

WOMEN UNDER THE HEGEMONY OF BODY POLITICS:
FASHION AND BEAUTY

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ABSTRACT

WOMEN UNDER THE HEGEMONY OF BODY POLITICS: FASHION AND BEAUTY

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This thesis aims to investigate women's oppression through analyzing the overlapping features of hegemonic ideology of beauty and fashion. The major goal of the study is to examine how beauty ideology is constructed and how it is practiced in the case of fashion. Additionally, the intersecting discourses of capitalist system and patriarchy have been questioned to understand women's oppression, as suggested by Dual-System theorists. Therefore, throughout the study, the common interests of capitalist and patriarchal systems in reproducing oppressive body politics have been demonstrated.

Keywords: Beauty Ideology, Fashion, Body Politics, Consumer Culture.

ÖZ

BEDEN POLİTİKALARI TAHAKKÜMÜNDE KADIN: MODA VE GÜZELLİK

Elifcan, Karacan

Yüksek Lisans, Kadın Çalışmaları

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Bu çalışma egemen güzellik anlayışı ve modanın örtüşen yanlarını tartışarak kadınların ezilmişliğini araştırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Tezin temel hedefi güzellik ideolojisinin nasıl oluşturulduğunu ve moda örneğinde nasıl pratik edildiğini incelemektir. Bununla birlikte, kadınların ezilmişliğini anlamak için, Dual-Sistem teorisyenlerinin önerdiği üzere, kapitalist ve ataerkil sistemin kesişen söylemleri tartışılmıştır. Bu nedenle, çalışma genelinde kapitalist ve ataerkil sistemin baskıcı beden politikalarını yeniden üretmekteki ortak çıkarları vurgulanmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Güzellik İdeolojisi, Moda, Beden Politikaları, Tüketim Kültürü.

To Kadriye Karacan

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary world we tend to receive gender roles as they are naturally given. However, gender roles are socially, economically and culturally constructed. Patriarchy reproduces gender roles through its institutions which results the oppression of women. Women's oppressed situation in the society is the main issue that feminist theory deals with. However, within the feminist theory there are different approaches in explaining the reasons of woman's oppression. According to Liberal Feminism, women can be liberated if only they have equal rights with men. On the other hand Marxist Feminists explain women's oppression through the exploitation of their labor force in the capitalist system, while Radical Feminists focus on the limits of body.

Although there are different approaches in explaining patriarchy, by its very nature, patriarchy is a "system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women."¹ Therefore, women's subordination and inferior position in the society need to be analyzed through the institutions of both capitalism and patriarchy. As it is theorized by Socialist Feminists, under the name of Dual-System, patriarchy is a system which exists alongside capitalism. Capitalism excludes women from the productive labor and forces her to remain in the domestic sphere, at the same time patriarchy subordinates women through its main institutions such as religion, language, family and

¹ Sylvia Walby, *Theorizing Patriarchy*. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell. 1990), p. 20.

motherhood. Dual-system theorists like Heidi Hartmann and Juliet Mitchell, assume that the two distinct systems, capitalism and patriarchy partnership in oppressing women.

Capitalism could only grow in a society which is operated by patriarchal order. Therefore, Fernand Braudel, in his trilogy *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th – 18th Century*, starts with analyzing the material life to explore the stages of Capitalism. The material life, although Braudel never uses the term, is the *Patriarchal life*, which will soon cause Capitalist Society to grow on. Gender roles became visible during the stage of material life. This is the stage which populations had to face with the scarcity of sources as a result of increasing needs. A need to search for sources in different lands was one of the strengthening causes of the gender roles. Men's labor force had become precious in military, women were confined to the domestic sphere, as a reproductive labor. After the Industrial Revolution, a significant stage for development of Capitalism, with the new innovations in technology, women's position as inferiors of men became stable.

Starting with the exploring main theories on fashion, it is aimed to specify the general frames of the subject. Fashion is a term which has a wide use. In this thesis, the term fashion is used in the meaning of its relation to clothing. However, not all clothing is fashion. Fashion is a complex structure of production, distribution, consumption. Clothing functions as a necessity for human beings; it is a tool of protection of the body. Fashion appears as a dynamics of capitalist economy; on the other hand it is a sum of signs related to gender, identity, social status, class. In other words it is a system of signs.

The history of fashion is examined through Braudel's (1992) work *Civilization and Capitalism*, to see the correlation between development of Capitalist society and history of the fashion. Braudel argues that the fashion is less likely to change in the stable societies unless political upheavals happen. For instance; fashion in Turkey could start changing only in the 18th century, other case is the Japanese fashion, which remained faithful to *kimono* for centuries. His other argument is that fashion is a tool of distinguishing few privileged from others. He claims that "everything would remain fixed if all the world were poor." Following the history of fashion, the main fashion theories of Veblen (1899), Simmel (1904), Blumer (1969) and Bourdieu (1984) are argued in the next chapter.

Simmel and Veblen emphasize the importance of class factor in diffusion of fashion. According to their theory, which is called as *Trickle-Down Theory*, fashion is first adopted by upper classes to separate themselves from lower classes. As soon as the lower classes imitate the upper class, a need for new style appears. In addition to imitation process, Veblen states that fashion is a symbol of pecuniary standing of individuals. It is also a tool of displaying the relation of individual's to manual labor, in Veblen's thought. In contrary to Trickle-Down Theory, Blumer thinks that fashion has a horizontal structure rather than vertical. He points out the importance of studying fashion in accordance with its relation to circulation through production, designers, consumption, and consumers. Bourdieu, on the other hand, argues that *taste* plays as the main actor in fashion area. In his work *Distinctions* (1984), he points out that the different social groups respond differently to cultural goods. It is a matter of lifestyles and tastes. According to him the tastes of working-class men would be based on a culture of necessity.

Both Veblen and Simmel are criticized for putting too much attention on class distinction in explaining the diffusion of fashion. In this thesis it is argued that fashion has both vertical and horizontal structure. It is mostly diffused by the upper classes, while in few cases it is the way other. *Punk* and the *bluejean* fashion is a good example of this assumption. Today's technology and marketing have fastened the process of adaptation which sometimes makes it difficult to distinguish social groups from each other.

By defining the femininity, patriarchy reproduces the oppression on women. In the third chapter this endless effort to reshape woman's body is questioned. In Foucauldian sense body is an "object and target of power, a field on which the hierarchies of power are displayed and inscribed."² In addition, women's disadvantaged situation in the society needs to be analyzed from a feminist perspective which is the way of challenging the male-dominant traditions in social sciences. Hence I tried to examine how the ideology of beauty, which reproduces power on women's bodies, is constructed and how it is practiced through fashion. Through the works of Feminist theorists; Tseelon (1995), Bordo (1995), Grosz (1994), Butler (1993), Weitz (1998) and Wolf (1991), ideology of beauty and politics on body are argued. Western culture is obsessed with the female beauty. As Naomi Wolf (1991) argues, beauty myth is announced as an objectively and universally existing reality. According to this universal concept beauty is defined as young, white, slender and so on. This hegemonic beauty ideology is based on the Anglo-Saxon values which are constructed through Christianity, and distributed all over the world through visual arts, media, science, technological innovations and literature. The discourse of the beauty ideology force

² Foucault, cited in Dinnerstein and Weitz in 1998.eds. *The Politics of Women's Bodies : Sexuality, Appearance, and Behavior*, (New York : Oxford University Press. 1979) pp. 159.

women to feel that their body is not beautiful in its natural form; they can only achieve beauty if they meet the standards of beauty myth. For this purpose women are forced to reshape their bodies into the objects of male desire. The main questions posed in this chapter are, how beauty ideology is constructed? and why it is a gender related category?

In the last chapter I argue the overlapping features of hegemonic Western ideology of beauty and fashion in the case of consumption. In today's consumer culture, individuals no more consume only needs but they consume images. The image of beauty meets with the consumers in the face of fashion. The hegemonic Western ideology states woman as the objects of the gaze. John Berger (1972) claims that the male gaze exists since the painting art first pictured the story of Eve and Adam told in Genesis. In this chapter I use Berger's argument: "men look at women; women watch themselves being looked at"³ and Baudrillard's theory which is arguing the "body as the commodity object"⁴ to explore the affect of the hegemonic male gaze and male desire in consumption.

Faludi's work *Backlash* (1991), lightens the functioning of fashion industry. Through her search I argue the patriarchal desire on operating women's bodies. Fashion is a tool of objectification and oppression of women's bodies. In addition consumption culture bases its rhetoric through its tools such as films, fashion photography and advertisements, on the objectification of women's bodies. As Sullerot claims; "woman is sold to women"⁵ in consumer culture.

³ John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*. (New York: Penguin Books. 1977), pp. 45-64.

⁴ Jean Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society :Myths and Structures*. (London: Sage Publications. 1998), pp. 129-150.

⁵ Evelyne Sullerot, cited in Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures*. (London: Sage Publications. 1998), p. 95.

The subject of this thesis is not confined to a one period or to a one place, since it is assumed here that fashion functions more or less the same in operating on women's bodies and reproducing the hegemonic ideology. In our globalizing world, consumption habits of the Western culture diffuse into entire world. Globalizing eases not only the exchange of the capital, but also it eases the exchange of the signs, cultures. In fact, this process occurs as the imposition of the Western values over undeveloped and developing countries. Although practicing these values may differ from country to country, the discourse of the fashion remains same. It is claimed in this study that fashion has one language and it is universal. The codes it is constructed by and the messages it delivers are based on the same ideology; which is Western, capitalist and patriarchal. What is consumed through fashion by non-western countries is the Westernization.⁶

⁶ Women's dress was the main actor of Westernization since the 19th century in Turkey. The studies on Turkish women's dress are focused on the problem of Westernization (Şeni, 1990), (Faroghi, 2002), (Norton, 1997). Women's dress has become a symbol of new political ideology. Especially during the Westernization movements in the last decades of the 19th century, and in the early decades of the new Republic in the 20th century, women's dress was on the stage. Şeni, in her article, claims that the Westernization movements have caused a duality between the traditionalists and the reformists, in the society. She assumes that this conflict has been a subject to the caricature magazines in the end of the 19th century. (See; Fig. 1.) These caricatures show that the acceptance of the new Western styles has been a tough one.

Because of the lack of information, it is difficult to imagine how women felt in adopting these new styles in the 19th century, but through the article of Şeni, it is assumed that women are forced to adopt the new fashion by law. The corset and the long skirts were main changes in the Westernization process of women's dress. (See; Fig. 2.) Women in 1850s in Turkey were forced to wear corsets and long skirts, as a symbol of *liberated woman*, ironically women like Bloomer in the West were making a dress reform by adopting Turkish trousers and pantalets.

Women's dress till the end of the 19th century was *ferace*, *yaşmak* (*yashmak*) and *babouches* (*slippers without heels*). *Yaşmak* is a kind of veil which clothes the face, except the eyes. *Ferace* is a kind of coat which covers all over the body from top to bottom. *Ferace* and *yaşmak* have shown some slight changes by the effects of European styles in 1890s. For instance, *ferace* has divided into two parts while the garment used for *yaşmak* got transparent by the time. Zeyneb Hanım interprets these changes as follows: (The women of the palace) divided their hair in the middle, and spent hours in making little bunches of curls. High-heeled shoes replaced the colored *babouches*; they even adopted the hideous crinolines, and abandoned forever those charming Oriental

In conclusion what is argued in this thesis is the dynamics of the construction of fashion, and the relation of these dynamics with patriarchy and capitalism. I tried to examine these two distinct systems', capitalism and patriarchy's, intersecting paths on operating women's bodies from the feminist perspective.

garments, the *chalvar* [*şalvar*] and *enturi* [*entari*], which they considered symbols of servitude, but which no other fashion has been able to equal in beauty.

Şeni points out that the new hair style as described by Zeyneb Hanim above was also subject to caricatures. (See: Fig. 3) The other sign of Westernization in fashion was the use of umbrella as an accessory. Şeni claims that umbrella was a complementary object of constructing the vertical silhouette of female body in coordination with corset and high heel shoes. (See: Fig. 4 and Fig. 5) According to Şeni, in the 19th century, the source of the fashion was the palace. A new style was first adopted by the members of the Palace and than was imitated by the middle class and afterwards adopted by the masses. In other words, the diffusion of fashion, in the case of Turkey, had a linear character; from top to bottom, as it is analyzed through the Trickle-Down theory of Simmel and Veblen.

In addition, the first reforms of the new Turkish Republic were related to dress, in the sake of showing the new Republic's modern face. The old costumes were shown as shameful signs of the undeveloped *East*. However the basic ideology of the new Republic was modernization through adopting the values of *West*. Eventually by using Braudel's assumption, it can be claimed that the big changes in fashion only come through as a result of political upheavals.



— قېز بونصل قىافت ؟ اوتاغز مېسك ؟

— بو عصر ترقېده سن اوتان قىافتكدن .

— Kız bu nasıl kıyafet? Utanmaz mısın?

— Bu ilerleme devrinde sen utan kıyafetinden.

Hayal/5.6.1875/S.175, s.4

Fig. 1. Below the text reads: What kind of a cosmute is this? Are you not ashamed? You are the one who needs to be ashamed in this era of reforms. The Westernization of woman's dress in the 19th century. In *Gelişim Sürecinde Türk Karikatürü, Tanzimat Dönemi 1867-1878*, Turgut Çeviker, İstanbul: Adam Yayınları, 1986, p. 213.



Fig. 2. Below, the text reads: Demirkafa was right. There is no room left to stay in the room.” A caricature on long skirt fashion in the 19th century, in *Gelişim Sürecinde Türk Karikatürü*, p.37.



نيسان آينك قزاره مخصوص موده سي . . ! !

*Nisan ayının kızlara özgü modası.
Latîf/17.4.1875/S.12, s.4 Tınhır*

Fig. 3. Below, the text reads: Women's Fashion in April. A caricature on Western hair style and long skirt fashion, in Çeviker, *Gelişim Sürecinde Türk Karikatürü*, p. 193.



— Boşuna bakma, elimde şemsiye var. Yüzümü göremezsin.
Lanfe/22.4.1875/S.14, s.3 Tınghur

Fig. 4. Below the text reads: Don't bother yourself looking at me, I have an umbrella, you can't see my face. Use of umbrella as a complementary object of constructing the vertical silhouette of woman, in Çeviker, *Gelişim Sürecinde Türk Karikatürü*, p. 192.



