

A Study on Walter Benjamin's Thoughts on Fashion Phenomenon

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Abstract

This study is focused on Walter Benjamin'sⁱ belief about one of the consequences of modernity: the phenomenon of fashion. After the industrial revolution, which took place in the 18th and 19th centuries, fashion appeared in the second half of the 19th century, in Paris, as it can be seen in Impressionist paintings. In the beginning, it was considered as a mere covering style, but in the early 20th century, especially after World War II, while women's social and commercial activities decreased, it started to play an important role as an important kind of art in all of the fields related to modern life, such as power policies, sexism and even protestant movements.

Walter Benjamin, one of the most renowned philosophers, art theorists and literary cultural critics of the 20th century, who was also among the famous thinkers of Frankfurt School, called Paris "the capital of the 19th century." Charles Baudelaireⁱⁱ, a lyric poet in the era of high Capitalism, in his unfinished luminous work *The Arcades Project*. In some sections of this book, Benjamin criticized the modern period as the age of technological reproduction, and also studied the fashion issue. Moreover, regarding the works of Surrealist painters, he studied the collection of *The Devil in Paris of Grandville*ⁱⁱⁱ, as an urban organism.

The purpose of this research is to study Benjamin's thoughts on the phenomenon of fashion and its relationship with the industrial communities in Europe. The main questions are: According to Benjamin, what factors caused the birth of fashion phenomenon? And how did it become one of the most important forms of modern art. My approach in this study was descriptive-analytic method, in order to explain the ideas of Benjamin in the field of fashion.

Keywords: Walter Benjamin; Charles Baudelaire; Fashion Philosophy; Roland Barthes; Surrealism

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1. Introduction

As it was said before, Walter Benjamin is one of the prominent German Marxist sociologists, who was influenced directly by the French poet and author of the 19th century, Baudelaire, in presenting his most important theory in the essay, “The Work of Art in the Age of Technological Reproduction.” In his essay, Benjamin describes how art work lost its aura due to technological reproduction in mass industrial production. Benjamin wrote extensive interpretations on Baudelaire’s literary theory, among which the most important book is called *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*. In 1927, he began his research on Paris passages in the 19th century. Although this project was left unfinished, his theories about this area have been considered as a basis for many significant cultural and artistic theories, until now.

Considering the fashion phenomenon as a form of art, there are two main questions: First, what factors led to the emergence of the fashion phenomenon? Second, how did fashion become one of the most important forms of modern arts? In order to answer these questions, first of all, we need to know why Benjamin considered Paris the capital of the nineteenth-century, and how Baudelaire’s poems affected Benjamin’s developing theory which provided the foundation for his thoughts. In this regard, we should study some parts of *The Arcades Project*, in order to figure out the characteristics of nineteenth-century European societies, especially Paris, as the first modern city.

In his book, Benjamin presented a combination of quotes and interpretations of a hundred of published sources, classified into 36 categories, such as fashion, fatigue, utopia, photography, events, advertisements, depravity, Baudelaire, and progress theory. His main concern in these areas was a process in objects that creates the modern world. He defined modernity as the ability of human beings to consume. The modern society created consumerism; the gathering of people in shopping malls is the central point in social relations (URL1). Another important point which we will mention in the next section is Benjamin’s theory of urban organism, which was inspired by the Surrealist paintings of J.J. Grandville, which ultimately lead to the issue of Surrealist fashion imagery.

The problem which is of great significance regarding fashion is its scope, potentials, and explanation of its goals in the modern society, where clothing can be considered equivalent to architecture, instead of applied arts such as pottery and tapestry. The point worthy of consideration is why the artistic quality of clothing has not found a place equal to architecture during these years. Perhaps one of the reasons is that architecture is obviously considered as a valuable and heroic effort with an artistic label, so that it could cast its shadow and affect the serious academic studies with its considerable costs and through a deceptive concept (Miller, 2007, p. 31). In comparison to architecture and fashion, perhaps it may be noted that fashion is the feminine form of architecture, which is considered as one of the main branches of modern art in the twentieth century.

2. Literature Review

Based on the previous studies, it can be concluded that fashion, as a special artistic form in the 20th century, was considered highly by art scholars (Breman, 2013, p. 176). The problem that can be considered a result of modernity, which was begun by the artists of the 19th century and could open a modern way for the artistic community during the artistic movements of the 20th century. Today, this way is the representative of Western culture around the world.

