists. But it was the evening wear which was to steal the show and capture the rapt attention of both audience and fashion press in Ireland and America alike. The emphasis was on native Irish fabrics and couture craftsmanship and finish, both shapes and use of fabric were very similar to the evening wear in Paris and London at the time Fig 4.8 to 4.11.

the places. And I congratulate Sybil Connolly
Richard Allen's designer, for elevating this
material to the rare brittle atmosphere of Paris,
London and New York."

The artist himself also revealed, repeated and
repeated, however, coats, and suits and accessories by
Lips and Sybil Connolly, cocktail and champagne
Sybil Connolly. The dinner section was a great hit with
the American women who loved the weights and colors of
the material. This suited with superb craftsmanship
and finish design in clear colours proved irresistible
to the retail buyers and journalists. But it was the
section which was to start the show and which was
the beginning of the section and section for the
section and American style. The materials were not
just the same and looked like diamonds and the fact
that a lot of fabric were very similar to the
and in fact and look at the film it is a

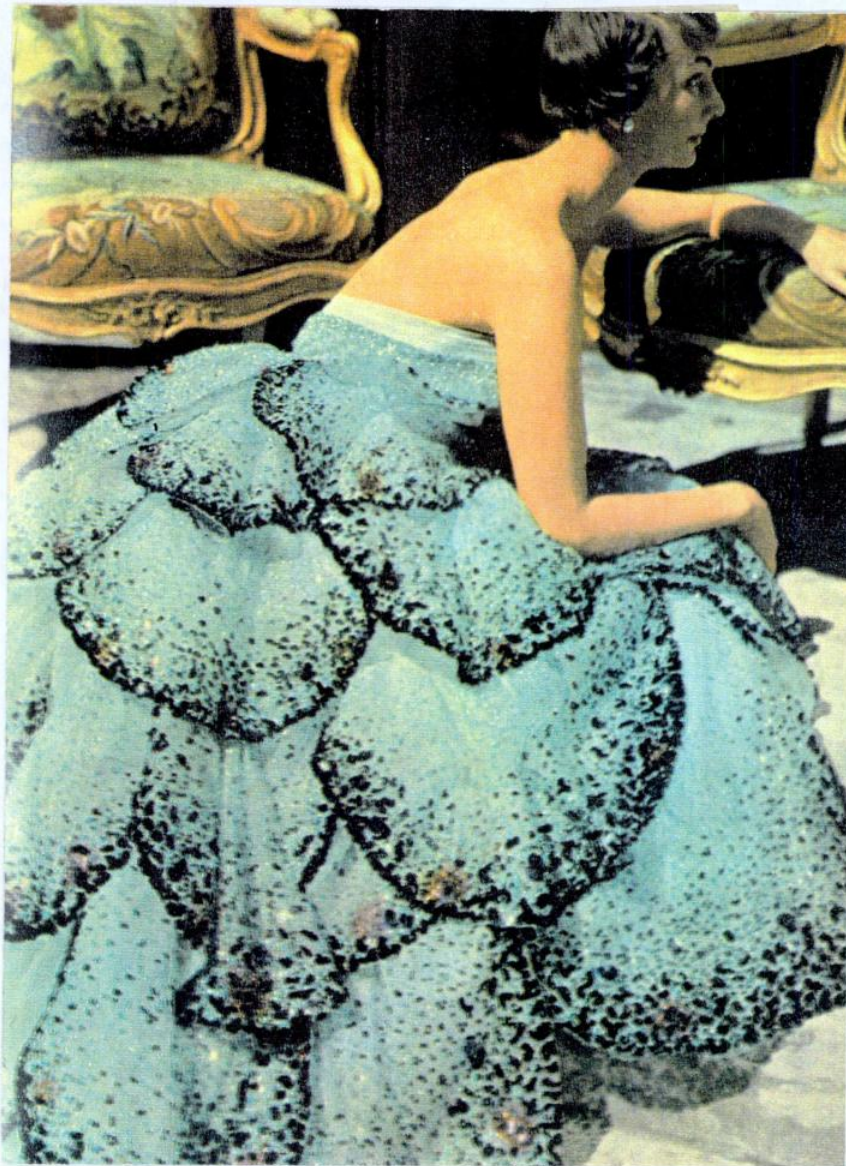


Fig 4.6
Barbara Goalen,
Englands famous post-war
model, was flown in for
the show - 1953.

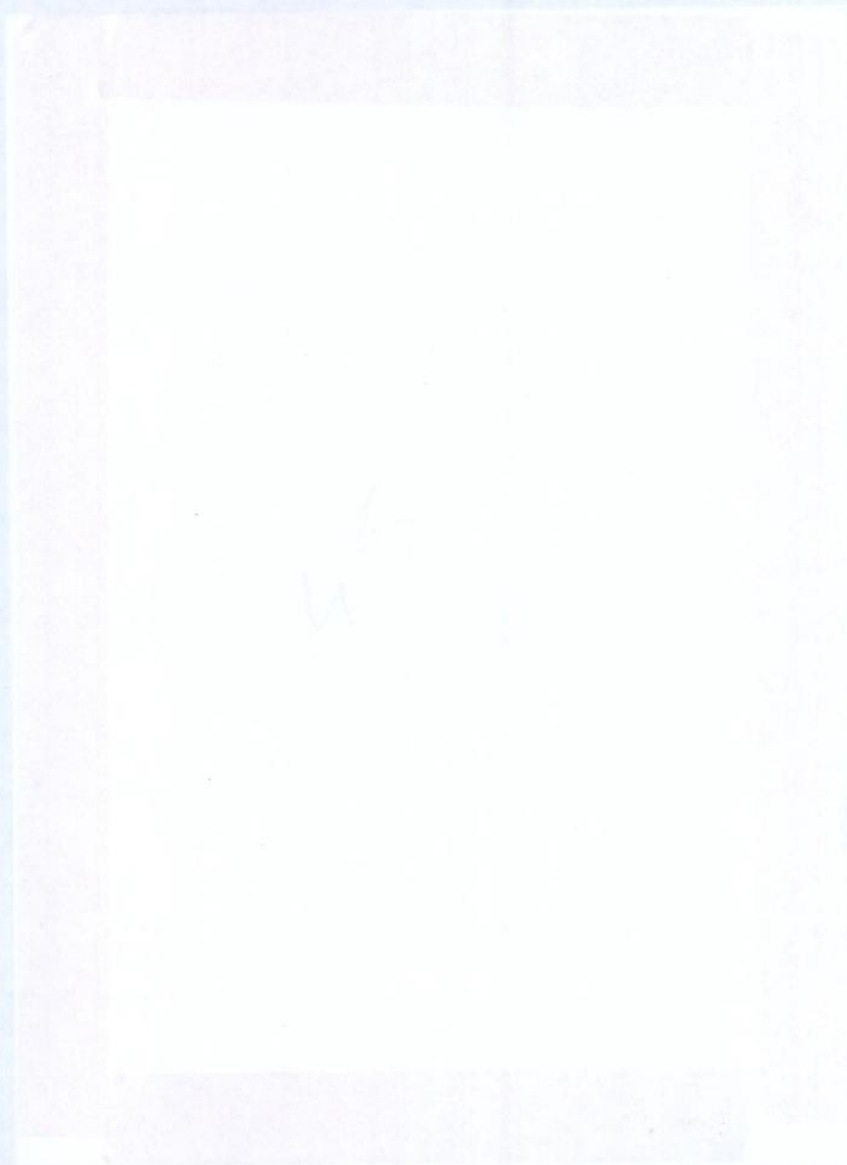




Fig 4.7
Ivory silk faille wedding gown by
Sybil Connolly with similar details
to a Hardy Amies cotton gown.
Social and Personal, September, 1953.

