



The Beautiful Fall: Fashion, Genius, and Glorious Excess in 1970s Paris

By Alicia Drake

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"Deliciously dramatic... *The Beautiful Fall* crackles with excitement." -New York Times Book Review

In the 1970s, Paris fashion exploded like a champagne bottle left out in the sun. Amid sequins and longing, celebrities and aspirants flocked to the heart of chic, and Paris became a hothouse of revelry, intrigue, and searing ambition. At the center of it all were fashion's most beloved luminaries - Yves Saint Laurent, the reclusive *enfant terrible*, and Karl Lagerfeld, the flamboyant freelancer with a talent for reinvention - and they divided Paris into two fabulous halves. Their enduring rivalry is chronicled in this dazzling exposé of an era: of social ambitions, shared obsessions, and the mesmerizing quest for beauty.

"Fascinating." -*New York Times*

"Addictive." -*Philadelphia Inquirer*

"It's like *US Weekly*, 1970s style." -*Gotham*

"A story constructed as exquisitely as a couture dress. . . . It moves stylishly forward, with frequent over-the-shoulder glances at some very dishy background." -*Boston Globe*

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Starred Review. This smart book stitches together the lives, loves, personalities and obsessions of two iconic designers, Yves Saint Laurent and Karl Lagerfeld, into a work as finely detailed as any outfit they ever sent down a runway. Through interviews with dozens of the designers' friends and colleagues, fashion journalist Drake offers revealing inside anecdotes and perspectives from those who were there for the Paris "fashion revolution." Drake interprets the rarefied and decadent 1970s French fashion scene Saint Laurent and Lagerfeld helped create with insight and vigor, as well as germane commentary on the collections and the trends they set. A period when couture was faltering and ready-to-wear rising, Drake crafts clear yin and yang portraits of the introverted, passive and magnetic Saint Laurent, and the exhibitionistic Lagerfeld, known for wearing high heels, sporting monocles or wielding a fan. With a large entourage of colorful supporting characters—from fashion muses like Loulou de la Falaise to socialites like Talitha Getty—and exotic locales—from Paris to Marrakech to the Blenheim Palace and back—the story of the competing and capricious fashionistas becomes the account of one glittering party after the next, interrupted occasionally by fashion shows, and sprinkled with celebrities such as Mick Jagger and Andy Warhol. The two tastemakers' homosexuality is dealt with frankly and the storied roots of their aesthetic senses and public personas is nicely detailed. De rigueur for the fashion crowd and those interested in the pop or gay culture of the era. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

From [Booklist](#)

Starred Review The relationship between hedonism and decay and the understanding of excess as creative consumption are themes central to this glittering exegesis. Drake conducted more than 100 interviews in her scrupulous chronicle of fashion's most illustrious rivalry. Yves Saint Laurent, the charmed genius of effortless success, and Karl Lagerfeld, the patrician workhorse, engaged in a decades-long competition for hyperbolic headlines and jet-set celebrity, pitting their cliques against each other in bitch-slap feuds of sartorial splendor. Theirs is a world of glorious, hideous self-involvement, where heroin is an accessory, violent political unrest is an evening's amusement, and a close friend's suicide is, foremost, a contemptible blemish on an orchestrated image. Drake's subjects made their livings and their names dedicating themselves to the pursuit of surface perfection, and her comprehensive examination of their barbed, parallel arcs is appropriately superficial. These titanic designers crafted their personas as carefully as they put together their luxurious collections, and we come to know them as reflections in the mirror houses they built. Although their individual aesthetics and personal recriminations are unique, they are united in the opulent glory of their narcissistic myopia. Ultimately, Drake makes a good case for the extraordinary nature of their individual achievements and the revolutionary effect of their competitive energy on the fashion industry. And yet we're left with a portrait defined more by the careful craft of its brushstrokes than by the substance of the sitters.

Thomas Barthelmess

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Review

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