Alexia Bretas, in an article entitled *The Eternal Return of the New –The Aesthetics of Fashion in Walter Benjamin*, assessed Walter Benjamin’s fashion philosophy. Bretas believes that classic aesthetics is based on three bases of Baudelaire, Grandville, and surrealists, which created the early

history of the 19th century through dialectic discussions between tradition and modernity. The author divided this study into four sections: In the first section, entitled “Dandy the Hero of Modernity,” he describes the concept of modernity and examines the article “The Painter of Modern Life” by Charles Baudelaire. The second section entitled “Historical Nationality” is allocated to the theories of Benjamin about aesthetics in the 19th century. In the third section, “An Allegorical Alchemy,” the author proves that fashion uses allegory instead of symbolism, according to Benjamin. Thus, in a certain system, dead objects return to life; this is one of the prominent characteristics of surrealist artists. Finally, in the fourth section, entitled “The Immortal Return of Modernity,” Bretas considers a conflict between tradition and modernity as a significant hypothesis. Bretas established a very good and citable relationship between surrealism, Baudelaire, and Grandville in this study, and the points discussed in this study can be the onset of fashion theoretical issues.

Make time: Toward a Historical Materialist Fashion is a thesis written by Cohen^v, in which he discusses the social significance of fashion abstract phenomenon, by referring to male clothing examples of the fashion industry, by using Walter Benjamin’s theories on surrealism and fashion. In his thesis, Cohen refers to the prominent designers of this area, like Martin^{vi}, Rei Kawakubo^{vii}, and other designers making or renovating themselves every day. This study analyzed the social significance of abstract phenomena and considered the acceleration of material revolution, growing in a free society without class differences, to show fashion as an industrial phenomenon having a direct relationship to Benjamin’s notion on understanding the aesthetics, commercial, and material concept. At the end, the author concluded that fashion is a material revolution towards the freedom and emergence of a society without class, while fashion designers and consumers can use the dialectic for the shock or relief of society.

Among Persian studies on this topic, there is a study by Tahoori, entitled “*Walter Benjamin: Theory of Manifestation Absence in Modern Art*”, referring to Benjamin as one of the significant members of the Frankfurt school. Benjamin’s studies are of great significance in understanding the relationship between modern art, politics and mass culture. In this study, he referred to the relationship between Benjamin and surrealism and studied Benjamin’s attitude, which is the result of his studies on modern art done by Baudelaire, the French poet of the 19th century.

Tahoori believed that Benjamin, by writing the article “*Paris, Capital of the 19th Century*”, analyzed the arrival of art into daily life and explained Benjamin’s thought on passages- one of the results of textile business boom- in detail. In addition, he explained the relationship between art, architecture, textile, industry, and modernity. This study is an appropriate analysis of Benjamin’s article in this regard. The opinions of Benjamin on the artistic works during the technological reproduction era are the solutions of many ideas in the fashion world during the modern era.

3. The Influence of Baudelaire on Benjamin's World

Walter Benjamin was the first person who understood the unlimited richness and depth of prose poems, through his brilliant articles on Baudelaire and Paris. The writings of Benjamin on Paris indicated a stunning display of conflict and contradiction, so that the taste of Baudelaire’s poems pushed Benjamin towards the bright lights, beautiful women, adornment, fashion, and luxury of the city, as well as the play and rotation of shining stages and their stunning appearance (Berman, 2013, p. 176). Benjamin could achieve considerable results in the modern world, according to the writings and thoughts of Baudelaire. Perhaps Benjamin was not exaggerating when he told Adorno “He pulled any notion in his book about Baudelaire and Paris in the 19th century out of the realm of madness. Something like fear from stopping before productivity is hidden behind these sentences”

(Benjamin, 2017, p. 111). In fact, he could write the introduction to his theory on Paris by approaching the thoughts of this part of the 19th century.

Benjamin discussed the concept of flaner^{viii} in his conceptual project (passages project), in the 21th. An unfinished project that was a starting point for discovering the effect of modern life in the cities on human soul. Baudelaire in Paris and the modern world named by himself looked for an artist to describe the modern world through his perspective. He believed that the artist should wander in the city to illustrate the dailiness of life. Baudelaire's artist, flaner, is a character who is not a part of bourgeoisie, yet, and passes through the populations created in the city, especially the passages of Paris (Tahoori, 2005, 77). The direct effect of Baudelaire's thoughts can be observed well in Benjamin's project, as Friedberg emphasized the point:

"Baudelaire's collection of poems, *Les fleurs du mal* (Flowers of Evil), is the cornerstone of Benjamin's massive work on modernity, an uncompleted study of the Paris arcades. For Benjamin, the poems record the ambulatory gaze that the flâneur directs on Paris" (Seal, 2013).