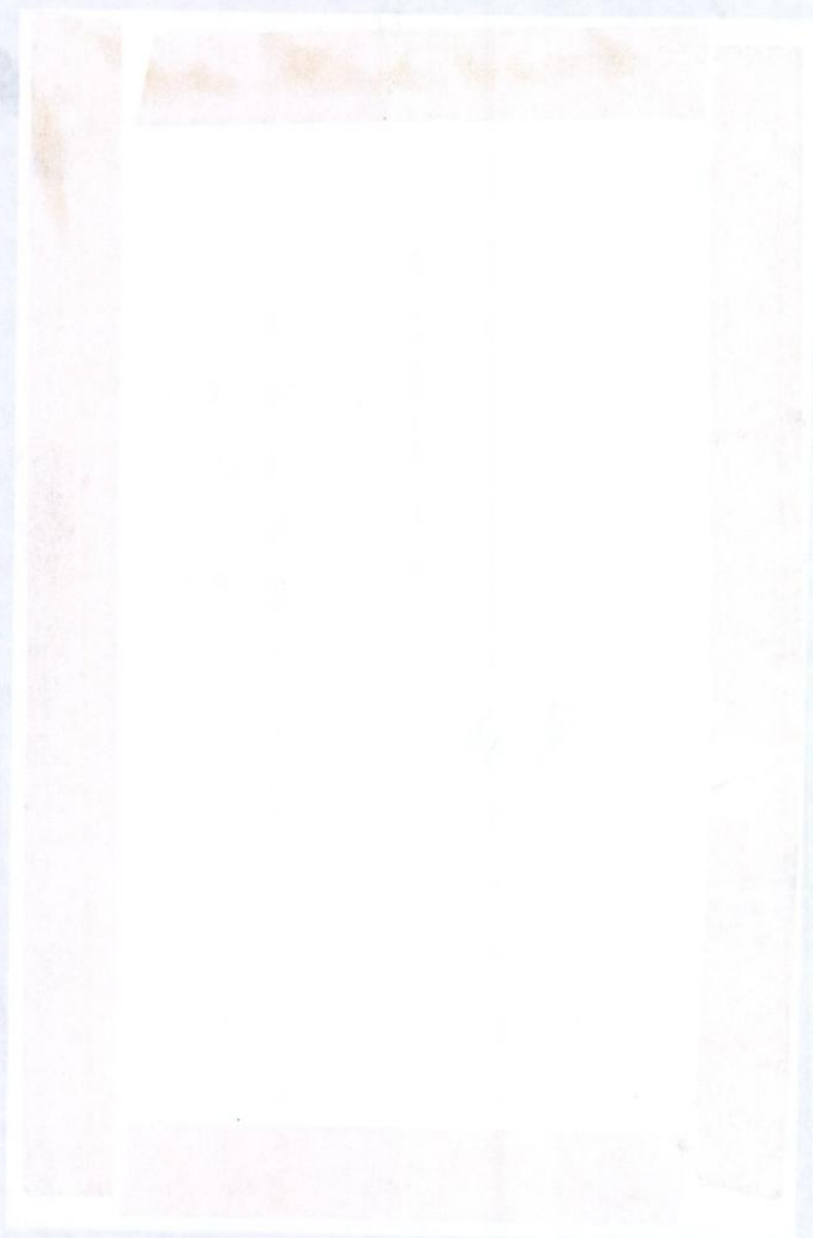
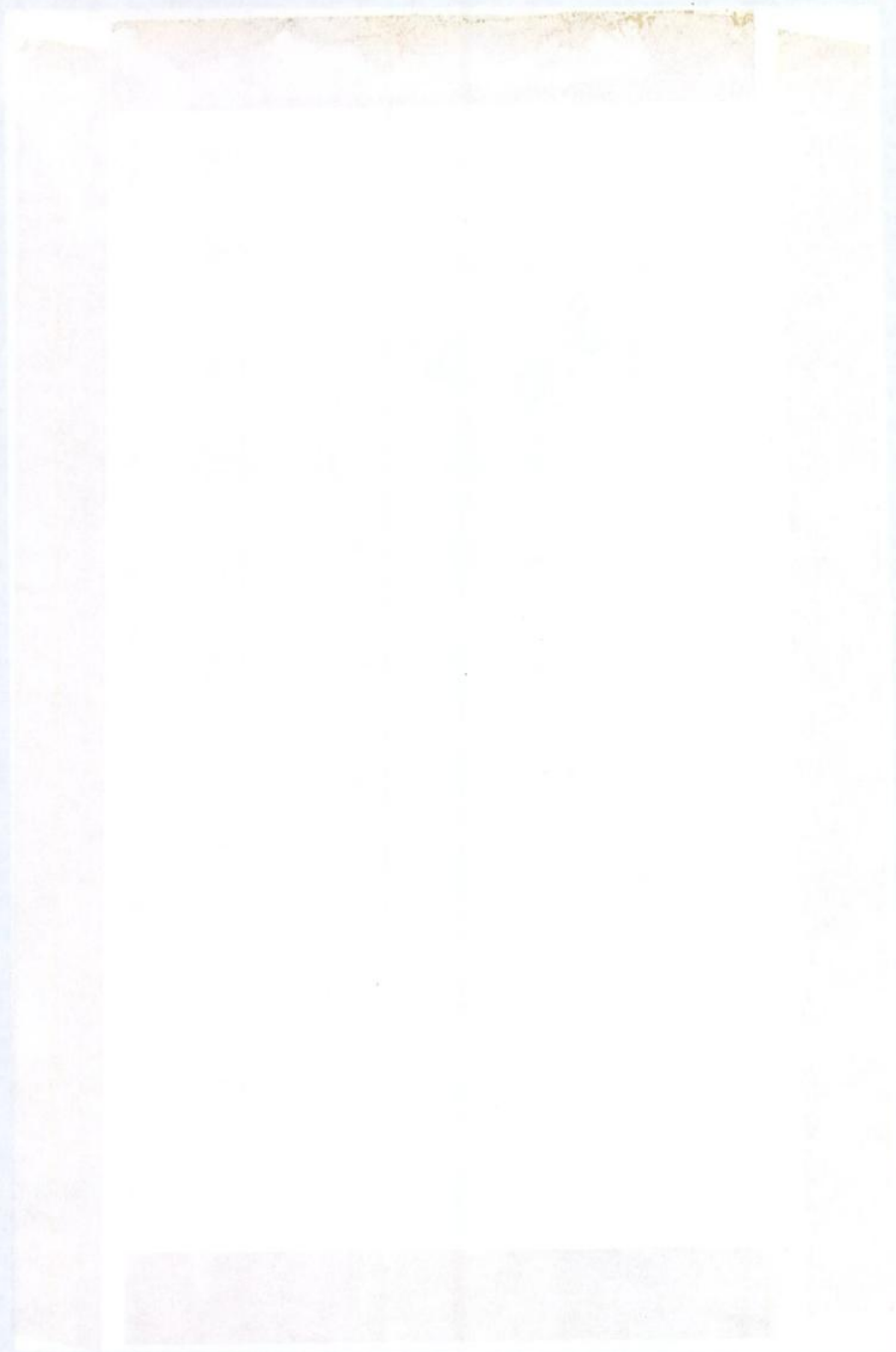




Fig 4.8
Wedding gown by Hardy Amies.
Cotton organdie dress designed for the
Cotton Board in Summer, 1953.



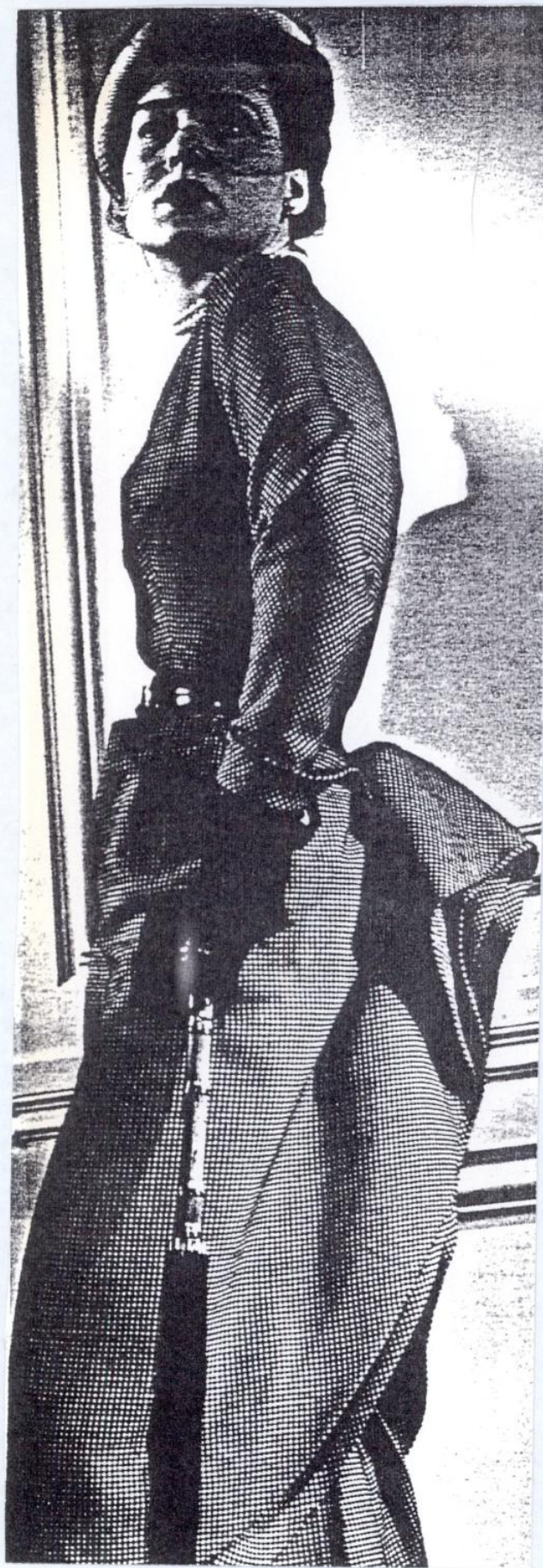


Fig 4.9
Bustle cut suit by Christian
Dior - similar to black linen
cocktail dress by Connolly