﴿ الافرانقه مادموازلر ايله كرمك استيانلر بوندنصكره "جانبازلقده" اوكرنمكه مجبور اوله جقلر !!! ﴾

Alafranga matmazeller ile gezmek isteyenler, bundan sonra cambazlık da öğrenmeye zorunlu olacaklar!!!

Tiyatro / 9.5.1874 / S. 12, s. 4 Nişan Berberyan

Fig. 5. Below the text reads: The ones who want to hang around with Western ladies need to learn acrobatics. Use of high heel shoes as a symbol of Westernization in the 19th century, in Çeviker, *Gelişim Sürecinde Türk Karikatürü*, p. 40.

CHAPTER II

THEORIZING DRESS AND FASHION

In this chapter costume/dress will be examined as a part of material life, as a code of social construction. The term fashion is used as a system of consumption related with dress. In the contemporary literature the word fashion implies on various commodities. It has been recently used to describe anything being up to date. Here the word fashion is used in reference to dress and the term dress implies on everything related to body, such as make-up, moustache, hair styles, the way of walking, total of the customs and behaviors.

Clothing has different functions. First of all it is a necessity. People have to wear to protect themselves from natural forces. However, the power of the clothes lies in its character as a signifier of one's identity, gender, class; a sum of images that one constructs his/her self.

Ryan examines four main functions of clothing. First is the modesty; clothing is a way to cover sexual organs and body parts. The second is the immodesty; the covered sexual body parts call attention. The third function of clothing is protection. And the last function is esthetic expression. Ryan believes that the last function of the clothing could have been a way to distinguish between hierarchical levels, gender or

different tribal groups.⁷

Is fashion a necessity for human life? Clothing is necessity for sure, but how and when did fashion become a part of our life? Why do people dress in different ways, differing ourselves from whom and how? What are the dynamics of fashion and how it is related with consumption?

2.1 History of Dress and Fashion

“The history of costume is less anecdotal than would appear. It touches on every issue: raw materials, production processes, manufacturing costs, cultural stability, fashion and social hierarchy.”⁸

Dress, is a widely studied area, by anthropologists, sociologists, economists, psychologists and historians. Fernand Braudel's work was one of the first on the subject which took the issue from a historical perspective. In the Volume I of his trilogy *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th – 18th Century*, Braudel focuses on consumption. He starts his first volume; *The structures of Everyday Life* by analyzing the weight of numbers, which implies the entire world not only Europe. The second importance of the numbers is that it certainly helps us to compare what people need and what people have. Braudel in this volume analyzes the necessities of life, such as food, clothing, housing and furniture.

Dress is one of the most visible sign of a person's social position; class, gender and identity. It is one of the codes which defines one's position in the layers of social hierarchy. Subject to incessant change, costume

⁷ M. S. Ryan, *Clothing: A Study in Human Behavior*. (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1966).

⁸ Fernand Braudel, *Civilization and Capitalism 15th – 18th Century* (Braudel 1956), Vol. I (California: University of California Pres, 1992), p. 311.

everywhere is a persistent reminder of social position.⁹ A historian working on clothing would certainly need to touch social structures. Otherwise the purpose of clothing as a code may remain unclear. Roche argues;

The history of clothing is a way of penetrating to the heart of social history. It is another way of posing the essential question: what should be produced? With its terrain of attendant questions: what should be consumed, what distributed?¹⁰

Clothing has a great importance in understanding the inequalities, a signifier of hierarchical relations. It is more than only being a concern for appearance, looking good. One doesn't necessarily need to look at Saussurian theory to examine the language of dress. Changing the German proverb: "man is what he eats" we may say: "man is what he wears."

Braudel argues that fashion was less likely to change if a society remained more or less stable. He gives examples of the established hierarchies from different parts of the world. Such as the mandarin's costume in China, or the *kimono*, which Japan remained faithful for centuries. In Braudel's words;

As a general rule no changes took place in these societies except as a result of political upheavals which affected the whole social order. When India was more or less conquered by the Muslims, the costume of the Mogul conquerors became the rule, at least for the rich. All the portraits of the Rajput princes [with one exception] show them in court dress, an incontestable proof that in general the high Hindu

⁹ Ibid., p. 311.

¹⁰ Roche, Daniel. *The Culture of Clothing, Dress and Fashion in The Ancien Regime* (Cambridge, 1994).

nobility had accepted the customs and manners of the Mogul sovereigns. The same conclusions apply to the Turkish Empire. Wherever the strength and influence of the Osmanli sultans made itself felt, the upper classes adopted their costume – in far – off Algeria and in Christian Poland, where Turkish fashion only belatedly gave way to French fashion in the eighteenth century.¹¹

For Braudel, since most people were limited in what they could consume – except privileged few – the question would not even arise if the entire world were poor.¹²

If all the world were poor... The question would not even arise. Everything would stay fixed. No wealth, no freedom of movement, no possible change. To be ignorant of fashion was the lot of the poor the world over. Their costumes, whether beautiful or homespun, remained the same. The beautiful was represented by the feast-day costume, often handed down from parent to child. It remained identical for centuries on end, despite the infinite variety of national and provincial popular costumes. Crude homespun was the everyday working garb, made from the least expensive local resources: it varied even less.¹³

In his book *Capitalism and Civilization* Braudel shows us how the society constructed on hierarchies. Despite his assumption: “if all the world were poor” the reality lies in front of us that society cannot be thought without hierarchy. Thus, capitalism, which Braudel takes as a top layer in his pyramid system, based on these hierarchical relations. In the period from 15th to 18th century, Braudel tells that the poor’s costume did not change very much unless a political upheaval happens. Even today we may hardly talk about a change on the costume of rural people. In

¹¹ Braudel, *Civilization and Capitalism* , p. 312.

¹² Ibid., p. 313.

¹³ Ibid., p. 313.

contrast the will of change in the upper classes, the privileged ones could affect the masses. Fashionable whims only affected a very small number of people, but that they made a great deal of noise and show, perhaps because the rest, even the most wretched looked on and encouraged them in their extravagance.¹⁴

According to Braudel in the 12th century the ‘general rule was changelessness’ in all around the world. For century upon century, costume had remained unchanged. Any innovation, such as the lengthening of men’s clothes in the twelfth century was strongly criticized.¹⁵ In his words;

Even the influence of the crusades was not as great as people thought: they introduced the use of silks and the luxury of furs, but did not fundamentally alter the shape of costumes in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.¹⁶

Braudel writes that the dramatic change came in about 1350 with the sudden shortening of men’s costume and in the 16th century black costume of Spanish inspiration was adopted by the European upper classes. In the seventeenth century, colored French costumes took over, even in the Spanish territories.¹⁷ As Braudel tells;

Clearly, the political influences which affected the whole body of Europe – making it seem to change its direction or its very centre of gravity from one day to the next – did not affect the whole realm of fashion immediately. There were time-lags, aberrations, gaps, delays. French fashion was

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 315.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 316.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 317.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 317.

predominant in the seventeenth century but really only established its sovereignty in the eighteenth. In 1716, even in Peru, where the extravagance of the Spanish was of unheard of proportions, the men were dressing 'in the French style, usually in silk [imported from Europe] in a strange mixture of bright colors.¹⁸

In Europe from the seventeenth century onwards, especially after the great movement of religious reflection following the Catholic and Protestant Reformations, clothing was at the centre of debates about wealth and poverty, excess and necessity, superfluity and sufficiency, luxury and adequacy.¹⁹ The history of clothing tells us much about civilizations; it reveals their codes. Braudel explains how the costume of the Italian Renaissance receded during the sixteenth century.

For Braudel, one cannot really talk of fashion becoming all-powerful before about 18th century. Since fashion is not only a matter of abundance, quantity, profusion. It also consists of making a quick change at the right moment. It is a question of season, day and hour. During the 18th century the word gained a new lease of life and spread everywhere with its new meaning: keeping up with the times. From then on fashion in the modern sense began to influence everything: the pace of change had never been as swift in earlier times.²⁰

Braudel asks: "Is fashion in fact such a trifling thing? Or is it, as I prefer to think, rather an indication of deeper phenomena – of the energies, possibilities, demands, economy and civilization?" Braudel writes that

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 318.

¹⁹ Roche, *The Culture of Clothing*, p.5.

²⁰ Braudel, *Civilization and Capitalism*, p. 316.

fashion was consciously used by the world of trade. Barbon is quoted in Braudel:

Fashion or the alteration of dress... is the spirit and life of Trade; thanks to fashion, the great body of trade remains in movement and man lives a perpetual springtime, without ever seeing the autumn of his clothes.²¹

We read from Braudel that the Lyons silk traders in the eighteenth century exploited the tyranny of French fashions to impose their products on foreign markets and eliminate competition. Fashion is not only an appearance and differentiation issue, but also an issue in trade. He writes:

Lyons silk traders' silks were indeed magnificent, but the Italian craftsmen could easily copy them, especially when the practice spread of sending samples. The silk merchants of Lyons found the answer to this: they paid designers known as silk illustrators, who changed the patterns every year. When the copies reached the market, they were already out of date.²²

This is not only an issue for the eighteenth century Lyons silk traders, it is also a contemporary issue for 'expensive' brands of our time. The technology of today allows imitation of the products of expensive brands for lower classes to look rich. This copying process is even faster than it was in the eighteenth century probably. But the need to be differentiated from lower classes for the upper classes would always find a solution, this can be seen on rich imitating the old 'fashion' what poor had before. This is an endless circulation for designers to 'create new'.

Fashion is also a search for a new language to discredit the

²¹ Ibid., p. 324.

²² Ibid., p. 325.

old, a way in which each generation can repudiate its immediate predecessor and distinguish itself from it (at least in the case of a society where there is conflict between generations). The tailors, in 1714, have more trouble inventing than sewing.²³

Before concluding his work on history of fashion Braudel adds the history of textiles and fabrics. As it is mentioned before, fashion is a wide subject that touches on many issues, production as well as consumption. He writes:

The history of costume should take us on to a history of textiles and fabrics, to geography of production and exchange, to the slow work of the weavers and the regular crises resulting from the scarcity of raw materials. Europe lacked wool, cotton and silk; China, cotton; India and Islam light wool; Black Africa bought foreign fabrics on the shores of the Atlantic or the Indian Ocean in exchange for gold or slaves. That was how poor peoples paid for their luxury purchases.²⁴

Braudel argues fashion's relation with the luxury and necessity. For him, the distinction between luxury and poverty is only a crude classification, one that recurs all the time, but does not in itself provide the necessary precision.²⁵ According to Braudel:

One cannot indeed say that all these realities are the product of constraining necessity: man certainly finds food, shelter and clothing because he cannot do otherwise – but he could choose to feed, live and dress differently. Sudden changes in fashion demonstrate this in a 'diachronic' manner, and contrasts between different parts of the world, past and present, do so in a 'synchronic' manner. In fact, our investigation takes us at this point not simply into the realm

²³ Ibid., p. 324.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 325.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 333.

of material 'things', but into a world of 'things and words' – interpreting the last term in a wider sense than usual, to mean languages with everything that man contributes or insinuates into them, as in the course of his everyday life he makes himself their unconscious prisoner, in front of his bowl of rice or slice of bread.²⁶

Both Veblen and Simmel perfectly explain its role on distinguishing rich from poor, Braudel too mentions fashion as a tool of noble persons to distinguish themselves from the masses:

I have always thought that fashion resulted to a large extent from the desire of the privileged to distinguish themselves, whatever the cost, from the masses who followed them; to set up a barrier.²⁷

He quotes from Jean Paul Marana, a Sicilian who passed through Paris in 1714 'Nothing makes noble persons despise the gilded costume so much as to see it on the bodies of the lowest men in the world.' So the upper classes had to invent new 'gilded costumes', or new distinctive signs, whatever they might be, every time complaining that 'things have changed indeed, and the new clothes being worn by the bourgeois, both men and women, cannot be distinguished from those of persons of quality'.²⁸

2.2 Trickle-Down Theory

According to Trickle-Down theory, fashion is practiced in the upper classes and imitated by the lower classes. The main followers of this theory; Veblen (1899) and Simmel (1904) claim that the fashion passes

²⁶ Ibid., p. 333

²⁷ Ibid., p. 324.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 324.

from up to down as in a vertical line. Fred Davis (1992) points out that neither Veblen nor Simmel named this process as trickle-down. The term has emerged later in the twentieth century. For this theory, fashion is a way of differentiation for upper classes from lower classes and it is imitated by the poor. This circle goes on by rich adopting a new fashion as soon as the last one is imitated.

2.2.1 Trickle-Down Theory in Thorstein Veblen

In his book *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899), Thorstein Veblen, writes on 'dress as an expression of the pecuniary culture'. According to Veblen, expenditure for display is more obviously present, and is, perhaps, more universally practiced in the matter of dress than in any other line of consumption.²⁹ Veblen's work on dress is focused on its purpose in relation to consumption. Why do individuals wear in different ways? For Veblen, people choose their clothing primarily to indicate their status to others.³⁰

According to Veblen, the leisure class lives in the *proper* style by displaying the possession of wealth, by conspicuous leisure, by conspicuous consumption and waste, by rating goods and services in proportion to their expensiveness, by wearing clothing that shows they could do no useful work, and by engaging in many other practices of a futile nature designed to show that they do not have to work for a living.³¹

²⁹ Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions* (New York: Mentor Books, 1899), p. 119.

³⁰ Ryan1966 cited in Julie A. Milewski, "Fashion and the Culture of Consumption: Perceptions of Fashion Trends Among College Students".

³¹ Vaughn, (2001) cited in Milewski, "Fashion and the Culture of Consumption: Perceptions of Fashion Trends Among College Students".

Veblen, like Braudel, argues about the imitation of expensive materials. He says that we find things beautiful if they are expensive. Even the best imitation of the original product will not be respected as the expensive 'original' one. It loses caste aesthetically because it falls to a lower pecuniary grade. Veblen asserts;

Without reflection or analysis, we feel that what is inexpensive is unworthy. 'A cheap coat makes a cheap man.' Cheap and nasty is recognized to hold true in dress with even less mitigation than in other lines of consumption. On the ground both of taste and of serviceability, an inexpensive article of apparel is held to be inferior, under the maxim 'cheap and nasty.'³²

Veblen's work on dress is one of the early works on the subject. Veblen writes that the expenditure on dress has the advantage over most other methods which our apparel is always in evidence and affords an indication of our pecuniary standing to all observers at the first glance. He adds that the expenditure for display is more universally practiced in the matter of dress than in any other line of consumption.³³

Veblen points out that the dress of women goes even further than that of men in the way of demonstrating the wearer's abstinence from productive employment. It needs no argument to enforce the generalization that the more elegant styles of feminine bonnets go even further towards making work impossible than does the man's high hat. In his book *Theory of the Leisure Class*, Veblen gives 'corset' and 'French heel shoes' as examples of women wearer's abstinence from productive employment.

³² Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, p. 119..

³³ Ibid., p. 119

By observing the consuming attitudes it can be seen that Veblen's theory is still up to date. While a worker's dress is based on its functions, an individual from 'leisure class' dresses with different aspects; such as a symbol of a status, a sign of the class.

Veblen sees a relation between fashion and wastefulness. Besides its elements such as expensiveness and inconvenience, a dress must also be up to date. He thinks that this principle of novelty is another corollary under the law of conspicuous waste. The term conspicuous consumption in Veblen's analysis, applies to a method of demonstrating wealth. Fashion emerges in this stage for the Leisure class. He writes;

Obviously, if each garment is permitted to serve for but a brief term, and if none of last season's apparel is carried over and made further use of during the present season, the wasteful expenditure on dress is greatly increased. This is good as far as it goes, but it is negative only. Pretty much all that this consideration warrants us in saying is that the norm of conspicuous waste exercises a controlling surveillance in all matters of dress, so that any change in the fashions must conform to the requirement of wastefulness.³⁴

Veblen pointed to how excessive expenditure on clothing and other finery, not to mention the built-in obsolescence achieved through functionally useless changes in fashion, served mainly to institutionalize the conspicuous consumption, waste, and leisure practices of the wealthy.³⁵

³⁴ Ibid., p. 122.

³⁵ Fred Davis, *Fashion, Culture, and Identity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

Veblen argues that the fashion among the Japanese, Chinese, and other Oriental nations, among the peasants of countries of Europe, was more stable, less wasteful compare to modern civilized cities. He writes that “it will hold true in a general way that fashions are least stable and least becoming in those communities where the principle of a conspicuous waste of goods asserts itself most imperatively, as among ourselves.”³⁶

Besides the phenomenon of shifting fashions, Veblen discusses the everyday facts of the fashion. He thinks that a new style comes into vogue. Without this everyday fact it may not be possible to talk about a fashion. From his point of view;

A new style comes into vogue and remains in favor for a season, and, at least so long as it is a novelty, people very generally find the new style attractive. The prevailing fashion is felt to be beautiful. This is due partly to the relief it affords in being different from what went before it, partly to its being reputable.³⁷

This reputability shapes our tastes. We accept the new style as beautiful, since it is worn by the novelty. Therefore Veblen assumes that;

[T]he community, especially the wealthy classes of the community, develop in wealth and mobility and in the range of their human contact, the more imperatively will the law of conspicuous waste assert itself in matters of dress, the more will the sense of beauty tend to fall into abeyance or be overborne by the canon of pecuniary reputability, the more rapidly will fashions shift and change, and the more grotesque and intolerable will be the varying styles that successively come into vogue.³⁸

³⁶ Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, pp. 123-124.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 125.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 125.

Veblen's theory is still in use by the fashion theorists, besides he is highly criticized for putting too much attention on class for explaining the dynamics of fashion.

2.2.2 Trickle-Down Theory in Georg Simmel

Georg Simmel (1858 – 1918), in his well known work *On Individuality and Social Forms* (1886) examines fashion as a part of social structure. Simmel thinks that fashion is the imitation of a given example and satisfies the demand for social adaptation.³⁹ To be a part of a group in the society can be also seen as a necessity, just like food or housing. Dress works like a secret code of differentiated groups within the society. While fashion helps the involvement of individuals into groups; it also may help to satisfy individuals' desire to be 'differentiated'. Men being different from women, boss being different from worker, old being different from young, new being different from old, white being different from black.

Fashion, is analyzed by Simmel as the social by-product of the opposition of processes of conformity and individualism, of unity and differentiation, in society.⁴⁰ His theory of fashion is based on the concept of *imitation*. He defines imitation; as a psychological inheritance, as the transition of group life into individual life.⁴¹ He writes;

³⁹ Georg Simmel, *On Individuality and Social Forms* (Edited by D.N. Levine. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1971), p. 296.

⁴⁰ Davis, *Fashion, Culture, and Identity*, p. 23.

⁴¹ *Simmel on Culture*, David Frisby and Mike Featherstone, eds.(London, Thousand Oaks& New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1997), p. 188.

We might define it as the child of thought and thoughtlessness. Imitation gives the individual the assurance of not standing alone in his or her actions. Instead, it elevates itself over the previous practice of that activity as if on a solid foundation, which now relieves the present practice of it from the difficulty of maintaining itself. Whenever we imitate, we transfer not only the demand for creative activity, but also the responsibility for the action from ourselves to another.⁴²

Different than imitating the expensive goods, he thinks that fashion is created by the upper classes to differentiate themselves from the masses, whenever the lower classes imitate them, and the masses adapt their taste; a need for change increases. This circulation goes on and new fashions need to be created for the upper classes.

Fashion is the imitation of a given example and satisfies the demand for social adaptation: it leads the individual upon the road which all travel, it furnishes a general condition, which resolves the conduct of every individual into a mere example. At the same time it satisfies in no less degree the need of differentiation, the tendency towards dissimilarity, the desire for change and contrast, on the one hand by a constant change of contents, which gives to the fashion of today an individual stamp as opposed to that of yesterday and of tomorrow, on the other hand because fashions differ for different classes, the fashions of the upper stratum of society are never identical with those of the lower, in fact, they are abandoned by the former as soon as the latter prepares to appropriate them.⁴³

Simmel points out that the 'union' and 'segregation' are the two fundamental functions of fashion. For him, two social tendencies are essential to the establishment of fashion, namely, the need for union on the one hand and the need for isolation on the other. He also examines

⁴² Ibid., p. 188

⁴³ Simmel, *On Individuality and Social Forms*, p. 296.

the different adoption of fashion by man and woman. According to Simmel, in a certain sense fashion gives woman a compensation for her lack of position in a class based on a profession. Fashion, for Simmel is a complex structure, it depends no less upon the narrow distinctions it draws for a given circle, the intimate connection of which it expresses in the terms of both cause and effect, than it does upon the decisiveness with which it separates the given circle from others.⁴⁴ Simmel writes:

Fashion is based on adoption by a social set, which demands mutual imitation from its members and thereby releases the individual of all responsibility – ethical and aesthetic – as well as of the possibility of producing within these limits individual accentuation and original shading of the elements of fashion. Thus fashion is shown to be an objective characteristic grouping upon equal terms by social expediency of the antagonistic tendencies of life.⁴⁵

It seems like Simmel's interest in fashion is a result of his interest in dualisms in the social constructions. He writes that the whole history of society is reflected in the conflict, the compromise, and the reconciliations, slowly won and quickly lost, that appear between adaptation to our social group and individual elevation from it.⁴⁶

Fashion appears as a matter of class distinction in Simmel. He argues that the clothing attitudes in primitive cultures remain unchanged as it is in the lower strata. The lower strata, for Simmel, possess very few fashions and those they have are seldom specific; for this reason the fashions of

⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 322 – 323.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 323.

⁴⁶ David Frisby and Mike Featherstone, (eds.) *Simmel On Culture: Selected Writings I* (London: Sage Publications, 1997).

primitive peoples are much more stable than ours.⁴⁷

In addition Simmel believes that the individualist fragmentation of modern life causes various fashions. On the other hand in the primitive societies there are less fashions and however more stable. He explains;

By virtue of their social structure, they lack that danger of mixing and blurring which spurs on the classes of civilized peoples to their differentiations of clothing, manners, taste, etc. Through these very differentiations, the sections of groups interested in separation are held together internally: the pace, tempo and rhythm of gestures is fundamentally determined by clothing and similarly dressed people behave in relatively similar ways. For modern life, with its individualist fragmentation, this is particularly valuable. And this is why fashions among primitive peoples will also be less numerous, that is more stable, because the need for the newness of impressions and forms of life - quite apart from its social effects – is much less acute among them.⁴⁸

To support his theory Simmel gives the sample of Kaffirs. Regarding the purely social motives of fashion, he points out that two neighboring primitive peoples provide telling examples of its goals of integration and differentiation. He compares the changes in clothing and jewelry between Kaffirs that have a rich structured and stratified social order and the bushmen among whom no class formation has occurred. He examines that among the Kaffirs fashions change quite rapid on the other hand the bushmen have not developed any fashions at all.

From the historical perspective, which is widely and in detail argued by Braudel, Simmel too argues the subject. He argues that the desire for integration is one of the elements of fashion and without this element one

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 191.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 191.

cannot talk about the existence of fashion. He assumes that in the 14th century in Florence there was no prevailing fashion in men's clothing because of the lack of the desire for integration, each one had his own special way of appearance. The other element of fashion for Simmel is differentiation, and without this element fashions cannot occur either. He says that the Venetian *nobili* who according to the law had to wear same black dress had no fashion.

Besides focusing in the fashion's relation with class differences, Simmel is aware of the functions of it for an individual. Firstly fashion helps an individual to integrate in a social group; on the other hand it is a way of saving inner freedom. He examines the individuals' fashion attitudes towards a mass action. From his point of view mass actions are characterized by the loss of the feeling of shame;

As a member of a mass, the individual will do many things which would have aroused uncontrollable repugnance in their soul had they been suggested to them alone. It is one of the most remarkable social-psychological phenomena, in which this characteristic of mass action is well exemplified, that many fashions tolerate breaches of modesty which, if suggested to the individual alone, would be angrily repudiated. But as dictates of fashion they find a ready acceptance. The feeling of shame is eradicated in matters of fashion, because it represents a mass action, in the same way that the feeling of responsibility is extinguished in participants in mass criminality, who if left to themselves as individuals would shrink from such deeds.⁴⁹

On the other hand fashion is a tool of expressing the inner world of an individual. Not only during a traditional event such as a funeral or wedding, in daily life, is fashion a way of expression of thoughts, feelings. In totalitarian regimes, or in institutions which the individualism

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 199.

is seen as a threat to their strict and solid structures, such as military, prisons, educational institutions adopt one uniform or they would allow very small changes. Simmel thinks the individuals too commit violence against the individuality of things:

Brutal violence is hereby committed against the individuality of things – all nuances are blurred by the curious supremacy of this one category of expression, for example, when we designate all things that we like for any reason whatever as ‘chic’, or ‘smart’ – even though the objects in question may bear no relation whatsoever to the fields to which these expressions belong. [...] by doing violence to objects treated in this way, and by clothing them all uniformly in a category that we apply to them, the individual exercises an authority over them, and gains an individual feeling of power, an emphasis of the self over against these objects.⁵⁰

In conclusion, Simmel thinks that fashion will always exist, it may be less expensive or less extravagant in the future, in any case since it is supported by a social circle “which demands mutual imitation from its members and thereby releases the individual from all responsibility”⁵¹ there will always be fashions.

2.3 Critiques to Trickle-Down Theory

The main critique to the trickle-down theory is that fashion is thought as a diffusion of styles from upper classes to lower classes. Recent theories on fashion accept that it has a horizontal movement not a vertical. “More recent statements espousing trickle-down theory are to be found in Barber (1957) and Robinson (1961), although the latter modifies the

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 201.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 201.

claim by noting that within social strata diffusion of the new fashion is likely to be horizontal rather than vertical.”⁵²

Simmel’s diffusion theory is highly criticized in the works of Fred Davis (1992), and Diana Crane (2000). Although Simmel’s theory on fashion has a great importance, it is claimed for not including the other social agendas than class while theorizing the fashion’s diffusion. Davis writes;

What does the shortened hemline or double-breasted suit mean to those who, cautiously, are among the first in their social circles to adopt them? How do these meanings, elusive or inchorate as they may be, relate to meanings that preceded and will follow them in the fashion cycle? Why do some new meanings (read, new fashions) “click” while others “fizzle”? Trickle-down theory, along with other sociological theories of fashion (Tarde’s and Sumner’s imitation theory, Konig’s displaced sex urge emphasis, Blumer’s collective selection formulation), reveals itself as peculiarly incapable of informing us substantively of how clothing meanings are engendered, communicated, and eventually dissipated. Yet it is this, after all, that lies at the core of the fashion process.⁵³

Crane too thinks that Simmel’s theory on diffusion of fashion is over emphasized. Through her research on the clothing practices of French costumes’ of middle and working classes she explains that while adopting a new style there was a more complicated process than Simmel assumed. She thinks that working class was selective while adopting the styles of upper classes. Not every style was adopted. She writes:

Simmel’s theory of fashion diffusion from the upper to the lower class suggests that fashionable clothing would eventually be adopted by the working class. In fact, French workers and their wives adopted fashionable clothing

⁵² King (1981) cited in Davis, *Fashion, Culture, and Identity*, p. 112.

⁵³ Davis, *Fashion, Culture, and Identity*, p. 113.

selectively; certain styles were not adopted. His theory would also predict that within the working class, fashionable styles would be adopted first by higher strata and later by lower strata.⁵⁴

Craine also thinks that, diffusion models have focused on the social characteristics of adopters defined in terms of social class and social status in a specific group, age, or gender. She argues that diffusion of fashion is overestimated. Her work on French fashion in the nineteenth-century shows the relation between the diffusion of fashion and interactions between social classes, social groups. “Relationships between social classes have been interpreted using theories of symbolic boundaries and class reproduction, which attempt to explain the nature of class cultures and their relationships to one another.”⁵⁵ In the light of this research she argues that relationships between social classes cannot be “conceptualized as a linear progression from high to low status because relationships between social strata change over time in ways that disrupt perceptions of relative status and affect the adoption of fashionable clothing.”⁵⁶

Veblen and Simmel are criticized for their trickle-down theory focusing too much on the class differentiation. The main critique is that the fashion is a complex practice of many social issues such as gender, aesthetic, taste, identity. Therefore fashion needs to be theorized by referring to other agendas in addition to class. Davis criticizes discusses Veblen and Simmel for placing too exclusive an emphasis on social class differentiation as the basis for fashion motivation. However Davis notes that Simmel’s rendition of “trickle-down” is more subtle and insightful

⁵⁴ Diana Crane, *Fashion and its Social Agendas: Class, Gender, and Identity in Clothing* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 61.

⁵⁵ Ibid., pp. 61-64.