Internal conflicts give life to all pages of Benjamin and are the source of energy and attraction in Baudelaire's works (Berman, 2013, p. 176). In fact, Benjamin used Baudelaire's thoughts to conclude that the appearance of consecutive civilizations of a problem is a temporary issue; everything in modern society is created in the moment, but its effect and result is eternal, and this is the result of a look obtained by Benjamin from Baudelaire's definition of modernity. According to Baudelaire, modernity is the perspective of flaner or unproductive dandy of aesthetics (Tahoori, 2005, p. 57). Since Baudelaire was a dandy-lover, an ideology that his complicated existence was coordinated with his poetic character and attitude (Shayegan, 2017, p. 120), his thoughts became more significant in the field of modernity and he attempted to find his behavior and clothing in the modern world of Paris.

Whatever we know about dandy, it certainly refers to more than just behavior. He is a man who has decided to express the basis and root of differences in male clothing in an absolute logic. Barthes believed "a dandy wants to be more distinct in this way. His nature is not social to him but meta-physical". He believed that the nature of his existence is slightly beyond the group gathering. However, his dandism is exactly a conflict of his character. In addition, he pretends that his existential nature, like gods, can attend all components of elements (Barthes, 2013, p. 63). Dandy^{ix}, with his black clothes, cold behavior, manner full of delicacy and different nature, went from England to the literary scope of France in 1853. Barbe Doroyli wrote a famous book about dandism, and so did *George Brummell* in 1845, and Baudelaire, in 1860, allocated a part of his short dissertation "*The Painter of the Modern Era*" to dandism (Shayegan, 2017, p.130).

Shayegan, in his book "*Consciousness Madness*", referred to some traits of dandy, like politeness, audacity, daring, and interest to shock others, but the prominent trait of dandy is his fashion style and makeup. However, according to the appearance, he did not limit dandy to mere clothing. According to Barbe, it is the presentation of clothes which is significant in dandism tradition. Each dandy is unique in his dressing style; dandy creates his fashion and does not follow a pure fashion. Dandy dresses himself up without paying special attention to makeup. It is the duty of others to pay attention to his adornment. According to Baudelaire, dandy should live in front of the mirror (Shayegan, 2017, p. 134).

Using details, dandy allows his clothes to become another person in the theoretical principles, (attitude) without a boundary, because the ways of dressing is limited, and repetition in clothes becomes rapidly tedious. If no special detail is involved in its production, no special attention will be paid to it. With the industrialization of the European society, dandy gave up the industrial production, gradually, because all sorts of ideas and details found their way into the process. Thus,

the ready dress was the first death of backwardness for Dandism. The birth of main clothing stores was the thing destroying and ruining Dandism forever. Such clothes were not related to the mass and were considered as a kind of luxury-orientation, but they were gradually turned into a social norm. Meanwhile, personal creativities (which were already invented by dandies) were released and became accessible consumption materials (Barthes, 2013, p. 63). For this reason, studying the behavior, clothing, and thoughts of Baudelaire were considered by Benjamin.

Baudelaire was the first person to use "modernity". In the article "The Painter of the Modern Life", he wrote: "Modernity is temporary and conditional. This is half of art and its other half is eternal and unchangeable" (Berman, 2013, p. 159). A half of it is related to the human trait that is decaying, and the other half is the soul which remains and is eternal. The part that is decaying is the body. The pleasure we obtain from the present time is not due to aesthetics, but because of its quality at the present time (Bretas, 2013, p. 150). This definition of modernity is highly citable for describing the contemporary artistic movements, and many concepts of art aesthetics can be well understood by this description. He disregarded the traditional definition of art in his study and believed that the real artist should represent the society where he lives. Art plays a key role in the emergence of fashion phenomenon, because art can display the world of industry and architecture with the help of fashion, use it in the cycle of economics, and redefine the social situations.

According to Baudelaire, an artist is someone who moves along his time and uses all the facilities for the purpose of displaying his art. He believed that "For designing the daily life customs, illustrating the bourgeoisie life and fashion displays, the technical tools which are more efficient and cheaper, are obviously the best". In addition, he added, "An artist is sometimes a poet, sometimes he approaches a novel author or preacher; he is the painter of temporary moments and the painter of all those implications having the same temporary moments to eternity" (Baudelaire, 2014, p. 32-33).

For Benjamin, urban environment, especially the parks in Paris, was a tool for stimulating the lost memories of the past. According to him, the material culture of a city provides the shared public spaces for the confrontation of consciousness and unconsciousness, as well as the relationship between the past and present, not the human soul. The changes that were created in France during the 19th century are certainly the product of technology, but displaying this space is of great significance. Those who are deep within the environment do not always have a critical look about the environment, but certainly the artists with a deep and mirror-like look can inform the society of this change. This poem by Baudelaire indicates the same changes: "What a pity that the appearance of cities changes sooner than the human heart" (Shayegan, 2017, p. 120).