Fig 4.10

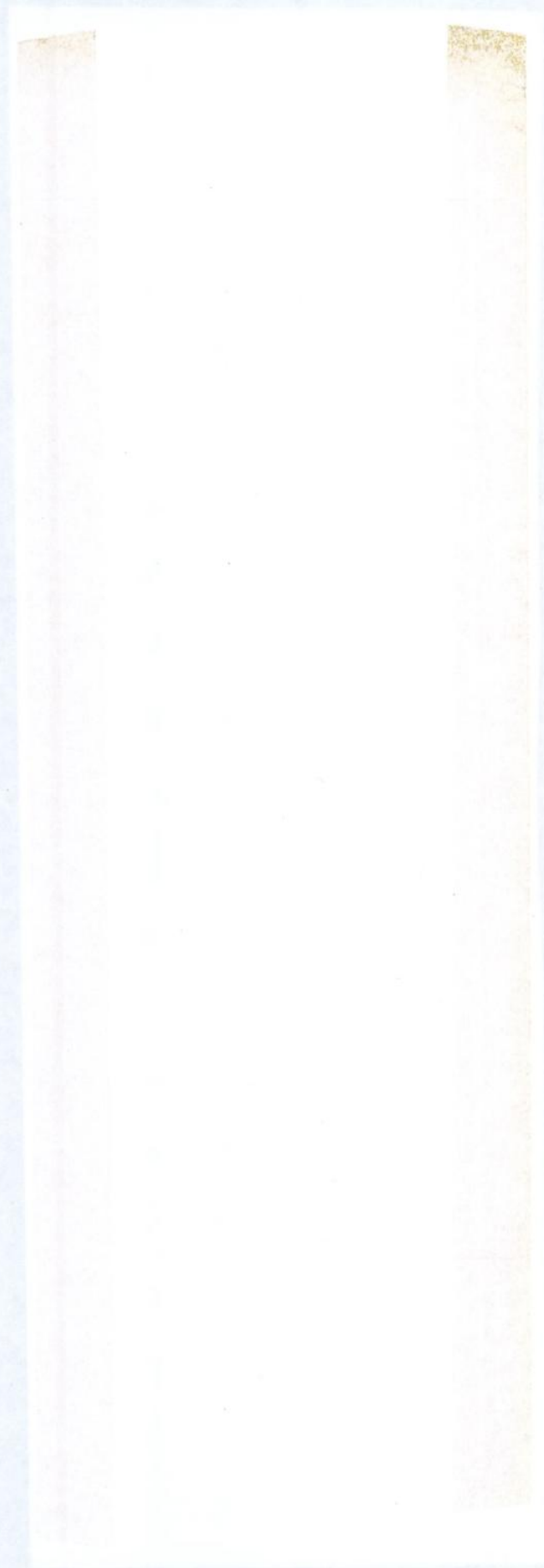




Fig 4.11
Londons Top twelve designers showed
elegant conservative styles in 1954.



County Wear

at selected
stores
throughout
the country

and at

Abercrombie & Fitch Co.,	New York
Lord & Taylor,	New York
B. Altman & Co.,	New York
Henry Bendel Inc.,	New York
Wm. Filene's Sons Company,	Boston
Gimbel Bros.,	Philadelphia
Rich's,	Atlanta, Georgia
I. Magnin & Co.,	San Francisco, Calif.
Frederick & Nelson,	Seattle
The T. Eaton Co. Ltd.,	Montreal, Canada
Ada McKenzie,	Toronto, Canada
Helena Hungerford,	London, Ontario, Canada

RICHARD DORMER

Fig 4.12
Irish Tatler and Sketch, 1953
 Irish Advertisements still went
 under "County Wear" label rather
 than Sybil Connolly.

4-12

I feel that it is important at this point to note Sybil Connolly's position at Richard Alan. It must not be assumed that she took over design rights for "County Wear" and Richard Alan label. She had great difficulties with tailored daywear, and many of the designs marketed under the name, could be seen a few years previously under Gaston Mallet's label or "County Wear", Fig 4.14 to 4.16 also many designs were mere reproductions of European designers, with minor new detailing and different fabrics. Jack Clarke continued to run the "County Wear" label and Miss Connolly used many other sources to produce the daywear for Richard Alan. Sybil Connolly was a great success with the American press and buyers and Clarke decided after the success of the first show it would be good business sense to use Sybil Connolly's name as the new label for Richard Alan and the "County Wear" collection that went to America only. The American buyers insisted on this, as their customers liked a personalized label, especially of a charming Irish "Colleen" who was taking Irish fashion to its heights.

" Sure, and it was a grand day for the Irish
when Sybil Connolly started designing!

For in three short years, this noted couturiere
has placed Ireland on the fashion map" ¹³

The press were certainly favourable to Sybil Connolly, the collections and the events held in Richard Alan were a great success and attracted the press, buyers and a wealthy clientele, lady Dunsany, Lady Beith and Countess of Dunraven were just a few that were tempted by Connolly's designs. Sybil Connolly used these situations and contacts to her best advantage to promote and create her own image:

" Only from Ireland could come such a fairy tale to capture the imagination of the fashion world, and only a Sybil Connolly, beautiful and capable - could have single handed plunged Ireland into the very centre of the fashion world" ¹⁴

She had gained some influential allies; Carmel Snow, editor-in-chief of Harpers Bazar, who could make or break a designers career/collection with a stroke of a pen, and Eleanor Lambert-Birkson, American agent and International Arbitrator of fashion. This created a specially close connection with the American market for discerning and wealthy travelled clients who particularly enjoyed Sybil Connolly's image - a charming, young, fresh, Irish woman who single-handedly had captured the attention of the press to exploit the Irish image in fashion, and created " a one woman fashion capital." ¹⁵ It was indeed a remarkable achievement for a single woman in the 50s. The

The press were certainly favourable to Sybil Connolly. The
event held in Ireland was a
great success and attracted the press, buyers and
well known designers. Lady Connolly, Lady Keith and Lady
Dunraven were just a few of those who were invited to
attend the designs. Sybil Connolly used these situations
and contacts to her best advantage to promote and create
her own image.

Only from Ireland could come such a fairy tale to
capture the imagination of the fashion world, and
only a Sybil Connolly, beautiful and capable -
could have single handed planted Ireland into the
very centre of the fashion world.

She had earned some international success since
her first success at Harpers Bazaar, she could make or break
the fashion career of a designer with a stroke of a pen, and
fashion designer's looked to her for advice and information.
The world of fashion, this created a special place
for her with the American market for designers and
fashion designers who particularly enjoyed her
style of dress - a feminine, young, Irish look.
Sybil Connolly had captured the attention of the press
and the Irish made in fashion and created a new
fashion capital. It was indeed a landmark
event in the fashion world in the 20th century.

Americans were intrigued by Sybil Connolly and the images she created of Ireland, and considered her "a sovereign power in the realm of elegance".¹⁶

Sybil Connolly maintained the interest of the American market and marketed her collections to pamper to her clients and American press. In 1953 she held her Winter collection at Dunsany Castle still inhabited by the family who built it and full of treasures. Her collection was displayed in wonderful settings and a gala ball was held afterwards. The Americans loved this idea and delighted at the thought of socialising with Irish aristocrats, Lord and Lady Dunsany, who were particularly glamorous, and Lady Dunsany had supported Irish fashion since she came to Ireland. Fashion journalists such as Carmel Snow - Ballard, Editor of Vogue, gathered with fashion representatives from America, Canada, England and South Africa to witness the first major International showing in Ireland, and proclaimed that it was a great success. Publicity shots shown in Fig 4.17 to 4.20.

Her success was certainly a publicity coup, although this cannot be responsible for a period of success which she has spanned over 35 years. It would certainly help to thrust a young designer into the limelight of International fashion. When one sees the amount and the

content of newspaper articles, press releases and publicity sheets which pertain to the first collections of Richard Alan by Sybil Connolly, one cannot be astounded by the stage Irishness of their content:

"Sure and what would be a more fitting day for the American debut of an Irish designer, Sybil Connolly the black haired Dublin "Colleen", who had stolen the fashion headlines from Paris and Rome.." ¹⁷

Sybil Connolly thrived on these images and even went as far as including accessories accentuating the traditional look for her collection - "Leprechan" hats in felts and velvets, hand made jewellery in silver and gold reminiscent of Tara broaches and collars worn in ancient Ireland. It was these gimmicks that thrust Sybil Connolly into the limelight of International fashion and sent her back to Ireland with order books bulging and the task of producing another collection that would compare favourable with the previous ones.

Although I have mentioned other Irish successful designer in the 1950's none reached such International acclaim as Sybil Connolly, indeed there were many more talented, Irene Gilbert another Irish couturier had been working since 1945, she was in many ways more talented than Sybil

Connolly, she had her own fashion house in the fashionable Stephen Green area. She had previous to this worked as an assistant to Madame Gres in Paris, where she had developed a love of art of draping - she had preferred to create her models on the the strand. Her approach was essentially a feminine one combined with an exceptional sense of colour. She also proceeded Sybil Connolly in her specialising in the use of Irish fabrics. She worked extensively with McNutts fabrics and with the Wynn sisters of Avoca hand-weaving. Both companies produced fabrics which were dyed and woven to her exact specification. Her eveningwear was often in Irish fabrics - Carrickmacross lace was one of her favourites. She had a well developed market in Ireland and England but never made it in America. She was a true designer and did not market an image or back her designs with a personality. Her clientele included Lady Dunsany and Countess Ross. The American press never really opened their arms to her in the way they did to Sybil Connolly. Although Clarke was a supreme success in the U.S.A. He sold an quality rather than image. He could'nt understand Sybil Connolly frequent trips to America. Miss Connolly was in a higher couture sphere than the "County Wear" client, was she promoting Richard Alan ? or was it all in the cause for Sybil Connolly's career? In 1958 it was decided the two businesses were incompatible.

Clarke continued his "County Wear" range until 1972, when he foresaw that the fashion trade in Ireland was coming to a standstill, in the 1960's our standard of living in Ireland increased, wages were bigger, so manufacturing was more expensive. The American standard of living remained the same, so Irish garments were very expensive for the American market, when the Far East was producing the same quality of garments for half the price. Jack Clarke's two sons Richard and Alan Clarke continued to run the successful retailing store "Richard Alan".