⁵⁶ Ibid., pp. 61-64.

than Veblen's. Davis thinks;

Veblen grinds away relentlessly on “conspicuous waste” and “conspicuous consumption” as the symbolic *sine qua non* of fashion whereby the leisure class differentiates itself from less advantaged classes. For Simmel, fashion, in addition to this societal function, at the interpersonal level affords a near-ideal mechanism for balancing several of the “contrary human tendencies” that figure so prominently in the corpus of his sociological writing (Simmel 1950), i.e., individualization vs. equalization, union vs. segregation, dependence vs. freedom, etc. What he had in mind was that fashion at one and the same time, allowed persons to express their individuality and afforded them the security of conformity with numerous similarly disposed peers.⁵⁷

On the other hand Crane argues that Veblen's model of “conspicuous consumption” may be useful to explain the different attitudes towards adopting styles. She writes;

Although Simmel recognized that some trendsetters were working-class women who had become actresses or courtesans, he has been criticized for emphasizing the role of superordinate groups in initiating the contagion process. Others argue that upwardly mobile status groups were motivated to adopt new styles as status markers in order to differentiate themselves from groups subordinate to themselves, while the highest-status groups, whose eminence was, secure and based on wealth and inheritance, tended to be relatively indifferent to the latest fashions (McCracken 1985: 40). Veblen's (1899) model of “conspicuous consumption” helps to explain the motivations of fashion adopters in some social strata.⁵⁸

Today's society has most probably more complex structures in class strata, than it was in the nineteenth century, the century that both Veblen and Simmel observed while theorizing fashion. The gaps in life styles,

⁵⁷ Davis, *Fashion, Culture, and Identity*, p. 111 n.8.

⁵⁸ Crane, *Fashion and its Social Agendas*, pp.6-7.

everyday practices, tastes were more visible between upper and lower classes. Today's society is in Baudrillard's words "consumer society". People construct their identities through the things they consume. Therefore the function of the fashion, had shown changes. The individual, today's consumer, has a right to 'choose freely'. Instead of adaptation we may talk about choices. The concept of "reception" endows the consumer with a greater level of agency than was the case in the older diffusion models, the consumers of today are actively making selections rather than passively responding to what is available.⁵⁹

According to Craine, Simmel's "top-down" model was the dominant form of fashion dissemination in Western societies until the 1960s. She thinks that the demographic and economic factors increased the influence of youth among all social class levels. Craine quoting from Field (1970) points that the trickle-down theory functions vice a versa, fashion diffusion is bottom to top since 1960s as a result of baby boom generation's influence. From Craine's point of view:

An indication of the difficulties in using Simmel's top-down model today is seen in the fact that members of adolescent subcultures, often at low social class levels, are sometimes the most avid consumers of luxury fashion items, which they adopt soon after their appearance and discard before they have lost their fashionable cachet.⁶⁰

Clothing is also a more complicated process than it was in the nineteenth century. The developing technology is forcing fashion to change rapidly today than it was ever before. The big companies, which are aware of the main element of fashion, produce and market identities with the styles

⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 61-64.

⁶⁰ De la Haye and Dingwall (1996) cited in Crane, *Fashion and its Social Agendas*, pp.14-15.

they sell.

This is why the meaning in clothing is a complicated process to examine, and needs to be considered through these processes. Davis points out that trickle-down, remarkably, barely attends to the complex of institutional, organizational, and market structures that channel and, at very least, mediate the fashion process. He thinks;

None would deny, for example, that the social construction of “seasons,” competition among designers and fashion centers (Paris, Milan, London, New York), the fashion choices of buyers for big American department stores at the fall and spring showings, the fashion press, merchandising strategies, etc., have a great deal to do with how fashion “happens.” Yet these palpable structural influences are hardly ever reflected in the formulations of trickle-down theory or, for that matter, in sociological writing on fashion generally. If considered at all, they are treated as something of a black box whose invisible operation serves solely to sustain and reproduce the social class system of society.⁶¹

Another critique to the trickle-down theory is the issue of pluralism. Contemporary dress is characterized by pluralism and polycentrism according to Davis, and for him trickle-down theory is unable to account this structure of the fashion. According to Davis, clothes and fashion tell more than one’s social status such as work, gender, sexuality, age, leisure inclinations, ethnic and religious identifications, political, and ideological dispositions, and still many other attributes of the person can be in play in the clothes we wear. To isolate from this rich design a single, though admittedly important, element is to do violence to the phenomenon itself.⁶²

⁶¹ Davis, *Fashion, Culture, and Identity*, p. 114.

⁶² Ibid., p. 112.

Craine criticizes Simmel's adaptation model since the way that how Simmel's idea of new styles are being widely adopted, is left unclear in defining the subjects of this process. She asks; if the fashions were circulating primarily in the upper strata of these societies and, to what extent were fashionable styles adopted by the working class? She thinks that these questions remain unanswered in Simmel's work. In her words;

Middle-class observers in the nineteenth century tended to generalize from experiences in their own social circles and exaggerate the extent to which new styles were widely adopted by the working class. Middle-class commentators in magazines and newspapers drew their conclusions about working-class clothing from the appearance of certain types of people who were particularly "visible," such as artisans and servants. Were those who were located in social positions that had little contact with the middle class less likely to adopt new styles? While costume historians have claimed that clothes were democratized during the nineteenth century, it would seem unlikely that members of the working class could emulate the extensive wardrobes of the middle class in anything more than a superficial manner.⁶³

In conclusion, both Simmel's and Veblen's theory on fashion is highly criticized by the recent theorists by being too much class oriented, but still their work will remain valuable, since class strata is the key issue in understanding the functions, or "codes" of the fashion.

2.4 Collective Selection Theory of Herbert Blumer

Herbert Blumer (1969) as one of the main theorists stands against the "trickle-down" theory of Veblen and Simmel, thinks that fashion does not have a linear structure. Blumer is more concerned with the industrial processes of the fashion. He defines his work in the name of "Collective

⁶³ Crane, *Fashion and its Social Agendas*, pp. 61-64.

Selection”, which actually does not deny the importance of class differentiation in the fashion process, but places it in the second.

The efforts of an elite class to set itself apart in appearance takes place inside of the movement of fashion instead of being its cause. The prestige of elite groups, in place of setting the direction of the fashion movement, is effective only to the extent to which they are recognized as representing and portraying the movement. The people in other classes who consciously follow the movement do so because it is the fashion and not because of the separate prestige of the elite group.⁶⁴

Davis (1992) thinks that Blumer’s theory is “largely indifferent to what is communicated by fashion”. He thinks that Blumer’s theory of fashion is “more balanced, comprehensive, and felicitous analysis of the fashion process” among the other theories like trickle-down.

However Davis thinks that Blumer’s theory too has some shortcomings. He assumes that Blumer is the first who interested in fashion’s communicative process. Blumer has analyzed fashion as a tool of communication between individuals, but according to Davis, “nowhere does Blumer offer a methodology for assaying what clothing’s meanings are.”⁶⁵

2.5 Cultural Capital – Pierre Bourdieu

Pierre Bourdieu’s conceptualization, which states that the primary differences, those which distinguish the major classes of conditions of

⁶⁴ Herbert Blumer, “Fashion: From Class Differentiation to Collective Selection,” *Sociological Quarterly* 10 (Summer, 1969): 275-291, p. 281.

⁶⁵ Davis, *Fashion, Culture, and Identity*, p. 119.

existence, derive from the overall volume of capital, understood as the set of actually usable resources and powers – economic capital, cultural capital, and also social capital.⁶⁶

Bourdieu's theory of class reproduction and cultural tastes is useful for understanding how different social classes respond to cultural goods and material culture in highly stratified societies.⁶⁷ His theory suggests that the dissemination of fashion was more complicated than the process described by Simmel. Bourdieu describes social structures as complex systems of class cultures comprising sets of cultural tastes and associated lifestyles.

Within social classes, individuals compete for social distinction and cultural capital on the basis of their capacity to judge the suitability of cultural products according to class-based standards of taste and manners. Cultural practices which include both knowledge of culture and critical abilities for assessing and appreciating it are acquired during childhood in the family and in the educational system and contribute to the reproduction of the existing social class structure. In class societies, the dominant and most prestigious culture is that of the upper class. The consumption of cultural goods associated with the upper and middle classes require attitudes and knowledge that are not readily accessible to members of the working class.

According to Bourdieu's theory, the tastes of working-class men would be based on a "culture of necessity" characteristic of that class, in other words, clothing was practical, functional, and durable rather than

⁶⁶ Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (London: Cambridge University Press, London, 1977).

⁶⁷ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinctions: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984).

aesthetically pleasing and stylish. Those who moved into the middle classes would be expected to adopt the clothing behavior of that class but would not exhibit the same levels of taste and refinement owing to insufficient socialization and education.

Bourdieu's theory helps to explain how social classes and hence social structures are maintained over time but is less useful for understanding how people respond to rapid social change during these periods. Bourdieu argues that the privileged possession of cultural capital, "along with its judicious expenditure day in and day out in a thousand small ways, explains how dominant classes manage to reproduce themselves from generation to generation."⁶⁸

In this chapter I tried to specify the area of fashion. Through the history of fashion I aimed to understand the shift from dressing to fashion. Dress has changed its meaning of necessity into fashion during the seventeenth century in the West, as a result of the upper classes' desire to distinguish themselves from lower classes. Fashion as a distinguishing instrument is main argument of Veblen and Simmel's fashion theory. According to their theory, which is called as Trickle-Down, fashion is a tool of differentiation rich from poor, and it changes when lower classes adopt the style of upper classes. This way of diffusion is still present in the society. However this vertical diffusion is not the only model we observe in fashion. It also has a horizontal character, which means that the defining element of the fashion is not class differences. It has a more complicated structure than Veblen and Simmel thought, which includes the production process. Besides we may not exclude the effect of *taste* in adopting new styles.

⁶⁸ Bourdieu, *Distinctions*.

In addition fashion bears the codes to reproduce the gender roles. The heterosexual normativity in the patriarchal society exposes the strict dressing styles to men and women. Dress functions as a tool of defining male and female. To examine fashion's relation to gender, the next chapter examines the body politics and the hegemonic beauty ideology.

CHAPTER III

THE BODY AND THE IDEOLOGY OF BEAUTY

The ideology of beauty in today's society can be seen as a tool of controlling women's bodies. Women are in a restless effort trying to fit the "beauty myth" of the contemporary culture in order to be accepted by the society. Sometimes they even need to take quite big risks such as cosmetic surgery to meet the requirements of being "feminine". The propaganda on the attractiveness is not only directing women's life but also men are the target consumers of that politics. However anyone can easily tell that the mechanism controlling the women's appearance is more brutal. Tseëlon says:

A positive relationship between physical attractiveness and self-concept throughout the life span is reported concept consistently for both men and women. Yet beauty appears to be a gender-related category. Looks are important but inconsequential for the man, but they are a defining feature for the woman, both in terms of how others respond to her, and how she experiences her own self.⁶⁹

The word "beauty" itself is much more related with femininity than it is with masculinity. The hegemonic idea is; the line between ugliness and beauty is very thin, therefore women's efforts need to be continuing.

⁶⁹ Efrat Tseëlon, *The Masque of Femininity* (London, Thousand Oaks & New Delhi: Sage, 1995), p. 78.

There are too many traps such as ageing, gaining weight that a woman can easily fall. And this fall, for women usually means the lost of the social position. Women are more critically judged for attractiveness, and more severely rejected when they lack it, and these judgements have real consequences for them.⁷⁰

Through the Althusserian sense, “beauty” can be seen as an ideological State apparatus. Althusser makes a distinction between the concepts of the Marxian terminology ‘State Apparatus’ and ‘Ideological State Apparatus (ISA)’. His main approach is that the State apparatus in Marxist theory points the repressive State apparatus ‘which functions by violence’, although in Althusser’s use the term ISA refers to “a certain number of realities which present themselves to the immediate observer in the form of distinct and specialized institutions.”⁷¹ For him the things constitute the difference between (Repressive) State Apparatus and Ideological State Apparatuses is, first the plurality of the (Repressive) State Apparatus. Second, (Repressive) State apparatus belongs to the public domain whereas Ideological State Apparatuses to the private.

As a first moment, it is clear that while there is one (Repressive) State Apparatus, there is a *plurality* of Ideological State Apparatuses. Even presupposing that it exists, the unity that constitutes this plurality of ISAs as a body is not immediately visible. As a second moment, it is clear that whereas the – unified – (Repressive) State Apparatus belongs entirely to the public domain, much the larger part of the Ideological State Apparatuses (in their apparent dispersion) are part, on the contrary, of the private domain. Churches, Parties, Trade Unions, families, some schools, most newspapers, cultural ventures, etc., etc., are

⁷⁰ Jackson (1992) quoted in Tseëlon, *The Masque of Femininity*, p. 79.

⁷¹ Louis Althusser “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an Investigation)” in Althusser L., *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (London: New Left Books, 1977).

private.⁷²

According to Althusser these institutions can be listed as; the religious ISA, the educational ISA, the family ISA, the legal ISA, the political ISA, the trade-union ISA, the communications ISA, and the cultural ISA.⁷³ Althusser argues that ‘an ideology always exists in an apparatus, and its practice, or practices.’ For him this existence is material. Judith Butler in her book *Bodies That Matter*, deals with the issue of body as a material existence. She argues the meaning of ‘material’ both in common sense and Althusserian sense. Butler in her book, tries to answer the question of a way to link the question of the materiality of the body to the performativity of gender and how the category of “sex” figures within such a relationship.⁷⁴ She writes;

At stake in such a reformulation of the materiality of bodies will be the following: (1) the recasting of the matter of bodies as the effect of a dynamic of power, such that the matter of bodies will be indissociable from the regulatory norms that govern their materialization and the signification of those material effects; (2) the understanding of performativity not as the act by which a subject brings into being what she / he names, but, rather, as that reiterative power of discourse to produce the phenomena that it regulates and constrains; (3) the construal of “sex” no longer as a bodily given on which the construct of gender is artificially imposed, but as a cultural norm which governs the materialization of bodies; (4) a rethinking of the process by which a bodily norm is assumed, appropriated, taken on as not, strictly speaking, undergone by a subject, but rather that the subject, the speaking “I” is formed by virtue of having gone through such a process of assuming a sex; and (5) a linking of this process of “assuming” a sex with the question of *identification*, and

⁷² Ibid., p.137.

⁷³ Ibid. p. 138.

