



Fashioning the Bourgeoisie

A HISTORY OF CLOTHING IN
THE NINETEENTH
CENTURY

by

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The Department Store and the Spread of Bourgeois Clothing

Soon there will be only one kind of dress
in the West, South, and North: ours.

This is becoming increasingly obvious.

—*Fashion-Théorie* (February 1863)

THE DEPARTMENT STORE came into existence because it could bring together two equally important groups: products and buyers. Its development required two sets of factors: audacious innovations and favorable economic conditions, which combined in the second half of the century to produce a commercial revolution.¹

THE TAKEOFF

Department stores or *grands magasins* were established during the Second Empire,² but not all were born *grands*, nor were they all substantially capitalized. Their founders often started out as lowly employees. Aristide Boucicaut began as a sales clerk at the Petit-Saint-Thomas before creating the Bon Marché in 1852. Alfred Chauchard started at the Pauvre Diable before promoting the Louvre in 1854. Ernest Cognacq clerked at the Gagne-Petit before launching the Samaritaine in 1869. The Bazar de l'Hôtel-de-Ville was born in 1856, on the initiative of the street peddler Ruel, whereas the Printemps was founded in 1865 by Jules Jaluzot, a former department head from the Bon Marché.

Some of these exemplary "self-made men"—Chauchard, for one—attracted investment capital immediately;³ but most started out small, investing their wives' dowries or forming partnerships with owners of small shops.⁴ They achieved their expansion by inventing commercial strategies and profiting from favorable economic conditions. Capital duly followed, and confirmed the relevance of the innovations. Only then did the *grand*

magasin merit its name. Actually, only La Belle Jardinière (which crossed the river in 1866 to occupy a grander establishment on the Quai de la Mégisserie) and a few prosperous "fancy goods stores"⁵ ever became department stores thanks to the substantial assets they had already acquired and the large amount of capital they were able to attract.

The first principle and absolute rule of department stores was the reduction of gross profit margins offset by rapid turnover of stock and capital. The large-scale application of this concept required a radical transformation of production techniques, a transformation that could take place only if the textile industry expanded⁶ and ready-made articles multiplied. Mass production, which involves both an industrial multiplication of standardized, identical units and the consumerism that would create the "department store" life-style, appeared with large-scale production of finished products during the last third of the nineteenth century.

Department stores were thus born of the textile industry, the cutting edge of French industry and the major purveyor of fabrics and ready-to-wear, but they expanded as mass production developed and diversified. A survey of department store catalogs reveals the correlation between the increasing choices of goods and services and the evolution of industry. Until the 1870s the catalogs advertise only household linens, fancy goods, lingerie, clothes, lace, furs, mourning clothes, headgear, accessories, carpets, and bed furnishings. Then they expanded to include furniture, china, knickknacks, and toys—the large choice we now expect from department stores.

Like other large companies, the department store exemplified the concentration of capital and labor, and it then based this concentration on internal specialization: each department within the store had a head and an army of clerks,⁷ and each functioned like an autonomous store. The profitability of this immense merchandise depot also depended on attracting legions of buyers. Essential to that development were increasing urban concentration, Haussmann's transformation of Paris, and the improvement of public transportation in the capital. In 1855, 347 omnibuses carried 36 million passengers; in 1865, 664 vehicles conveyed 107 million passengers.⁸ These figures indicate clearly that neighborhoods opened up and that mobility progressed in a city that doubled its population by annexing many suburbs in 1860.

SETTING THE TRAP

It was the responsibility of the department stores to lure these hitherto fluid masses from the traditional shopping channels and attract them by offering not only the advantage and ease of modern commerce but also an unprecedented spectacle of permanent temptation. Marked prices and

entrée libre, or "no obligation to buy," played a decisive role in this shift: they did away with wearisome bargaining and the moral obligation to buy.

The shops described by Balzac—where once a shopper crossed the fatal threshold and entered the confining, obscure space, there was no turning back—had not yet disappeared. Instantly assaulted, the customer was forced into tiresome haggling. The inevitable and age-old struggle developed between those unequal adversaries, a distrustful but ignorant buyer and a seller comfortably established on his own turf. The latter could decipher the code on labels that bore a double price: one the asking price and the other the minimum amount acceptable. To foil deceptive strategies, evaluate quality and quantity, make a final choice, and fight for a reasonable price, the customer needed to muster all his attention and aggressiveness.

Marked prices had already been tried in the "fancy goods stores," but these establishments had not linked them to *entrée libre* so that they did not reap all the benefit they could have. As Arnould Frémy wrote in 1841, "The poor girl can contemplate these luxurious treasures only through the magic prism of the shop windows! Unlike the great lady, she cannot have everything laid out and heaped on the counter merely because a green-liveried footman attends her and gray-dappled horses prance and foam before the door. Only the rich have the right to buy nothing."⁹

The department store broke with these restrictive practices. Instead of engaging in economic discrimination, or considering the buyer as an enemy to be fleeced whose indecision had to be forcefully overcome, the department store sought to seduce, to satisfy and secure the confidence and loyalty of the many by proving its honesty¹⁰ and softening the too-obvious mercantile relationship. Store clerks¹¹ were required to be invariably pleasant, present unfurrowed brows, speak gently, and be restrained but solicitous, whoever the buyer, whatever the purchase. Making modest customers feel reassured and the rich ones feel safe, this novel courtesy gave people freedom to finger, heft, turn over, try on the merchandise profusely displayed, to wander among the counters, to lose themselves along the galleries, and to be treated everywhere with equal deference by an anonymous, eager staff. Everything was done to arouse desire and de-dramatize buying. Piles of choice goods overflowing everywhere denied scarcity and affirmed abundance. "It was a giant fairground spread of hawker's wares, as if the shop were bursting and throwing its surplus into the street," wrote Zola in *Au Bonheur des Dames*.¹²

Drawing increasingly dense crowds and amassing a growing volume of transactions,¹³ these miraculous stores spawned impressive edifices whose display and ostentation made them look like cathedrals dedicated to the glory of the age. The "Hausmannization" of Paris both inspired and facilitated their expansion.¹⁴ Wide storefronts with plate-glass windows at-

tracted boulevard strollers, subjugated by carefully studied appeal. Like fashion plates and catalogs, store windows become the best place to school and train the public about its appearance. Inside, the clever arrangement of departments and the stagy display of goods aroused further excitements.

Octave Mouret, in Zola's *Au Bonheur des Dames*, was a "revolutionary window dresser." He created the school of "brutal and colossal" window dressing, the perfect incarnation of the new business tactics: "He wanted cascades of goods, looking as though they had fallen by chance from broken racks, and he wanted his displays to blaze with fiery colors that intensified one another. When the customers left the store, he said, their eyes should hurt."¹⁵ In fact, with these conflagrations of fabric, orgies of gaslight,¹⁶ flashing chandeliers, splendor of domes, gilded candelabras, and mirrors to reflect everything a hundred times, the department store and its counters sparkled like the sun. The fascinating modernity of the spiraling iron staircases and upholstered elevators dazzled the eye and the mind. But comfort was not forgotten: a reading and writing room stocked with newspapers and magazines, pens, ink, and stationery was available gratis to visitors, while a buffet served grenadine to children.



Peasant and mannequins

The public was not admitted behind the scenery. Backstage were found administration, accounting, correspondence, delivery, advertising, maintenance, lighting, heating, the staff restaurant, and the workshops where the *poignards*, or alterations, were done.

The stores' bargain prices, and the advertising that announced them everywhere, appealed to the buyers' "economic reasonableness." But "reason" was overwhelmed by many powerful devices calculated to make spending blameless and guiltless. In 1852, Boucicaut, the pioneering department-store owner, instituted the practice of accepting returns, which quickly became general, pledging to take back at its original price any article that did not satisfy the customer. Despite many abuses—women bought a headpiece or a mantle for an evening and returned it the next day, swearing they never had worn it—the acceptance of returns long remained a commercially profitable psychological gambit, a way of postponing the buyer's decision by making it revocable. "Dresses have been exchanged for other dresses; money has been returned to persons suddenly bereaved. Poorly fitting garments have been altered, and others taken back. Our promises are true," proclaimed a Printemps advertisement.¹⁷

To hasten the process, commissions were instituted to give employees a financial stake in sales volume, and a calendar of events was established in the form of monthly promotions. Each department was featured in turn: white goods in January, laces and gloves in February, coats and day wear in March, summer clothes in May, floor coverings in September, and winter wear in December. These drew crowds almost as large as for the sales, another invention that liquidated inventory at season's end. The department store could not tolerate deserted corners or dead spots. If necessary, crowds and bustle were simulated—just as abundance was—by planned overcrowding.