Sybil Connolly had built up many contracts and gathered a wealthy clientele around the world: in England, Lady Astor; In Ireland, lady Dunsany, Lady Beit and Countess Dunraven; Australia and America where her clients have included Mrs Henry Kissinger, Jaqueline Kennedy Onasis, Mrs Bob Hope and Nancy Reagan. It was on a trip to Australia that she met the famous cricket player Kerry Pacor, who financially backed her return to Ireland in 1958, to set up her own couture house in Merrion Square. It is here that she still continues her business to the present day, which has survived on a diet of private wealthy clients.

Today she mainly concentrates on her biggest passion that of Interior and China collections. Her business is very much centred around a selection of clients who can afford and appreciate the time and workmanship in a Connolly production. At 64 Sybil Connolly still makes constant trips to America to promote and maintain her Irish image, that she has so carefully created.

GIMBELS

For Famous Fashions

"Cead mile failte"

(Gaelic for one hundred thousand welcomes)

to a new star

the first
fashion
collection
from

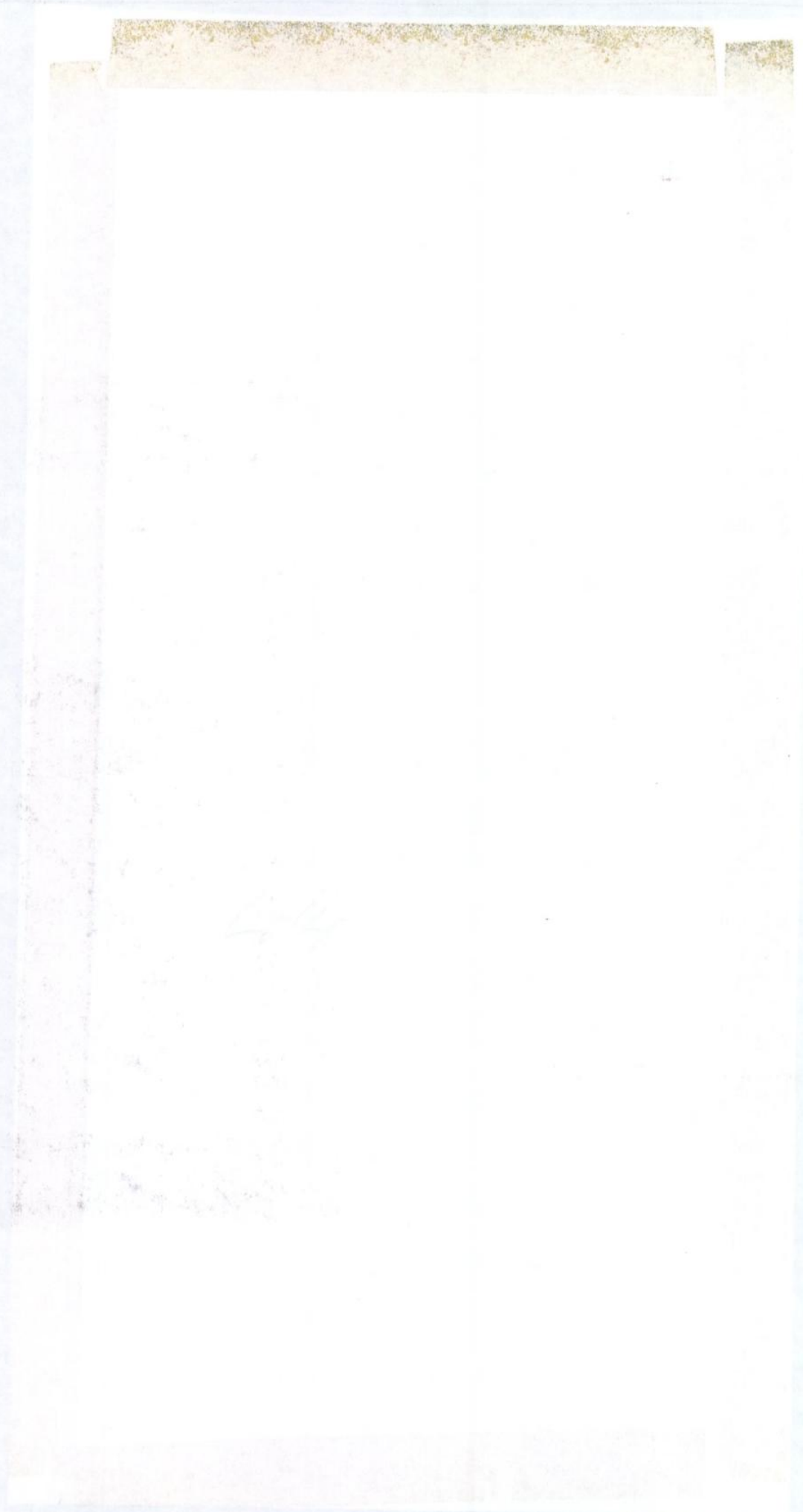
Ireland

to be seen in the U.S.A. . . . in two exciting

Fashion Shows

Tomorrow 1 and 3:30 P. M.

displaying the newsmaking collection of coats,
suits, daytime dresses and evening gowns by
famed designer Sybil Connolly of Dublin . . .
with Miss Connolly here **IN PERSON**, tomorrow



a
born
traveller

remembered wherever you

go . . . the timeless

elegance of this

COUNTY WEAR coat.

designed by Sybil Connolly.

A traveller all over

the world . . . here, in

the U.S.A., Canada,

England, and Australia.

*County
Wear*
REGD.

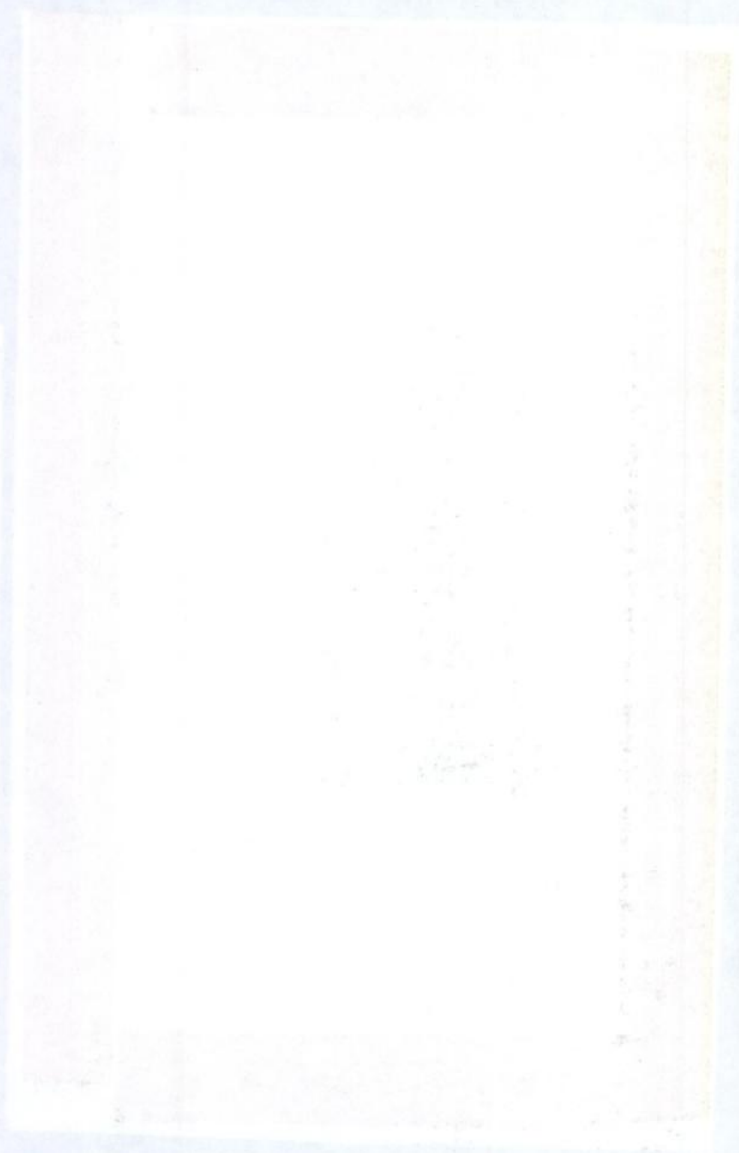
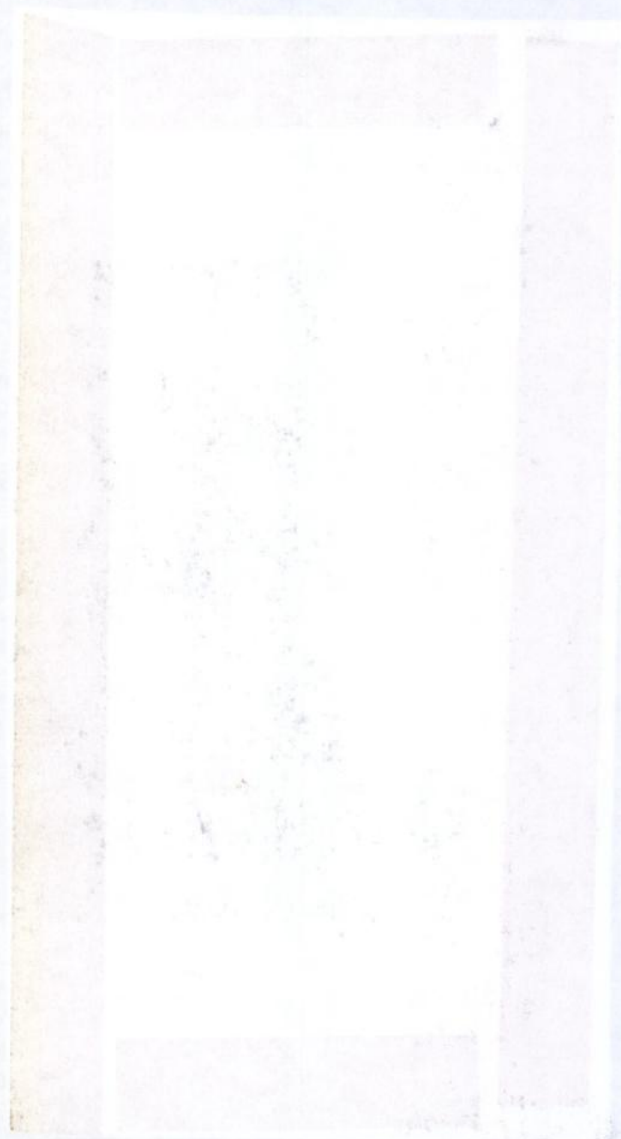


Fig 4.14
Life 1953 : Sybil Connolly coat.



