

# European Fashion (1450–1950)

by Gabriele Mentges

This article discusses the function of fashion as a form of cultural transfer in Europe-wide social processes between 1450 and 1950. Taking medieval gender history and the history of the body as its starting point, it examines the formation of a Western European identity in the 16th century, and the formation of aristocratic (and then middle class) dress codes in the 17th and 18th centuries, and goes on to focus on the theatricalization of court life. The social dominance that the middle classes enjoyed from the end of the 18th century meant that middle class fashion set the standard for all classes and groups from that time. The emphasis placed on functionality and freedom of movement meant that middle class fashion contributed to the modernization of the image of the body, thus creating and reinforcing models of stratification in terms of gender, consumption and social distinction. From the medieval period, fashion in Europe oscillated between the competing poles of the European self and the other; between the heterogeneity of the towns, regions and nations, the growth of a European identity, and the attempt on the part of Europeans to distinguish themselves from the non-European other.

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## Concepts and research

Unlike any other object of material culture, clothing is associated in an immediate, sensory manner with the historical actor, his body, gender and actions. The concept of clothing as body technology (Craik) and the concept of the "visible self" in the English-language literature demonstrate this close connection between the body, personal and social identity, and clothing.<sup>1</sup> Clothing demonstrates the mechanisms of social inclusion and is both the instrument of visible demarcation as well as a method of negotiating cultural and social differences. European history is replete with examples of mechanisms of integration and exclusion in which fashion is used as a mark of identity.

▲ 1

As a central object of visual and material culture, clothing communicates and transfers social standards and cultural concepts with regard to the body, gender, aesthetics, gestures and taste, as well as images of the self and the other. Viewed from a micro-historical perspective, fashion provides an interesting field of observation because private and political processes are mixed together in fashion.<sup>2</sup> Its role in European transfer processes is thus very important, both historically and culturally.

▲ 2

The French concept of *mode* has had a varied history. The term (from the Latin *modus*) was used with regard to clothing as early as the 15th century and use of the term subsequently spread, particularly in the 17th century. A lexicon published by Antoine Furetière (1619–1688) (→ Media Link #ac) in 1690 defined *mode* primarily as custom, as a way of life, or the manner in which objects are produced. Clothing – referred to here in the context of court apparel – was only mentioned in third place. Subsequently, however, the increasing discussion of courtly clothing in almanacs and calendars resulted in the term acquiring an increasingly clothing-specific connotation.<sup>3</sup> When the philosopher and author Christian Garve (1742–1798) (→ Media Link #ad) used the term *Mode* in his treatise *Über die Moden* ("On Fashions") of 1792 to refer to various objects of everyday use (including clothing), he used the term in a way that it is still used today.<sup>4</sup> The term thus incorporates two fundamental categories: the appearance and composition of objects and their temporality.

▲ 3

Research has yet to produce a consensus regarding the historical and spatial development, and the diffusion of the phenomenon of fashion. As a cultural phenomenon characterized – among other things – by constant change, mass production and mass consumption, is fashion exclusively an aspect of European modernity? Must fashion therefore primarily be considered a strategy of Western modernization processes (→ Media Link #ae)? Or is it possible to identify processes inherent in the phenomenon of fashion in early modern and medieval periods? Rejecting the tendency to identify fashion as a strictly Western phenomenon, recent criticism of this interpretation has pointed out that non-Western societies have displayed similar patterns of change and evolution in clothing habits.<sup>5</sup>

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The definition of fashion as a body technology and as part of processes of identity formation – as described above – enables the term to be used in a sense that is historically and spatially broader, and focuses to a greater degree on individual and social practices.

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In contrast to traditional, art history-oriented costume history, the more recent inter-disciplinary approach no longer considers form and style in isolation. Instead, it views fashions in clothing as the result of the dress practices of various historical actors within a specific historical and spatial context (clothing culture). It no longer tacitly assumes a chronological continuity of form and style. In line with other modern historiography, it assumes instead the existence of discontinuity and sudden change. Above all, this new approach stresses that the meanings attached to clothing are not fixed and immutable, but are constantly the object of social negotiation and are specific to a particular period in time. Consequently, the history of clothing can follow its own independent rhythm and rules in the historical process.<sup>6</sup>

▲ 6

Modern research into clothing habits and fashions critically appraises the many and varied sources available, using sources of different kinds in combination. For the history of clothing, the pictorial sources, which were used by traditional costume history often solely as a means of dating particular styles or garments, possess a particular complexity. They should be viewed less as a reliable or precise source of information on the form taken by clothing, but rather as a means of representing and communicating cultural standards, desires, concepts, forms of resistance and strategies, which are in a reciprocal relationship with the "actual dress culture" and can even significantly change the latter.

▲ 7

## Modelling the gendered body

The late medieval period saw the completion of a revolution in European clothing history that had started in the High Middle Ages. The fashion of the courtly elite that began to emerge in this period increasingly drew attention to the body by its tailoring and created a new perspective on the gendered body, as well as novel concepts of clothing fashion and new aesthetic concepts and changed sensibilities. Knowledge of these changes was transferred to other European courts by courtly poetry. The changes demonstrate how clothing, as an important component of the courtly discourse, contributes to the "readability" of the courtly world.<sup>7</sup>

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Two decisive changes in shape can be recognized. The first, which already occurred in the High Middle Ages, was a

considerable lengthening and narrowing of clothes. The second was an extreme shortening of male clothing.