⁷⁴ Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”* (London : Routledge, 1993).

with the discursive means by which the heterosexual imperative enables certain sexed identifications and forecloses and / or disavows other identifications.⁷⁵

Mind/body dualism is another issue which made many theorists to think on it, also some feminist thinkers such as Susan Bordo. Bordo argues:

[I]f, whatever the specific historical content of the duality, the body is the negative term, and if woman is the body, then women are that negativity, whatever it may be: distraction from knowledge, seduction away from God, capitulation to sexual desire, violence or aggression, failure of will, even death”⁷⁶

Bordo criticizes postmodern feminists for being muted in terms of “celebrating the creative agency of individuals and denying systemic pattern”. She thinks that “if the body is a metaphor for our locatedness in space and time and thus for the finitude of human perception and knowledge, then the postmodern body is no body at all”⁷⁷

In her article *Postmodern Subjects, Postmodern Bodies, Postmodern Resistance*, Bordo examines the postmodern thought on body through three books: Jane Flax’s *Thinking Fragments: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, Postmodernism in the Contemporary West*, bell hooks’s *Yearning: Race, Gender and Cultural Politics* and Judith Butler’s *Gender Trouble*. She argues the Postmodern multiplicity and the issue of culture. The question is: Is the body culturally constructed, or it is a biological issue? Can this argument go beyond this dualism? According to Bordo, Karl Marx

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 3.

⁷⁶ Susan Bordo, *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture and the Body*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, Berkeley, 1993), p. 5.

⁷⁷ Ellen Rooney, What Can the Matter Be? In *American Literary History*, Vol. 8, No. 4. (Winter, 1996), pp. 754-755.

played a crucial role here, in reimagining the body as a historical and not merely a biological arena, an arena shaped by the social and economic organization of human life and, often, brutalized by it. Marx cut the first great slice into the unitary conception of “the body” assumed by those who preceded him. It makes a difference, he insisted; “whose body you are talking about – one that tills its own field, or one that works on an assembly line all day, or one that sits in an office managing the labor of others.”⁷⁸

Elizabeth Grosz, in her book *Volatile Bodies* (1994), summarizes the thoughts on body under few groups; Dualism, Cartesianism, Spinoza’s Monism, Egalitarian Feminism, Social Constructionism and Sexual Difference.⁷⁹ According to Grosz’s categorization, the egalitarian feminism includes authors such as Simone de Beauvoir, Shulamith Firestone, Mary Wollstonecraft, and liberal, conservative, humanist and ecofeminists. Female body’s specificities limit the women’s access to the rights according to egalitarian feminist thought. For the equality, biological developments on female bodies are needed;

[A]n idea that women’s oppression (in agreement with patriarchs) is a consequence of their containment within an inadequate, i.e., a female or potentially maternal, body (it is not simply the social and historical context of the body but the real vulnerability or fragility of the female body that poses the problem of women’s social subordination); and a notion that women’s oppression is, at least to some extent, biologically justified insofar as women are less socially, politically, and intellectually able to participate as men’s social equals when they bear or raise children. Thus biology itself requires modification and transformation.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Marx Karl, quoted in Bordo, *Unbearable Weight*, p. 34

⁷⁹ Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), pp. 6-19.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

Grosz puts feminist theorists like Juliet Mitchell, Julia Kristeva, Michele Barrett, Nancy Chodorow, Marxist feminists, psychoanalytic feminists into the category of Social Constructionism. In contrast to the egalitarian feminism, social constructionists think that oppression of women is not a result of biology but of the socially constructed system. Grosz examines:

Their project has been to minimize biological differences and to provide them with different cultural meanings and values. There also remains the possibility of the equalization of relations between the two sexes only if the psychological functioning of each – gender – can be understood and transformed. Equalization does not require a transformation or supersession of the body. The body itself, in the strongest version of this position, is irrelevant to political transformation, and in the weakest version is merely a vehicle for psychological change, an instrument for a “deeper” effect. What needs to be changed are attitudes, beliefs, and values rather than the body itself.⁸¹

Third category of Grosz, sexual difference includes Luce Irigaray, Helene Cixous, Gayatri Spivak, Jane Gallop, Moira Gatens, Vicki Kirby, Judith Butler, Naomi Schor, and Monique Wittig. For them, the body is crucial to understanding woman’s psychical and social existence, but the body is no longer understood as an ahistorical, biologically given, acultural object. They are concerned with the *lived body*, the body insofar as it is represented and used in specific ways in particular cultures.⁸² It is certain that there is no universal, ideal body, there are bodies. As Grosz points out:

[B]odies can be represented or understood not as entities in

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 17.

⁸² Ibid., p. 18.

themselves or simply on a linear continuum with its polar extremes occupied by male and female bodies (with the various gradations of “intersexed” individuals in between) but as a field, a two-dimensional continuum in which race (and possibly even class, caste, or religion) form body specifications.⁸³

The importance of sexual difference category is its critique to the western thought. The theory of body is blind to the third world countries, non-western cultures, religions, rules, beliefs, practices, races. Although capitalist system insists on its body standards as they are universal truth, the application of this ideology may differ for different races, cultures, classes.

3.1 “The Beauty Myth”

The discussion on ideology of beauty and body is subject of a popular American TV series named: Nip Tuck.⁸⁴ The main theme is: there are two aesthetic doctors, who in each episode argue about the ethic issues on aesthetic surgery which their patients want them to do. In one of the episodes a young woman wants to have an operation since she thinks that she is overweight and if she loses some weight through an operation the man she has been in love for long time may fall in love with her too. After long discussions, the doctors decide that her health is not suitable to have the operation. At the end of the episode, she kills herself on her exercise bike and her blood spreads on the walls of the room which she covered with the pictures of the thin beauty idols.

This is just a TV serial, but not too far from the reality of women’s unhappiness about their own appearance. As Marcia Gillespie puts it:

⁸³ Ibid., p. 19.

⁸⁴ Nip / Tuck, Nanette Babcock, Season 1, Episode 3, BBC. 2003.

“Mirror, mirror on the wall, who’s the ...?” Most of the time when the question is raised, the answer isn’t you. In fact, most women rarely (as in almost never) look in a mirror and are satisfied with what they see. You are either too short or too tall, too fat, or too thin. Your eyes aren’t the shape, size or color that is considered beautiful. Your hair doesn’t blow in the wind, or drape on your shoulder, or fluff out on his pillow. You have too much butt or too little. You worry because you have skinny legs or thunder thighs, 32A’s or 36DD’s. You worry about gravity sending nipples downward, about time and wrinkles, stretch marks and cellulite.⁸⁵

The ideal body shape and ideology of beauty are tools of oppression on women in the patriarchal system. Many women try to fit the beauty standards which are far from being natural. Ideal bodies, regardless of their specifics, have never represented the bodies of average women. Much to the contrary, they have represented physical standards that very few women could attain.⁸⁶ Many women, arguably most women, have invested substantial amounts of time, energy, and emotional resources in the usually futile effort to conform to these standards. Both men and women have habitually scrutinized women’s bodies to see how closely those women approximate the beauty standards.⁸⁷

Recent researches show women’s dissatisfaction about their appearance. A research done in Millikin University on *Body Dissatisfaction in*

⁸⁵ Marcia Ann Gillepe, “Mirror Mirror,” in *The Politics of Women’s Bodies: Sexuality, Appearance and Behaviour*, Rose Weitz, R., eds. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998): 184-188, p. 186

⁸⁶ Garner, Garfinkel, Schwartz, & Thompson,(1980); Rodin, Silberstein, & Striegel-Moore (1984) cited in Gordon B. Forbes et al. “Sexism, Hostility toward Women, and Endorsement of Beauty Ideals and Practices: Are Beauty Ideals Associated with Oppressive Beliefs?” *Sex Roles* 56 (2007) : 265-273, p. 265.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 265.

Women and Men: The Role of Gender-Typing and Self-Esteem shows that;

[W]omen classified as feminine-typed or undifferentiated were more dissatisfied with their bodies than were women classified as masculine-typed or androgynous. Similar results were found for men. Both studies also found that women, regardless of gender-type, had thin ideals and greatly overestimated male preferences for slender female bodies.⁸⁸

The propaganda on beauty starts from the early ages of an individual. The Western ideology of beauty is imposed through visual arts, movies, novels, fairy tales and even toys like Barbies. The fairy tales are full of the stories of victory of the beautiful which is at the same time assumed as the 'good'. Anthony Synnott (1990) says that:

[T]he beauty mystique is rooted not only in physiognomy and philosophy, linguistics, ethnic relations, war and criminology, but also in our literary heritage. Our fairy stories imbue children with the mystique. In Grimm's story, 'Cinderella', it is the remarkably beautiful and amazingly good Cinderella who wins the heart of the prince, In 'Beauty and the Beast', Beauty, who is both good and intelligent enough to see through ugliness, breaks the spell over the beast, which promptly turns into a handsome prince. The moral of the stories is not only that virtue triumphs, but so does beauty. All of these stories exemplify the beauty mystique, and socialize children into the cosmic value and practical utility of beauty.⁸⁹

Synnott claims that adult literature too emphasizes the same themes. Not only the western literature but also those in the Eastern world reproduce

⁸⁸ Gordon B. Forbes, et al. "Body Dissatisfaction in Women and Men: The Role of Gender-Typing and Self-Esteem," *Sex Roles* 44 (2001) : 461-484, p. 461.

⁸⁹ Anthony Synnott "Truth and Goodness, Mirrors and Masks Part II: A Sociology of Beauty and the Face," *The British Journal of Sociology* 41 (March, 1990) : 55-76, p. 57.

the beauty mystique. Through these fairy tales the ideology of beauty can be clearly seen.

First of all “beauty” is a word related with femininity and so its requirements apply to women. Men’s position is to be beast, strong, and to have physical or hierarchical power. To be ‘good looking’ has a less importance in this order. Naomi Wolf says that:

[T]he beauty myth tells the story of the quality called “beauty” objectively and universally exists. Women must want to embody it and men must want to possess women who embody it. This embodiment is an imperative for women and not for men, which situation is necessary and natural because it is biological, sexual, and evolutionary: strong men battle for beautiful women, and beautiful women are more reproductively successful.⁹⁰

In fairy tales the beautiful women are described long haired (and mostly blond in Western literature), thin, white and the completion of this beauty can be possible through winning the heart of the most powerful man.

The ugly ones have nothing to do but to loose, because the ugliness means ‘evil’. As Anthony Synnott points out “physical beauty is believed to symbolize inner moral or spiritual beauty or goodness, so too physical ugliness is believed to symbolize an inner ugliness or evil.”⁹¹ The equation is reversible; the ugly are evil, but the evil are also ugly. Thus those who are perceived as evil, i.e. enemies of one sort or another: military, ethnic, racial, political, etc., are ‘uglified’ – portrayed as ugly.

⁹⁰ Naomi Wolf, “The Beauty Myth (excerpt),” in *Women in Culture: A Women’s Studies Anthology*, Lucina Loy Peach, ed.(Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 1998): 179-187, p. 181.

⁹¹ Synott, Truth and Goodness, Mirrors and Masks Part II: A Sociology of Beauty and the Face, p. 56.

This second process consolidates and reinforces the original stigmatization of the ugly: propaganda includes ‘uglification’.⁹² This is why every nation pictures its enemies ugly to legitimize its own war.

What makes Cinderella ‘beautiful and good’, her sisters ‘evil and ugly’? According to Tseëlon, “it is a Victorian belief which imposes that a person’s character can be seen through their appearance and that physical beauty reflects spiritual beauty.”⁹³ On the whole, research repeatedly affirmed the Victorian belief that beauty of body signals beauty of character ‘what is beautiful is good’.⁹⁴ Anne Anlin Cheng points out in her article: “much of the writing about beauty over the centuries has pondered beauty as a dichotomy between good and evil, between absolution and curse.”⁹⁵ She adds:

[T]he discourse of beauty, especially in mass/commodity culture, is seen to represent an attempt to discipline women’s bodies (that which needs to be made beautiful), and, as such, the rhetoric of feminine beauty can be said to have also been a rhetoric about feminine ugliness.⁹⁶

How beauty, the ‘defining feature for the woman’ is itself defined? How is it constructed? Why is it a ‘gender related category?’ The problematic issue is the definition of beauty. Beauty is defined from different perspectives such as *evolutionary* and *social constructionist* perspectives:

⁹² Synott, Truth and Goodness, Mirrors and Masks Part II: A Sociology of Beauty and the Face, p. 56.

⁹³ Tseëlon, *The Masque of Femininity*, p. 85.

⁹⁴ Dion (1972) cited in Tseëlon, *The Masque of Femininity*, p. 85.

⁹⁵ Anne Anlin Cheng, “Wounded Beauty: An Exploratory Essay on Race, Feminism, and the Aesthetic Question,” *The Tulsa Studies in Women’s Literature* 19 (Autumm, 2000): 191-217, p. 191.

⁹⁶ Ibid., pp.191-192.

Evolutionary perspective conceptualizes beauty as a biological adaptation. According to this view beauty standards represent a cluster of cues that provide information about a woman's reproductive potential. However, evolutionary forces are not the only variables contributing to beauty standard. As Banner (1983) and others have observed, the human genome did not change in the few decades that separate flappers from sweater girls, and it is abundantly clear that beauty, at least to some extent, is socially constructed.⁹⁷

Feminist theory states that all beauty standards serve the same purpose and have the same motivation: the maintenance of gender inequality.⁹⁸ Scott (1997) claims that beauty ideals are oppressive (in short she calls this: BIO). She identifies four central themes about beauty ideals:

After reviewing the feminist literature on this hypothesis, she identified four central themes. These are (Scott, 1997 p.12) 1) "Beauty is fundamentally feminine." This refers to beauty as a gendered trait that is both specific to women and required for femininity; 2) "Beauty is imperative for women." That is, almost irrespective of the consequences and the cost, women are expected to be beautiful. 3) "Beauty is paramount among women's qualities." This reflects the belief that beauty is a woman's most important attribute; 4) "Women's beauty requires substantial modification of the natural appearance." That is, in its natural state the female body is not beautiful. To achieve beauty, women must shape, color, shave, or in other ways conceal or modify the natural appearance of their bodies.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Forbes, et al., Sexism, Hostility toward Women, and Endorsement of Beauty Ideals and Practices: Are Beauty Ideals Associated with Oppressive Beliefs?, p. 265.

⁹⁸ Jeffreys (2005) cited in Forbes, et al., Sexism, Hostility toward Women, and Endorsement of Beauty Ideals and Practices: Are Beauty Ideals Associated with Oppressive Beliefs?, p. 266.