Fig 4.15

Two similar coats, but American magazine was
Sybil Connolly's name.



Designer made a quick trip to the top

Sybil Connolly was buyer for a Dublin dress shop when, in 1950, she reluctantly replaced the store's departed designer who had left for a more promising fashion future in the U.S. Her designs grew quickly popular and last spring she brought a group to the U.S. for a highly successful showing (LIFE, May 18).

Since the practical Irish will not accept extremes in fashion, Miss Connolly concentrates on the tweed daytime clothes and extravagant ball gowns that go with the local round of sporting events and fancy parties. This fall's collection again showed off her knack with classic Irish materials. Because of inexpensive labor costs in Ireland, U.S. stores can import the styles ready made and, even after duty, sell them at prices relatively low for a top European label.



THE DESIGNER Sybil Connolly came to County Limerick from Wales when she was 7. This fall she will bring a collection of her new clothes over for showings in U.S. department stores.



THE "CRIOS" OF ARAN, colorful braided belts which women of the Irish island weave with help of their toes, make slim skirt worn in stable doorway at Dunsany Castle. Irish price: \$52.50.

"BAININ" TWEED, fabric worn by Aran fishermen, is used in bulky jacket with knit sleeves and hood. The word is pronounced "hawneen." It will cost about \$115 (Lord & Taylor, New York).

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

Fig 4.16

Life, August 1953 :

Examples of Connolly's ability to exploit the Irish image to the American market. Continued on following pages.





Fig 4.17
Life, 1953 continued. Shaggy suit with
sleeveless swing coat.





Fig 4.18
Life, continued.





Fig 4.19
Cambric Tiers, embroidered by Donegal
cottages, 1953. Child is daughter of
Master of Dunsany Castle. Also adding
to the image she created.

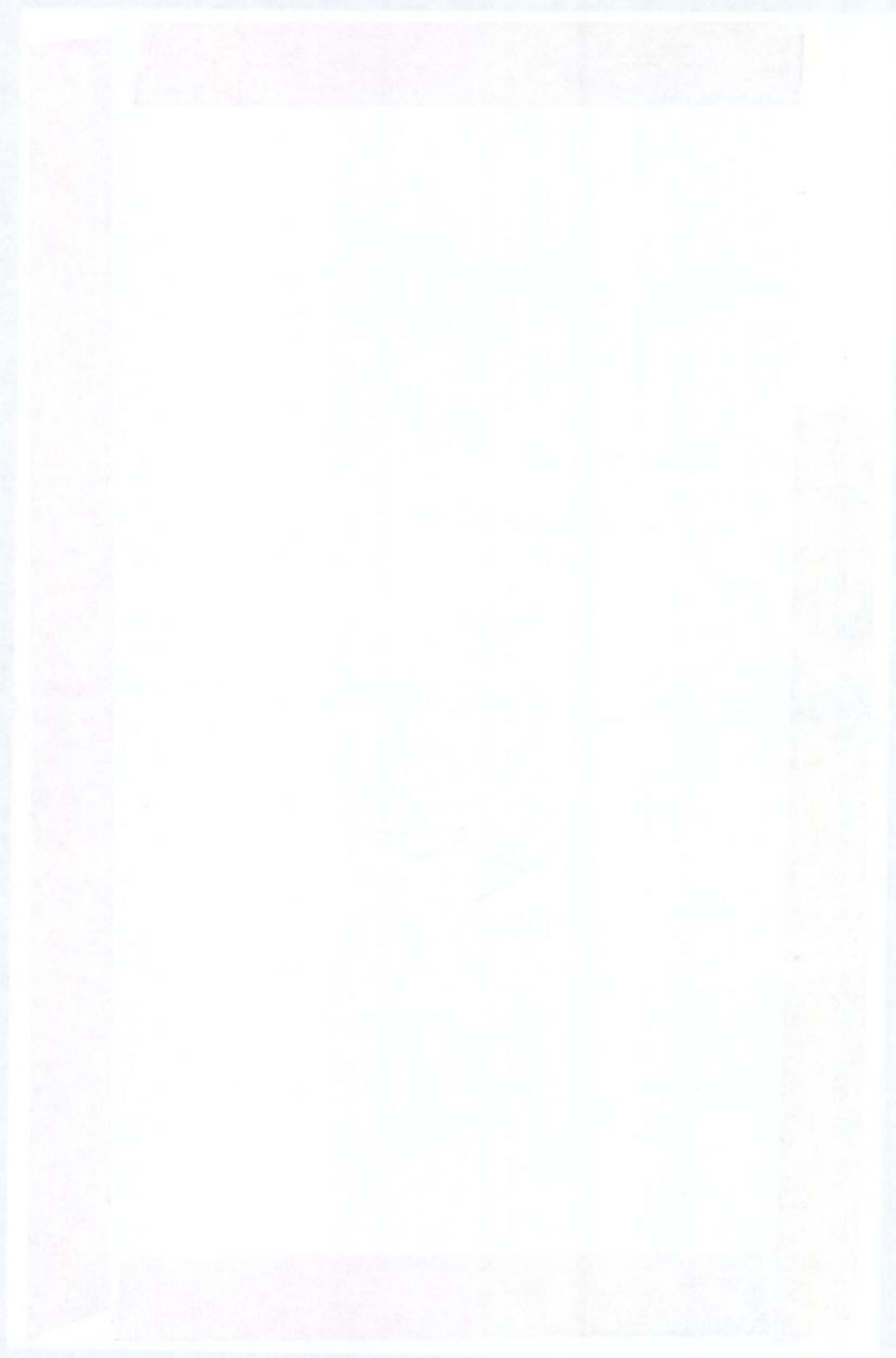




Fig 4.20
Suit in yellow Moygashel linen, date
unknown. These strong colours appealed
most to American market.





Distinctly casual. Relaxed of line, precisely detailed . . . Jack Clarke designs a suit both chic and easy. Top fashion everywhere in the world where elegance prevails. From the current County Wear collection, now at selected stores here, England, Holland, Canada, Bermuda, the United States, and Australia.

*County
Wear*

REGD.

Fig 4.21
Jack Clarke continues on
"County Wear" until the
1970's.