▲ 9

The first change replaced the Frankish-Byzantine tunic shape, which had been customary up to then, with close-fitting robe-like garments for men and women. This resulted in an increased eroticization of the body by emphasizing the female waist and the male legs under long, laterally slit skirts.<sup>8</sup>

▲ 10

The second change, occurring in the late Middle Ages, introduced a final, clear differentiation between male and female clothing. This "birth of fashion" was based on a number of clothing innovations which were to culminate in an entirely new style of clothing in Europe. New tailoring techniques (sleeve production, padded clothing and frontal openings) gradually established themselves. These resulted in a radical shortening of the male dress to a short, close-fitting doublet (jacket) with an inconspicuous jerkin to which the stockings were attached with ties. In female clothing, the ankle-length dresses remained, though the gender-specific bodily characteristics were more strongly emphasized by the close fit (cotta and muodor) and a décolleté and surcoat (outer garment). The houppelande was a dress for ceremonial occasions which was typical of the late Middle Ages. Varying in length and worn by both men and women (though closed at the front for women), the high value of this garment was reflected in the valuable furs and choice textiles used.<sup>9</sup>

▲ 11

This new unprecedented sartorial grandeur was employed by the nobility as a strategy of social differentiation. "Courtly" (in German *höfisch* or *hövesch*) became a key concept, and everything that was "un-courtly" (*nichthöfisch*) was referred to disparagingly as "*dörperlich*", hence the origin of *Tölpel* ("dolt"). The close proximity of the feudal land-owning elites to the agrarian way of life explains the need to delimit court from non-court life. Clothes thus became an important strategy by which distance was manifested in a visible, sensory, and corporeal manner. Ceremonial dress practices had an important function in this process: They served to confirm social relationships and to enact the precepts of courtly life as a performance.<sup>10</sup>

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How did these strategies manifest themselves in actual clothing and how were they received in the contemporary European context? Colours, for example, became an important differentiating characteristic of medieval noble society, not only because they were expensive to produce and were often oriental in origin, but because they were invested with a symbolism that became integral to the social order. Taking the history of the colour blue as an example, it has been described how a re-organization of the social hierarchy of colours occurred between the 11th and 14th centuries. Originally disdained – some even spoke of its non-existence as a colour – the symbolic status of the colour blue was raised when it became the symbolic colour of the French king, leading to a radical re-ordering of the colour hierarchy.<sup>11</sup> A similar clear hierarchy applied to furs – ermine, sable and Nordic squirrel were among the luxury items of the highest elite. In terms of the cut of clothing, noble courts followed the example of Burgundian-Dutch fashion, especially in the case of female fashion.<sup>12</sup>

▲ 13

The growing significance attached to fashion in society resulted in the increased consumption of fabrics, precious stones and furs. It was this extreme demand for furs that stimulated the initial interest in the exploration of Siberia and its subsequent colonization by the Russian Tsars. Royal account books give a good insight into the growth in the consumption of furs as a particularly effective form of conspicuous consumption. For instance, between 1285 and 1288, King Edward I of England (1239–1307) (→ Media Link #ag) ordered the purchase of 119,300 squirrel furs, 3,200 lamb skins and 60 ermines.<sup>13</sup> Such conspicuous consumption is not only a manifestation of the desire for increased social differentiation, but also of an increasing dominance of nature and of an increasing distance from nature as the "cultural other".

▲ 14

Europe experienced a general increase in economic prosperity, during which improvements in artisanal technology strengthened the social position of artisans. The new prosperity and growing power of the cities was primarily due to them. In particular, textile-related trades, such as the cloth-workers' trade, experienced increased political influence.<sup>14</sup>

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This consumption was made possible by a thriving trade between European centres of wool production and important centres of trade such as Ghent, Ypres, Arras, Brussels, Troyes, Cologne, Antwerp, Florence, Venice (with the Ottoman Empire) and Paris, as well as through trade with the Orient.<sup>15</sup> The European towns, in particular in Flanders, provided woollen cloth ranging in quality from the plainest to the finest. Trade with materials and dyes required a special form of communication and transfer. Expensive material such as silk, damask, baldachin and atlas, and dyes such as indigo, saffron and scarlet were brought from Italy and the Orient; Northern Europe (Russia and Scandinavia) provided the equally valuable furs (sable, ermine, Nordic squirrel, etc.) via the Hanseatic League (→ Media Link #ai).<sup>16</sup>

▲ 16

Close commercial ties with the towns of Flanders and trade with the Orient proved particularly lucrative for the Burgundian court, which under Charles the Bold (1433–1477) (→ Media Link #aj) was responsible for the extreme refinement and stylization of medieval fashion in its elegance and sophistication. This was accompanied by a court etiquette in which fashion played a central role in courtly communication.<sup>17</sup> The privilege of the monarch to determine the colours worn at court was used to visibly denote his territorial claims and social superiority – a strategy interpreted by many historians as the beginning of monarchical demands for absolute power.<sup>18</sup> In particular, the sartorial extravagance of the Burgundian court under Charles the Bold, including the use of colour, made it a model for other European courts.<sup>19</sup> (→ Media Link #ak)

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The courts and the nobility continued to dominate tastes in fashion for centuries, as the nobility alone could afford such extravagance in clothing, could acquire the required competence of taste, and could thus keep competition from the urban middle classes at bay. As a result, tastes in fashion had a European reach from the beginning, as the noble courts – connected by marital alliances (→ Media Link #al), heraldry, trade in mercenaries, and artists – remained in constant and close communication. The Burgundian court was especially adept at employing its extensive heraldic network and power rhetoric to establish and maintain its reputation as a trendsetter in all matters pertaining to fashion.