"Everywhere he insisted upon noise, crowds, life," writes Zola of his Octave Mouret:

First of all there should be a crush at the entrance, it should seem to people in the street as if a riot were taking place in the shop; and he caused this crush by putting remnants in the entrance, shelves and baskets overflowing with articles at very low prices, so that working-class people accumulated, barring the threshold, and gave the impression that the shop was bursting with people, when often it was only half-full. . . . If he could have found a way of making the street run right through his shop, he would have done so.¹⁸

In this brave, new world where customers, their distrust allayed, were drawn only by the display, choice, and bargain prices of products, shopping became a random, dreamlike, or impulsive activity. Its objectives became vaguer and amenable to influence, and its course was strewn with unexpected suggestions and sudden decisions. For people who were short

of money because they did not intend to spend that much, another service—home delivery—further reduced hesitation: one paid at home, later. In the *Coquet*, Henriette d'Orville ironically notes that the delivery services that traversed Paris in every direction were uniquely suitable for noisy advertisement: "Vans like the chariot of the sun, postilions in braided uniforms, high-spirited horses such as only the Perche can produce, ringing bells, deliverymen busily handling the three or four packages contained within the immense vehicle, high speeds that didn't endanger pedestrians thanks to the skill and responsibility of the drivers, and above it all, the miraculous advertisement in golden letters: '*Grand Magasin de l'Obélisque*—the largest store in the world' (along with many others)."¹⁹

TRAPPED WOMEN, THIEVING WOMEN

Women, whose appearance and clothes henceforth signified their husbands' status, women, who increasingly managed the family budget, women, who were both delegates and managers, became the prime target of the new business practices. For them the department stores multiplied the snares and seductions that both enslaved and exalted them simultaneously. "A woman must be the queen of the store; she must feel that she is in a temple raised for her glory, her enjoyment, and her triumph," Zola had noted in the outlines for his novel. "The omnipotence of woman, the scent of woman dominates the whole store. That is Octave's commercial credo, more or less conscious and open."²⁰ His success ordained him as the high priest of a

new religion that converted a rational browser into an unbridled coquette. . . . Churches, which were little by little being deserted by those of wavering faith, were being replaced by his bazaar. Woman came to spend her hours of idleness in his shop, the thrilling, disturbing hours which in the past she had spent in the depths of a chapel. . . . If he closed the doors, there would have been a rising in the street, a desperate outcry from the devout, whose confessional and altar he would have abolished.²¹

One year before Zola, Pierre Giffard had said much the same thing: "Eve's daughter enters this hell of temptation like a mouse into a trap. . . . In this abyss, whirlwinds are strewn with mirages each one more dangerous than the other. As if from Charybdis to Scylla, she glides from counter to counter, dazzled and overpowered."²² The more daring of these stores presented a topography diabolically calculated to draw captivated customers into a labyrinth, keep them wandering, prolong their browsing routes, and enlarge the shopping space by a network of counters so arranged as to destroy any sense of symmetry or any geometrical frame of reference.²³

The product of a meticulous and controlled design, the apparent jumbled disorder of merchandise proffered unexpected suggestions and aroused unsuspected temptations. At a time of relative increase in buying power the department store induced the psychological "takeoff" of modern consumerism, this increasingly socially dictated definition of needs. With this development came acute frustrations and culpable transgressions. Now unleashed, the shopping spree revealed its sexual component: "The customers, despoiled and violated, were going away disheveled, their sensual desires satisfied and with the secret shame of having yielded to temptation in some shady hotel."²⁴

This palace "offered" a provocative abundance, and theft made it possible to experience the new euphoria of acquisition without the agony of payment. Shoplifting introduced the gratuitous into a system where everything had a market value, without short-circuiting the commercial mechanisms. Its statistically computed cost was figured into the pricing structure. Nevertheless, because bargain prices were a decisive selling point, floorwalkers were assigned to keep an eye on the counters. It then became apparent that these arenas, in which people, goods, and money circulated frenetically, engendered or brought out aberrant behaviors that attracted the attention of psychiatrists and forensic physicians. Along with commonplace thefts, there were others that were singularly specific to the department stores, committed without apparent motive by affluent



Ready-to-wear salon

women. It is difficult to fathom the motivation of a wealthy middle-class woman who snatched in one fell swoop three hundred ties from a display stand and whose house disclosed to a police search "two hundred and forty-eight pairs of pink gloves, stolen from all over Paris."²⁵ Another one was caught stealing a sponge worth 60 centimes after having spent 200 francs. This kind of behavior, which defied explanations based on utility or economic rationality,²⁶ became the subject of a psychiatric literature that accounted for such crimes by invoking "hysterical" and "menstrual" causality.²⁷ These studies led to more general investigations of the pathogenesis of department store theft—*apéritifs du crime*—and of the neuroses that they induced or revealed.²⁸

This peculiar climate—compulsive, feverish, sensual—caused by a tide of women examining, fingering, and caressing the fabrics with desire and delight, also attracted an odd male population, which the floorwalkers spotted out of the corners of their eyes and cataloged:

Here is one, slovenly dressed, with a polka-dot tie. He is alone. . . . What is he, looking for in this display, which reeks of woman? . . .

He is happy amidst the undulating movements of these women, who give off emanations and odors that excite him sensually. He is a demented, emotionally unbalanced individual, who gets intoxicated by the natural and artificial scents of women. He lets himself be carried along by the crowd that squeezes him, surrounds him, and takes him three steps forward and five steps back. He lives and breathes in this feminine element as easily as a fish in water. . . .

Such unfortunates always end up among those who indulge in loathsome maneuvers against the fair sex. Driven by their passion, they sometimes sink so low as to forget themselves before passers-by. . . .

First come the "gropers," casual and haphazard, not yet fully corrupted; they slip into crowds and manage to run their hands over the breasts and curves of pretty girls. . . .

Somewhat worse are the "frotteurs", easily recognized by their glances from top to bottom, directed primarily toward women's necklines and bosoms. Once they have chosen the target of their obscene intentions, they brush against her and pester her for hours, inflaming and sustaining their desire by rumpling her dress.

A subgroup of "frotteurs" is even more audacious and shameless. They take advantage of the crowds to indulge themselves in surreptitious touching. They then go away satisfied, having sullied a woman's clothing.

A young girl complained to her mother of having been literally assaulted by an individual whose wild eyes rolled in their sockets. "Let's get out of here," she said. "I can hardly breathe, and that man frightens me. He's crazy; you see, he just spat on me."

Unfortunately, this is not an isolated case. Far worse yet is a curious category of emotional deviants who go from crowd to crowd, hesitating and lingering before stopping. Once they've made a choice, they throw themselves upon the targeted woman, madly kiss the curls on her nape, then vanish as if by magic, clucking their tongues and licking their lips to savor the perfume left by the "ringlets" of their preferred color. . . .

Another class of specialists, the most singular of them all, can be called the "destroyers." These maniacs use scissors to cut women's dresses and coats, carefully storing the pieces they take with them in drawers. Each trophy is identified by a label which bears the date, the name of the store, the woman's description, and the degree of satisfaction experienced. . . .

After the "dress destroyers" come the "hair cutters." I interviewed one of these souvenir-collectors. He would go up to ten- to twelve-year-old girls who wore braids or shoulder-length hair. Armed with scissors, he would mutilate their silken hair, shortening it by half.

To conclude this pitiful catalog, we have the handkerchief-collectors. These at least have a purpose in mind, a hardly admissible purpose, . . . one difficult to discuss, a purpose that is hidden, it is true, until they're arrested. Then we find this item, the most indispensable one in your wardrobe, wrapped around a part of their body.²⁹

THE TRIUMPH OF DISTRIBUTION

The department store was denounced from all quarters. It was a plague³⁰ that instigated baseness, corrupted people, prostituted women, broke up marriages, devoured small businesses,³¹ and made products ugly. Yet it expanded unflinchingly, sure of its strength and its future. Some stores died because they tried to grow too quickly.³² Others, more prudently intrepid, diversified the choice, quality, and price of their merchandise to attract a more diverse clientele. The middle class shopped at the department stores in great numbers, but the stores sought to attract customers from the opposite poles of the bourgeoisie by appealing to both the affluent and the penurious. Thus they enlarged their departments of luxury goods as well as those of ordinary articles, multiplied both the promotions of new fashions and the sales to liquidate them. Ideally, "The working girl would find there her good woolen Sunday dress, the middle-class woman, her simple but rich silks, and the great lady, the most original and sophisticated fabrics and designs that caprice might dictate."³³

The department stores soon realized, however, that despite their broad range of goods, they could not really draw all customers into the same space. Each store targeted both its merchandise and its merchandising according to customers' income, social status, and age, categories that did

not always overlap. Each store chose a style and adopted an attitude. A typology of department stores emerged. The Louvre, whose "ready-to-wear was generally expensive and intended for the affluent,"³⁴ was opulent, conservative, and conformist. Comparing it to the Bon Marché, Zola found the Louvre "more stylish and expensive," whereas "the Bon Marché smacked a bit of the provinces."³⁵ Le Printemps always saw itself as modern and daring, appealing to a young clientele from the petty and middle bourgeoisie. La Samaritaine had very low prices and attracted working-class customers, as did the Ville-de-Saint-Denis, which supplied "charity boards, parish vestiaries, police headquarters, the Imperial Insane Asylum at Charenton, and the General Linen Office of the Department of the Seine."³⁶

Each store bought fairly specific products, hierarchically arranged according to their origin: fabrics and ready-to-wear articles from Paris or Lyon cost more but enjoyed a better reputation than those from Lille, Roubaix, or Rheims. Alongside these immense stores, smaller establishments, devoted exclusively to ready-to-wear clothing, also prospered. Located throughout Paris, they were ranked according to the luxury of their products and the elegance of their clientele. Although their psychological impact was less modest, the Bon Pasteur, the Galeries de Paris, the Palais de Cristal, the Quatre Nations, the house of Opigez-Gagelin (where Worth worked), and firms like Bouillet, Leleux, Dubus, and many others did a large volume of business that tripled in twenty years,³⁷ further stimulating the ready-to-wear industry that began to mechanize around 1860.