4. Benjamin and Fashion

Apparently, the first connection between Benjamin's thoughts with Baudelaire was his enjoyment of Baudelaire's constructive opinions in the field of *Arcades Project*, especially the modern atmosphere of Paris and the manifestation of fashion in literature. He considered literature as a significant communication tool with politics, culture, society, and art. Fashion was formed as a process (or set of processes) in the 19th century, and Benjamin challenged the objects in the frontline of capitalism wave. In fact, his theories were considered a tool for exploring and displaying the past and the relationship to the evolutionary policies of his era. According to him, the objects and tools constructing fashion are an example of a weird, but at the same time, attractive phenomenon which always refers to the present. In addition to being complicated in the path of aesthetics (look and feeling), it is always associated with the changes of society. Thus, Benjamin studied fashion in the form of an aesthetic phenomenon, as instant photos and social reflections,

and then as the aesthetics of changes and an example of perception and feeling (Hroch, 2010, p. 109).

The obvious example of this aesthetics can be observed in a piece given at the beginning of the article “Paris: Capital of the 19th Century”.

Yes, when all the world from Paris to China pays heed to your doctrine, divine Saint-Simon, the glorious Golden Age will be reborn. Rivers will flow with chocolate and tea, sheep roasted whole will frisk on the plain, and sautéed pike will swim in the Seine. Fricassee spinach will grow on the ground, garnished with crushed fried croutons; the trees will bring forth apple compotes, and farmers will harvest boots and coats. It will snow wine, it will rain chickens, and ducks cooked with turnips will fall from the sky (Benjamin 1999, p. 174).

The literary pieces mentioned by Walter Benjamin in his book are a part of the objectives of his unfinished project, a document which is considered as the revolutionary change of the 19th century, the rapid transition era where fashion was born and developed out of two aspects. First, as a material object- the female clothing- and second as an industrialization process and the increase of urbanization, which was created due to the change of life in Paris, during the 19th century. Benjamin in his book *Arcades Project* introduced the appearance of Paris, which was the model of modernity, introduced as “It is a mosaic that interweaves everything: passages, fashion, exhibitions, details of daily life, technical innovation, stock exchange economy, and wandering” (Shayegan, 2016, p. 81).

Perhaps not surprisingly, this era of rapid transition was the period that gave rise to fashion, both as a material object (for example, couture) and as a process (or a cycle of change). The industrialization and increased urbanization that characterized nineteenth-century Parisian life, led to changes in clothing style that outpaced the slower, more gradual shifts in the style of earlier centuries. The nineteenth century saw the emergence of fashion as a process (or rather, a set of processes) characterized by constant, ongoing, and rapid alterations in clothing styles or ‘fashions’ (as the items themselves also came to be called). The fashion ‘process’ — *a cycle of continuous change* — worked in tandem with the increased speed of production of clothing, as well as the increased rate at which various styles were taken up (and subsequently abandoned) by various ranks of city dwellers seeking to stay on top of the latest trend (Horch, 2010, p. 109).

Walter Benjamin presented a poetic definition of fashion and history which is related to material questions from a meta-physical aspect and expressed fashion as a structural tool. Fashion mixes a basis of eternal or classic idea with its anti-thesis, which is obviously seen in the contemporary era. The apparent conflict between eternity and current moment was abolished with the movements requiring a historical past for continuing any presence. Thus, he described the position of fashion in history as an eternal concept, i.e. the aesthetic ideal and the continuous progress of history. Benjamin described the image “the jump of a tiger” to explain how fashion goes back from the contemporary era to the ancient era without remaining separately in a historical configuration or aesthetics (the jump of a tiger under the open sky of history indicates a convergence having an internal revolution) (URL2).

5. Birth of Fashion in "Paris: Capital of the 19th Century"

Whatever Benjamin attempted to describe was obviously seen in Paris, but someone had to describe it as Constantine Guy^x designed it. Baudelaire did so in the article “The Painter of Modern Life”, and Édouard Manet criticized it in his painting. The same atmosphere that Benjamin understood well in the next years and presented his technological era theory in the form of the article “Paris: Capital of the 19th Century”. He knew well that “As Vesuve^{xi} ranges were turned into

heavenly gardens, due to the lava covering them for many years, social life, art, and fashion were boomed to the lava of the French revolution without any alternate” (Shayegan, 2016, p. 98). Thus, it can be understood why Benjamin referred to the combination of industry and technology in this project and considered the newly constructed and modern buildings in Paris as the factor of fashion birth, which could introduce Paris as the center of modernity after the war, to become an appropriate place for wandering the streets:

The magic columns of these palaces show to the amateur on all sides, in the objects their porticos display, the fact that industry is the rival of the arts.