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Despite the social dominance of the nobility, modern historians argue that in the late Middle Ages the middle and even the lower social classes were increasingly influenced by developments in fashion, or at least attempted to participate in these developments. Roughly from the 13th century, the municipal authorities attempted to deal with this increasing social dynamic in clothing behaviour by issuing an increasing number of dress regulations. These appeared in Germany from the late medieval period, whereas in northern Italy (Genoa 1157), France (1180), Spain (1234) and England (1363) they appeared earlier. The aim of these dress regulations was to protect the common interests of the city, which were seen as being threatened by increasing extravagance and luxury in clothing habits.<sup>20</sup> However, these attempts to maintain the "readability of the world" (Dinges) reflected the aims of the municipal authorities, and subsequently (in the early modern period) of the state authorities, rather than the actual reality. In many regards, such regulations achieved the opposite effect, because they contributed to the spread of knowledge about clothing and made people more keenly aware of differentiation through dress.<sup>21</sup>

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The trend towards shorter clothes saw clerical and academic vestments becoming ever more distinct from secular dress, because the clergy and academics retained the long gown for men, which remained the most obvious sign of their profession for a long time. This longstanding differentiation between clerical and academic vestments and secular clothing mirrored the longstanding distinction between the trousers and the skirt in gender-specific clothing, and its visual representation in the motif of the "war of the trousers".<sup>22</sup>

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Research on the medieval period must take into account that the nobility held a monopoly in terms of the surviving sources. Original garments and cloths from the medieval period are all but non-existent. Text sources and pictorial sources, on the other hand, are far more common: literature, sermons (mostly of clerical origin) calling for moderation and condemning eroticized and luxuriant clothing, but also accounts, manuscripts, and religious and secular works of art including, for example, seals.

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## European urbanity and fashion (the 16th century)

The broadening of European horizons with the "discovery" of America (→ Media Link #am) (1492) and the establishment of trade links with other continents (Asia – China and India in particular) as well as the intensification of trade relations with the Ottoman Empire in particular (especially in the case of the Venetian republic) saw the emergence of a new, powerful social group, the urban merchant class – the Fuggers of Augsburg, for example (→ Media Link #an). Members of this class brought a flood of previously unknown trade commodities to Europe: spices, fabrics and raw materials for textile production (Egyptian cotton, Indian cotton fabric, and silk from Persia, Iraq and Syria), precious cloths such as damask, baldachin, (silk with ornate decorations), Kamokas (silk from China), Dabiki (Egyptian silk with golden flowers), derivatives (silk and linen composites such as brocatelle or filoselle), decorative materials (precious stones from India), dyes (scarlet from Armenia, madder and henna from Arabia) and types of wood from Brazil, India and Ceylon, indigo from Bagdad, and saffron from India. Similarly, knowledge of foreign, non-European styles in clothing spread.<sup>23</sup> The Silk Road itself provides a classic example of the international transfer of culture and technology.<sup>24</sup>

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With the beginning of the early modern period, the nobility began thus to experience increasing competition from the urban merchant class in the important European trading centres of the age (Milan, Venice, Genoa, Paris, Lyon, Brussels, Antwerp, Nuremberg, Augsburg, Cologne, Danzig, and others), which used clothing as a means of displaying its enhanced social status, its political power and its prestige.<sup>25</sup> (→ Media Link #ap)

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This is evidenced by the growing number of images and documents of a personal and social nature (portraits, costume books, genealogical manuscripts and house books), as well as depictions of social occasions such as family dances (*Geschlechtertänze*), which gave expression to the enhanced confidence of the urban elite. A new concept of representation appeared in this form of depiction, one in which status and power were increasingly attached to the personalized body. This was in contrast to the concept of representation of the noble elite, which referred to a collective kin group by using the coat of arms as a representative sign. The new middle class deliberately contravened dress regulations.<sup>26</sup> The richly-illustrated costume book of the Augsburg burgess Matthäus Schwarz (1496–1564), the chief bookkeeper of the Fugger trading company, provides interesting evidence of contemporary clothing practices. In this clothing biography, his luxuriant wardrobe with its precious materials and dyes is portrayed as an essential element for the construction of the middle class male self in the urban space. The costume book also testifies to the importance of mercantile networks with their international trade links.<sup>27</sup>

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The growing gender differences emerging in society were clearly expressed in the dress culture.<sup>28</sup> The tendency to use the shape and design of garments to emphasize the gender-specific bodily characteristics became ever stronger. Women's fashion witnessed the final separation between the top garment (bodice) and the skirt, and male clothing developed in a different direction with its shirt, doublet and various forms of trousers, either short or reaching to the knee (*Heerpauke* and Turkish pants).<sup>29</sup> The so-called slit or "shredded" fashion caused a sensation as well as moral indignation. Borrowed from Italy in the 15th century and spread by the lansquenets, it became common throughout Europe in the 16th century.<sup>30</sup> The elaborate dissection of the textile surface and the interplay of various materials which this allowed were testament to the enormous tailoring effort and skill involved, as well as to an unprecedented aggressive male elegance.<sup>31</sup> This aggressive elegance manifested itself symbolically in the codpiece, a representation of the male sexual organ stylized in cloth and exaggeratedly large.

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Precious fabrics decorated with furs, metals and precious stones became the means of social differentiation within towns (for example, long golden chains for the patricians). Various forms of headwear were employed to visually denote social estate, status and age, particularly the variously shaped berets of the urban elites.

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A central trend of the period was the homogenization of the fashions of the urban elites and simultaneously the increasing social stratification of clothing.