The sewing machine, perfected in 1829 by Barthélemy Thimonnier, created such a panic among the tailors that they rioted and destroyed the eighty machines at the Germain Petit uniform factory and forced Parissot, of La Belle Jardinière, to put his thirty machines away until 1850. Not until the middle of the Second Empire did Isaac M. Singer, drawing his inspiration largely from the inventions of Elias Howe and Walter Hunt, break into a still-hesitant French market with a machine that appreciably increased the productivity of workers.³⁸ These laborers still worked at home or in small production units using "sewing equipment" soon to be within the reach of bourgeois households. They were not gathered into factories until the 1880s,³⁹ with the only notable industrial concentration being the military workshops. The ultramodern Godillot firm, for example, founded in 1859, employed several thousand workers and as many machines. Later it gave its name, *godillots*, to army boots, of which it supplied over 1,100,000 each year.⁴⁰

The conquests of the ready-to-wear industry were achieved at the expense of the small tailor who mainly worked to order. His working-class and petty-bourgeois customers deserted him day by day, and soon he virtually disappeared. Threatened by the same fate, the tailor-employers

ignored the real danger of this new production, which they attacked with indignation or contempt. Their professional journals ritualistically forecast the imminent demise of ready-to-wear and the ineluctable return of custom-made clothing, deluding themselves about a future that they could not face.

Our fathers were happier than we. They weren't faced with this constant competition from more or less grand factories, from clothing cut in "roughly" three sizes, produced "dirt-cheap" and sold at more than they're worth for the profit of a few manufacturers. Whatever the case may be, and despite everything, the real tailors will triumph because they alone can combine the two words that motivate both the artist and the man of the world: "elegance" and "comfort." . . . Let the fripperers, high- or low-class, assume responsibility for their twenty-five franc paletots. This obsession with cheapness no matter what will pass quickly enough, especially after people try it out. Let us occupy ourselves, seriously and conscientiously, with the normal proportions to be observed in all parts of a suit.⁴¹

But instead the fever for bargain prices caught on among other segments of the bourgeoisie, this time gradually dispossessing the middling tailors. The Coutard firm, for example, a pioneer in ready-to-wear, offered all the guarantees of superior, *comme il faut* clothing, if one can believe Charles Eck's 1866 description:

The building has a simple, severe, and tasteful look, and its external appearance is not without interest: nothing flashy, garish, gilded. It is immediately apparent that this is a serious establishment: a single shop window with a few garments displayed, and a modest entrance opening onto immense rooms airy and well lit. In them, carefully arranged garments are ready to wear and ready to be shipped to customers. One warehouse holds ready-made dressing gowns; then come the departments of paletots, trousers, and vests, and a charming room for trying them on, with large mirrors that enable the buyer to spot the slightest defect. There is a measurement salon, also simply decorated, and through a large opening at the center, one can view an immense workshop in which forty cutters labor under expert supervision. . . .

Senators, deputies, lawyers, physicians, ministerial officers, indeed all the better people get their clothes at the MAISON COUTARD, and, may we add, without intending a criticism of others, one will not find there eccentricities that not only deviate from good taste but are frankly bad form.⁴²

Given the demographic growth and prestige of Paris, as well as a rise in the standard of living, the production of made-to-measure clothing did not suffer an absolute decline but was greatly outdistanced by the dynamic, many-sided ready-to-wear industry. In his *Report to the Internal Jury of the*

Exposition of 1867, the tailor Dusautoy exhorted his colleagues to acknowledge their methods as obsolete and their pride as suicidal:

Two rival elements confront each other. . . . On one side, the tailors, steeped in their ancient prejudices, proud of their origins, and draped in the old reputation of their major craft guild, refuse any truck with improvements whose potential they fail to recognize.

On the other, the makers of ready-to-wear, children of our times and only recently arrived on the scene, work and learn, adopt the best practices of tailors, and innovate, all the while expanding, intelligently and swiftly, their business activities. Newcomers, they mean to make whatever sacrifices are necessary to meet headlong the ancient tailoring establishment, so venerable that its members consider their craft a kind of aristocracy.

The tailors of Paris had better rouse themselves from their torpor, learn from the ready-to-wear manufacturers, compete with their intelligent rivals, and remember that they are protected by no monopoly, no privilege; or else it's all over for their industry. For, sooner or later, it is certain that the ready-to-wear manufacturers will become the principal suppliers of clothing for Paris.⁴³

Acknowledging the victory of ready-to-wear clothing as inevitable, Dusautoy pointed out (without real conviction) that because some manufacturers of ready-made also offered custom clothing, tailors should imitate them and sell both kinds of clothes:

Will they listen to us? I doubt it. Today's tailors are as hidebound as their predecessors who warred with the fripperers. Frippery has become big business, ready-to-wear manufacturing, big industry, while tailoring has practically stood still, little different from what it was twenty years ago. A tailor would feel disgraced at the idea of selling ready-made.

There, however, lies the salvation of their guild.⁴⁴

For couturières the problem long remained different. For one thing, custom sewing was the general rule for women's dresses, which involved many parts that must fit the body closely. Moreover, their sewing techniques did not lend themselves to assembly-line procedures. For another, the dressmaking business was spurred on by the immense selection of reasonably priced fabrics that the department stores offered. Furthermore, the clothes they made were not in competition with the stores' ready-to-wear offerings,⁴⁵ which multiplied, but primarily for articles that did not require an exact fit.

The fripperers' trade, however, was not spared by the hegemonic expansion of the ready-to-wear industry, which quickly became a dangerous competitor. Alexis Monteil dubbed the age of the French Revolution the

"decade of the fripperers," when pillage and confiscation enabled some members of the trade to amass considerable fortunes, when proscribed aristocratic vestiges like trimmed suits and braid sold for next to nothing and were profitably transformed. The latter half of the Second Empire marked, on the contrary, the historic decline of this millennial trade. "On the one hand," pointed out the Paris Chamber of Commerce, "since 1860 the rag-cutting industry has absorbed some of the trade in old cloth, and on the other, the fripperers have met a formidable rival in a ready-to-wear industry whose bargain-priced products are now preferred to mended clothes."⁴⁶ The trend intensified, as Kerckhoff noted in 1865, as textiles became less durable: "Today, general affluence and ready-to-wear clothing have largely deprived the fripperers of clients and wares. People prefer, and rightly so, to buy new garments that barely cost more than used clothes."⁴⁷

Old-clothes merchants and wardrobe dealers grew rarer and eventually vanished from the urban landscape.⁴⁸ The Temple market still functioned, but a triumphant public health movement imposed a sanitary grid of new streets and exorcised the remnants of this disturbing world of dubious morality, shady dealings, and foul rags, carriers of moral and microbial infections. As early as the eighteenth century, the "contagious miasmas" produced and transmitted by used clothing had aroused concern and elicited a call for "charitable police regulations . . . to submit these old clothes to some kind of disinfection by fire, water, or aromatics."⁴⁹

The nascent microbiology of the nineteenth century, however, created a real sense of urgency. Tracking down pathogenic germs in every nook and cranny of the body social, the 1860s' public health specialists were alarmed by the absence of controls over this vast exchange of contaminated rags. Dr. Michel Lévy observed that "no public health regulation subjects this merchandise to preliminary cleansing, even though it is a thousand times more suspect than the bales of raw cotton brought in by ship. . . . The frippery trade operates in filthy dens where needy workers bargain for articles of clothing that will infect their perspiration with the morbid contagion picked up from sick people."⁵⁰

In 1863, the sheds of the Temple and the Rotonde were destroyed and replaced by a handsome iron building inspired by the central Halles. Six gleaming pavilions, each with four hundred stalls, were brilliantly lit by an ovoid glass cupola, but the effects sold there were not yet "beaten, aerated, fumigated,"⁵¹ as the new prophylaxis would have liked. Nevertheless, the modernizing market became very middle-class. "Circulation is easy and the cleanliness remarkable," testified a Paris guide of 1870. It also noted, however, that "the new ready-to-wear stores where one finds reasonably priced clothes—poorly cut, it is true, but new—competes effectively with

the frippery trade."⁵² In fact, the taming and decline of frippery went hand in hand. "The police have almost completely eliminated abuses beneath the new sheds, but alas the trade has been radically altered; frippery is in decline. Only new articles are now sold there, along with shopworn items."⁵³ Some remnants of the former trade survived on the second story, where the *carreau* and its tumultuous dealings had moved. But because of the scarcity of supplies and customers, the volume of business steadily decreased, its problems further aggravated by increases in stall rental fees.⁵⁴ Frippery, as such, then became limited to exports,⁵⁵ especially to colonial Africa: "Even the most shopworn garments take on new life when they cross the ocean. In other climes they become fancy goods: the soldiers' red trousers and epaulettes are at a premium; the black kinglets grab the uniforms of generals and prefects, and even the gowns of academics and the livery of lackeys."⁵⁶

THE TREND TOWARD UNIFORMITY

Getting the better of both fripperers and ordinary tailors, the ready-to-wear industry—especially for men—appealed to social strata whose way of life ranged from upper working-class to middle bourgeois. The purchasing power of those classes rose during most of the Second Empire,⁵⁷ so that the relatively low cost of ready-made provoked a veritable euphoria of clothes buying, all the more so since clothing was largely immune to a general rise in prices.⁵⁸ This trend toward "the well-being of the greatest number," to which commerce and industry contributed, was proudly displayed to provincials and foreigners visiting the 1855 and 1867 Universal Expositions.⁵⁹ Household linens, silks, furs, shawls, jackets, shirts, and paletots, all ready-made, were presented by the best firms at prices⁶⁰ that astounded a public not yet reached by either catalogs or branch stores.