Most of the Paris arcades came into being in the decade and a half after 1822. The first condition for their emergence is the boom in the textile trade (Benjamin, 1999, p. 77).

This study depicted the atmosphere of Paris in the 19th century, appropriately, and mentioned a big industry which became the main factor of European business growth. In addition, he referred to the progress of technology, the mixture of iron, glass, and many constructions which were necessary for the world trade. Benjamin believed that the progress of industry and the construction of big passages in Paris were the main factors of the textile industry boom, because the showcases of shops in Paris should have been full of luxurious goods.

"These arcades, a recent invention of industrial luxury, are glass-roofed, marble-paneled corridors extending through whole blocks of buildings, whose owners have joined together for such enterprises. Lining both sides of these corridors, which get their light from above, are the most elegant shops, so that the passage is a city, a world in miniature" (Benjamin, 1999, p. 78).

6. The Unfinished Project of Passages

Fashion as an economic force and visual sign is one of the most significant features of Benjamin’s passages project. He collected about 300 documents on clothing design, codes of dressing, art, literature, etc. in his book. Fashion axis, in his theories, was considered as a historical fact, not merely a historical element, as a sign of the history of the past and a factor which is analyzed through permanent and continuous quotes by history. It is a historical structure which uses the styles, decorations, and motifs of the past (URL3).



Fig 1 Walter Benjamin’s Passages Project, Source: (Benjamin, 1999)

The process of technology development in all production fields in Europe, from the Middle Ages to the early 19th century, was much slower than the art development. Art can use technological processes differently at different times. However, all evolutions that emerged during 1800 years and were rapidly dictated into art became a part of fashion, until we reached the current status. It seems that art cannot adjust itself to technological processes, and it is the advertisements which are the stimulators of their dreams in the industry (Ibid). Social and historical jumps in clothing for the purpose of understanding the unique character as a historical constructor are the potential structure system or even a revolutionary force. Benjamin, with his unfinished work, invited us to watch the new abstract image of fashion which is independent of material (textile industry, clothing, design, distribution, representation, etc.) (URL 4). In fact, the first artificial materials were made with iron in the history of architecture, by which construction was developed over centuries, and then the combination of glass with iron provided the required architectural conditions for building a utopia. A society where its shops were the place of gathering people, experienced a new event with the birth of a utopian where the thousand-year effects of life are visible with sustainable buildings and temporary fashion (Benjamin, 1999, p. 79). According to Benjamin, business became a determining factor in art by changing the urban space, big shops, and international exhibitions, so that with the development of textile industry, investment should have formed new ways for producing and maintaining its interests in developing consumerism and use art (Tahoori, 2005, p. 49). However, one of the famous and unfinished works of Benjamin was a document entitled “The Stage of Revolutionary Changes in the 19th Century.” This rapid transition era was called a material era- for example, clothing fashion- and the increase of urbanism and the presence of industry, indicating the life in Paris in the 19th century, led to the change of fashion style. Such changes occurred more rapidly than the changes of previous centuries.

In the 19th century, the emergence of fashion was a set of processes with continuous and rapid changes in fashion or model styles (Wilson, 2015, p. 5). When citizens attempt to keep themselves at the highest level, this continuous changes cycle with the rapid increase of clothing production as well as the increase of interest rate with different styles. According to Benjamin, evolution, even at a small and radical change level can lead to the recognition of small things and a revolutionary spirit. In fact, Benjamin believed that small details in fashion always cause changes and revolutions in the mind; they create a world and destroy a world, and such gradual changes are so small and temporary that may look as a revolution (Benjamin, 1999, p. 78). Benjamin, in his big project of passages that was not published during his life, described Paris as it was, like how it was praised by Baudelaire. In fact, Benjamin explained Baudelaire’s thoughts and his most important ideas on the artistic work. Paris was an appropriate place for passages: the capital of dreams, the dreamiest subject of surrealists (Tahoori, 2005, p.48). According to him, architecture with iron constructions overtakes art, and the citizens whose political superiority on villages is expressed over time attempt to take the village to the city (Benjamin, 2017, p. 135).

Paris was recognized as the capital of selfishness and fashion (Benjamin, 1999, p. 83), a city that would become the patron of modernity, if it was the cultural center of Christianity during the middle ages (Shayegan, 2016, p. 102). In fact, Paris, in form of a city with a pattern of modernity, was the starter of all the madness in the modern era (Shayegan, 2016, p. 105), and it was regarded by everyone since fashion with the centrality of Paris was introduced to the world.

Everyone’s attention was paid to Paris and the artists went there to be united around the flag “art for art”. From this motto, the general concept of art was originated, which attempted to put art alone versus the growth of technology (Benjamin, 2017, p. 141).