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Thus the appearance of the middle class elites became more uniform, but clothing also began to clearly reflect internal tensions within society. There were considerable differences between prosperous merchants and master craftsmen on the one hand, and middle class artisans on the other, "zwischen der Genossenschaft armer Rebleute und reicher Metzger, zwischen vornehmen Kürschnern und armen Seilern, ja sogar zwischen Weißgerbern und den wesentlich angesehenen Rotgerbern".<sup>32</sup> The same applied to the social distance between the urban political elites and the aspiring groups amongst the citizenry, between the members of the civic associations and the institutional church hierarchies, between laymen and the clergy – and not only in large cities such as Paris, Antwerp, Florence, Cologne and Augsburg, but also in the small cities and rural towns.<sup>33</sup>

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The predominant agent of the diffusion of male clothing fashions within Europe was the mobile armies of lansquenets, who as bearers of fashion innovations provoked sensation wherever they went, both in the 16th century as well as during the Thirty Years War. They had a particularly strong influence in the German territories.<sup>34</sup> The importance of mercenaries as the carriers of fashion trends is also explained by the fact that no differentiation existed yet between military and civilian clothing.

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Another important means of fashion transfer among the European states of the period were the richly-illustrated costume books which enjoyed a strong European-wide reception between 1532 and 1600.<sup>35</sup> These publications, usually appearing regularly and in a number of languages (French, Italian, Dutch), provided for the first time an overview of the fashions prevalent in the large urban centres of trade, as well as in the Ottoman Empire,<sup>36</sup> Asia and Africa. Depictions of fashion from the so-called New World were less common.<sup>37</sup> The costume books demonstrate that Eastern European societies such as Poland (the lower nobility) and Russia had undergone a change from Western European clothing styles to a Byzantine style with a kaftan ("Zupan"), a richly decorated, coat-like garment with long sleeves, and had thus taken a separate path in terms of fashion. This change probably occurred in the 15th century and was only reversed from 1700 under Peter I (1672–1725) (→ Media Link #aq), who reintroduced a Western European orientation.<sup>38</sup>

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With their clear division of the world into familiar (European) dress culture and foreign dress cultures, the costume books can be considered an early attempt both to standardize European fashion in the sense of a *civilité* as well as to contribute to the formation of national and European identities.<sup>39</sup>

▲ 31

### Court fashion and middle class respectability (from the end of the 16th century to the end of the 18th century)

Despite the growing significance of the towns from a fashion point of view, the noble courts retained their important position in this regard. Depending on the power-political and cultural circumstances at the individual courts, different geographical regions dominated in terms of fashion influences. Thus Italian fashion served as the model for most European courts until the mid-15th century. Subsequently, its influence was increasingly replaced by the fashions of other national courts.<sup>40</sup>

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The growth of Spanish dominance in Europe (→ Media Link #ar) resulted in fresh differentiations within European clothing cultures. Following the example of Burgundian etiquette, courtly culture attempted to channel the manifold political, cultural and social influences initiated by the Reformation. Due in particular to the dominant position of Spain under Charles V (1500–1558) (→ Media Link #as), the Castilian-Spanish court culture, as a symbol of the Counter Reformation, enjoyed influence and a strong reputation at other European courts until about 1620 and continued to exert this influence at some courts (such as Vienna) well into the 18th century.<sup>41</sup> (→ Media Link #at)

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With its strict, geometric form, courtly fashion emphasized the body-disciplining effect of clothing and its role in subjugating the body to the court etiquette of a centralist monarchy by ornate adornment.<sup>42</sup> The cone-shaped hoop skirt, first

appearing around the middle of the 16th century, continued to dominate female fashion in a number of variations until the end of the 18th century. The corset or bodice drawn down deeply and tapering to a point at the front remained a central element of female clothing. It forced the female body into a strict geometric shape with a narrow waist and broad hips (further broadened by padding), thereby establishing the normative ideal of the female body with its hour-glass shape.<sup>43</sup>

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An established repertoire of shapes and forms also emerged in male clothing, with the Spanish *Heerpauke* or Turkish trousers (usually filled with horsehair and sometimes accompanied by a codpiece) and a short, tight doublet and stockings, which from the mid-16th century were often knitted. Male clothing also borrowed fashion elements that were popular in the army, such as the loose doublet, longer trousers and calf-high leather boots.

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White shirt collars, usually made of finest lace, began to appear and were worn as a sign of distinction, whereby cleanliness was understood as a means of social differentiation and lace was seen as "eine Wäsche, die sauber macht"<sup>44</sup> ("a cloth that makes you clean"). This Spanish fashion provides an example of how a clothing style could be received and adapted in different ways in different parts of Europe. It had little impact in the Italian city states; the French toned it down considerably; however, in England it was enthusiastically embraced because of its suitability for festive and ceremonial purposes (→ Media Link #au).<sup>45</sup>

▲ 36

During the 17th century, the contrast between the luxuriant fashion of the noble court and the sober dress style of the middle classes (merchants) grew more pronounced. In contrast to the ostentatious and expensive lifestyles of the nobility, the dress style of the middle classes was characterized by austerity and Puritanism in terms of colour and shape, and, together with a general trend towards more natural representation in the performing arts, led to fundamental change in the meaning and interpretation of dress: Dress should now express inner values.<sup>46</sup>

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#### The colour black

The colour black, usually ascribed to Spanish fashion, provides an example of how a common fashion culture can emerge in spite of marked political, religious and social differences.<sup>47</sup> In spite of its association with Spanish fashion, black gained acceptance even in reformed Protestant countries. As an element of the so-called Dutch fashion, it gained acceptance in England, North Germany, Scandinavia and even among the Quakers in North America. In their views on ethics, bodily discipline and gender as a physical trait, there were considerable similarities between these societies and Catholic, absolutist Castile. The colour black came to symbolize respectability and decency – the central norms of the new middle classes (→ Media Link #av).<sup>48</sup>