Thanks to ready-to-wear clothing and inexpensive fabrics, the intermediate classes—the small, relatively independent businessmen, the low-level bureaucrats who fetched and carried for their superiors, the auxiliaries of the liberal professions, and the white-collar employees of industry and business, as well as the comfortable artisans and laborers—could now assume varying degrees of sophistication and entire wardrobes formerly reserved for their betters and protected by wealth.

Thus the proliferation of ready-to-wear foreshadowed the era of imitations, when authentic models, rare because they were old, original, and costly, would be copied and mass-produced as industrially manufactured, finished goods to be distributed by department stores. Just as such newly discovered chemical processes and products as pinchbeck, electroplating,

paste jewelry, and imitation leather attempted to approximate the sign-values of gold, silver, diamonds, and genuine leather at a fraction of their cost, so too did the ready-to-wear industry enable those who could not afford custom-made clothing to acquire a copy, whose value was secondary and derivative but which gained them entry, by imitation and anticipation, into the purview of bourgeois appearances and their concomitant comportment, style, and ideology. As the social strata grasping at status symbols multiplied and elegant rarities further increased in price, industrially produced imitation chic became more widely available. Antiques well illustrate this development: when heavy demand pushed up their prices, ersatz replicas⁶¹ replaced the originals, in the same way that an exotic object is worn out and then replaced by a mass-produced copy. In both cases, the imitation is not an exact copy of the original, which merely serves as a point of departure, with many other elements added. The fake chinoiserie produced in the Saint-Sulpice quarter and the Henri II buffets overladen with moldings and collerettes are typical examples of this syncretizing imitation, these bastardized fakes endlessly reproduced and distributed by the department stores. Although the ready-to-wear industry contributed to this industrialized false luxury, it remained closer to its original made-to-measure clothing. Having only the appearance of the reality it imitated, it compensated for this fundamental defect not by adding details but rather by improving its copying techniques. It thus became crucial in the spreading of bourgeois norms, for those ready-to-wear copies became pedagogical instruments of deportment and morality.

A century earlier, panniers had been reserved for noble ladies and wealthy bourgeois, but crinolines were now worn both by working women who walked about hatless and by behatted ladies who rode in carriages. Crinolines did vary, however, depending on who wore them. An elegant, custom-made afternoon dress by a famous couturière could cost between 500 and 1,000 francs; its fullness, fabric, color, and the way it was worn all signaled upper class. Another one, purchased ready-made for 50 or 100 francs, of more modest dimensions,⁶² with dull or garish tints, and less precisely fitted, betrayed its modest origin.

It is difficult to establish the social limits of crinoline wearing because the definition of *crinoline* remained fluid. In cities, dresses were generally, but diversely, bouffant, thanks to ready-to-wear and cheap fabrics. We need only leaf through nineteenth-century photographs taken along the grand boulevards during parades, where, amid the crowds acclaiming the soldiers, rows of crinolines lined the streets. The metallic "cages" that replaced layered petticoats were so cumbersome that they marked a distinct frontier separating the idle from the working-class populations. In France, the Thompson and the Peugeot⁶³ factories produced annually 2,400 metric tons⁶⁴ of these steel engines between 1858 and 1864 when they reached the

height of their vogue. Averaging 500 grams apiece, this yielded some 4,800,000 units a year.

Excluded from real social mobility, the proletariat and the peasantry did not yet participate in this process of equalization, that is to say, in the apparent homogenization of vestimentary signs caused by the advent of standardized ready-to-wear. Here and there, traditional costumes adopted elements of the new styles, but no real cultural integration took place. Geographically varied, they were not affected by bourgeois models but existed outside the commercial and competitive rhythms of fashion. Their forms did change, but only over long periods. As Jules Michelet noted in 1846, an enormous improvement had been made when the lower classes adopted underwear and generally improved their textile comfort: "That was a revolution in France, little noted but a great revolution nonetheless. It was a revolution in cleanliness and embellishment of the homes of the poor; underwear, bedding, table linen, and window curtains were now used by whole classes who had not used them since the beginning of the world."

And indeed, a few years later, printed calicoes at last gave working women the right to wear colors: "Today her husband, a poor worker, covers her with a robe of flowers for the price of a day's labor. All these women of the people who now display an iris of a thousand colors on our promenades were formerly in mourning."⁶⁵



Crinoline factory: installing the hoops (Bach, 1865)

Nevertheless, it was only during the Second Empire that some assimilation of bourgeois dress occurred in the working class, and this mainly among laborers in big cities, especially Paris. As the nineteenth-century *Larousse* encyclopedia testifies,

In 1848 workers still wore smocks, not only in the shops during working hours and on weekdays, when it was a necessity, but on Sundays and holidays; when they walked about, some craftsmen wore costumes of cotton or velvet in a particular color that made it easy to spot their members. But these customs have disappeared in less than ten years and today are no more than an already-distant memory.⁶⁶

This transition to wearing ready-made clothing and dressing up like a bourgeois on Sundays served more than a commercial purpose. Because the dominant social groups were forced to draw new class distinctions,⁶⁷ the adoption of bourgeois clothes was politically profitable. The thrifty worker was dissuaded from buying his clothes from the fripperer and directed toward department store displays to buy ready-made, fixed-price garments. He was thus drawn into a universe of consumption that imposed patterns of thought, acted as mental orthopedics, and moralized aesthetic perceptions as he internalized bourgeois norms of dress such as "propriety" or "respectability." The result benefited social control. Some workers hoped to be assimilated into the bourgeoisie by adopting its appearance, and there was even a tradition of workers' elegance among journeymen.⁶⁸ Others, on the contrary, displayed a provocative slovenliness, affected casualness, and flagrant dirtiness, which effectively challenged the "good behavior" preached by hygienists and philanthropists and thus threatened the social order.

Because the former was reassuring and the latter disturbing, a veritable civilizing mission was conferred on the ready-to-wear industry. Because of it, one observer noted that

every worker can be appropriately dressed; during his leisure hours, the frock coat replaces the smock, and on solemn occasions he wears a black suit without financial sacrifice. The apparent vice of luxury is really a good. The worker will behave in accordance with what he wears; he goes to the cafe, reads, shuns the cabaret, and abandons the common dormitory for a room of his own as soon as he can. He dreams of furniture once he owns a wardrobe, and of a family once the furniture is placed in his garret. For him, cleanliness and comfort are the beginnings of morality; for society they are the guarantees of order.⁶⁹

This view was supported by many other accounts:

The ready-to-wear industry must have contributed, it seems to me, to improving the morals of the masses. The worker who used to wear rough

clothing or mended rags now puts on a suit: this kind of dress, which is now familiar to him, raises him to a higher station and gives him self-respect. Drunkenness has lost ground as the taste for clothing has gained. Orderly habits have followed the disappearance of intemperance, and family relations have consequently improved.⁷⁰

Always conscious of material conditions and their symbolic representation, Michelet observed that these

are not simple material improvements but progress for the people in those external appearances that men use to judge one another. . . . In this way the people rise to new ideas that they did not reach before; fashion and taste are an initiation into art for them. In addition, and more important, better dress changes a man; he wants to be worthy of it, and he tries to align his moral behavior with it.⁷¹

On the one hand, this acculturation functioned as social integration: the worker became integrated and acquired moral standing when he honored the socially accepted values of hygiene, sobriety, self-respect, order, family values, and thrift. On the other, the same acculturation made it necessary to create social distance within a hierarchy of sign-values and through a discrimination that relegated ready-to-wear clothing to the domain of the common or the vulgar.

Like the savage or the laborer, the poor or "ill-bred" child numbered among the new nineteenth-century barbarians. Like them, he scandalized people by dressing in a way that flouted the rules of "propriety" and "decency." Like them, he needed to have his moral standards raised, by being made to wear the external signs of a morality later internalized by the symbolic and social profit extracted from displaying these signs. The moralizing Louise Boyeldieu d'Auvigny comments self-righteously on the subject: "To make these unfortunate children, who run barefoot through the gutters where they learn vicious habits and laziness, understand that they have an immortal soul created to love the good and practice it, and to make them raise their heads and comprehend their human dignity as well as the necessity and joy of labor, first give them clogs and a jacket."⁷²

In the countryside, urban ascendancy and the expansion of bourgeois clothing, which elsewhere resulted in the material and symbolic dispossession of the groups it contaminated, encountered passivity and strong resistance because people clung to old customs. One need only note the persistence of certain elements such as the fullness of the peasant smock, its "long-wearing" blue cloth, and the display of regional costumes on special occasions. The latter, however, did not go back much farther than the mid-eighteenth century. Before then, differences came from social roles rather than geography: on cathedral portals, the reaper could be distinguished from the wine grower by a costume found throughout Europe.

Then, inspired by local aristocratic models, the rich peasants' festive dress that would become characteristic of each region, indeed each village and valley, took forms that quickly became distinct since they evolved in relatively autonomous ways. However, when city fashions crystallized into types, they did sometimes influence the evolution of peasant costume: thus, during the reign of the crinoline, the "typical" rustic dresses grew wider. In fact, as with dialects and sociolects within a linguistic community, continuous exchanges and influences were established among various kinds of dress.

