



Fashion and Democracy in Europe, 1860-1960

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Fashion is a historically determined social institution that feeds change through a turn over in innovation and novelty and that becomes ever more pervasive according to the size of the quota of the population which has the resources – whether they be economic, cultural or social – to get access to fashion itself. A strong, decisive push towards increase in the opportunities for that access came about between the second half of the 19th century and the second half of the 20th. Exhaustive illustrations of the causes of economic and social nature that produced such progress have already been made, while minor attention has been dedicated to the mode of interaction between fashion and political systems. If it is true, as Yuniya Kawamura has stated, that «in some societies where the dominant ideology is antipathetic to social change and progress, fashion cannot exist»¹, then the century between 1860 and 1960, in which in Europe liberal states, socialist regimes, Nazi-Fascist dictatorships and then, finally, democratic regimes followed each other, offers the opportunity to analyze this theme under a stimulating comparative prospect.

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Democratization without democracy

The period between the latter half of the 19th century and the First World War is universally recognized as the age in which the process of “democratization” of fashion began in the Western world, a process which marked the end of the *Ancien Régime* of clothing which had been

¹ Y. Kawamura, *Fashion-ology. An Introduction to Fashion Studies*, Berg, Oxford and New York 2005, p. 5.

characterized by an exclusive access limited to liberty of choice in terms of garments. Whilst such a distinction is excessively schematic and simplistic, there is no doubt that in the decades between the end of the 19th century and the start of the 20th, conditions emerged that were such as to contribute in a determinant manner to extending the possibility of inclusion into the dynamics of consumption set off by fashion to increasingly wider social groups².

First of all, these were economic conditions. The technological and organizational innovations introduced by industrialisation had progressively made available a notable quantity of products (both semi-finished and fully worked), destined for clothing at decreasing costs. Furthermore, in the countries most involved in modernisation, the standard of living of the lower classes began to be noticeably bettered and thus boosted a more consistent propensity to consumption: «In 1899, a British worker had twice as much spending power as fifty years earlier. Americans enjoyed even higher real wages»³. Commercial organisation was undergoing important organisational innovations and was experimenting with new solutions aimed at reaching an ever widening range of consumers.

It was a period which was also defined as the age of the formation of the society of the masses precisely for the participation of ever wider swathes of the population in the various forms of socialisation, amongst which were the new political and Union movements. However, the increasing involvement of the populace did not have a corresponding extension of full political rights. In fact, between the mid 19th century and the Great War the prevailing institutional set up in Western countries was modelled on principles of liberalism that guaranteed a series of individual liberties, but which did not allow for effective working class

² Ph. Perrot, *Les dessus et les dessous de la bourgeoisie*, Editions Complexe, Bruxelles 1984, pp. 301-37; S. Levitt, *Victorians Unbuttoned: Registered Designs for Clothings. Their Makers and Wearers 1839-1900*, Allen and Unwin, London 1986; G. Lipovetsky, *L'empire de l'éphémère*, Gallimard, Paris 1991, pp. 86-92; D. Crane, *Fashion and its Social Agendas. Class, Gender, Identity in Clothing*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago 2000 (*Questioni di moda. Classe, genere e identità nell'abbigliamento*, ed. E. Mora, Franco Angeli, Milano 2004, pp. 54-92); Kawamura, *Fashion-ology*, cit., pp. 91-3; F. Trentmann, *Empire of Things: How We Became a World of Consumers, from the Fifteenth Century to the Twenty-first*, Allen Lane, Rushden 2016, pp. 146-60; E. Merlo, C.M. Belfanti, *Fashion, Product Innovation and Consumer Culture in the late 19th Century: Alle città d'Italia department store in Milan*, in "Journal of Consumer Culture", Published online, September 2019.

³ Trentmann, *Empire of Things*, cit., pp. 146-7.

participation, still heavily conditioned by limited access to suffrage. In other words, the process of “democratization” in fashion would come about in the absence of democracy.

Thus there are two possible interpretive hypotheses. The first might be that the term “democratization” of fashion is improper because if anything it was rather a “liberalisation” of fashion, perfectly congruent with the then current liberal vision of society; in this perspective the greater opportunities of choice offered to the working classes did not have a relevant impact in terms of destructuring the social hierarchy; instead what occurred was nothing but a simple remodelling of the criteria of social distinction. The second hypothesis, alternative to the first, could instead maintain the analytic efficacy of the expression “democratization” of fashion, attributing to this phenomenon the character of anticipating the political and social transformations that would take place after the Second World War.