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#### Courtly presentation and middle class fashion styles: France as fashion leader

After the Peace of Westphalia (1648), the fashion of the absolutist French court – particularly under Louis XIV (1638–1715) (→ Media Link #aw) – gained a position of dominance in European courtly fashion. Under French influence, fashion – as an element of courtly etiquette – became even more stylized, becoming an instrument of power of the monarchy and a means of demonstrating visually both the privileges of the nobility and its dependence on, and close links to, the monarch.<sup>49</sup>

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At the same time, the concept of *theatrum mundi* became influential in society and increasingly affected how social interaction was staged. This theatricalization of life was nowhere more developed than in courtly ceremonial practices.<sup>50</sup> The women in opulent *manteaux* (skirt and bodice) with padding at the hips and often a visible *devantière* (petticoat) were at the centre of court life, though neither as "partners" as in the Renaissance nor as idealized figures as in the era

of the minnesingers, but rather as charming decorations of the strictly patriarchal order. Simultaneously, middle class Enlightenment influences from Holland and England became apparent.

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To simplify somewhat, two distinct concepts of ethics and morality emerged during this period. One continued to be defined by the ceremonial culture of the court; the other, middle class Protestant concept tended to be defined by the central values of simplicity and authenticity.<sup>51</sup> (→ Media Link #ax)

▲ 41

In the 18th century, the dress of the nobility was characterized by the following elements until shortly before the French Revolution: for the ladies, broad expansive hoop skirts with panniers (frames) and tightly laced bodices (laced-up corsets and breastplates), *Stecker* and *Echelles* of expensive damask, satin and velvet; and for the men, colourful, ornately embroidered, short waistcoats and justaucorps as well as tail coats, and breeches with stockings.<sup>52</sup> (→ Media Link #ay)

▲ 42

Middle class dress, on the other hand, was characterized by considerably less elaboration and expense and was based – in contrast to the artificiality cultivated by the nobility – on the ideal of naturalness, i.e., the body and its movement unfettered by fashion. In England, this concept was even adopted by the nobility.<sup>53</sup>

▲ 43

This ideal manifested itself around 1800 in particular in the corset-less "empire" fashion, a trend that originated in France and featured dresses with a waistline just below the bosom, and also featured brightly coloured, light cotton fabrics.<sup>54</sup>

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During the course of the 18th century, the urban world became increasingly important for middle class clothing, particularly very large cities such as London, Paris, St. Petersburg and Vienna, in which dense social interaction facilitated and promoted the spread of new influences and new developments. Increased luxury and fashion-awareness, and prosperous mercantile middle classes led to increased demand for clothing and new clothing styles.<sup>55</sup> These new styles clearly demonstrate how ineffectual the old order of state regulations on dress code had become.

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Having already proved to be an inefficient means of enforcing a form of clothing defined from above and based on social distinctions, state regulations on dress code were finally abolished in the late-18th century. In the modern understanding of fashion, which rose to dominance during the 19th century, clothing lost its role of assigning social status and became governed instead by individual taste and financial means, as clothing became a central form of self-expression.<sup>56</sup>

▲ 46

The media of fashion: fashion journals

The history of the textile trade in Paris demonstrates the frequent emergence during the 18th century of new, unfamiliar patterns of consumption and tastes in clothing that deviated from the social order.<sup>57</sup> Growing discernment in clothes and fashion, increased luxury, and increased buying power among prosperous classes were conducive to the development of a press devoted to fashion. Up to the end of the 18th century, developments in fashion were displayed at European courts and in cities as far away as St. Petersburg using mannequins.<sup>58</sup> These were put on display on public squares for the public to admire. An independent fashion press gradually developed in the form of copperplate engravings, almanacs, and calendars which were aimed at an exclusive noble and middle class audience. Fashion journals published periodically from the end of the 18th century, such as the *Journal des Luxus und der Moden* in Germany (→ Media Link #az)(edited from 1787 by Friedrich Justin Bertuch [1747–1822] (→ Media Link #b0)) and the *Mercure Gallant* (from 1672) and *Galerie des Modes* 1778–1787 in France, helped to break the monopoly of the nobility on fashion



knowledge and to establish middle class fashion, which was defined by seasonal and economic change.<sup>59</sup> The successful German *Journal des Luxus und der Moden* also disseminated middle class Enlightenment values, such as ideas regarding children's dress and upbringing, and sought to stimulate cross-border trade and add to the prosperity<sup>60</sup> by its attempts to encourage an independent German fashion industry, thereby following the same logic as the French encyclopaedists. In this way, increased consumption led to new social differentiation.<sup>61</sup>

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The division of the journals in text and pictures provided a structure which remains typical of contemporary fashion journals. As a means of communication (and therefore advertisement), they establish the necessary connection between consumer and producer. Their illustrations serve as a guide for imitation and stimulate consumption.<sup>62</sup>

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## Fashion industry, consumption and the "clothing reform movement" (19th century)

In the 19th century, fashion witnessed unprecedented dynamic transformations and an increase in consumption, which was made possible, in particular, by the increasing industrial production of clothing, as well as the emergence of ready-made clothing (the invention of the sewing machine in 1855 was a seminal development) and new dyeing technologies (chemical dyes in the late-19th century).<sup>63</sup>