Oddly enough, French provincial costumes assumed their true identity after the French Revolution officially suppressed the provinces, and they became most splendid during the Second Empire, when they were threatened with commercial domination. Romanticism, which valued the particular and the picturesque, discovered and admired Alsatian headresses and Provençal embroideries; but the Romantics believed this finery to be the product of an ancestral popular culture, fixed from its beginnings. They did not understand that, in fact, it characterized a period of transition between the old and new vestimentary regime of the peasant world.⁷³



Opening the mail at the Bon Marché

Was it a reaction against the centralizing state, a desire to assume the lavishness of vanished lords, or a product of mimetic rivalries between rival towns? What caused this splendid period of vernacular costume, between 1840 and 1860 especially, is still difficult to explain.

What is certain is that the unifying trend toward bourgeois dress, even in the countryside, continued inexorably, albeit more slowly, and along with it, the commercialization of economic life and the progressive disappearance of an earlier domestic or artisanal production system that included the spinstress, the shoemaker, and the itinerant tailor.⁷⁴ The department store, and the consumption it engendered, developed and prospered by seeking its clientele from beyond the socioeconomic limits of the middle classes and the topographical limits of the quarter or even the city. In Paris, Baron Haussmann's city planning, which encouraged mass transportation and thus drew shoppers out of their neighborhoods, enabled the new stores to attract and channel buyers. In the provinces and abroad, the extension of railroads⁷⁵ made it possible to order through catalogs, a practice that became widespread by 1860, and then to establish branches. In 1867, for example, La Belle Jardinière had branches in Lyon, Marseille, Nantes, and Angers, while the railroad tracks radiating from Paris focused on the capital 17,733 kilometers of track laid down by 1870. Accumulation of wealth and strengthening of power were impossible without an increase in speed. "Paris," noted Gustave Tarde at the end of the century, "lords it over the provinces, royally and orientally, more than the court ever did over the city. Every day, by telegraph or train, Paris dispatches its ready-made ideas, desires, conversations, and revolutions along with its ready-made clothing and furnishings."⁷⁶

In the same way, the corrosive force of business practices alien to both usury and rural tradition penetrated the countryside, already crisscrossed and "worked" by the traveling salesman⁷⁷ who moved his stock and collected orders, using subprefectures and market towns as stopovers. The new attitude progressively eclipsed stout fabrics and changeless forms. The "heavy," "solid," and "durable" object was replaced by "light," "fragile," and "ephemeral"⁷⁸ merchandise; and the garment as symbol, organically tied to peasant life and activities, was replaced by the garment as sign, with its borrowed references.

Sunday, the day for seeing and being seen, had been the occasion to display regional costumes. Gradually it became the pretext for rich country folk to show off their black suits or crinolines, to mimic another constituency, and to exhibit the signs of another world, of the city and modernity.⁷⁹ Ly'onnais hardly exaggerated when he wrote in 1862: "The crinoline has invaded the remotest cottages, and scarcely a cowgirl can be found who doesn't get into her cage at least once a week."⁸⁰ Eugène Chapus was also astonished: "Who could have believed that the pannier, so inconvenient

even for women of leisure and wealth; would become the indispensable accoutrement of the most humble stable girls or the overblown females who preside over kitchen stoves?"⁸¹

As white became the obligatory nuptial color, even wedding ceremonies ceased being an occasion for diverse vestimentary manifestations. This change was brought about by the spread of fashion journals and department store catalogs as well as by the 1854 proclamation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception.⁸² In short, "La Belle Jardinière invaded everything,"⁸³ even though up until the First World War and beyond, certain regions resisted the domination of bourgeois clothing, the symbol of the cities' ascendancy over the countryside. It is difficult, however, given the diversity of regions and the disparate nature of the documents, to establish a specific geographic chronology of this process.⁸⁴ During the same period, it took place⁸⁵ all over Europe, but differently according to industrial development, trading patterns, economic availability, and cultural influences. In 1855, on the occasion of Queen Victoria's visit to Paris, an event that attracted a considerable number of foreigners, the phenomenon was noted with surprise:

One expected to see the most contrasting, disparate costumes, and a general sartorial confusion. It was pleasant to think of Turks in their dolmans with golden suns embroidered on the backs, Scots garbed in their indispensable garment, Tyrolians wearing hats trimmed with eagle feathers, and Spaniards solemnly dressed in cape and sombrero. But Turkey is becoming civilized, Scotland has abandoned the kilt for the common trouser, Tyrol has adopted the silk top hat, and Spain imitates our fashions with the most scrupulous exactness. Thus, everyone you see seems to have lived always on the rue de Rivoli or the Boulevard des Italiens.⁸⁶

Export sales flourished for ready-to-wear, which already in the Second Empire gained some curious markets. Lemann wrote in 1857:

All along the west coast of Africa the savages seek out our clothes. Who would have believed it? A firm in Marseilles, the Régis company, exchanges ready-to-wear clothes for the natural products of these countries. . . . The *Coniquet* or *Koniquay* is a small African country near the Congo whose black denizens always go about naked: the loincloth is the only advance that clothing has made among them since the Creation. Their king, doubtless seeking to increase his prestige in the eyes of his subjects by donning European garb, ordered from me a brocaded frock coat completely lined in red silk. His Negro Majesty, however, did not think it useful to order any pants. I have no doubt that the Negro chiefs will imitate their prince, and that soon, the masses having acquired a taste for luxury, I will be able to cover the traditional nudity of the Congo's inhabitants.⁸⁷

Stimulated by the natives' penchant for European dress and by the religious, moral, and hygienic proselytism of the missionaries, a new market was thus opened for ready-made clothing. The explorer Henry Stanley, distressed by the nakedness of the blacks, declared to the Manchester Chamber of Commerce in 1877: "If we succeed in clothing the natives only on the Lord's day, this innovation in African mores would represent a new market for 320 million yards of English cottons."⁸⁸ The monetary profit derived from commercializing Christian modesty, whether among the Africans or among the working class, went hand in hand with symbolic and political profits, because the inner being was transformed through the metamorphosis of appearance. The injunction to clothe the naked became an apostolate participating in the domestication of savages whose Westernization was proved by their wearing of bourgeois clothing.

Guiding shoppers on a different itinerary, toward other forms of socialization and other aspirations, this new production—industrialized ready-to-wear clothing—and new system of distribution—the department store—established a dominant style and transformed vestimentary codes and comportments as they expanded geographically and socially.

characteristic of a stage in economic development in which oil, steel, railroads, and heavy machinery were yet undeveloped.

81. Au Trois Quartiers, born in 1829, is one of the rare "fancy goods stores" that, transformed into a department store, survives into the present.

CHAPTER V

1. For detailed studies of two exemplary cases, see Michael B. Miller, *The Bon Marché, Bourgeois Culture and the Department Store, 1869-1920* (Princeton, 1981); and François Faraut, *Histoire de la Belle Jardinière* (Paris, 1987).

2. Documents on their origins are rare. On this subject see Bertrand Gille, "Recherches sur l'origine des grands magasins parisiens, notes d'orientation," *Fédération des sociétés historiques et archéologiques de Paris et de l'Île-de-France*, Mémoire VII (1955), pp. 308-321.

3. Chauchard entered into a partnership with Heriot, head of the silk fabric department at La Ville de Paris, and Faret, the owner of La Belle Française, and the brothers Pereire, who owned the building and adjacent property, invested 1,100,000 francs in the Louvre.

4. Boucicaut went into partnership with Videau, who owned a small store, the Bon Marché, on the rue du Bac. Jaluzot received the sum of 300,000 francs from his wife. In 1863, Videau ceded his share to Boucicaut.

5. Zola's fictional department store, *Au Bonheur des Dames*, was, for example, a transformed "fancy goods store." Before its metamorphosis, he gave the following description of it in *Pot-Bouille*:

"There was a fancy goods store at the corner of the rue Neuve-Saint-Augustin and the rue Michodière. Its door opened onto the narrow triangle of the Place Gaillon. Barring two of the windows of the entresol was a sign in decorated letters: 'Au Bonheur des Dames, firm founded in 1822.' While, on the plate glass of the windows, one could read, painted in red, the firm's corporate name: *Deleuze, Hedoin and Co.* . . . The young man spent two hours in the store. He found it ill-lit, small, cluttered with merchandise that spilled out from the basement and accumulated in the corners, leaving only narrow passages between walls of stacked-up bundles." Émile Zola, *Pot-Bouille* (Paris, 1957), pp. 20-21.

6. On this subject see Claude Fohlen's thesis, *L'Industrie textile au temps du Second Empire* (Paris, 1956).

7. "At the head of each subdivision, the store equivalent of ministries in a government, there is a 'chef de rayon,' or 'department head,' who stands in the same relationship to his superior as a minister toward his sovereign. The department head is both ship captain and ambassador. He is captain in that he has absolute, discretionary power over the crew that sell under his direction, and responsibility. He is ambassador in that he takes daily inventory of his stock in his department and is fully empowered to make the purchases necessary to fill the gaps left by customers. Since he often must be out on business most of the day, he delegates the sales supervision to a steady, reliable lieutenant who bears the title of "Second." For this second-in-command, as well as the "Thirds" and "Fourths" who merge under the title of "clerk," the department head is a "premier." Eugène Muller, *La Boutique du*

marchand de nouveautés (Paris, 1868), p. 17. The department is the constitutive unit of the department store.