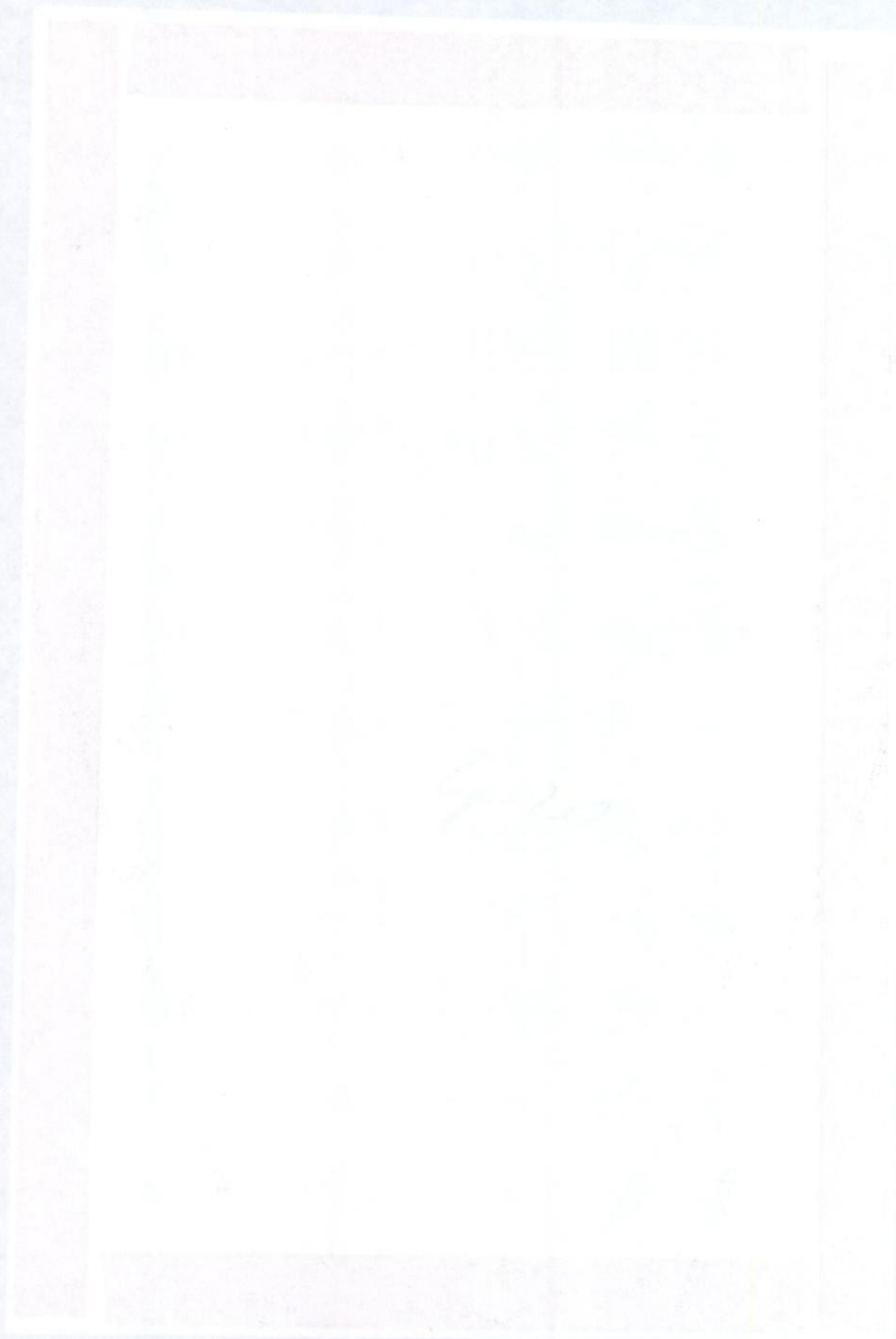
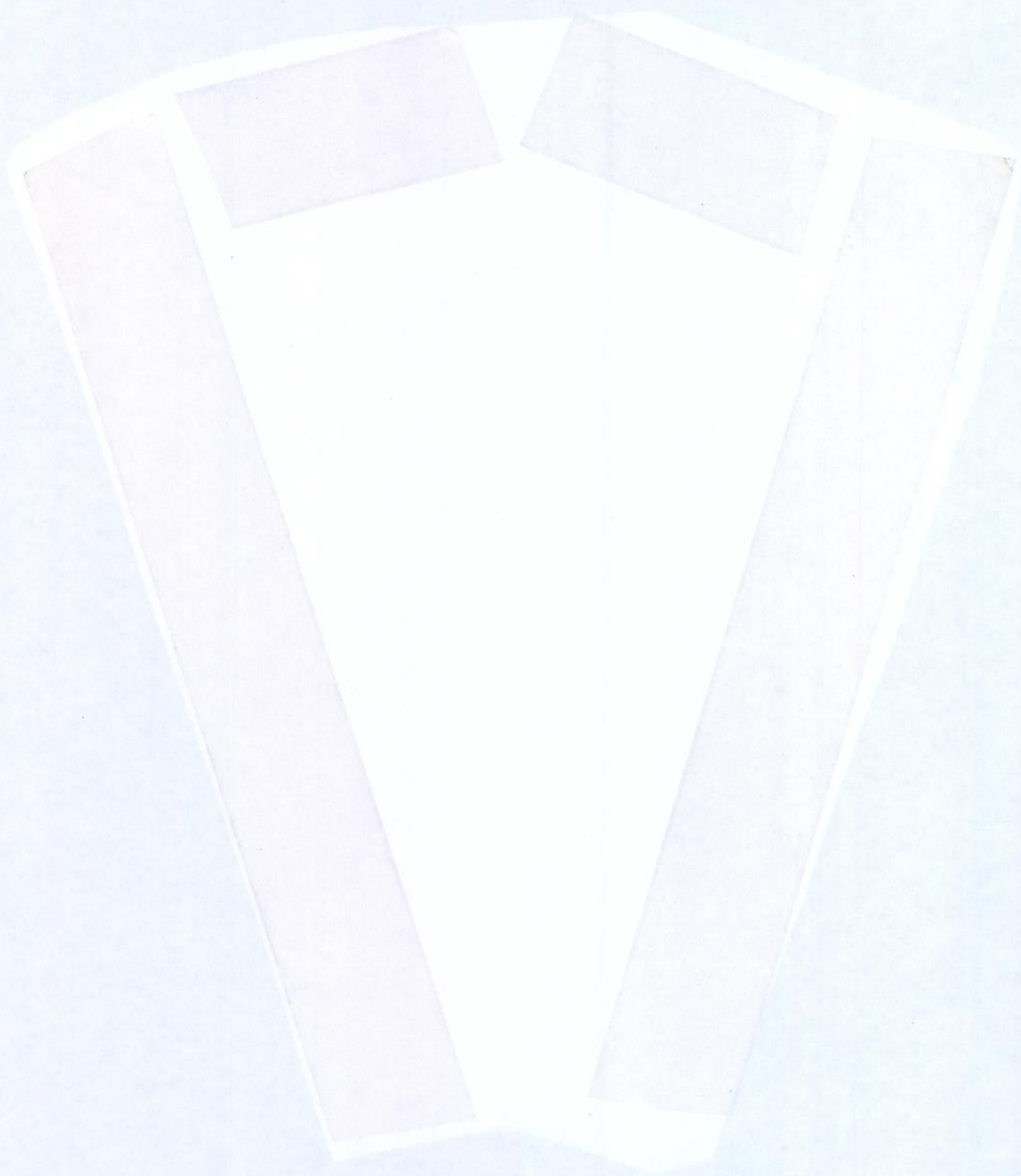




Fig 4.22
Sybil Connolly mainly concentrates on household goods to
this day.



CONCLUSION

Both Jack Clarke and Sybil Connolly brought the Irish Fashion Industry in the depressed, economically shaky Ireland of the 1950's to remarkable heights. Clarke, who marketed a ready-to-wear more commercial range of ladies tailored daywear, proved that as small a country as Ireland could produce a sizable fashion Industry, capable of supplying high quality garments to Ireland, America, Canada and as far as a field as Australia. Sybil Connolly was very much a product of European couture of the 1950's. Her marketing and method of production were typical of the great couturiers in Paris and London. Her work was a fusion of elements from both English and French couture, a subdued feminine elegance not to outrageous original in cut or line. With a twist that the great European couturiers had overlooked, she used fabric indigenous to Ireland, she used Irish fabrics in a way which, as she claims herself took her out of European Competition they had never been used before and created a pared-down couture elegance that fitted into a niche in the American market, somewhere between the Haute Couture from Europe and the new American ready-to-wear of Norell and Claire Mc Ardle. It combined the appeal of European couture and

American prices. Inevitably such a successful designer as Sybil Connolly made many enemies throughout her career. Whether it is pure resentment from fellow colleagues that she reached such an acknowledged status, or whether she stopped at nothing to satisfy her determination, is a matter to be proved. Many in the fashion trade claim that she was an intruder into fashion, that her success developed from an image that she created and exploited to the press. In the words of Jean Wiseman,

" She added her own personal signature and sophistication to age old Irish crafts, and made them a sought after commodity in the exclusive world of high fashion" 18

All this aside, we must remind ourselves that Sybil Connolly brought remarkable success to Irish design, a position in the world of fashion that no other Irish-based designer had reached. She was in the right place at the right time and to her credit realised that what assured her success was the recognition by one or two individuals. Sybil Connolly has never totally claimed to be a creator, but that privilege is rarely bestowed on any designer. Sybil Connolly has had a very special combination of things which together have helped to establish her as an international designer. She had one good idea and some

talent for designing, an excellent colour sense and a feeling especially for Irish fabrics; also charm, personality and an ability to illustrious colleagues such as Eleanor Lambert and Carmel Snow. She carved a place both for herself and Ireland in the exclusive world of haute Couture. She helped to make Irish linen and tweeds an accepted choice by International designers and opened up new possibilities with regard to vast markets, in Britain and especially in the United States, for Irish Industry badly in need of such. She helped organise supplies of exclusive, handworked facrics such as Carrickmacross and hand crocheted lace. Sybil Connolly insisted that her collections be made in Ireland only, claiming their production meant more employment in Ireland.

Other designers benefited greatly from Sybil Connolly's phenomenal success which paved the way for designers such as Donald Davies, Sheila Mullally and Neilli Mulcahy. In 1960 the "Pride of Ireland" exhibitions and other International fairs and store promotions started to invite other Irish designers as well as Sybil Connolly to their functions, but Sybil Connolly was always regarded as as reigning supreme in Irish couture. However this particular "Irish" approach to couture began to appear a

...for designing an excellent colour sense and a
...especially for Irish fabrics; also chair
...and an ability to illustrate costumes and
...Lillian Lambert and Carmel Snow, she carved a place
...herself and Ireland in the exclusive world of
...She helped to make Irish linen and lace
...of international designers and opened
...with regard to last matter, in
...in the United States for Irish
...to such. She helped to make
...exclusive, handwoven fabrics such as
...and hand crocheted lace, Irish linen
...made in Ireland only.
...more exposure in
...Ireland.