One of liberal Europe’s intellectuals, Alexis de Tocqueville, however, saw the United States as a country in which aspirations towards the most advanced forms of equality were finding practical application and he did hesitate to adopt the term “democracy” for American society⁴. In depth studies have convincingly demonstrated how the innovative production and commercial solutions that were established in the United States had made of fashion the ideal terrain on which to experiment forms of democratization:⁵ «If Tocqueville considered democracy to be everyone’s ‘eager desire to acquire comfort’, then the ready-made presented an obvious avenue for realizing such ambitions»⁶.

The case of the United States therefore seems to support the second hypothesis, that is that the “democratization” of fashion accompanied and even augmented progress towards the construction of a democratic system: the egalitarian American society «made fashion a form of governance: a system of majority rule for a polity that located sovereignty in the free will of every citizen»⁷. In reality the process of “democratization” of fashion was part of the wider context of the “citizenship of consumption” and an expression through which wider access to consumption as

⁴ A. de Tocqueville, *De la démocratie en Amérique*, Charles Gosselin, Paris 1836.

⁵ C.B. Kidwell, M.C. Christman, *Suiting Everyone: The Democratization of Clothing in America*, The Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington 1971, pp. 165-203; M. Zakim, *Ready-Made Democracy*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago 2003. For a different point of view see Crane, *Fashion and its social agendas*, cit., pp. 94-123.

⁶ Zakim, *Ready-Made Democracy*, cit., p. 7.

⁷ Ivi, p. 188.

a form of integration which was not only social but also political was made legitimate. In Europe, the coeval correspondent of this evolution, peculiar to the reality of the United States, were the experiences in the field of cooperative consumption, whose perspective was certainly not that of assimilation but rather that of making barriers even more rigid⁸.

It was thus from two very different situations – both from the social and from the political point of view – that the process of “democratization” of fashion came about in the USA, on the one hand, and in Europe, on the other. It was precisely in some European countries, in the period between the two wars, that the crisis of the pre-war political systems degenerated into dictatorial regimes of opposite ideological inspiration, which were, however, equally harbingers of a fracture with the *status quo ante*, in which the interaction between fashion, the society of the masses and the political institutions was reformulated in totally new terms.

Fashion and Socialism

The First World War sparked off the deflagration of Czarist Russia, burdened as it was by centuries of backwardness, whose society emerged profoundly transformed by the advent of a political system alternative both to the institutions of a liberal matrix prevalent in the rest of Europe and to economic liberalism: it is difficult to imagine that fashion could have any right to citizenship in such a context.

Fashion incorporated many of the characteristics to which the Soviet regime opposed its own values: sobriety, equality, collectivity, simplicity and functionality were to take the place of luxury, distinction, individuality, eccentricity and appearance. It was not, therefore, sufficient to ban bourgeois European fashion but instead became needful to found a new Soviet fashion: an ambitious programme, whose realisation required not only the institution of design centres destined for the creation of a Soviet taste, but also – above all – the development of production on a large scale of textiles and clothing able to meet demand. The latter was to reveal itself as the weak point of the programme. At the beginning of the Thirties the textile-clothing industrial sector was in grave difficulties and it was only later that initial progress was made, but, at the outbreak of war, primary materials and workforce were completely absorbed by the

⁸ Trentmann, *Empire of Things*, cit., pp. 146-60, 236-45; V. De Grazia, *Irresistible Empire. America's Advance through Twentieth-Century Europe*, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge (Mass.) and London 2006.

war effort. With the return of peace the reprise of production destined for consumers brought to light a profound contradiction in the Soviet system, which had created a Plan for developing production and trade in clothing. On one hand those responsible for the clothing and textile industries showed themselves to be reluctant to adopt those changes in production which might have met the needs of the changes in demand, fearing that this might compromise the achievement of the production targets set by the Plan while, on the other hand, those who supervised the choices made for the distribution system, incapable of envisioning the possible evolution in taste, preferred to continue to offer the consumer the same models as before. The combined effect of these two dynamics was that of impeding the mass production of clothing from being furthered by fashion, which however, was not lacking in the contribution offered by the design centres created by the state⁹.