8. Maxime du Camp, "Les voitures publiques dans la ville de Paris," *Revue des Deux-Mondes* 37 (15 May 1867): 343.

9. "La revendeuse à la toilette," p. 360.

10. "*E probitate decus*" became, for example, the motto of Printemps and the core of its advertising. Fixed prices, inaugurated by "fancy goods stores" and adopted by department stores, were forced upon most establishments above a certain size and a certain level.

"Nothing was more unpleasant or made one more irritated and suspicious than having to constantly bargain as shoppers were once forced to do," noted Countess Drohojowska in 1860. "Thank God, all respectable stores today buy and sell at marked prices." *De la politesse et du bon ton ou devoir d'une femme chrétienne dans le monde* (Paris, 1860), pp. 98-99.

11. On their working conditions see Claudie Lesselier, "Employées de grands magasins à Paris (avant 1914)," *Le Mouvement social* 105 (October-December 1978): 109-126; and Miller, *The Bon Marché*.

12. *Ladies' Delight*, trans. April Fitzlyon (London, 1957), p. 10.

13. The *Bon Marché* increased its gross as follows (amounts in francs):

1852	450,000
1860	5,600,000
1863	7,000,000
1866	12,000,000
1869	21,000,000
1877	67,000,000

See Georges d'Avenel, "Les grands magasins," *La Revue des Deux-Mondes* 4 (1894): 335-336; and Auguste Dusautoy, *Rapport*, p. 44.

14. Cast iron and glass construction, which we think characteristic of the department store, did not appear until the Third Republic. For these technical aspects, see the magnificently illustrated book by Bernard Marrey, *Les Grands Magasins: des origines à 1939* (Paris, 1979).

15. *Au Bonheur des Dames*, p. 277.

16. The *Bon Marché* had 4,300 gas jets in 1882. Zola's preparatory dossier for *Au Bonheur des Dames* (manuscript, Bibliothèque nationale, Nouvelle Acquisitions françaises, N° 10278).

17. *La Joie du foyer* 2, no. 3 (1 December 1865).

18. *Ladies' Delight*, pp. 226-227.

19. Vol. 2, no. 7 (1 April 1868).

20. Zola's preparatory dossier for *Au Bonheur des Dames*.

21. *Ladies' Delight*, p. 402.

22. *Les Grands Bazaars* (Paris, 1882), p. 62.

23. Zola's Mouret must certainly be numbered among these ingenious topographers; he divulged his concept of labyrinthine commercial space to a skeptical Bourdoncle: "First, the continual coming and going of the customers disperses them a bit everywhere, increases their number and makes them lose their sense of direction; second, we must be able to lead them from one end of the store to the other;

if, for example, they want to buy lining after they've bought a dress, these trips in every direction will make the store seem three times as big; third, because they are forced to go through departments they've never seen before, they will be ensnared as they pass through, and they will succumb." *Au Bonheur des Dames*, p. 279.

24. Zola, *Ladies' Delight*, p. 402.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 299.

26. "Ravaged by a furious, irresistible need, Madame de Bove had been stealing like that for a year. The attacks had been growing more acute, increasing until they had become a sensual pleasure necessary to her existence, sweeping away all the reasonings of prudence and indulged in with an enjoyment which was all the more keen because she was risking her name, her pride, and her husband's important position, under the very eyes of the crowd. Now that her husband let her take money from his drawers, she was stealing with her pockets full of money, stealing for stealing's sake as people love for the sake of loving, spurred on by desire, unhinged by the neurosis which had been developed within her in the past by her unassuaged desire for luxury when faced with the enormous, ruthless temptation of big stores." *Ladies' Delight*, p. 398.

27. "From 1868 to 1881," wrote Dr. Legrand du Saulle, at the central police station I questioned 104 women accused of theft. As we shall see, the greatest number were hysterics and belonged to the category which I discuss.

Here is the breakdown of my statistics; among 104 pathological or semipathological thieves, I found:

"Pathological" Thefts

Very feeble-minded	4
Hysterical lunatics	9
Hemiplegic lunatics	2
Totally paralyzed lunatics	5
Senile lunatics	5
Total	25

"Semipathological" Thefts

Hysterics, 15-42 years old, apprehended at the time of their menstrual periods	35
Hysterics of the same age but not in their menstrual periods	6
Girls or women hereditarily predisposed to mental illness (with a greater or lesser number of hysterical symptoms)	24
Women at menopause or seriously weakened by uterine hemorrhages	10
Pregnant women	5
Total	80

Les hystériques, état physique et état mental, actes insolites, délictueux et criminels (Paris, 1883), pp. 449-450.

28. "By now Madame Marty had the animated and hysterical face of a child that has drunk undiluted wine. She had come into the shop, her eyes clear and her skin fresh from the cold of the street, and her eyes and skin had gradually become scorched by the sight of all the luxury of those violent colours, the continual succession of which inflamed her passion. When she finally left, after having said that she would pay at home, terrified by the figures on her bill, her features were drawn and she had the dilated eyes of a sick woman. . . . Then, outside on the pavement, . . . the keen air made her shiver, and she was still frightened, unhinged by the neurosis caused by big shops." *Ladies' Delight*, pp. 254-255.

29. Gustave Macé, *Un Joli monde* (Paris, 1887), pp. 262-268.

30. See, for example, Alexandre Weill, *Un Fléau national, les grands magasins de Paris et les Moyens de les combattre* (Paris, 1888).

31. Zola clearly overdid the image of the Second Empire monster—gigantic and luminous—that devoured the small, dark, damp, low-ceilinged shops, expropriating, bulldozing everything in sight, annihilating Baudus, Vincards, Bourras, and consorts, and flourishing amidst their ruins. Jeanne Gaillard indicates that "in a survey of one-tenth of the Paris bankruptcies during the Second Empire, the department store was named only twice as the cause of the failure of fancy goods merchants." In fact, she concludes later, "the department store-shop feud . . . picked up speed only during periods of economic crisis. Thus, in 1882, when Zola wrote *Au Bonheur des Dames*, all businesses in Paris were shaken by the crash of the Union générale." *Paris, La Ville* (Paris, 1977).

32. As Jeanne Gaillard notes, the history of the department store is also a history of "lost illusions and resounding setbacks." *Paris, La Ville*, pp. 544-547.

33. *La Corbeille* (fashion magazine), vol. 1 (1 January 1854).

34. Auguste Dusautoy, *Rapport du Jury international de l'Exposition de 1867*, 35^e classe, p. 49.

35. Preparatory dossier.

36. *La Joie du foyer* 11 (1 April 1867).

37. The ready-made firms in Paris grew in the following way:

Year	Number	Volume (in francs)
1846	190	30 million
1849	180	25 million
1855	180	42 million; and 2 million for military clothing
1860	322	50 million; and 6 million for military clothing
1866	420	100 million; and 9 million for military clothing

Dusautoy, *Rapport du Jury*, p. 28.

38. For the technical particulars, see G. Bardin, "Machines servant à la confection des vêtements," *Études sur l'Exposition de 1867*, 8th ser. (Paris, 1869), pp. 37-100.

39. In the 1860s a Singer sewing machine cost between 300 and 1,000 francs, depending on its features. On its social history—not well known—see Michelle Perrot's "Machine à coudre et travail à domicile," *Le Mouvement social* 105 (October-December 1978): 161-164.

40. Dusautoy, *Rapport du Jury*, pp. 15-16. Henri Despaigne described another factory of the period:

"M. Dusautoy was kind enough to take me recently on a visit to one of the immense workshops producing military clothing that he has established in the Rochechouart quarter. I realized what mechanical processes and the sewing machine can do in cutting and assembling clothes. A man needs only to direct the automatic movement of the machines; the task is precisely and solidly accomplished with extreme rapidity and economy. And far from depriving the worker of his work or diminishing his wages, machines have increased both. The factory of this eminent industrialist provides jobs for an entire population." *Le Code de la mode* (Paris, 1866), p. 50.

41. *Le Coupeur* [a tailors' journal], vol. 5, no. 2 (15 February 1853).

42. *Histoire chronologique du vêtement*, pp. 68-69.

Speaking of Gavarni, Edmond and Jules de Goncourt mention in their journal the cheapness and convenience of ready-to-wear clothes:

"Friday, 28 January 1859. . . . Walking by a ready-to-wear on the rue Montesquieu: 'Look, I'm going to buy a pair of pants.' He goes in: 'A warm pair of pants in a dark color.' They take his measurements: 'I don't mean to say anything, but really! It does suit you.' 'Do you think so? How much?' 'Twenty-six francs.' He pays and carries away his pants under his arm." *Journal, Mémoires de la vie littéraire*, vol. 3 (Monaco, 1957), pp. 99-100.

Of course such speed in buying clothes was derided, as though it lacked caution and solemnity: "Let us leave roses to the rosebush, theatrical farces to M. de Girardin, the literary guillotine to M. Gagne, and American-style advertising to dentists and ready-to-wear merchants, who for 33 francs will provide a fiancé with:

black cashmere trousers;
a coat;
a vest;
boots;
a hat;
and two witnesses—for the civil ceremony.

Le Club 2, no. 16 (8 January 1865).

43. Pp. 11-12.

44. *Report to Internal Jury*, p. 14.

45. On this subject see Jeanne Gaillard, *Paris, La Ville*, pp. 537-539.

46. *Statistiques de l'industrie à Paris* (1864), p. 274.

47. *Le Costume à la cour et à la ville*, pp. 205-206.