Modernity is the product of its machines of which modern women and men are merely the reproduced examples (Berman, 2013, p. 32). It is the thing believed by the modern enemies of the 20th century. Benjamin always intended to overlook the temptations of Paris, but could never ignore the last look at whatever was happening in the boulevards, underpasses, and roofed bazaar; from bright lights, beautiful women, adornments, fashion, and urban luxury! However, his passages project, which was a research on Baudelaire, Paris, and capitalism in the 19th century was unfortunately unfinished (Berman, 2013, p. 176).

7. J.J. Grandville or Global Exhibition

Walter Benjamin, in the article “Paris: Capital of the 19th Century”, wrote about a painter that can create a useful world by his works and global exhibitions. Benjamin believed that Grandville belongs to that group of authors in the 20th century of Germany, who were the source of negotiation and discussion more than others. The depth of the effect of modernization changes and the rhythm of the new capital on the lifestyle and thoughts of Benjamin can be found in the urban painting and his childhood in Berlin, in the late 19th century, as well as the passages project. In fact, he was the unofficial master of an official philosophy (Brodersen, 2011, p. 17-19). Grandville globalized the commercial goods and developed the power of fashion by creating his fantasy characters. The fantasies of Grandville transferred the feature of being a product to the whole world. He dominated fashion on objects as much as the whole world. Some traditions gave a new power to objectivity on which life was dependent and was subdued by the sexual attraction (Tahoori, 2015, p. 54). Walter Benjamin studied the exhibition of Grandville paintings in 1844, in an article entitled "Le Diable" and used it as an urban organism. In the framework of modern aesthetics in the 19th century, no fight was made against these natural rules, but mimesis occurred weirdly, and the model of this mimesis was presented by the works of Grandville (Bretas, 2013, p. 154). "Grandville's masking of nature with the fashions of midcentury-nature understood as the cosmos, as well as the world of animals and plants-lets history, in the guise of fashion, be derived from the eternal cycle of nature" (Benjamin, 1999, p. 200).



Fig 2 The Surreal Painting by Grandville, Source: (J.J. Grandville, 1847. P. 269)

In fact, the comic and cosmic style of Grandville has a specific feature in introducing human beings in the form of nature, which was studied and confirmed by Benjamin. He considered the world of nature as an unmatched model for historical events and indicated that humans are always present with nature clothes in social events. According to Benjamin, the paintings of Grandville are not merely for entertainment, but for correcting the wired personal behaviors of individuals which have social consequences. Illustrating the plants and creating human profiles for each one make the audience think. (Fig 2 and 3) "Dalias, lillies, violets, poppies and so many other flowers are portrayed and described as animated entities with characteristics, vestments and accessories associated to each profile. Stems and leaves play the role of skirts and dresses, while petals become ornaments for the hair or exotic colorful hats, giving shape to an inspired humanization of Art nouveau floral patterns" (Bretas, 2013, p. 154).

Grandville portrays the tulip in a sultana's headdress; her bulbs are worn about her like jewels, in this illustration for *Les Fleurs Animées*. During the height of "tulip mania" in Europe, the flowers became so valuable that they sometimes functioned as a form of currency in their own right. The Ottomans prized her no less; in the accompanying story she is born Dutch, but is abducted by a Barbary corsair, who styles her as the "Sultana Tulipia" (URL6).

Issued in English as "The Flowers Personified," *Les Fleurs Animées* imagines the "Court of Flora" granted maidenly forms in a bid to try human life and judge for themselves whether they truly own the qualities that the romantics have ascribed to them; their experiences are related in a series of fanciful vignettes. The ornate, two-volume set was illustrated with 54 hand-colored plates in what became a strange and beautiful masterpiece, unique in its surreal whimsy (J.J. Grandville, 1847. P. 278).

This short and poetic note strengthened the modernity theory of Benjamin. In fact, the governance of good, sparkle, and the significance of entertainment around it were the final theme of Grandville art (Benjamin, 2017, 134). The surreal illustrations of Grandville can be considered the result of urban space in Paris, a gigantic city where drugs, depravity, and deterioration of creatures work together to create Baudelaire gods, the temple of modernity gods (Shayegan, 2017, p. 88). In fact, Benjamin's thoughts were based on the fact that the 19th century has determined our current behavior in a broad scale and the flow of goods, circulation of wealth, and boulevards have formed the general scheme of our behavior (Shayegan, 2017, p. 86). Such a notion is the result of the intelligent attitude of the painters like Grandville, illustrating the appearance of cities in another way and displaying the urban system as it is. The invention of photography creates an outlook, urbanism ends wandering, and finally Grandville global exhibition reveals the value of goods exchange (Shayegan, 2007, p. 82).