In effect, if, on the one hand, the production system and the organisation of distribution were revealed to be totally inadequate, on the other, the efforts towards creating a Soviet fashion are worthy of attention. The first initiative dates back to 1919, when the Workshop of Contemporary Dress was created, while in the course of the Twenties forms of collaboration between the artists of the Constructionist movement and fashion design were experimented with¹⁰. The guiding principle was naturally that of functionality, while the expression of personal taste was entrusted to the form of the neckline or the width of the sleeves. In the course of the Thirties interest in fashion was confirmed by the creation of the Moscow House of Clothing Design, which was meant to elaborate the models of clothing to be put into production, carrying out this function as much as to dictate the rules of Soviet fashion, as to educate the taste of the Socialist consumer. At the end of the Second World War branches of the House of Clothing Design were opened in all the capital cities of the Republics of the Soviet Union, coordinated from the head-

⁹ L. Zakharova, *Soviet Socialist Dress, 1917 to 1990*, in *Berg Encyclopedia of World Dress and Fashion*, vol. 9. *East Europe, Russia and the Caucasus*, ed. D. Bartlett, Bloomsbury, London and Oxford 2011, pp. 355-60; L. Zakharova, *S'habiller à la soviétique*, CNRS Editions, Paris 2011; D. Bartlett, *Fashion East. The Spectre that Haunted Socialism*, The MIT Press, Boston 2010; J. Gronow, S. Zhuravlev, *Fashion Meets Socialism*, Finnish Literature Society – SKS, Helsinki 2016.

¹⁰ B. English, *A Cultural History of Fashion in the 20th Century*, The MIT Press, Boston 2010, pp. 48-50; D. Bartlett, *Russian Constructivism in Dress and Textiles*, *Berg Encyclopedia of World Dress and Fashion*, vol. 9. *East Europe, Russia and the Caucasus*, cit., pp. 361-3.

quarters in Moscow. The attempt made by the designers of the House of Clothing Design to furnish Soviet fashion with a seasonal changeover of styles clashed, however, as has been said, with the rigidity of the production system and the organisation of the distribution.

This “Planning” of fashion design “made in the USSR” obviously begs questions over its efficacy in immunising Soviet society from the influence of that bourgeois fashion which in the decades following the end of the Second World War became a phenomenon which then went through a further evolution of increasing social impact. In the period between the Revolution and the Second World War the influence of French fashion was stemmed intermittently: opposition was relevant in the first phase of the planning and at the end of the Thirties, while in the time of the NEP French magazines circulated and from 1936 reports on French fashion appeared in the Russian press. The creations of the Russian designers also showed evident signs of the influence of Western style. In the post-war period, once Stalinism had been set aside, the start of lessening tension with the West led the Soviet leadership to activate contacts with the capitalist world to study its mechanisms and eventually to adopt them with the aim of relaunching Soviet fashion.

In reality, these contacts principally produced the effect of furthering the influence of French fashion over the Russian designers, so that, as Larissa Zacharova wrote «In fact, the concept of Socialist fashion was a simple rhetoric aimed at justifying the incapacity of the Soviet garment industry to produce fashionable goods»¹¹. The failure of the project to realise a Socialist fashion, alternative to the bourgeois one, is thus further confirmation of the increasing attraction exercised by Western fashion articles – like jeans or women’s nylon stockings and tights – on the Russian consumers at least from the 1970s on.

The Soviet regime installed in Russia after the October Revolution, despite offering an alternative model of society to the Western one based on liberal social orders and a market economy – as well as the connected culture of consumption – did not conceive of the idea of banning fashion, which was a typical product of capitalist society. On the contrary, the Soviet regime recognised fashion’s role as a social catalyst and tried to use it for its own ends, trying to make of fashion not as much an instrument of consensus as an important component of the underpinning of an ideology. The Plan, as has been seen, was unsuccessful for two types of reason.

¹¹ Zakharova, *Soviet Socialist Dress*, cit., p. 357.

The first lay in the illusion of “exporting” a social institution which arose in a context of societies which were liberal and liberalist into a political-social context that was radically diverse. Soviet fashion did not fail to clearly demonstrate its link with “the original”: the strict link between fashion and art, women as the target – “The great masculine renunciation”¹² –, the seasonal rhythm of change and the fatal attraction of French fashion “original traits” all highlight the contradictions inlaid in trying to force fashion into a kind of “Procrustes bed” represented by the Soviet ideology, while fashion was, to coin a phrase, “born free”.

The second type of reason reflects the second illusion of the Soviet regime in thinking that fashion, which established itself and developed within a production and distribution system whose efficiency was measured by its capacity to satisfy the demands of mass consumption, could take root in the strangled economy of the Five Year Plans or in that dominated by the heavy industry of the post-war period. Fashion seems to be a social institution which has a mechanics of functioning which, where it is supported by efficient production and distribution and is set in a liberal system, works in synergy with the processes of “democratization”: in the absence of one or more of these contextual factors, despite remaining in an incomplete state, fashion, nonetheless, shows a resilient capacity evidencing traits of its own DNA.