48. "One of the trades killed by progress was that of the rags peddler. His cry—'Any old clothes?'—so familiar to our ears, is almost never heard anymore," observed Georges d'Avenel in 1894. "Les Grands magasins," p. 342.

49. "It is known that the contagious miasmas of illnesses particularly breed in woolen cloth. The effects of people who died from phthisis, pneumonia, and consumption are sold instead of being burned. The fripperer buys them for resale, and the infected garment is placed on the body of a poor worker who knows nothing about science and catches the illness from the fabric. Hidden diseases are spread among the masses by this imprudent exchange of clothes, and the working class

does not know whence the illness came. Louis Sébastien Mercier, *Tableau de Paris*, vol. 9, pp. 175-176.

50. *Traité d'hygiène publique et privée*, 4th ed., vol. 2 (Paris, 1862), pp. 784-785.

51. *Traité d'hygiène publique et privée*, p. 785.

52. Adolphe Joanne, *Paris illustré en 1870. Guide de l'étranger et du parisien*, 3d ed. (Paris, 1870), p. 1017.

53. Marcel Charlot, "Fripier," *La Grande Encyclopédie*, vol. 18 (Paris, 1886-1902).

54. The stalls were, moreover, deserted in a dramatic fashion. From 188 vacant stalls in 1866, the figure grew to 626 in 1876. Soon reduced to a third of its area, the market lived on until 1905, when its pavilions were torn down except for two, located where the Rotonde and the first *carreau* used to be. It is under this roof, which creates one vast hangar, that the present Temple market is held, though secondhand clothing was banished from it shortly after World War II. For figures and a detailed analysis of the beginning of this decline, see *Rapport du Conseil municipal de Paris, présentée par M. Georges Villain, au nom de la 2^e Commission, sur diverses pétitions relatives au marché du Temple* (Paris, 1892).

55. In today's Paris, Third World immigrants seem to have replaced the nineteenth-century working class as clientele for secondhand clothing. See Bernard Feuillet and Anne-Marie Vasseur, *Le Marché d'occasion de l'électro-ménager et du vêtement* (mimeographed publication, Paris, 1979).

56. Marcel Charlot, "Fripier," p. 181.

57. After 1850 the overproduction crises required that more money be spent on internal consumption and less on investment. Levels of production and profits were sustained, therefore, by the rise (which varied greatly) of relative and real wages. See Jacques Rougerie, "Remarque sur l'histoire des salaires à Paris," *Mouvement social* 63 (April-June 1968), pp. 71-108.

58. This was not true for leather shoes. See Georges Duveau, *La Vie ouvrière en France sous le Second Empire* (Paris, 1946), p. 363.

59. The 1855 Universal Exposition in Paris received 5,163,000 visitors, and the 1867 fair 15,000,000—enormous figures for the period. See Jacques Lacour-Gayet, *Historie du commerce*, vol. 2 (Paris, 1952), p. 132.

60. In 1855, for example, La Belle Jardinière offered "all kinds of clothing within the reach of people of modest means under these three headings: work clothes, daily wear, Sunday clothes, from pea jackets at 4.75 francs, *cuir-laine* trousers at 5 francs, trousers at 20 francs, all the way to frock coats at 60 francs." *Journal des tailleurs* 26, no. 618 (16 November 1855).

61. "It was open season on old houses, small towns, and thatched cottages. Mahogany, which was once favored, was shamefully relegated to the attic in disgrace. And anything old found there was triumphantly retrieved from the dust.

When old furniture ran out and the usual lodes were exhausted, 'old' furniture was manufactured everywhere: imitation-old.

The cabinetmakers of the faubourg Saint-Antoine eagerly carved Henri II and Louis XIII chests. The chair-joiners began turning twisted legs for medieval tables. Artisans from the Marais outdid Boulle, Gouttière, and Riesener.

Clocks, copper plates, Venetian mirrors, flacons, candelabras, swords, armoires, antique fabrics, and chandeliers poured out of the workshops.

Once fabricated, the objects were endowed with a patina and antique coloration. Small and delicate gimlets imitated worm borings, acids cleverly altered bronzes and blunted the sharp edges of the new." Bertall, *La Comédie de notre temps*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1874), p. 494.

The contemporary proliferation of "second homes" inescapably "rustic" has brought a repetition, on a greater scale, of the rarefication and valorization of antiques and consequently the industrial production of "old-new."

62. Moreover, social critics quickly attacked women who transgressed standards of propriety in dress that guaranteed semantic clarity. A working-class woman who "scorns the title of wife and mother," wrote Stanislas Martin, "requires eccentric, gaudy outfits above her station; she wants artificial flowers, marabouts, lace, and *exaggeratedly wide crinolines*. In factories that employ only women one can see this passion for dress carried to the extreme" (emphasis added). *La Joie du foyer* 5 (1 January 1866).

63. The Peugeot works at Valentigney (in the Doubs department) specialized in the manufacture of turnspits, clock springs, and rolled-out corset stays. Set back by the economic crisis engendered by the 1848 revolution, it turned after 1855 to the production of "cages" of steel strips. So many orders poured in that Peugeot built a new factory that began full production by 1858. See, especially, René Sédillot, *Peugeot—De la crinoline à la 404* (Paris, 1960).

64. Statistic from "Crinoline," *La Grande Encyclopédie*, vol. 13.

65. "It has required the combined efforts of science and art to force rebellious and ungrateful cotton fabrics to undergo every day so many brilliant transformations and to spread them everywhere within the reach of the poor. Every woman used to wear a blue or black dress that she kept for ten years without washing, for fear it might tear to pieces." Jules Michelet, *The People*, trans. and with an intro. by John P. McKay (Chicago, 1973), p. 44.

66. "Tailleur," *Grand Dictionnaire universel du XIX^e siècle*. The Larousse encyclopedia overgeneralizes in contending that workers wore smocks even on Sunday. An 1842 description indicates otherwise: "The worker who gets on well with his wife and has no bad acquaintances takes his wife and his children on Sunday excursions. . . . The family dresses up as well as its means permit; a madras fichu and a new apron may be all that the wife can add to her weekday dress; the husband wears a white shirt and tie; and his children have socks and shoes, which they do not wear every day." Paul de Kock, "Le Dimanche à Paris," *La Grande Ville. Nouveau tableau de Paris* (Paris, 1842), p. 223.

67. See my article "Aspects socio-culturels des débuts de la confection parisienne au XIX^e siècle," *Revue de l'Institut de sociologie* 2 (1977): 185-202.

68. Georges Dureau, *La Vie ouvrière*, pp. 366-367.

69. Kerckhoff, *Le Costume à la cour et à la ville*, pp. 210-211.

70. Lemann, *De l'industrie des vêtements*, pp. 34-35.

71. Michelet, *The People*, p. 45. The following expression of the belief that "the beautiful," namely the "clean," "proper," "respectable," "tasteful," and "discreet" as defined by the bourgeois, could improve morals illustrates the nineteenth century's ideology of appearances:

"One can safely say that this willful disorder pushed to an extreme and this cynically displayed filth augur ill.

Those who wantonly choose ugliness display their lack of self-respect; they try to shock by not caring for their person; they insult public opinion, which they know is based on appearance; they are at least guilty of self-contempt, if not of contempt for others. . . .

Everything is connected. Aesthetic education, which teaches us to hate ugliness in any form, is indirectly moral education. Are not self-respect and love of home derived from beautifying oneself and one's home? Does not vice cause physical ugliness as much as moral ugliness? Few artists appear in criminal statistics because beauty is one and indivisible whether in thought or deed.

In calling for a more aesthetic education, we do not advocate the Florentine enervation that produces a population of artists absorbed in pointless pursuits but a people sensitive to beauty that enobles the individual, such ennoblement being, after all, the purpose of all progress." Gabriel Prévost, *Le Nu, le vêtement, la parure*, pp. 21-23.

72. *La Mode des enfants* (A women's magazine that gave advice on children's clothing), vol. 1, no. 2 (1 May 1853).

73. Brittany, possessing a long tradition of clans with distinctive costumes, seems, on the other hand, to have derived the complexity and originality of its regional garb from a very distant past. See René-Yves Creston, *Le Costume breton* (Paris, 1974).

74. The country tailor who went from village to village and farm to farm, stayed with families, became part of their life, and sat around the fire with them. His role consisted as much in enriching sociability by transmitting news as in making clothes:

"Newsmonger; living legend of the canton, he had to tell stories remarkably well and to answer tactfully indiscreet questions without revealing the family secrets he ordinarily learned. When necessary he had to gossip about neighbors without being branded a slanderer. He had to know the local customs and habits and to show manners suitable for one who had seen the world and spent several days a year in the bosom of the province's most exalted families.

He watched the boys grow, cut bodices for the girls, made clothing for baptisms, weddings, and mourning. Like the church, he participated in all of life's important events. No solemn occasion affecting the individual, the family, or the community could do without him. . . .

Wandering from home to home and learning everything about the family's wealth, origins, and members, he inevitably became a natural marriage-broker. Before M. Foy invented the matrimonial profession, this upright and shrewd artisan, the country tailor, practiced throughout France and Navarre. How eagerly he was received by boys and girls alike, how closely fathers and mothers watched the secret conversations they had with him! As he fitted the bodice that would sparkle at Easter, he knew that before Lent he would return to make a wedding dress." Émile Kerckhoff, *Le Costume*, pp. 201-202.