"When Grandville presents a new fan as the 'fan of Iris', when the Milky Way appears as an 'avenue' illuminated at night by gas lamps, when the moon reposes on fashionable velvet cushions instead of on clouds, then history is being secularized and drawn into a natural context as relentlessly as it was three hundred years earlier with allegory" (Benjamin, 1999, p. 200-201).

Global exhibitions were the spellbound places to visit the goods. The entire Europe began a movement to see the goods which were the result of the tendency to entertain the middle class. Luxurious goods and the distractions around them were among the hidden subjects of Grandville's art. The solidarity between the utopian and material element being was called the dogicalcaper's by Marx. The issues which were ended by Grandville, in a method of determining the good in the luxurious industry, converting the entire nature to a specialty and then presenting it as advertisement.



Fig 3 Surreal Picture of Grandville, Source: (URL5)

8. Surrealism and Fashion according to Benjamin

Walter Benjamin, in his article "*Surrealism, the Last Snapshot of the European Intelligentsia*", referred to the great revolutionary forces discovered in the past, such as the first iron structures, the first photos, gradual pianos, the clothes of the last five years, etc. to see whether new things are made by destroying these goods to create a unique form of art. The goal of an alchemist is to convert metal to gold, while the goal of surrealists is converting regular things to art, which is exactly the irregular and revolutionary facilities of fashion. He believed:

"This year", said Tristouse, 'fashions are bizarre and common, simple and full of fantasy. Any material from nature's domain can now be introduced into the composition of women's clothes. I saw a charming dress made of corks ... You'd have thought it was a gold mine out for a walk. Later it started raining and the lady looked like a silver mine... Fashion is becoming practical and no longer looks down on anything. It ennobles everything. It does for materials what the Romantics did for words" (Bretas 2013, p. 158; Benjamin, 1999, p. 70).

Benjamin believed that fashion is related to the past, not an eternal representative of surrealism. In fact, he considered the Baroque in the 17th century, the empire of modernity in the second half of the 19th century and the aesthetics of the 20th century as a kind of overlap between different time layers. Cohen believed that Benjamin considered his plan based on the acceleration of a material revolution, where a free society emerges without class differences; a society where the producers and consumers can use the fashion dialectic. On the other hand, Roland Barthes believed that fashion belongs to all the phenomena and neomania^{xii} which emerged in our civilization with the birth of capitalism with a completely organized fall, and fashion had no place for imaginary predictions. Accordingly, fashion reading, with the help of Benjamin, tells us that revolution is not inherently a tool for labelling the clothes, but as series of clothes free or open themselves to be read (Cohen, 2006, p. 71).

In fact, fashion is an abstract phenomenon which is not inclusively related to clothing and can be defined in the form of an individual or social body. Cohen considered the beginning of surrealistic clothing design from the cooperation of Salvador Dali and Elsa Schiaparelli in 1924 and the crab dress (Fig 4). Then, surrealism emerged in America and Europe, which left dialectic effects, and for Walter Benjamin, the modern dialectic image appeared as fashion. For Benjamin, this “dialectical image” was epitomized by fashion, and always a site of ambiguity. Artist and critic, Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe, identifies this quality of fashion as inherently surrealist:

“... fashion, which is and always has been a language of concealment as revelation, covering as display, the external as an intensification of what it begins to obscure, is an essentially surrealist operation to begin with, a surreal activity both *avant* and *après le lettre*” (Gilbert-Rolfe & Others, 1995, p. 280; Cohen, 2006, p. 18).

In fact, fashion retrieves some parts of the past and the realization of previous images leads to raising the base of question in modern images and retrieving the images which seem to currently exist. The fact that fashion provides historical information at the moment was an exercise for Benjamin.



Fig 4 Crab Dress by Salvador Dali, Source: (Cohen, 2006, p. 3)

Fashion in Benjamin’s reading is a material revolution to free and create a society without class, where fashion producers and consumers can use dialectic to shock and relieve the society. Barthes believed that “Fashion doubtless belongs to all the phenomena of neomania which probably appeared in our civilization with the birth of capitalism: in an entirely institutional manner, the new is a purchased value” (Barthes, 1983, p. 300; Cohen, 2006, p. 71).

9. Conclusion

After the industrial revolution of Europe, new political, social, and cultural currents occurred, which were very significant in changing the path from specific evolutions in human life. Meanwhile, artists in past centuries, with their courage and ingenuity in different fields, attempted to explain the current notions of society and illustrate the social and cultural facts, which play a fundamental role in the attitude or even the change of people's intellectual path. It seems that literature, especially the thoughts of Charles Baudelaire among the arts of Europe in the 19th century, left a considerable effect on the art of its time and the consequent notions, by appropriate analysis of urban appearance. As Walter Benjamin, the German author and thinker, revealed and analyzed art in the modern era in a new way, a few years after Baudelaire, by reading his poems and theories.