Fashion and Nazism

Fashion in the Third Reich was not born under Nazism, it was rather the end point of a long journey that intertwined it with the history of German nationalism and its attempts to bridle fashion making it into a means of collective regulation and a form of expression meant to serve a political aim.

Nationalism had its roots in the nineteenth century competition for seizing and controlling strategic resources for industrialisation. Forced to cede its mineral producing areas to what would become Belgium after the Napoleonic wars, France became an importer of coal and iron, raw materials which were abundant both in the England of the first Industrial Revolution and in the region of the Ruhr, thanks to which the German Empire would assure its leadership of the second Industrial Revolution. It was therefore inevitable that in continental Europe

¹² J.C. Flugel, *The Psychology of Clothes*, Leonard & Virginia Woolf at The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, Hogarth Press, London 1930, p. 111.

nationalism would be expressed through the conflict between the two principal contenders for British supremacy, exploding first into the Franco-Prussian war (1870), and then as the detonator for the First World War. At the time, consumers' preference for French fashion was targeted as antinationalistic both in the context of commercial interests and in terms of moral obligation¹³. German superiority however, ought to have manifested not only through the refusal of the French model dictated by ethical and political reasons, but also through the birth of a national fashion with aesthetic connotations that expressed its underlying values. The protraction of the war well beyond the period foreseen and the less than encouraging outcome of the battles forced the project to be postponed.

In the Twenties, the German fashion industry was second only to the siderurgical industry in terms of employment and exportation. In Berlin, which for over a century had rivalled Paris for primacy as the European capital of fashion, art and culture experienced an age of renewed vigour and of great openness to the influence of aesthetic canons, both European and from outside Europe, in rapid and continuous renewal. Berlin became a capital of international fashion once more particularly for what concerns the production of readymade women's clothing, the expression of a solid industrial and distribution reality. In that decade, the material and aesthetic characteristics that made a fashion an un-German fashion – short hair, higher hem lines, trousers, and heavy makeup – became more clearly defined, contextually and in opposition to the increasing popularity of the boyish style known as “Garçonne”. However the same clarity was not expressed for the characteristics on which the German fashion *was* meant to be founded.

Following French occupation of the Ruhr (1923), anti French tone and sentiment became more vehement in the battle in favour of a national fashion. The conservative reaction against the prevailing modernism of foreign fashion was welded to the anti-Semitic tack in

¹³ According to Norbert Stern, author of a publication in 1915 dedicated to the themes of fashion and culture, the men at the front paid in blood for the treachery of German women who continued to dress in fashion inspired by the French model (N. Stern, *Mode und Kultur*, 2 volumes, Expedition der Europ. Modenzeitung, Dresden [c1915], cit. in I.V. Guenther, *Nazi “Chic”? German Politics and Women’s Fashions, 1915–1945*, in “Fashion Theory”, 1, 1997, 1, p. 30. The topics dealt with in the article were successively taken up and further discussed in Ead., *Nazi Chic? Fashioning Women in the Third Reich*, Berg, 2004. For the Franco-Prussian conflict see R. Looft, *Unseen political spaces: German and Nationhood in the Berlin and Paris Fashion Press during the Franco-Prussian War*, in “Journal of European Periodical Studies”, 11, 2017, 2, pp. 44-60.

smoothing the way for the advent of the fashion of the Third Reich. For, in fact, in comparison with the other industrial and commercial sectors, the presence of Jews in the clothing manufacture industry was not negligible. The Aryanisation of the phases of planning, production and sales of fashion meant the impoverishment of creative, productive and entrepreneurial resources¹⁴. A cost which, however, was estimated as being amply compensated by its benefits. The clothing sector was expected to take part in reaching the objective of full employment (effectively reached in 1936) on which Hitler had based his electoral campaign. No less important, German fashion would have finally established itself on the international scene as the Aryan fashion par-excellence and in turn would have found greater favour in the preferences of German female consumers, turning them away from their enduring love for foreign taste.