...designers benefited greatly from such committee
...which paved the way for designers such
...and Nellie Moulden. It
...the "Irish of Ireland" exhibitions and other
...and some promotions aimed to bring
...of Irish goods to the
...was always present in
...Irish goods.
...Irish goods began to appear

little stale towards the end of the 1960's - the traditional look was no longer a novelty. No other designer to this day has managed to repeat her success although many have tried : Ib Jorgensen, Pat Crowley and Paul Costello have taken their collections to the United States and have created for themselves valuable export markets but have never managed to have such a popular International media success. In the Eighties there was a euphoria in the media of the fashion trade about an emerging pool of Irish designers Paul Costelloe, Michael Mortell, John Rocha were but a few that formed this pool. Their scale was small in context of Irish clothing exports, but the bravery and excellence of their designs had the potential to develop the scale of their businesses and upgrade the image of Irish fashion once again. But the promised breakthrough never came : John Rocha found that critical acclaim is not a ticket to commercial success. Others like Michael Mortell discovered through years of trial and error that it is impossible to take on the Italians and Germans at what they do best. There are a handful who have made progress. Paul Costelloe being the most successful one now, although he states in an article recently published in the Sunday Tribune

"Ireland needs International Fashion hit"

" There is no real International success story

coming out of Ireland and I include myself in that".¹⁹

As the clothing trade struggles to survive the ongoing currency crisis, much soul searching is taking place about what has gone wrong in a business which once employed 27,500 and today employs 15,000. The low priority afforded to design, and the lack of support and encouragement given to talented designers, is one of several reasons for the industries downward spiral. So what is the future for Irish Fashion ?

An article in the Irish Trade Board library states that on the 1st of January 1993, Irish Industry in general will undergo some dramatic changes²¹ because on this date, Ireland ceases to be a "home" market and becomes an intergal part of a single "European" market consisting of all twelve countries in the E.C.. As a geographical entity Ireland will become a market freely open to all E.C manufacturers and their products. Likewise the whole of the E.C, with its 345 million inhabitants will be a freely open market for Irish manufacturers and their goods. Open competition will replace restraints on trade barriers and quotas. The Irish clothing industry will be directly involved in these changes. Non-Irish markets are likely to increase their efforts to gain a greater share of what was the "Irish Market" and this is bound to have a direct

... out of Ireland and I include myself in

that.

... the ... (some ... the ...
... with ... and ...
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... The ...
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... to talented ...
... for the industry ...
... the future for Irish fashion?

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... with its 10.5 million inhabitants will be a fairly
... for Irish manufacturers and their goods. Open
... will replace restrictions on trade barriers and
... the Irish ... industry will be ...
... Non-Irish markets and ...
... to gain a greater share of ...
... and this is bound to have a ...

effect on some Irish manufacturers. I asked Lorraine Egan: Fashion Consultant for The Irish Trade Board, how she considered these changes would directly effect the Irish Fashion Trade. Her reply was

" These changes will be seen by the Industry as serious threats or as exciting opportunities, it will depend on how the Industry sees itself, and the attitude of the people that work in it and their ability to cope". ²¹

Will a new league of Irish designers emerge to develop a market for Irish fashion and place Ireland on the International fashion map once again ? What is certain is there are many designers out there more talented than Connolly and Clarke, but few have the determination and that they have shown to persevere in a well worn out Irish fashion industry in 90's.

... the Irish manufacturers ...
... a committee for the Irish Trade Board ...
... these changes would directly affect the ...
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... shown to persevere in a well worn old Irish
... industry in 2012.

Rocha's romantic linens are a triumph

By Gabrielle Williams

JOHN ROCHA'S "Chinatown" collection at Cafe Klara, Dawson Street, yesterday prompted an impulsive movement towards A-Wear, the Grafton Street store which exclusively stocks the clothes. Everyone in the audience seemed to want something.

In colour, line and fabric, this was as good or better than any of John Rocha's previous triumphs under his less expensive label. He also has a designer range.

Although based largely on linen the collection included viscose, a splendid fabric with a good "fall", chiffons, cottons and pure silk organza. Since these are luxury fabrics, the £40 price for a pair of linen trousers, or the £80 odd for a viscose jacket, renders the clothes "affordable".

The line flowed: A-line jackets and blouses; wide, highwaisted palazzo pants; sarong; circular or pleated skirts swirling around the ankle; delicate organza tops — all seemed romantic because of the wonderful colours.

The subtlety of the Etruscan browns, terracottas, ochres, and dull rose pinks turned a good collection into a very good one. There were also touches of ivory, natural (for a strong Safari group), and delicate sea green. It was pretty. There was an element of tailoring involved. Some of the jackets and tunics were very fitted, but they looked soft when paired with full shorts or long chiffon skirts. Little cotton crochet sweaters and cotton-knit cardigans (both under £40) added a nice touch. Few collections will satisfy so many tastes, offer such a variety of beautiful colours and give such value. The clothes are 95 per cent Irish made.



Sheila Eustace models a cream pure silk organza blouse and cream pure linen palazzo pants with crochet cardigan at a preview in Cafe Klara of John Rocha's "Chinatown" international collection for spring/summer. — (Photograph: Tom Lawlor) I.T. 21-2-90





Fig 5/2
John Rocha, 1983
modernising the
use of linen to
attract a younger
market.

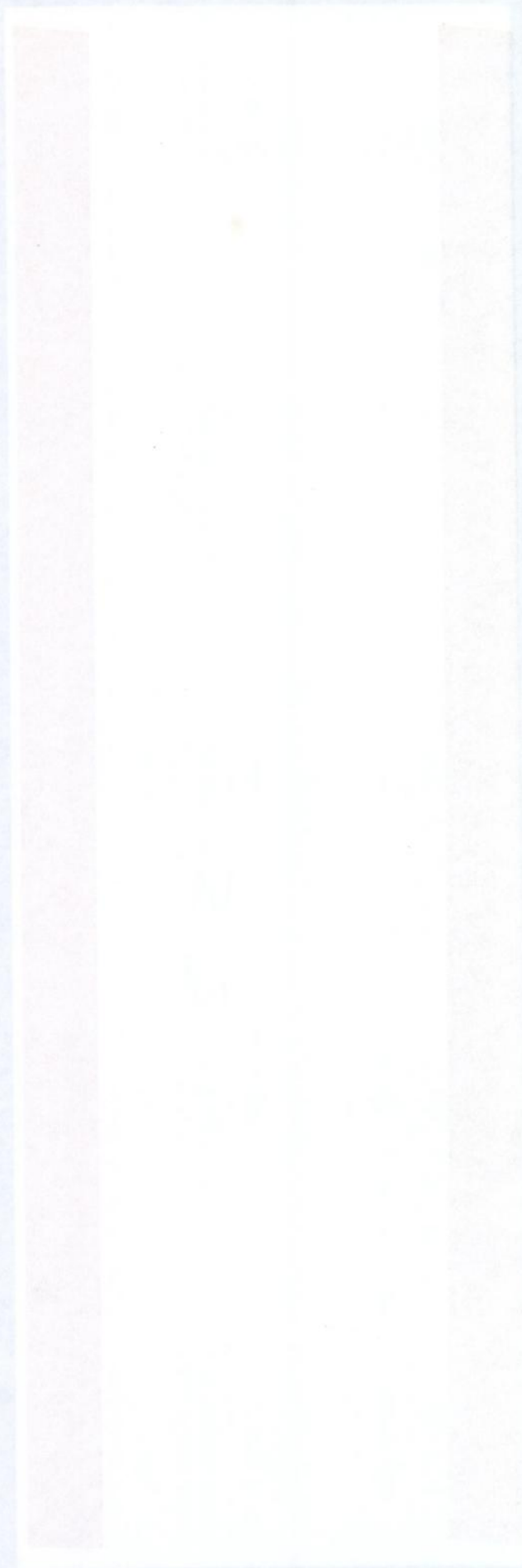




Fig 5.3
Michael Mortel
Sunday Tribune, September 1990.
He bought style into rainwear.