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The mass consumption of clothing resulted from demographic changes and industrialization (→ Media Link #b2) in the 19th century, but primarily also from cultural changes and changing patterns of behaviour that emerged with growing demand. This is illustrated by the example of the Hausvogteiplatz in Berlin, which contained a colourful mix of production, trade and marketing. From 1900 to 1920, the Hausvogteiplatz enjoyed the reputation of being one of the largest centres of ready-made fashion in the world, primarily due to trade.<sup>64</sup> Department stores began to appear in the major urban centres of the period (Paris, London, Berlin, St. Petersburg, Vienna, Stockholm, Copenhagen, Chicago, etc.). With their novel displays of goods and their large range of materials and clothing, department stores made participation in fashion consumption possible for a broader section of society, including the working classes.<sup>65</sup> During the course of these developments, an almost complete feminization of fashion consumption occurred.<sup>66</sup>

▲ 50

## Fashion in the 19th century

Whereas the empire fashion prevalent around 1800 was characterized by a loose, free shape, female clothing of the *Biedermeier* fashion (1825–1830) returned to more conservative trends with crinoline and a tight waistline. Up to the beginning of the 20th century, a succession of different corset shapes transformed the female body into an object of display in the shape of the bustle and s-curve, which was also an expression of the subordinate social role of the woman. More than ever, models of clothing reflected contemporary gender roles and gendered concepts of the body, which only allowed the man an active public role. The increasingly dark and unadorned middle class male suit, with its fixed repertoire of drainpipe trousers of various kinds, shirt, waistcoat and jacket, emphasized functionality and objectivity, and has remained the standard form of middle class dress up to the present.<sup>67</sup> Fashion changes drew their influence from historical models (Renaissance, baroque and rococo) but also exhibited Eastern European influences, especially in the area of furs.

▲ 51

However, female fashion – in particular, the corset – became the subject of a European-wide reform movement (which had less of an influence in France and southern Europe) in the last third of the 19th century. Doctors such as Carl Heinrich Stratz (1858–1924) (→ Media Link #b3) and Heinrich Lahmann (1860–1905) (→ Media Link #b4), the zoologist Gustav Jäger (1832–1917) (→ Media Link #b5), and the artists Henry van de Velde (1863–1957) (→ Media Link #b6), Richard Riemerschmid (1868–1957) (→ Media Link #b7), Alfred Mohrbutter (1867–1916) (→ Media Link #b8) and Gustav Klimt (1862–1918) (→ Media Link #b9) all participated in this movement along with the middle class feminist movement (→ Media Link #ba). Other cultural movements, such as sport (→ Media Link #bb) and nudism (the German Free Body Culture), propagated the ideal of the body freed from the constraints of fashion in accordance with the example of

classical antiquity (Venus de Milo) and advocated the introduction of far greater functionality and freedom of movement in female clothing to make it suitable for modernizing processes. In this process, both the body and clothes became the object of scientific discourse (physiology of clothing), and the body became the object of new strategies of cultural differentiation (healthy/sick, normal/abnormal, etc.).<sup>68</sup>

▲ 52

While discussions about fashion and dress were dominated by legal and economic considerations (dress regulations), or religious constraints (sermons (→ Media Link #bc)) up to the beginning of the 19th century, the discourse on dress now shifted to the arenas of politics, science and art. In the process, the focus shifted to the relationship between dress, the individual and society.<sup>69</sup>

▲ 53

Two other notable phenomena in the development of fashion in the 19th century deserve mention. Emerging as a result of the standing armies and new military techniques of absolutist states in the 18th century, the phenomenon of uniforms gave rise to specifically male forms of clothing. (→ Media Link #bd) Initially confined to the military, uniforms became increasingly common in the civil organs of the state. Uniforms signalled the disciplining (hygiene, posture) of the male body, making it a visual symbol and instrument for the enforcement of state authority.<sup>70</sup>

▲ 54

The second phenomenon pertains to the large-scale, Europe-wide emergence during the 19th century of regional rural clothing styles (traditional dress). These styles emerged as a result of new processes of rural stratification and identity formation, but also as a result of the middle class romanticization of rural life. In Eastern European countries in particular, rural folklore was instrumentalized by movements for national independence.<sup>71</sup>

▲ 55

## The "new woman" – transformations in the 20th century

In the 20th century and particularly in the 1920s, a fundamental transformation of concepts of gender and gender roles occurred in fashion, as in society generally. (→ Media Link #be) This reform process culminated in the 1920s in the phenomenon of the "new woman" with bobbed hair, a cigarette and wearing a knee-length skirt or shirt dress, thereby revealing the naked female leg which had been hidden from public view for centuries. (→ Media Link #bf) This was indicative of a new self-confidence among women, who in the context of increasing visible female employment (as secretaries, employees and telephonists) used fashion as a means of professional advancement and who for the first time could act independently in public.<sup>72</sup>

▲ 56

While male dress had previously been considered an expression of modernity, it now appeared conservative and too bound to the staid, monotonous middle class suit. The *Men's Dress Reform Party* founded in England in 1929 by the psychologist John Carl Flugel (1884–1955) (→ Media Link #bg) dedicated itself to the reform of male fashion.

▲ 57

## Transfer through media

The topos of the "new woman" was propagated by the numerous fashion journals of the period which aimed at various social clienteles. With the development of fashion photography, a new type of image emerged, which enabled a new perception of fashion by means of close-up photographs of the body and face, as well as photographs of individual details. This easier and cheaper means of producing visual representations of fashion accelerated the pace of fashion change and, through a close symbiosis with the growing film industry, created a new phenomenon of stars and models. In this way, it contributed to the discursive production and circulation of gender concepts and roles.<sup>73</sup>

▲ 58

## Fashion under dictatorship and occupation

In the 1930s, a general conservatism returned to female fashion and to concepts of the role of the women (in the form of "motherliness" and an emphasis on gender differences) in many European countries. However, this did not change the basic fashion features of the modern female appearance.