The attempt to subjugate fashion to the dictates of the rhetoric of Nazi ideology and to its political aims produced contradictory results. German fashion of the 1930s recognized the value of the uniformity of the everyday dress as a means of collective regulation in civil society. The disciplined codes regulating the civil uniforms produced an aesthetic to be spectacularized through parades that denoted order, authority, and control, reflected a new sense of public space, and showed the interference of the state in the freedom of choice. In the second half of the Thirties, and even more during the War, dressing women in uniform became however a political problem¹⁵, as well as an economic one since it increased demand for civilian use of materials that were needed for military purposes. Folk costume (i.e., the dirndl dress) was also taken as a source of inspiration, yet German people soon discarded it as unsuitable to the urban life. The same happened abroad. According to Guenther, variations on the dirndl dress became popular under the rubric of “the Bavarian Style”, and were spotlighted in the later 1930s in English, French, and American fashion magazines. Robert Piguet, Mainbocher, and other French couture designers presented dirndl-inspired creations as part of their spring 1939 collections. But, by the autumn of 1939 – while the world watched to see what Hitler would do next – the dirndl was rejected by the English edition of Harper’s Bazaar: «We loved the

¹⁴ R.S. Kremer, *Broken Threads, The Destruction of the Jewish Fashion Industry in Germany and Austria*, Berg, Oxford and New York 2007.

¹⁵ Guenther, *Nazi Chic? Fashioning Women in the Third Reich*, cit., p. 265.

dirndl well, but not too wisely, for it was essentially a peasant fashion»¹⁶. However, there was not one prevailing fashion promoted by the Nazi publicity machine, but several which not only competed with one another, but also sometimes conflicted with either the Party's rhetoric or its politics. As a consequence Aryan fashion was left without a female icon¹⁷. The selfsame exponents of the Party showed tolerance of, if not admiration for, the canons of elegance that could never be reconciled with Aryan fashion. At the end of the 1930s it was still unclear what made of fashion a German fashion and, above all, clothing became a signifier of disjunction, instead of what «the Nazis had hoped, a means by which to consolidate a national German spirit and community, a *Volksgemeinschaft*»¹⁸.

In the period between the two wars, in Germany politics, economy and racial discrimination were decisive in drastically reducing the range of aesthetic models and the quality and quantity of the materials to be transformed into articles of clothing, yet this did not impede fashion from expressing itself through a wide range of individual options and strategies which, in the most adverse of circumstances included reuse and recycling. Ultimately, «the essence of fashioning made it far more recalcitrant than other cultural domains and mass consumer products to National Socialist manipulations and controls»¹⁹.

The objective of becoming the fulcrum of international fashion, an ambition that had been nourished by the nationalism of the First World War and which had been reawakened by the Second World War, seemed finally within reach after the French surrendered. Military occupation appeared as a great opportunity for the elevation of the prestige of German fashion. The temptation to reach this objective by the destruction of the French fashion industry gave way to the opportunist and unrealistic choice of gaining economic advantage from it by simultaneously exercising full control over the channels of the supply of raw materials and over the sources of inspiration, the advertising and promotional tools and over the choices of the consumers. The transformation that fashion underwent under the Occupation, from a consumer commodity that the German troops who had entered Paris a short time before rushed to buy favored by an advantageous Exchange rate, to being a symbol of

¹⁶ Ead., *Nazi "Chic"? German Politics and Women's Fashions*, cit., p. 32.

¹⁷ Ead., *Nazi Chic? Fashioning Women in the Third Reich*, cit., pp. 131-41.

¹⁸ Ivi, p. 267.

¹⁹ Ivi, p. 275.

resistance to the invaders, offers further proof of the difficulty that totalitarianisms encounter while trying to bend to their will an institution – fashion – which is still not yet completely democratic but which has its assumptions profoundly rooted in liberal regimes.

At the end of the War, Berlin went back to being the capital of German fashion through the rapid resumption of production and distribution activity, the return of the principal fashion magazines and the organization of fairs and fashion shows. In the post-war context characterized by extreme poverty and untold humiliation, fashion played a role in accompanying civil society in the transition towards democracy. The attractive, fashionably dressed, stylish German women photographed in the fashion magazines of the time «exemplified and embodied the western, particularly American, acceptance of their former enemies»²⁰ and «symbolized the transformation from the desperate present to the preferable future of western affluence»²¹.

