

Luisa Ciuni e Marina Spadafora, La rivoluzione comincia dal tuo armadio. Tutto quello che dovrete sapere sulla moda sostenibile, Solferino, 2020

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Published: December 22, 2020

“The revolution starts in your wardrobe”¹, a book born out of authors’ pluriannual experience in the field, states very clearly, right from the title the very needed change of consumers’ behaviour, understanding of, and relation with fashion. The subtitle underlines the handbook approach, reassuring the reader that on the pages of the book, they can find “everything (they) should know about sustainable fashion”. Or at least, that they could discover the cues leading towards an intimate sustainable journey.

In the first part of the book, Luisa Ciuni, a noted journalist, author and fashion critic, depicts with an unambiguous language a world in crisis, our world of crisis. Moving the discourse back and forth, covering the crucial developments of the last few decades, she delivers the dynamics of an extremely complex system of interactions between industry players. How came it that we are always more habituated to the “use and dispose” Kleenex dress? (p.22) The story starts with a seemingly positive tone. Still, soon we realize that the textile paradise — referring to the places of clothing production like China, India and other countries in Asia or Nord Africa — should be in quotation marks. It is a paradise only for the tycoon of the new millennium. As Ciuni explains, the relocation of the production processes brought possibilities in the developing countries, also contributed to the democratization of the clothing, meaning today, millions of people worldwide can dress decently. However, the positive sides should not and can not be truly valuable if, behind the scenes, there are practices of profound inequality, injustice and human rights violations.

One of the earliest engagements of the ethical fashion was, as the author recounts, in response to environmental pollution. Even before the term ethical fashion existed, the practitioners of the field were acting against ambient injustices. Nevertheless, the fashion industry still stands for one of the most polluting industries in the world. Through vivid, although disturbing examples, the author leads us over

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1. At the moment the book is available in Italian language only but it would be great if in near future it becomes accessible by wider audience also.

the different stages of the product life cycle. From the tanning, provoking olfactory pollution of entire neighbourhoods, and dangerously high levels of chrome, lead or even cyanide in the nearby water flows, to cases of unsold goods incinerated as prevention of brand devaluation, the fashion industry is full of illogical acts of environmental pollution. Closely related to the practices of leather processing are the questions of respect towards the animals. If we think on that in the 70s, the natural fur was a central point of at least one editorial per issue of *Vogue Italia*, the fact that recently some high-end brands renounced the fur usage in their collections is speaking of the drastic changes in the general sensibility to the question of animal rights. Nevertheless, there are still many milestones to achieve before we arrive to a cruelty-free industry. Most of the problems, as Ciuni points out, are almost invisible for most of the consumers. We can talk about products with fur decorations, feathers or our so-loved wool and silk garments. Whichever the case, the consumer is rarely transparently informed on how these products came to be.

The significance of the book lies in the educational power that it holds. It does not show a straight forward path or remedy to the listed problems, but it provides an overview of the cause-consequential relation between the acts taking place on different sides of the globe. While the legislation and acceptable practices change from country to country, the larger part of the textile production is carried by the subcontractors outside the national borders. The negative environmental impact of the industry is, as the book shows, strictly connected to pertinent social issues alongside the fashion pipeline. If we also add the economic dimension, the interplay becomes much complex, and the request for transparent information seems the only possible pathway.

The second part of the book, written by the designer and professor of ethical fashion Marina Spadafora, acts as a lantern on this call for transparency. It provides the reader, and the consumer, first of all, with the needed hope that the issues can be solved. The wind of change is already touching fashion realities of different dimensions. Luxury brands are starting to change their ways; fast fashion companies are becoming dedicated to transparency, while the new fashion start-ups are fully committed to sustainable and ethic practices. Still, this wind of change needs the power of the people, the consumers. By explaining the many different aspects of product creation, Spadafora points out that “Who made my clothes?” is only an initial question. As consumers, we should require information on the raw materials as well as the spinning and weaving, again on colouring and finishing processes, and then clearly, on who saw our garment. And then, we should reflect on what happens once we buy something. Enormous quantities of clothing finish on landfills after being worn just a couple of times. The projections for 2030 are that we will pass from 62 in 2019 to 102 million tones of bought clothing. (p.103) Thus, we should also examine our addiction to consumption.

The writing is full of innovative examples, cruelty-free solutions, recommendations on where to start. Above all, it emphasizes the need for an individual but also systematic education because “When people are informed, they care.” (p.119) The educative mission is very close to Spadafora insofar she is engaged as a professor and national coordinator of Fashion Revolution Italy. The rich appendix is a final touch, confirmation of the objectives given in the introduction. It starts with an A to Z glossary of ethical and sustainable fashion and then continues with a vade mecum of pieces of advice for a sustainable closet. The bibliography and extensive website list are an invitation for further exploration because, with the right information, we can all change the world for better. Or in the words of Ciuni and Spadafora “The revolution starts from our head, our heart, our closet.”