⁹⁹ Scott (1997) cited in Forbes, et al., Sexism, Hostility toward Women, and Endorsement of Beauty Ideals and Practices: Are Beauty Ideals Associated with Oppressive Beliefs?, p. 265.

Naomi Wolf in her pioneering work *Beauty Myth* (1991) argues that the beauty myth is a violent backlash against feminism. Her argument is; “as women released themselves from the feminine mystique of domesticity, the beauty myth took over its lost ground, expanding as it waned to carry on its work of social control.”¹⁰⁰ Wolf thinks that beauty myth is a way of oppression just like motherhood, domesticity, chastity. For her this backlash is so violent because the ideology of beauty is the last one remaining of the old feminine ideologies that still has the power to control those women whom second-wave feminism would have otherwise made relatively uncontrollable.

The capitalist and patriarchal systems reproduce the beauty myth through its tools such as media, education, religion and science. Beauty contests became a part of our life not only in western world, but in the entire world. Through these beauty contests the beauty standards of the male world are imposed on women. What is demonstrated as “beautiful” on the back pages of newspapers’ or front covers of the magazines are almost impossible for most women to achieve. Tseëlon (1995) writes; what helps promoting the ideology of the construction of sexual difference through appearance is a certain climate of opinions created by the media on the one hand, and the scientific community on the other. “The first is the propagation of the ‘new woman’ myth. The second is scientific research which reinforces ‘the physical attractiveness myth’.”¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Wolf, *The Beauty Myth* (excerpt), p. 180.

¹⁰¹ Tseëlon, *The Masque of Femininity*, pp. 81-82.

The society is not daring to face with the real woman and tries too hard to reshape it again and again. Why does the social order feel the need to defend itself by evading the fact of real women? Wolf claims that;

An economy that depends on slavery needs to promote images of slaves that “justify” the institution of slavery. Western economies are absolutely dependent now on the continued underpayment of women. An ideology that makes women feel “worth less” was urgently needed to counteract the way feminism had begun to make us feel worth more. This does not require a conspiracy; merely an atmosphere. The contemporary economy depends right now on the representation of women within the beauty myth.¹⁰²

Wolf is aware of the fact that there has to be a beauty myth as long as patriarchy exists. But she thinks that the modern form of beauty myth is a recent invention. She takes the term in a historical line in her article to show how much the beauty myth has changed, and whether the aim of the myth has changed ever. She writes:

Anthropology has overturned the notion that females must be “beautiful” to be selected to mate. Evelyn Reed, Elaine Morgan, and others have dismissed sociobiological assertions of innate male polygamy and female monogamy. Female higher primates are the sexual initiators; not only do they seek out and enjoy sex with many partners, but “every nonpregnant female takes her turn at being the most desirable of all her troop. And that cycle keeps turning as long as she lives.” The inflamed pink sexual organs of primates are often cited by male sociobiologists as analogous to human arrangements relating to female “beauty,” when in fact that is universal, non-hierarchical female primate characteristic.¹⁰³

¹⁰² Wolf, *The Beauty Myth* (excerpt), p. 186.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 182.

Wolf points out that the beauty myth has not been always in this way. Pairing of the older rich men with young “beautiful” women is taken to be somehow inevitable, in the matriarchal goddess religions that dominated the Mediterranean from about 25,000 BCE to about 700 BCE, and the situation was reversed.

And she also thinks that the beauty myth is not always something that women do and only men watch. She supports her idea with the example of Nigerian Wodaabes. Among the Nigerian Wodaabes, Wolf writes that women hold economic power and the tribe is obsessed with male beauty; Wodaabe men spend hours together in elaborate makeup sessions, and compete – provocatively painted and dressed, with swaying hips and seductive expressions – in beauty contests judged by women. Wolf comes to the conclusion that there is no legitimate historical or biological justification for the beauty myth; “what it is doing to women today is a result of nothing more exalted than the need of today’s power structure, economy, and culture to mount a counter-offense against women.”

Competition is the main source of the modern times. Beauty myth is creating and reproducing this competition between women and dividing them into categories of age, weight, color. Competition between women has been made part of the myth so that women will be divided from one another. Youth and (until recently) virginity has been “beautiful” in women since they stand for experiential and sexual ignorance.¹⁰⁴

Beauty is creating an invisible ‘class’ among women. Wolf argues that before the industrial revolution, the average woman could not have had the same feelings about “beauty” that modern women do, who experience

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 183.

the myth as continual comparison to a mass-disseminated physical ideal. She thinks that, before the development of the technologies of mass production – daguerreotypes, photographs – an ordinary woman was exposed to few such images outside the Church. Since the family was a productive unit and women's work complemented men's, the value of women who were not aristocrats or prostitutes lay in their work skills, economic shrewdness, physical strength, and fertility.¹⁰⁵

According to Wolf, beauty myth is a result of industrialization. And she assumes that the beauty index is invented not earlier than 1830s. She writes:

Physical attraction, obviously, played its part; but “beauty” as we understand it was not, for ordinary women, a serious issue in the marriage marketplace. The beauty myth in its modern form gained ground after the upheavals of industrialization, as the work unit of the family was destroyed, and urbanization and the emerging factory system demanded what social engineers of the time termed the “separate sphere” of domesticity, which supported the new labor category of the “breadwinner” who left home for the workplace during the day. The middle class expanded the standards of living and of literacy rose, the size of families shrank; a new class of literate, idle women developed, on whose submission to enforced domesticity the evolving system of industrial capitalism depended. Most of our assumptions about the way women have always thought about “beauty” date from no earlier than the 1830s, when the cult of domesticity was first consolidated and the beauty index invented.¹⁰⁶

As Chapkis (1986) points out, “a woman is made to feel continually insecure about her physical appearance, and simultaneously so dependent

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 183.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 183.

on it.”¹⁰⁷ Gendered bodies are needed for modern life which is based on dualisms. So there has to be feminine and masculine bodies. But the beauty myth is more oppressive on women than it is for men; because as Wolf points out, “the beauty myth is not about women at all. It is about men’s institutions and institutional power.”¹⁰⁸

3.2 Age, Weight and the Color of Beauty

The numbers are necessary tools of the patriarchal system. Patriarchy is based on a numerical world. Men measure women, and women as objects of this patriarchal world have to be measured through their age, weight, size and so on. For instance aging is more traumatic feature for women than it is for men, just like gaining weight.

Many women spend most of their time and money on anti aging creams, activities, watching TV programs which tell women what to eat, how to exercise to lose weight and shape their body, how to look younger. The effort on physical appearance forces women to remain behind the doors. Dinnerstein and Weitz (1994) point out that:

[T]he increased cultural focus since the 1970s on controlling women’s bodies has led several critics to label it a “backlash” to the rising power and visibility of women. These commentators suggest that keeping women involved with controlling their bodies diverts their energies from striving to achieve more control in the public arena.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Wendy Chapkis, *Beauty Secrets*. (Boston: South End Press, 1986); p. 140.

¹⁰⁸ Wolf, *The Beauty Myth* (excerpt), p. 183.

¹⁰⁹ Bordo 1989; Bordo 1990; Faludi 1991; Wolf 1991 cited in Dinnerstein and Weitz Weitz, Rose. eds. *The Politics of Women’s Bodies: Sexuality, Appearance and Behaviour*. (New York: Oxford University Press. 1998): 189-203, p.191.

Every where is full of images which display desired female bodies; thin, tall, young, white. Many women are unhappy with their appearance and wishing to have bodies they are required by the male gaze. She is willing, more than men, to take dangerous risks to improve her appearance and fight ageing through endless diets and unsafe, unnecessary surgery.¹¹⁰

Recent innovations feed the beauty myth discourse. To look young, to meet the sizes of beauty is shown like such an easy work for women. The products' TV commercials tell the same lie to women that through using that product they will meet the beauty standards. It is sometimes an anti aging cream which promises women ten years younger look in one day; an exercising instrument which promises a slim body in a week. They all offer a magic which women used to dream about since they hear the fairy tales such as Cinderella, since they start playing with their Barbies. Women are being forced to live in different bodies than their own, at least in their imagination. What happens to their identity then? According to Sartre:

The very attempt to be “authentic” (that is, feminine) suggests that originally “one is being what one is not”. In other words: the woman is not originally authentically feminine but can become one with effort. Second, “being authentic” implies an act of objectifying oneself, of seeing oneself through the eyes of the other. And a being which is for-others cannot be authentically for-itself.¹¹¹

According to common belief every woman is beautiful but only if she wills to be. There is a common proverb in Turkish: “there is no ugly woman but woman who doesn’t care her look.” This proverb is obvious

¹¹⁰ Finkelstein, 1991, Wolf, 1991 cited in Efrat Tseëlon. *The Masque of Femininity: The Presentation of Woman in Everyday Life*. (London: Sage Publications), 1995. p. 80.

¹¹¹ Sartre, 1943-1966 p.100 cited in Efrat Tseëlon. *The Masque of Femininity: The Presentation of Woman in Everyday Life*. (London: Sage Publications), 1995. p. 38.

example of patriarchal thought on women's appearance. It can be read in this way; there is no naturally beautiful woman, a woman can achieve beauty only if she tries to meet the standards she is required. Tseëlon (1995) gives the example of the advertisement of Nike sports shoes which appeared in Cosmopolitan (September 1991) shows two images: "a soft frail image of Marilyn Monroe and a picture of a bronze-colored sporty woman during workout." In between the text reads:

A woman is often measured by the things she cannot control. She is measured by the way her body curves or doesn't curve, by where she is flat or straight or round. She is measured by 36-24-36 and inches and ages and numbers, by all the outside things that don't ever add up to who she is on the inside. And so if a woman is to be measured, let her be measured by the things she can control, by who she is and who she is trying to become. Because as every woman knows, measurements are only statistics. And statistics lie.¹¹²

According to Tseëlon this message, while appearing to liberate the woman from the imposition of an arbitrary standard of her physical features, ties her to the same standard but places the responsibility on her. She says that this message is telling her that she can really achieve the required standard if only she tries hard enough.

Achieving the required standard is not enough; once it is achieved she needs to try hard not to lose it. From Lacanian perspective she can either appear feminine (castrated) or masculine (castrating). Aging from this perspective seems to be frightening women, since it may cause her to appear masculine. This is an unbearable circle for women to deal with it is a fight against time. The cosmetics sector, just as cosmetic surgery emerges as a best friend of women in this fight. Aging in general is

¹¹² Wolf, 1991 cited in Efrat Tseëlon. *The Masque of Femininity: The Presentation of Woman in Everyday Life*. (London: Sage Publications), 1995. p. 92.

related with death for all but female aging is more frightening. Tseëlon assumes that:

The ageing woman portrays an unashamed undisguised ugliness that society has placed on the category of woman. And she is beyond the control system of the beauty system. Yet even here she is caught up in a paradox. She is threatening if she has given up the fight for beauty and failed to defeat the inevitable. But she is equally threatening if she tries to do just that: defy the inevitable.¹¹³

Additionally Wolf thinks that “aging in women is ‘unbeautiful’ in women since women grow more powerful with time.”¹¹⁴ As aging, weight is another fear of women. Many women are obsessed with their weight even the ones who are healthy enough. Susan Bordo, in her book *Unbearable Weight* (1995), analyses the eating disorders, diets, ideology of hunger and discourses of the body in general. Bordo points out that:

[W]omen in western culture are more tyrannized by the contemporary slenderness ideal than men are, as they typically have been by beauty ideals in general. It is far more important to men than to women that their partner be slim. Women are much more prone than men to perceive themselves as too fat.¹¹⁵

She questions the relation between slenderness and gender. She writes that she wants to remain with the image of the slender body, confronting it now both as a gendered body and as a body whose gender meaning is never neutral.¹¹⁶ She points out that the gender roles are socially

¹¹³ Efrat Tseëlon. *The Masque of Femininity: The Presentation of Woman in Everyday Life*. (London: Sage Publications), 1995. p. 94.

¹¹⁴ Wolf, *The Beauty Myth* (excerpt), p. 183.

¹¹⁵ Bordo, *Unbearable Weight*, p. 204.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 204.

constructed, such as while male is related with rational, female is on contrary related with natural, emotional, and bodily spontaneities. “Women’s desires are by their very nature excessive, irrational, and threatening to erupt and challenge the patriarchal order.”¹¹⁷

Bordo points out the construction of femaleness/maleness in Western Culture. She thinks that these terms are constructed through religion and traditions, which relate male with self-management on the contrary, relate femaleness with biological needs and emotions. She thinks:

The exploration of contemporary slenderness as a metaphor for the correct management of desire must take into account the fact that throughout dominant Western religious and philosophical traditions, the capacity for self-management is decisively coded as male. By contrast, all those bodily spontaneities – hunger, sexuality, the emotions – seen as needful of containment and control have been culturally constructed and coded as female. The management of specifically female desire, therefore, is in phallogocentric cultures a doubly freighted problem.¹¹⁸

Since the Victorian era, if not before, women are forced to be slim. They had to use tie corsets which are very unhealthy for the inner organs to look thinner, and the contemporary world encounter with new illnesses called anorexia and bulimia which can even cause death. Bordo believes that cultural elements play a very important role in eating disorders. She thinks that self-starvation among elite women first surfaced in the nineteenth century took the attention of medicine profession. Bordo writes:

Certainly, food refusal was an appropriate symptom in this

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 206.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 205-206.

cultural context, with its rigid prohibitions, both metaphorical and literal, against female appetite and desire, prohibitions that were locked in unstable and painful antithesis with a developing bourgeois culture of affluence and indulgence. But eating disorders have emerged as an over determined crystallization of cultural anxiety only in the second half of the twentieth century. The contemporary woman, who struggles to cope with social contradictions that first, emerged in the Victorian era but who confronts those contradictions later in their historical development and as they intersect with specifically contemporary elements, is far more likely to develop an eating disorder than a hysterical paralysis.¹¹⁹

Cultural pressures make women to have eating disorders, besides many other pressures. Culture alone is not sufficient to “cause” anorexia or bulimia “in an individual to mystification and effacement of culture’s preeminent role in providing the necessary ground for the historical flourishing of the disorders.”¹²⁰

Western culture is obsessed with the weight of women. The hegemonic western idea promotes that women are over weighted and have unacceptable sizes compared to its own popular images. The beauty myth tells “real-life women that they are overweight, chubby, chunky, obese, heavy, and too fat in relation to this standard.”¹²¹ This discourse is a tool for exclusion of women from public sphere. The shopping can sometimes mean torture for women who don’t meet the standards of beauty myth. There is a cloth size called ‘standard’. Standard for whom? How many women have these standard sizes? And how does a woman feel when a standard sized cloth doesn’t suit her? Siebecker writes:

¹¹⁹ Ibid.,

¹²⁰ Ibid.,

¹²¹ Lucinda Joy Peach. eds. *Women in Culture: A Women’s Studies Anthology* (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers. 1998). p. 175.