75. In 1850 there were 3,010 kilometers of tracks; in 1860 there were 9,439; and in 1870, 17,733. *Annuaire statistique de la France* (Paris, 1910).

76. *Les Lois de l'imitation* (Paris, 1890), pp. 245-246.

77. On the character of the traveling salesman and his cultural role during the July Monarchy, consult Balzac's masterful study. "No one in France," he wrote,

"doubts the incredible power incessantly deployed by the Travelers, these intrepid opponents of negation who in the remotest villages represent the genius of civilization and Parisian inventions, battling provincial good sense, ignorance, and routine. How can one forget the admirable maneuvers that mold the intelligence of populations by entertaining the most refractory masses with words and that resemble the indefatigable polishers whose files burnish the hardest porphyry?" *L'Illustré Gaudissart* (1833; reprint, Paris, 1971), pp. 27-28.

See also Raoul Perrin's monograph "Le commis-voyageur," *Les Français peints par eux-mêmes*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1841), pp. 549-558.

As early as 1845, Fernand Wagnien observed that "scheming and harassing, the peddlers and traveling salesmen who flood the countryside with their products will soon destroy its originality. In their own way they assist the process of centralization so that in twenty years or less all of France will dress the same." Cited by Guy Thuillier, "Le couleurs," *Pour une histoire du quotidien au XIX^e siècle en Nivernais* (Paris, 1977), p. 299.

The hair merchant also spread urban elegance. "He would arrive in the village in a cabriolet like the dentist . . . and bartered scarves, bonnets, shawls, ribbons, and plated earrings in exchange for hair." But "contemporary peasant girls . . . prefer good money. Hair 'on the hoof,' (or rather on the head!) sells for around ten francs. The market operates on the spot. The girl climbs into the carriage, and in five minutes she is sheared, paid and gone, her head wrapped up because the lads would poke fun at her." Louis Lemer cier de Neuville, *Physiologie du coiffeur* (Paris, 1862), p. 123.

78. "Formerly" (a word that denotes different periods depending on the social strata involved), notes Werner Sombart, "sturdy merchandise was needed, useful goods had to be durable and 'solid.' Clothing was made of heavy, durable materials: wool, linen, felt, satin, and fur. . . .

Shoes were made of horsehide or cowhide, with high, turned up uppers.

Body, table, and bed linens were of heavy cloth or heavy damask so that they could last for centuries. Today our armoires still contain tablecloths and napkins that date from the eighteenth century. And all gigantic: chemises fell to the ankles, napkins were as large as tablecloths, and handkerchiefs had the dimensions of a fichu.

In keeping with the durability of clothing, the used-clothing trade was one of the characteristic phenomena of these periods.

Today? . . .

Clothes are made of light fabrics that wear out quickly and cannot be repaired. The transformation of women's dress dates back to the nineteenth century with the appearance of mousseline, which became 'lighter' and 'lighter.' Dresses, underwear, and stockings are made of cotton, batiste, light silk. Ceremonial dresses are in lace. The same is true of men's clothing: 'cheviot,' a light wool and cotton blend, has eliminated all heavy woolen fabrics. Shoes are made of calf or goatskin, cloth or silk." *L'Apogée du capitalisme*, vol. 2, trans. S. Jankélévitch (Paris, 1932), pp. 116-118.

Thus, during the nineteenth century, the peasant world gradually assented to the ephemeralization of goods transformed into merchandise, a process that Frédéric Soulié considered the hallmark of his century:

"Today's fancy goods merchant who provides antique lace, resuscitates heavy fabrics and dresses women in flimsy rags that wear out in two days, embodies our period, an age that turns out shoddy goods, begs from the past ideas ill-suited to the present, and creates only rags in literature, painting, and government. Nothing is stable, be it the form of sovereign power or the shape of a woman's bonnet; nothing is made to last, be it the throne or an embroidered tulle fichu. Damask and epic poems are contemporaries; penny dreadfuls and six-franc dresses are born on the same day." "Les marchands de nouveautés," *Nouveau Tableau de Paris au XIX^e siècle*, vol. 2 (Paris, 1843), p. 151.

79. "Fashion and Modernity. Wherever," wrote Nietzsche, "ignorance, uncleanness and superstition are still rife, where communication is backward, agriculture poor, and the priesthood powerful, national costumes are still worn. Fashion, on the other hand, rules where the opposite conditions prevail. Fashion is accordingly to be found next to the virtues in modern Europe." *Complete Works*, vol. 7: *The Wanderer and His Shadow*, trans. Paul V. Cohn (New York, 1964), p. 303.

80. *L'Art de relever sa robe* (Paris, 1862), p. 70.

81. *Manuel de l'homme et de la femme comme il faut*, 5th ed. (Paris, 1862), p. 138.

82. Arnold Gennep, *Manuel du folklore français contemporain*, part 1, vol. 2 (Paris, 1949), pp. 390-392.

83. Bertall, *La Comédie de notre temps*, vol. 1, p. 412. Bourgeois dress enjoyed such prestige because it signified a certain status in the rural world. Traditionalist movements and Catholic Leagues considered it a factor contributing to emigration. To dissuade peasants from leaving the land, Adolphe Leroy described the economic constraints imposed by bourgeois clothes and flayed the illusions it fostered:

"Their position [office workers] forces them to dress up. They must wear 'presentable dress.' They must also on piddling salaries feed and support wife and children, pay for room and board. And God knows what it costs to live in the city. Never mind your stomach's grumbling, you must have a good-looking suit for every day and a splendid one for Sundays. For so-and-so's clerks and employees will not be outdone by the elegance of the rich, lively, and brilliant world.

We see these fugitives from the countryside wearing fine clothes that are like peacock feathers stuck on bodies consumed by poverty! If you did not know who they are and what privation and misery they suffer at home, you might keep calling them 'sir,' but this title that flatters their vanity won't put food on their table." *La Vie des champs comparée à la vie des villes ou la désertion de nos campagnes* (Paris, 1864), pp. 48-49.

84. See, for example, Alain Corbin, *Archaïsme et Modernité en Limousin au XIX^e siècle, 1845-1880*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1975), pp. 78-81; Maurice Aghulon, "La société paysanne et la vie à la campagne," *Histoire de la France rurale* (Paris, 1976), pp. 323-325.

85. The numerous travelers who crisscrossed Europe by rail before the First World War confirmed this observation. For example, Dr. Ricord wrote: "As I set foot [in Naples] I eagerly searched for the classic and picturesque costumes that please us so much in the charming paintings of Léopold Robert and of my lamented friend Papéty: nothing remains. The railroads not only carry Paris fashions throughout the world but also level the population. Neapolitan working-class women look just like those in the faubourg Saint-Antoine. I hoped for better luck

with the *lazzaroni* but found Seine bargemen from the Bercy dock. I'll make up for this, however. The next time they perform *La Muette de Portici* at the opera, I shall go!" *De Paris à Meaux en passant par Venise, Vienne, Pesth, La Roumanie, Constantinople, Athènes* (Paris, 1873), p. 23.

86. *Le Journal des tailleurs* 26, no. 613 (1 September 1855).

87. Lemann, *De l'industrie des vêtements*, pp. 26-27.

88. Cited by Jacques Mousseau, *L'Amour à refaire* (Paris, 1969), p. 99.

CHAPTER VI

1. "The object of art—like every other product—creates," wrote Marx, "a public which is sensitive to art and enjoys beauty. Production thus not only creates an object for the subject, but also a subject for the object. Thus production produces consumption (1) by creating the material for it; (2) by determining the manner of consumption; and (3) by creating the products initially posited by it as objects, in the form of a need felt by the consumer. It thus produces the object of consumption, the manner of consumption and the motive of consumption. Consumption likewise produces the producer's *inclination* by beckoning to him as an aim-determined need." *Gründrisse: Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Martin Nicolaus (New York, 1973), p. 92.

2. *Le Système des objets*, p. 183.

3. *Les Mœurs de notre temps* (Paris, 1860), p. 82.

4. *Manuel de l'homme et de la femme comme-il-faut*, pp. 109-110, 133-134.

5. "Distinction: that which in dress has the characteristics of elegance, nobility and good manners. . . . *This meaning seems to be recent, for it is not to be found in earlier authors.*" The *Littre* Dictionary. "Distinction: (widely used in the nineteenth century): elegance and reserve in dress and manners." The *Robert* Dictionary (emphasis added).

6. *Theory of the Leisure Class*, p. 186.

7. *The Wanderer*, p. 304.

8. See Adeline Daumard, *Les Fortunes françaises au XIX^e siècle* (Paris, 1973).

9. Jean-Paul Aron, *Le Mangeur du XIX^e siècle* (Paris, 1973).

10. "The villa's originality obscured its ancestors [Italian villas and eighteenth-century French and English country houses] and left it with only one progenitor, that is, the nineteenth-century bourgeoisie for whom it was the ideal dwelling. Marked by a taste for representing the signs of opulence, shaped by a desire for comfort and a certain functionalism, and placed at the center of the town/country debate, the villa, as César Daly insisted in 1864, manifests the genius and the character of modern civilization." Patrick Favardin, "La villa ou l'avènement d'un nouveau mode d'habitation," *Monuments historiques* 102 (April 1979): 57.

11. For a discussion of these problems, see, of course, Max Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*.

12. The symbolic and economic profitability of the effect of "essence" can also be seen in the labels, signatures, and trade names that increased the value of commercial products like perfumes, designer fashions, etc.