Fashion and democracy, fashion as democracy

In the period between the two World Wars the crisis of liberal political systems led to the rise in Russia and in Germany – as well as in Spain and Italy naturally – of totalitarian regimes that suppressed liberty and rights with the aim of exercising strict control over the masses and imposing widespread subjugation to the new social orders²². The so-called factory of consent constructed by the dictatorships could not fail to encompass fashion, which had already become from the mid nineteenth century on a potent active force in society. While the determination with which Communism and Nazism tried to appropriate fashion to serve their own ends was different, the result was substantially the same. The project for the creation of a Soviet fashion alternative to that of the capitalist world was decidedly more conscious, adopting some features of bourgeois fashion to remodel them in the context of socialist ideology. Instead, as far as Nazi Germany is concerned, we cannot even talk of a real and proper project for a Nazi fashion; unless it be for the efforts spent in putting the German people into uniform according to age and sex (see the Hitler Youth and the League of German Maidens). There

²⁰ I.V. Guenther, *Out of the Ruins: Fashioning Berlin, 1945–1952*, in “Fashion Theory”, XXI, 2017, 4, p. 410.

²¹ Ivi, p. 404.

²² Trentmann, *Empire of Things*, cit., pp. 292-6.

was much more conviction in the support for the “Aryanisation” of production, expelling the Jewish entrepreneurs from the cloth and clothing industrial sectors of which they were a significant component. Both in Soviet Russia and in Nazi Germany the progress made in Europe and the United States between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries towards the “democratization” of fashion also clashed with the incapacity of the production system to foster demand.

The economic difficulties of the period following the First World War and the priorities imposed by the outbreak of the Second are sufficient reasons to explain the situation; in the case of Soviet Russia the unresolved inefficiency of the organisation of production and distribution continued in the post-war decades. The dictatorships of the first half of the twentieth century opposed fashion as a symbol of a decadent society to which they set against new diverse solutions including that which regarded consumer culture. However, those regimes did not succeed in annihilating fashion, neither by uniforms nor by rendering design bureaucratic: in a clandestine or subterranean form fashion showed itself to be resilient; in expectation either of the return of democracy – or its advent – or of a return to production efficiency that would allow the process of “democratization” of fashion to resume.

According to Gilles Lipovetsky it was only after the Second World War, despite there being some continuity in some experiences carried out in France in the period between the wars, that fashion became effectively “democratic” with the epilogue of the symbiosis between fashion and luxury sanctioned by the advent of *prêt-à-porter* which allowed for the consolidation of the links between fashion and industry²³, favouring what Diane Crane has defined as a shift «from a class fashion to a consumer fashion»²⁴. Once again it is Lipovetsky who states that the organisational set up of fashion became more “democratic” with the transformation of a regime dominated by the absolute power of Parisian *Haute Couture* into a multipolar system able to offer articulated style solutions²⁵.

The “Golden Age” of the economy of Western Europe in the decades after the War with the consistent bettering of the standard of life, on the one hand, and the reprise of production activity on the other, certainly contributed to the economic conditions for the transformation

²³ Lipovetsky, *L'empire de l'éphémère*, cit., pp. 125-35.

²⁴ Crane, *Fashion and its social agendas*, cit.

²⁵ Lipovetsky, *L'empire de l'éphémère*, cit., pp. 125-35.

of fashion into a mass social phenomenon²⁶. However, it is not possible to ignore the changes that came about in the political order, which, in the same period of time, led to the formation of democratic systems. It could be said that it was only then that the circle closed with the melding of fashion and democracy. Fashion was definitively established in societies with a democratic political order because it was in such a context that the interaction between the democratic system and the economic development theorized by diverse economists from Mancur Olson to Benjamin Friedman and Daron Acemoglu to James Robinson²⁷ operates and that “perverse” mechanism that favours the culture of consumption defined by Galbraith as the “dependence effect”²⁸ is set in motion.

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²⁶ Trentmann, *Empire of Things*, cit., pp. 338-54.

²⁷ M. Olson, *Power and Prosperity*, Basic Books, New York 2000; B. Friedman, *The Moral Consequences of Economic Growth*, Vintage Books, New York 2006; D. Acemoglu, J. A. Robinson, *Why Nations Fail: The Origins Of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty*, Crown business, New York 2012.

²⁸ «As a society becomes increasingly affluent, wants are increasingly created by the process by which they are satisfied. This may operate passively. Increases in consumption, the counterpart of increases in production, act by suggestion or emulation to create wants. Expectation rises with attainment. Or producers may proceed actively to create wants through advertising and salesmanship. Wants thus come to depend on output. In technical terms, it can no longer be assumed that welfare is greater at an all-round higher level of production than at a lower one. It may be the same. The higher level of production has, merely, a higher level of want creation necessitating a higher level of want satisfaction. There will be frequent occasion to refer to the way wants depend on the process by which they are satisfied. It will be convenient to call it the Dependence Effect» (J.K. Galbraith, *The Affluent Society*, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston and New York 1998, p. 116).