[S]ocial acceptability is dependent on thinness is transmitted with frightening success. For example, 75 percent of respondents to a Glamour magazine survey in 1984 indicated that they were overweight, whereas only 15 percent thought they were just right. Other studies have shown that large numbers of women who are of normal, or even less than normal, weight according to life-insurance tables, consider themselves to be overweight.¹²²

Jacqueline Urla and Alan C. Swedlund (1998) argue the importance of Barbie doll as a popular image of female body. They suggest that Barbie dolls, in fact, offer a much more complex and contradictory set of possible meanings that take shape and mutate in a period marked by the growth of consumer society, intense debate over gender and racial relations, and changing notions of the body.¹²³

Barbie has debuted in 1959 by Mattel Company in the United States. It has become a best selling doll of the company in a very short time not only in the States but in all over the world. Barbie doll was an example of materialized form of ideal woman, a postwar feminine body, of the *feminine mystique* which Betty Friedan has criticized in 1963. Barbie has a thin body, blond long hair, blue eyes; she is tall, young and white. Motz assumes that:

Barbie such a perfect icon of late capitalist constructions of femininity is the way in which her persona pairs endless consumption with the achievement of femininity and the appearance of an appropriately gendered body. By buying for

¹²² Siebecker, 1995: 107. cited in Peach, Women in Culture: A Women's Studies Anthology, p.175.

¹²³ Jacqueline Urla and Alan C. Swedlund, The Anthropometry of Barbie: Unsettling Ideals of the Feminine Body in Popular Culture, in *Feminism and The Body*, ed. Londa Schiebinger, (Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 397-428.

Barbie, girls practice how to be discriminating consumers knowledgeable about the cultural capital of different name brands, how to read packaging, and the overall importance of fashion and taste for social status.¹²⁴

The girls who dream of having a body like baby doll Barbie, most probably will dissatisfy their own appearance in the future. However the cosmetic surgery hands in hands with technology develops its features to “help” women to have the desired ‘look’.

3.3 Reconstructing Femininity – Cosmetic Surgery

Western culture is deeply interested in the appearance of the bodies. A proper body must be slim, young and fit. As it is mentioned before having these qualities is related with the acceptance to the social relations. If an individual is failed to meet these requirements there is no need to worry, since the industrialized beauty ideology would do anything to shape woman into the beauty idols.

Cosmetic surgery as Kathy Davis (2000) writes emerged at the end of the 19th century in the U.S. and Europe. When it first emerged in the 19th century it was to treat the wounded body parts of soldiers. Cosmetic surgery had its contemporary meaning in the 20th century. The media has played an important role in relation to cosmetic surgery and beauty politics.

A TV show on MTV channel which applies cosmetic surgery to the “lucky” audiences; most of them are women, in promise to *beautify* them.¹²⁵ The first day we are introduced with the “victim” of the show,

¹²⁴ Motz in Urla and Swedlund, *The Anthropometry of Barbie*, p. 401.

¹²⁵ “*I Want a Famous Face*”, produced by MTV Channel, 2007.

we learn about her dreamed body, and her wishes which will come through only if she loses weight, get rid of her wrinkles, look younger and fit. The TV program shows every stage of the cosmetic surgery. The inner body appears on the screen with its all reality. At the end we witness her happiness with her new appearance. Now she feels self confidence. She is hardly recognizable, totally a different person. But we are told that with her new appearance men will desire her and “they will live happily after.”

In mainstream feminist thought, cosmetic surgery is a way of subordinating women. Through cosmetic surgery women are once again seen as objects. Although cosmetic surgery is one of the most difficult and risky surgeries why do women want to have it? Kathryn Pauly Morgan (1991) writes:

We need a feminist analysis to understand why actual, live women are reduced and reduce themselves to “potential women” and choose to participate in anatomizing and fetishizing their bodies as they buy “contoured bodies,” “restored youth,” and “permanent beauty.” In the face of a growing market and demand for surgical interventions in women’s bodies that can and do result in infection, bleeding, embolisms, pulmonary edema, facial nerve injury, unfavorable scar formation, skin loss, blindness, crippling, and death, our silence becomes a culpable one...¹²⁶

Morgan illustrates the power over women’s bodies by Foucault’s concept of power. Foucault’s analysis of the diffusion of power is used by her in relation to cosmetic surgery. In relation to cosmetic surgery, it makes it possible to speak about the diffusion of power throughout Western

¹²⁶ Kathryn Pauly Morgan, 1991 cited in Weitz eds., *The Politics of Women’s Bodies*: 147-166, p. 148.

industrialized cultures that are increasingly committed to a technological beauty imperative.¹²⁷

Morgan highlights three paradoxes; *The Choice of Conformity, Liberation into Colonization, Coerced Voluntariness and the Technological Imperative*. According to first paradox, The Choice of Conformity, women choose to have cosmetic surgery to *westernize* their bodies. Jewish women who demand reductions of their noses, Asian girls demand the *westernizing* of their own eyes, black women demand toxic bleaching agents to lighten their skin. She assumes that what are being created through these instances are white, Western, Anglo-Saxon bodies in a racist, anti-Semitic context. In relation with conformity she writes:

More often than not, what appear at first glance to be instances of choice turn out to be instances of conformity. The women who undergo cosmetic surgery in order to compete in various beauty pageants are clearly choosing to conform. ...women's public conformity to the norms of beauty often signals a deeper conformity to the norms of compulsory heterosexuality along with an awareness of the violence that can result from violating those norms. Hence the first paradox: that what looks like an optimal situation of reflection, deliberation, and self-creating choice often signals conformity at a deeper level.¹²⁸

According to second paradox, *Liberation into Colonization*, she points out that, women's bodies are viewed as "primitive entities". Women's bodies are "seen only as potential, as a kind of raw material to be exploited in terms of appearance, eroticism, nurturance, and fertility as defined by the colonizing culture."¹²⁹

¹²⁷ Ibid., p. 154.

¹²⁸ Ibid., p. 155.

¹²⁹ Ibid., p. 156.

In paradox three; *Coerced Voluntariness and the Technological Imperative*, she questions the “free” choice of women about undergoing cosmetic surgery. There are two ideological dynamics that affect women’s choices. One is the *pressure to achieve perfection through technology*. And the other one is the *double-pathologizing of women’s bodies*. As far as the cosmetic surgery is normalized more women see their bodies as unfinished ugly works and feel the need of transforming their bodies.

One of the most striking thought in cosmetic surgery; is the one which claims that women may use cosmetic surgery for their independence, followed by Kathy Davis. Although Davis in her book *Reshaping the Female Body* (Davis, 1995) situates cosmetic surgery as an agent where gender/power is exercised, she revisits her thoughts in the article titled: *Cosmetic Surgery in a Different Voice: The Case of Madame Noël* (Davis, 2000). In this article she searches for a “different voice” in cosmetic surgery, through examining the life of Dr. Suzanne Noël, the first and most famous woman to practice cosmetic surgery, working in France at the beginning of the 20th century. Davis notes that Madame Noël was also “a feminist, a suffragette, an advocate of women’s right to work, and one of the founders of soroptimism, an international women’s organization.”¹³⁰

Through Davis’s article it is clearly seen how a successful surgeon was Madame Noël in cosmetic surgery besides being a feminist who worked for women’s rights such as voting, education, employment. Davis thinks

¹³⁰ Kathy Davis, *Cosmetic Surgery in a Different Voice: The Case of Madame Noël*, 2000 www.let.uu.nl/~Kathy.Davis/personal/cosmetic_surgery.html

that cosmetic surgery in this sense may empower individual women. She writes:

Cosmetic surgery was presented as part of a woman's struggle to feel at home in her body – a subject with a body rather than just a body. Paradoxically, cosmetic surgery enabled these women to become embodied subjects rather than objectified bodies.¹³¹

Morgan too believes that women can “constitute themselves as culturally liberated subjects through public participation in Ms. Ugly Canada/America/Universe/Cosmos pageants and use the technology of cosmetic surgery to do so.”¹³²

Morgan and Davis are too optimistic to see cosmetic surgery as a liberating act for women. Saying that, would be denying the fact that cosmetic surgery is a tool of patriarchal ideology of beauty as well as it is a part of capitalist system which uses women's bodies as commodities. One of the valuable responses to Davis and Morgan is the response of Llewellyn Negrin's (2002). She writes:

The decision to have cosmetic surgery is an individualistic 'solution' that does nothing to tackle the broader social problem as to why women should feel dissatisfaction with their appearance in the first place.¹³³

The beauty system creates “class” among women by glamorizing the Western standards. Therefore saying that the cosmetic surgery allows women to control their own body would be simplifying the issue. Negrin

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid., p. 161.

¹³³ Llewellyn Negrin. *Cosmetic Surgery and the Eclipse of Identity* in *Body Society* 2002; 8; 21

in her article questions the technology used in cosmetic surgery as well. “Ultimately, they are in the hands of surgeons whose training has been based on a white, Western ideal of beauty.”¹³⁴ Further we may say that the science and technology, which developed the cosmetic surgery is based on the Christian culture besides Western, heterosexual ideology.¹³⁵

In this chapter I argued the distinct approaches of feminist theorists to body. Women’s oppression is practiced through the body politics, therefore body continues to exist as a main issue in the feminist theory. The hegemonic beauty ideology functions as one of the main oppressor of women’s bodies. Women are forced to reshape their bodies as required by male desire. Therefore I tried to examine how beauty myth is constructed in the society, in the second part of this section. The hegemonic beauty ideology situates women as the objects of male desire. In the next chapter I aimed to understand the intersecting discourses of patriarchy and capitalism in the case of fashion.

¹³⁴ Ibid., p.27.

¹³⁵ Donna Haraway, in her book; *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women*. (London: Free Association Books, 1991), claims that the science and technology are biased. The hegemonic ideology in both is inspired from Christian belief.

CHAPTER IV

FASHION: INTERSECTION OF PATRIARCHY AND CAPITALISM

We live in an era of images. We think through images, we consume images and we exist as images. Our bodies are the most favorite actors of this 'imaged' world. The hegemonic Western culture creates and distributes thousands of images through its movies, film stars, advertisements which shape our appearances, life styles, cultural activities and even our way of thinking.

Since when and why did Western world get involved in the world of images? Sure it was since Eve and Adam. Christianity, like other religions rises on the power of the images. Eve and Adam, after having bites from the 'apple' get aware of nudity of each other's.¹³⁶ This 'traumatic' moment would appear in the Western art especially Renaissance art which will last for centuries.

Western culture is a 'faceist' culture. A beautiful face is the main criteria of an individual's acceptance to the society. All the emotions and thoughts are shown through face; it is the basic element of communication. Other cultures most probably don't give more value to face than they do to other parts of the body.

¹³⁶ See; Berger, John. *Ways of Seeing*. (New York: Penguin Books. 1977), pp. 45-64.

On the other hand it is women's bodies which are objectified. Women's bodies are used as the signs of father's/husband's wealth while at the same time they are highly sexualized and consumed as fetish objects on the market.

Fashion in this case appears as a tool of serving women's bodies as commodities to the capitalist and patriarchal society. This chapter aims to examine the relation between the Consumer Society and Patriarchal desires through analyzing the codes of fashion.

4.1 The Consumer Culture

The consumer culture produces two main categories in relation to body. Featherstone defines these categories as the inner and the outer body:

The inner body refers to the concern with the health and optimum functioning of the body which demands maintenance and repair in the face of disease, abuse and the deterioration accompanying the ageing process. The outer body refers to appearance as well as the movement and control of the body within social space.¹³⁷

The consumer culture wants us to believe that the 'good look' of outer body is depended on the good maintenance of the inner body. Both Baudrillard and Featherstone point out that the discourse of the consumer society is based on the hedonistic and narcissistic thought. Consumer society wants individuals to love their bodies and, learn to get the highest pleasures from them.

¹³⁷ Mike Featherstone. *The Body in Consumer Culture*, in: *The Body: Social Process and Cultural Theory*, eds. Mike Featherstone, Mike Hepworth, Bryan S. Turner. (London, Newbury Park, Calif: Sage Publications, 1991), p. 171.

The shift from consuming 'needs' to consuming 'images' lies in the stages of Capitalist ideology and mass media was the greatest supporter of this new culture, still it is. Technological innovations have increased the productive capacity after Industrial Revolution. Besides, the developments in working conditions and increasing wages let a new class to come alive: the leisure class. Featherstone writes:

Improvements in real wages, and not least the creation of consumer credit and instalment buying, stimulated demand. Workers who had become used to the rhetoric of thrift, hard work and sobriety, had to become 'educated' to appreciate a new discourse centered on the hedonistic lifestyle entailing new needs and desires.¹³⁸

How did body change its meaning from 'flesh' to the commodity object 'body'? "If in the past it was 'the soul which clothed the body', today it is the skin which clothes it."¹³⁹ Beauty and eroticism are the two major leitmotifs of this change according to Baudrillard. Body has changed its meaning from the religious concept of 'flesh', to the labor power in industrial concept and lastly it gained its meaning as 'narcissistic cult object or element of social ritual and tactics.' He argues that beauty and eroticism are 'inseparable and the two together institute this new ethics of the relation to the body'. These two elements come together in the case of fashion. Baudrillard is right to find similarities between the Protestant ethic and beauty. Besides this relation between Protestant ethic and beauty, Baudrillard believes that there is also a relation between beauty and success for women:

For women, beauty has become an absolute, religious imperative. Being beautiful is no longer an effect of nature or

¹³⁸ Featherstone, *The Body in Consumer Culture*, p. 172.