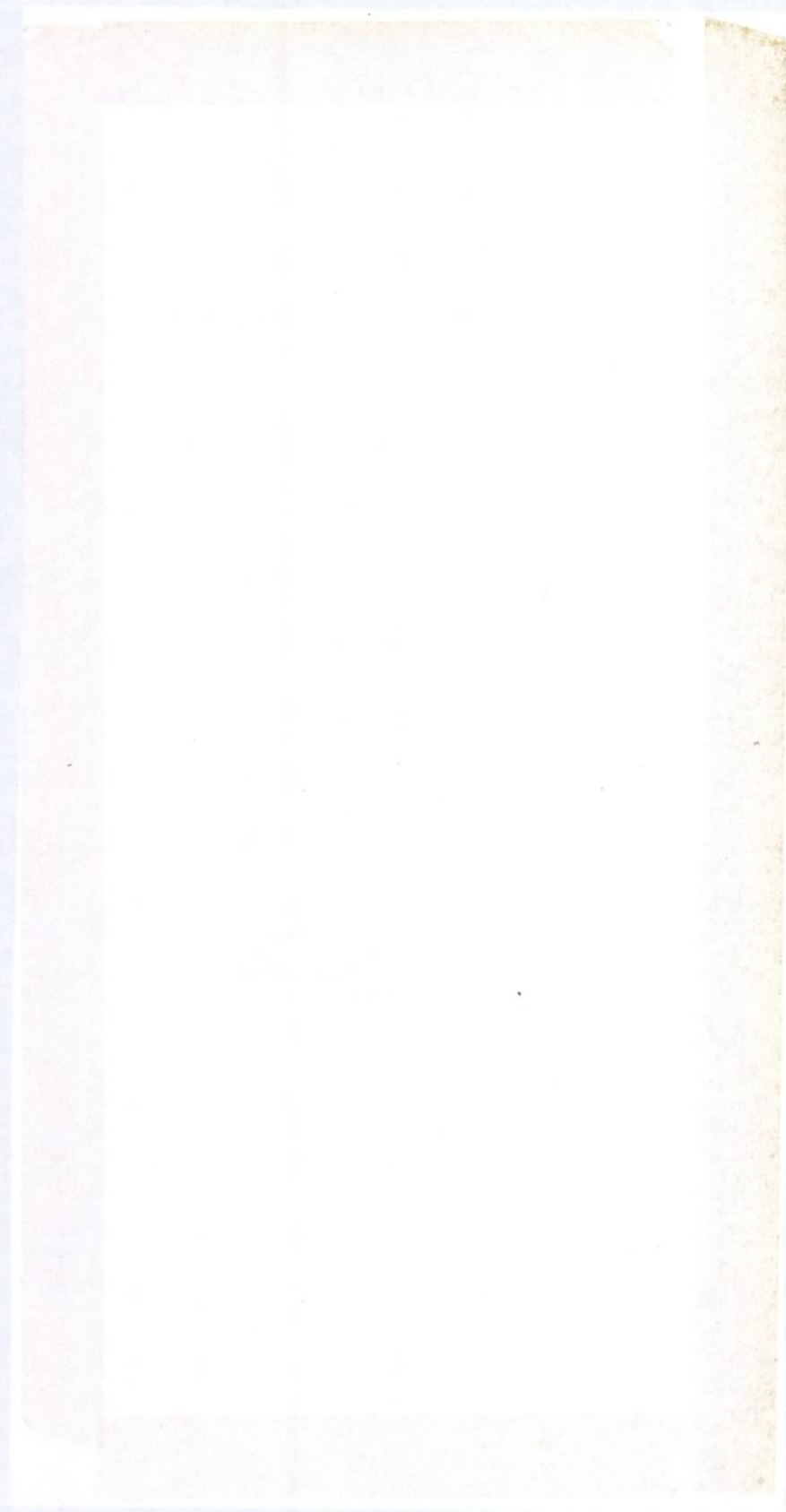




Fig 5.5
Paul Costelloe Spring/Summer collection 91/92.

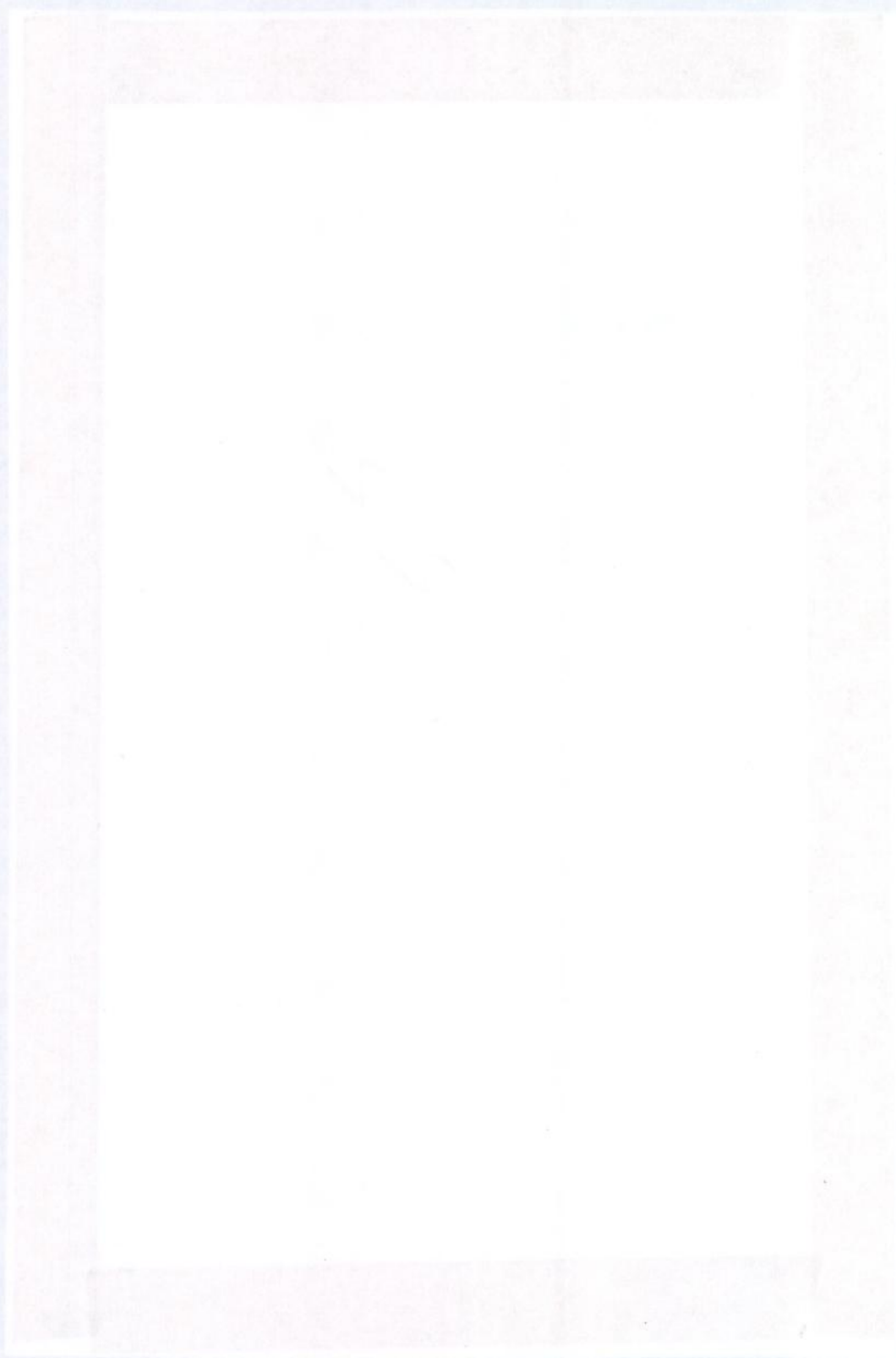
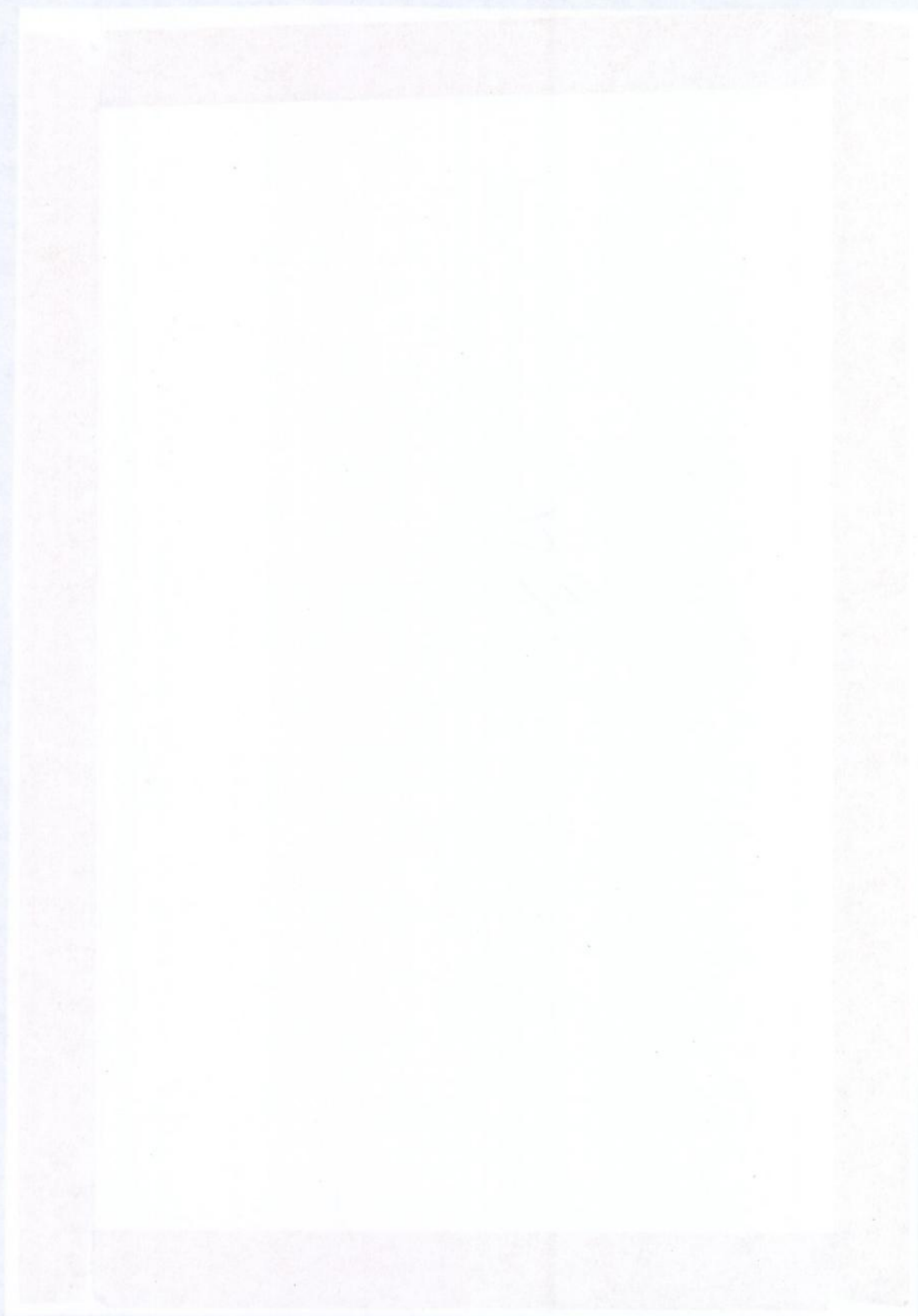




Fig 5.4
1992 Paul Costelloe Spring/Summer collection.
He caters for a more International appeal.



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