▲ 59

As so often in history, it became clear that clothing fashion requires an international context in which to develop. Under National Socialist rule (1933–1945), the desire for a German fashion remained more a propagandistic strategy than a reality. There were, however, attempts to put the German public in uniforms (League of German Maidens groups, parades, the promotion of national costumes such as the dirndl).<sup>74</sup>

▲ 60

#### Fashion powers – fashion nations

Many developments in fashion unfolded in a fairly similar way throughout Europe, but were combined with specific national or regional characteristics. They did not unfold at the same pace in all places and they did not affect all social classes to the same extent. The rule of Napoleon Bonaparte (1769–1831) (→ Media Link #bh) did not result in the general adoption of French fashion, but rather resulted in tendencies towards a return to national forms of fashion. This was reflected in the *Journal des Luxus und der Moden*, which abandoned its earlier enthusiasm for French fashion, championing instead national fashions as advocated by Justus Möser (1740–1794) (→ Media Link #bi). Under the influence of the Slavophile movement in Russia and in order to emphasize Russian national characteristics, Russian national dress was resurrected and even prescribed for ceremonial occasions at the imperial court (1834). On the other hand, even politically motivated measures such as the blockade of England could not dampen French enthusiasm for English male fashion.<sup>75</sup>

▲ 61

After the French Revolution, England and France emerged as the two main fashion powers (in production, trade and design). While London enjoyed a monopoly in male fashion, Paris was dominant in female fashion, and later also became the leader of high-fashion design with the establishment of the system of couture beginning with Charles Frédéric Worth (1826–1895) (→ Media Link #bk) during the rule of Napoleon III (1808–1873) (→ Media Link #bl).<sup>76</sup>

▲ 62

Around 1900, Berlin became the most important centre for the production and trade of ready-made clothes, thanks primarily to textile and clothing manufacturers of Jewish, French Huguenot and northern Italy (Piedmont) origin.<sup>77</sup>

▲ 63

The "language" of fashion was almost ubiquitously European and emphasized its roots in European urbanity. The fashion journals of the 19th and early-20th centuries borrowed from imagined oriental fashion styles, emphasizing the European links with the colonial world. As is often the case with fashion developments, this involved the import and export of images, propagandist arguments, fantasies and moods, rather than the actual adoption of foreign culture. The power of a specific "fashion" depends on a number of instruments such as communication, competent cultural agencies, or political and social events to which fashion reacts in an almost seismographic manner. Dictated fashion trends, on the other hand, very rarely prove successful.

▲ 64

In the 19th century, the networks of production and trade, travel and a nascent tourism (→ Media Link #bo) promoted the European-wide transmission of middle class fashion. In the first half of the 20th century, artistic movements also participated in this process, in particular avant-garde movements such as Italian futurism (ca. 1910–1940) or Russian constructivism (1900–1925), which incorporated fashion into their artistic concepts, thereby contributing to the renewal of the appearance of fashion.

▲ 65

Fashion discourses also reflect resistance to new influences, a subject which returned with periodic regularity from the

late Middle Ages to the modern period (1930s), though the ideological basis of the resistance constantly changed. Foreign fashion influences are often perceived as a threat, because they can change traditional identities, concepts and norms. In this way, foreign fashions are criticized in the moral-satirical literature of the Reformation. Examples of this are *Vom Hosenteufel* by the theologian Andreas Musculus (1514–1581) (→ Media Link #bp) and *Wider den Kleyder-Teuffel* by Johannes Strauss (→ Media Link #bq). This phenomenon often combined economic interests with genuine moral principles. Considerable criticism was directed at the fashion power France (in the 18th and 19th centuries), which was considered too dominant and criticized in print. While objections to French dominance in the late-18th century were primarily motivated by mercantilist wishes to promote indigenous industry, the fashion discourses from the early-19th century (reform clothing) until the 1930s were strongly characterized by strongly nationalist – even chauvinistic – tendencies.<sup>78</sup>

▲ 66

In retrospect, the European fashion landscape demonstrates the degree to which the historical diversity of European fashion oscillated between European self and the other; between the heterogeneity of the nations and a common European identity; between Europe and North America on the one hand, and the non-European world represented by the Orient, Africa and Latin America on the other. The forced Westernization of Russian dress habits under Peter I demonstrates the degree to which the adoption of the Western European fashion of the period (around 1700) was viewed as a sign that a society was ready to participate in general European modernization processes. Conversely, the return to traditional Byzantine garb under the influence of the Slavophile movement was motivated by modern nationalist thought.<sup>79</sup>

▲ 67

## Fashion and modernity, 1945–1950

Due to a general scarcity of materials in the immediate post-war period, fashion remained relatively plain and similar in style to the war years, even though there continued to be international fashion activity, as the fashion journals prove. In the context of the spread of American-style mass-consumption after 1950, however, there was an explosion in the development of fashion (Dior and New Look, production under license), especially in female fashion. This fashion is characterized by an accelerated pace of change and the massive consumption of fashion trends, which oscillate between extreme eroticization (the mini-skirt) and trends towards emancipation. In addition to haute couture, fashion has received new impulses from the youth cultures that have developed since the 1950s, such as teenagers and hippies, and latterly the punk, techno and hip-hop scenes. Instead of the previously vertical social system (trickle down), as described by Georg Simmel (1858–1918) (→ Media Link #br) in his theories on fashion (1911), there is a mixing of diverse influences, whereby fashion developments have become a subtle negotiation of changed gender and group constructions, and the staging of the self has become central.<sup>80</sup>