Undoubtedly, Benjamin who is one of the big thinkers of the 20th century, presented one of the most significant theories in the field of modern art, by thinking on Baudelaire's works and looking at the paintings of surreal painters. He introduced Paris as the model city of modernity and the capital of the 19th century, in his unfinished book "Passages", the city that was the birthplace of many notions in the modern era. In addition, he left wonderful works in the second half of the 19th century by looking at the comic paintings of J.J. Grandville which were based on the mimesis of nature and considered goods as valuable and brilliant commodities inspired by the surrounding nature, which was the final theme of Grandville art. The surreal works of this thinker and painter which were displayed at several exhibitions indicated the urban space of Paris in the 19th century, which was the result of industrial changes.

Benjamin's theories on the passages of Paris which investigated the relationship between industry and fashion are notable. He believed that architecture overtakes art with iron constructions which were the result of technological progress in France. Industrial production caused the progress of textile, which led to the mass production of fabric and then the industrial sewing and clothing growth and development that lead to the birth of fashion in Paris. According to Shayegan, it actually converted Paris into a great workshop of amazing inventions; an appropriate city wandering and intellectual growth with mysterious rhythm. Since Baudelaire was a complete dandy, his manner, character thoughts, and articles on modernity and fashion, as one of the aspects of modernity, are of great significance. Dandism is a social phenomenon that was first recognized due to its type of clothing and made Paris leave traditions, in order to reach the modern era and take steps towards a united community. In this community, the mass of people require a new definition to be united with the capitalist class.

In fact, Benjamin believed that fashion is an abstract phenomenon which is not inclusively related to clothing and can be defined in form of a social body or individual. With a poetic attitude to Paris, Benjamin believed that objects became some idols worthy of worship, since the 19th century, and they were to be united around the flag "art for art" with the European surrealist thoughts, so that art alone was placed against technological growth. Parisian passages were provided to citizens to supply goods to rotate the wheel of industry from the new status given to them. Dependency on goods, wandering of people in passages to obtain the idols had all of them gather in a center with the mass production of clothes and accessories which made them achieve a collective self-awareness. A common thought that caused the birth of fashion in France, and then Europe and the world, due to the emergence of technology with industrial production and the help of art. Undoubtedly, Baudelaire and Benjamin were among the first individuals affecting the formation of this thought.

Footnotes

ⁱWalter Benedix Schoen flies Benjamin (1892-1940).

ⁱⁱCharles Baudelaire, the French translator, poet, and literary artistic critic, the artist who played a significant role in informing the women and men in his era of their modern industry in the 19th century. Before everything, he is famous due to the collection of the collection of “the flowers of Evil” which is probably the most important and effective poem collection published in Europe in the 19th century (Tahoori, 2005, p. 44). He accompanies a paled face and old human full of nonsense emotions of modernity on the streets of Paris to discover his misery in the heart of his depression and frustration (Shayegan, 2015, p. 25).

ⁱⁱⁱJ.J. Grandville (1803-1847): It is the French caricaturist of the 19th century who designed clothes for a theatre group in addition to lithography. The subject of his works was mostly the comic combination of animals and human with clothes at different time situations and people mainly welcomed the illustration of contemporary events and characters presented by Grandville.

^{iv}The Arcades Project

^vJacob Cohen (1923-1998)

^{vi}Martin Margiela

^{vii}Rei Kawakubo

^{viii}Flanerie: It means wandering considered by Baudelaire as a person wandering the city to experience it personally.

^{ix}Dandy: It is someone who looks at poverty, hunger, prostitution, alienation, and loneliness in the bustle, frustration, and ugliness. It is a flanerie whose burnt eyes see nothing except a memory of the sun and refuge to a mild and yellow light of fall in regret of a bright and burning summer (Tahoori, 2005, p. 42).

^xConstantine Guys (1802-1892): Baudelaire in the painter of the modern life spoke about a child who can see and think beyond artists. Constantine Guy who is referred to Mr. G in the article is a painter illustrating the modern world of Paris as it is (Baudelaire, 2014, p. 33-35).

^{xi}Vesuve: The famous volcano of Naples, Italy which is dipped in a layer of ash and mud due to the destruction of Pompeii, Herculaneum, etc. and is stored in the same ancient conditions until now. It has been the inspiration for myths for many years and is currently used as the national park of the city (Julayi, 2007, p. 8).

^{xiii}Neomania: It is defined as anewobsession for buying new things, a hunger, and eternal need and is one of the signs of American culture (Dowling, 2017).

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