▲ 68

Gabriele Mentges, Dortmund

## Appendix

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**Link #az**



- <http://www.ieg-ego.eu/en/mediainfo/an-english-gentleman-in-the-newest-fashion-1786?mediainfo=1&width=900&height=500>  
"An English gentleman in the newest fashion" 1786


**Link #b0**

- Friedrich Justin Bertuch [1747–1822] VIAF  <http://viaf.org/viaf/39409589> DNB  <http://d-nb.info/gnd/118510169> ADB/NDB  <http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd118510169.html>

**Link #b2**

- Industrialization (<http://www.ieg-ego.eu/en/threads/backgrounds/industrialization/richard-h-tilly-industrialization-as-an-historical-process>)

**Link #b3**

- Carl Heinrich Stratz (1858–1924) VIAF  <http://viaf.org/viaf/69062634> DNB  <http://d-nb.info/gnd/117309044>




**Link #b4**

- Heinrich Lahmann (1860–1905) VIAF  <http://viaf.org/viaf/793389> DNB  <http://d-nb.info/gnd/117573760> ADB/NDB  <http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd117573760.html>

**Link #b5**

- Gustav Jäger (1832–1917) VIAF  <http://viaf.org/viaf/163078> DNB  <http://d-nb.info/gnd/118825615> ADB/NDB  <http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd118825615.html>

**Link #b6**

- Henry van de Velde (1863–1957) VIAF  <http://viaf.org/viaf/68944453> DNB  <http://d-nb.info/gnd/118626442> ADB/NDB  <http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd118626442.html>






#### Link #b7

- Richard Riemerschmid (1868–1957) VIAF  <http://viaf.org/viaf/54940957> DNB  (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/118600915>) ADB/NDB  (<http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd118600915.html>)

#### Link #b8

- Alfred Mohrbutter (1867–1916) VIAF  <http://viaf.org/viaf/55294600> DNB  (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/131951521>)

#### Link #b9

- Gustav Klimt (1862–1918) VIAF  <http://viaf.org/viaf/7399081> DNB  (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/118563289>) ADB/NDB  (<http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd118563289.html>)

#### Link #ba

- Women's Movements (<http://www.ieg-ego.eu/en/threads/transnational-movements-and-organisations/international-social-movements/leila-j-rupp-transnational-womens-movements>)

#### Link #bb

- Transfer des englischen Sports (<http://www.ieg-ego.eu/de/threads/modelle-und-stereotypen/anglophilie/michael-maurer-vom-mutterland-des-sports-zum-kontinent-der-transfer-des-englischen-sports-im-19-jahrhundert>)

#### Link #bc

- Predigt (<http://www.ieg-ego.eu/de/threads/europaeische-medien/medien-des-religioesen-transfers/sabine-holtz-predigt>)

#### Link #bd



- (<http://www.ieg-ego.eu/en/mediainfo/the-prussian-royal-postal-officials-in-uniform-1855?mediainfo=1&width=900&height=500>)  
The Prussian royal postal officials in uniform 1855

#### Link #be



- (<http://www.ieg-ego.eu/en/mediainfo/middle-class-female-fashion-at-the-turn-of-the-20th-century?mediainfo=1&width=900&height=500>)  
Middle class female fashion at the turn of the 20th century

#### Link #bf






- (<http://www.ieg-ego.eu/en/mediainfo/ladies-fashion-in-the-1920s?mediainfo=1&width=900&height=500>)  
Ladies' fashion in the 1920s




#### Link #bg

- John Carl Flügel (1884–1955) VIAF  <http://viaf.org/viaf/17319787> DNB  (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/135717671>)

#### Link #bh

- Napoleon Bonaparte (1769–1831) VIAF  <http://viaf.org/viaf/106964661> DNB  <http://d-nb.info/gnd/118586408> ADB/NDB  <http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd118586408.html>

#### Link #bi

- Justus Möser (1740–1794) VIAF  <http://viaf.org/viaf/17238377> DNB  <http://d-nb.info/gnd/11858314X> ADB/NDB  <http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd11858314X.html>

#### Link #bk

- Charles Frédéric Worth (1826–1895) VIAF  <http://viaf.org/viaf/67266860> DNB  <http://d-nb.info/gnd/119031817>

#### Link #bl

- Napoleon III of France (1808–1873) VIAF  <http://viaf.org/viaf/88934487> DNB  <http://d-nb.info/gnd/118586416> ADB/NDB  <http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd118586416.html>



#### Link #bo

- The History of Tourism (<http://www.ieg-ego.eu/en/threads/europe-on-the-road/the-history-of-tourism/ueli-gyr-the-history-of-tourism>)




#### Link #bp

- Andreas Musculus (1514–1581) VIAF  <http://viaf.org/viaf/9976258> DNB  <http://d-nb.info/gnd/118785478> ADB/NDB  <http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd118785478.html>

#### Link #bq

- Johannes Strauss VIAF  <http://viaf.org/viaf/13126686> DNB  <http://d-nb.info/gnd/119841479>

#### Link #br

- Georg Simmel (1858–1918) VIAF  <http://viaf.org/viaf/39384262> DNB  <http://d-nb.info/gnd/118614436> ADB/NDB  <http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd118614436.html>