¹³⁹ Jean Baudrillard. *The Consumer Society Myths & Structures*, (London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1998)

a supplement to moral qualities. It is the basic, imperative quality of those who take the same care of their faces and figures as they do of their souls. It is a sign, at the level of the body, which one is a member of the elect, just as success is such a sign in business. And, indeed, in their respective magazines, beauty and success are accorded the same mystical foundation: for women, it is sensitivity, exploring and evoking 'form the inside' all the parts of the body; for the entrepreneur, it is the adequate intuition of all the possibilities of the market. A sign of election and salvation: the Protestant ethic is not far away here. And it is true that beauty is such an absolute imperative only because it is a form of capital.¹⁴⁰

Like any other objects in the consumer culture, women's body, in this process, gains a new value: exchange value besides 'use-value'. Exchange value appears as a sum of signs and codes loaded value. Baudrillard writes:

The ethics of beauty, which is the very ethics of fashion, may be defined as the reduction of all concrete values –the 'use-values' of the body (energetic, gestural, sexual) – to a single functional 'exchange-value', which itself alone, in its abstraction, encapsulates the idea of the glorious, fulfilled body, the idea of desire and pleasure [*jouissance*], and of course thereby also denies and forgets them in their reality and in the end simply peters out into an exchange of signs. For beauty is nothing more than sign material being exchanged. It *functions* as sign-value. That is why we can say that the beauty imperative is one of the modalities of the functional imperative, this being valid for objects as much as it is for women (and men), the beautician every woman has become being the counterpart of the designer and stylist in the business sphere.¹⁴¹

Like beauty, he thinks that 'eroticism' has a functional meaning in the consumer culture. Woman's body is a fetish object surrounded with the symbols of the desire. The hegemonic gaze is the male gaze which both

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 132.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 132.

of the sexes have. Not only men but also women search the market with the same gaze. Ironically women are both consumers and consumed. The discourse of the market has two dimensions. One is imposing women that their bodies are not “good looking”, and the other is, by consuming new goods, their bodies can be the desired, ‘liberated’ ones. First women dislike their bodies and then they ‘fall in love’. ‘The only drive that is really liberated is the *drive to buy*.’ Consumer culture wants us to believe the magic of purchasing goods: “Buy – and you will be at ease in your body.”

The changing attitudes in shopping can be seen as a sign of a new consumer culture. The shopping centers show that people are not only purchasing their needs but also they are ex-changing the images, the signs. It is a stage where people display their wealth. This show mostly goes on through the appearances of women. Women play the signifier objects of the competition between men. On the one hand as Evelyne Sullerot puts:

Woman is sold to women...while doing what she believes is preening herself, scenting herself, clothing herself, in a word ‘creating’ herself, she is, in fact, consuming herself.¹⁴²

On the other hand as Veblen writes, women have the vicarious value. Women are only called on to gratify themselves in order the better to be able to enter as objects into the masculine competition (enjoying them in order to be the more enjoyable).¹⁴³

¹⁴² Evelyne Sullerot, cited in Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures*. (London: Sage Publications. 1998), p. 95.

¹⁴³ Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society*

In Baudrillard's thought fashion is a kind of 'the playscript of erection and castration is everywhere'.¹⁴⁴ He writes:

Ankle boots and thigh boots, a short coat under a long coat, over the elbow gloves and stocking-tops on the thigh, hair over the eyes or the stripperr's G-string, but also bracelets, necklaces, rings, belts, jewels and chains – the scenario is the same everywhere: a mark that takes on the force of a sign and thereby even a perverse erotic function, a boundary to figure castration which parodies castration as the symbolic articulation of lack, under the structural form of a bar articulating two full terms (which then on either side play the part of the signifier and the signified in the classical economy of the sign).¹⁴⁵

Baudrillard may seem to be exaggerating by comparing the field of consumption to the erection – castration duality. This relation is not enough to explain all the field of consumption for sure, but on the other hand; it is one of the components which play an important role in structuring this field. Most of the women's dresses sold in the market have no functions at all, except the sign value they have. Baudrillard goes even further:

[...] rouged lips are phallic (face paint and make-up are preeminent in the arsenal of the body's structural enhancement). A made-up mouth no longer speaks its beatified lips, half open, half closed, and are no longer used for speaking, eating, vomiting or kissing. Beyond these always ambivalent exchange functions – introjections and rejection – and on the basis of their denegation, the perverse erotic and cultural function is established. This fascinating mouth, like an artificial sign, like cultural labor, the game and the rules of the game, neither speaks nor eats, and no-one kisses it. The painted mouth, objectified like a jewel, derives

¹⁴⁴ Jean Baudrillard. *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, (London; Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1993) p.101.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

its intense erotic value not, as one might imagine, from accentuating its role as an erotogenic orifice, but conversely from its closure – paint being as it were the trace of the phallic, the mark that institutes its *phallic exchange-value*: an erectile mouth, a sexual tumescence whereby woman becomes erect and man's desire will be received in its own image.¹⁴⁶

Luce Irigaray's approach to women as exchange objects in the market argues the roots of the male dominant market.¹⁴⁷ She argues that the exchange of the women among men is a reason of the incest taboo. Not only primitive cultures but also Western culture is based on the exchange of women. "Without the exchange of women, we are told, we would fall back into the anarchy (?)"¹⁴⁸ She criticizes the anthropologists such as Lévi-Strauss for explaining the exchange of women that; are being "scarce [commodities] ... essential to the life of the group,"¹⁴⁹ She adds that anthropologists believe that men have a polygamous tendency. She writes:

Are men all equally desirable? Do women have no tendency toward polygamy? The good anthropologist does not raise such questions. *A fortiori*: why are men not objects of exchange among women? It is because women's bodies – through their use, consumption, and circulation – provide for the condition making social life and culture possible, although they remain an unknown "infrastructure" of the elaboration of that social life and culture. The exploitation of the matter that has been sexualized female is so integral a part of our sociocultural horizon that there is no way to interpret it except within this horizon.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 103.

¹⁴⁷ Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which is Not One* (New York: Cornell University Press), p. 170.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 170.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 170.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 171.

In other words the continuity of the culture, which is created by men depends on the exchange of signs, commodities, and in fact women. Irigaray by using Marxist analyze 'of commodities as the elementary form of capitalist wealth' tries to understand the status of woman in 'so-called patriarchal societies.'

The similarities she sees between the commodity in capitalist wealth and woman in patriarchal society are: men want to accumulate the both. Women and commodities 'are a mirror of value of and for man'. Both commodities and women 'among themselves are not equal, not alike, nor different. They only become so when they are compared by and for men.'¹⁵¹

As Irigaray points there is a dichotomy in the meanings of the commodities. One is its natural meaning and the other is the social meaning. The objectified woman's body too bears the same schism. For Irigaray:

The commodity, like the sign, suffers from metaphysical dichotomies. Its value, its truth, lies in the social element. But this social element is added on to its nature, to its matter, and the social subordinates it as a lesser value, indeed as nonvalue. Participation in society requires that the body submit itself to a specularization, a speculation that transforms it into a valuebearing object, a standardized sign, an exchangeable signifier, a "likeness" with reference to an authoritative model. A *commodity* –a woman- *is divided into two irreconcilable "bodies"*: her "natural" body and her socially valued, exchangeable body, which is a particularly mimetic expression of masculine values.¹⁵²

¹⁵¹ Ibid., p. 177.

¹⁵² Ibid., pp. 179-180

As Baudrillard, Irigaray too thinks that 'fetishism is attached' to the commodities, so does to women. Besides, circulation of women guaranties the continuity of patriarchal society. To clarify the constitution of women as "objects" Irigaray examines the natural and social values which women represent. She starts by analyzing the three social roles imposed to women: mother, virgin, prostitute, which she thinks 'the characteristics of feminine sexuality derive from'. And none of them has right to their own pleasure, she writes:

The economy of desire – of exchange – is man's business. And that economy subjects women to a schism that is necessary to symbolic operations: red blood / semblance; body / value-invested envelope; matter / medium of exchange; (re)productive nature / fabricated femininity. . . ¹⁵³

Fashion in the world of images, in consumer culture, functions as a signifier of the male desire through woman's bodies. It assures the consumption of products, which is vital for the capitalist order; on the other hand it strengthens women's positions as objects in the patriarchal order. Fashion depends on the taste of men. The ideal beauty standards change frequently so the definition of 'femininity'. Women are required to consume the new 'femininities'. Fashion is a clear sample of 'conspicuous waste'.¹⁵⁴ Veblen claims that women are the elements of the conspicuous leisure, commodities belong to men, which functions as an object of her owner's leisure. He says:

It results at this cultural stage women take thought to alter their persons, so as to conform more nearly to the requirements of the instructed taste of the time; and under the guidance of the canon of pecuniary decency, the men find the

¹⁵³ Ibid., p. 188.

¹⁵⁴ Veblen, *The Theory of Leisure Class*, p.119

resulting artificially induced pathological features attractive. So, for instance, the constricted waist which has had so wide and persistent a vogue in the communities of the Western culture, and so also the deformed foot of the Chinese. Both of these are mutilations of unquestioned repulsiveness to the untrained sense. It requires habituation to become reconciled to them. Yet there is no room to question their attractiveness to men into whose scheme of life they fit as honorific items sanctioned by the requirements of pecuniary reputability. They are items of pecuniary and cultural beauty which have come to do duty as elements of the ideal of womanliness.¹⁵⁵

From the functionalist perspective, most components of the women's dress is clearly useless, which are imposed by the fashion. Women, since the Victorian era has forced to wear uncomfortable and even harmful clothes, such as corsets, high heel shoes etc. Woman's bodies are seen not only as fetish objects but also it is a sign of women's exclusion from the public sphere. Patriarchal society's future is depended on women's position in household. Jennifer Craik writes:

Through their clothes, women were subjugated into ornamental accompaniments to the social status of men. Leisure and inactivity (inevitable in corsets, tight sleeves, full skirts, multiple petticoats, crinolines (cages of hoped steel), and tiny slippers) were a perfect recipe for containing the model Victorian woman. The symptomatic and extreme mode of feminine containment was tight lacing.¹⁵⁶

Women's dress in the late nineteenth century according to Veblen, was an obstacle for her access to occupation. "All labor is symbolized in the woman's long hair, dangerously high "French heel," and bulky ankle-length skirt, which hampers the movement of the wearer and disables her

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., pp. 107-108.

¹⁵⁶ Jennifer Craik, *The face of Fashion: Cultural Studies in Fashion* (London; New York: Routledge: 1994), p. 123.

for any useful occupation.”¹⁵⁷ Woman’s dress is similar to servants’, is a sign of ‘their master’s ability to pay’.¹⁵⁸ For Veblen:

[...] the high heel, the skirt, the impracticable bonnet, the corset, and the general disregard of the wearer’s comfort which is an obvious feature of all civilized women’s apparel, are so many items of evidence to the effect that in the modern civilized scheme of life the woman is still, in theory, the economic dependent of the man – that, perhaps in a highly idealized sense, she still is the man’s chattel. The homely reason for all this conspicuous leisure and attire on the part of women lies in the fact that they are servants to who, in the differentiation of economic functions, has been delegated the office of putting in evidence their master’s ability to pay.¹⁵⁹

On the other hand Victorian morality, which was based on censorship of woman’s sexuality, by putting more clothes on woman’s body, was actually displaying her body as nothing but sexual object. “Victorian clothing was a form of social control which contributed to the maintenance of women in dependent, subservient roles.”¹⁶⁰ However, the ‘Bloomer’ dress reform done in 1850s by Amelia Bloomer and her friends, show that women did not passively accept these subservient roles (See Fig. 6.)

¹⁵⁷ John Patrick Diggins, *Thorstein Veblen Theorist of The Leisure Class* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999), p. 154.

¹⁵⁸ Veblen, in his book “*The Theory of Leisure Class*” points out that the dress expresses the wearers relation to manual labor. According to him, especially women’s dress is designed to show that she is not involved in manual labor. He mentions that in the case of corsets, only the wealthy women were wearing it. The women of poorer classes, since they had to work hard, did not wear it ‘except as a holiday luxury.’

¹⁵⁹ Veblen, *The Theory of Leisure Class*, p. 127.

¹⁶⁰ Diana Crane, *Fashion and Its Social Agendas* (Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2000)



Fig. 6. Bloomer Costume which was designed by Amelia Bloomer in 1850s., in <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/HNS/domwest/cloth.html>.

Fashion differs from dress, since the material of fashion is the body itself, its identity, its sex, its status. Fashion as it's mentioned before; is a sum of signs which is universally exchanged. According to Baudrillard, fashion is the only "universalisable sign system". He adds that "all cultures, all sign systems, are exchanged and combined in fashion. Fashion is the pure speculative stage in the order of signs."¹⁶¹ Roland Barthes, in his book *The Fashion System* (1983), takes fashion as a system which is structured by signs.¹⁶² Edmond Radar thinks that fashion

¹⁶¹ Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death*

¹⁶² See Roland Barthes' *The Fashion System* (1990) for his analyses on fashion system, which he thinks is a system like language, includes the signifiers and signified. He makes a distinction between clothing and fashion in a Saussurian sense of Language and Speech.

is a 'mimetic support' of the language, not the 'signification of discourse.'¹⁶³ It has a rhythm, and changeability. Baudrillard claims that fashion is a neutralizer of sexuality. According to him fashion is related to feminine, not to women. He writes:

Abandoned to the signs of fashion, the body is sexually disenchanted; it becomes a *mannequin*, whose lack of sexual discrimination suits its meaning well. The mannequin is sex in its entirety, but sex without qualities. Fashion is its sex. Or rather, it is in fashion that sex is lost as difference but is generalized as reference (as simulation). Nothing is sexed any longer, everything is sexualized. The masculine and the feminine themselves rediscover, having once lost their particularity, the chance of an unlimited second existence. Hence, in our culture alone, sexuality impregnates all significations, and this is because signs have, for their part, invested the entire sexual sphere.¹⁶⁴

So he assumes that "it is a modified sexuality that comes into play at the level of fashion."¹⁶⁵ Barthes, too, points out the 'femininity – masculinity' differentiation through fashion. According to him, "fashion understands the opposition between the feminine and the masculine quite well."¹⁶⁶

Fashion plays a very important role on constructing gender roles. Barthes argues that the women's clothes are more various than men's. While feminine clothing includes masculine clothing such as pants, tie, jacket, there is a taboo on men wearing feminine clothing. There is a social

¹⁶³ Edmond Radar, Diogène [50, Summer, 1965] cited in Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death*

¹⁶⁴ Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, p. 92.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 95.

¹⁶⁶ Roland Barthes, *The Fashion System* (Berkeley ; Los Angeles: University of California Pres, 1990), p. 257

prohibition against the feminization of men; there is almost none against the masculinization of women.¹⁶⁷ Barthes examines the characteristic properties of feminization and masculinization through the texts of the fashion adds. In his point of view, in Fashion literature, femininity is related to sexual value more than masculinity. He writes:

[...] feminine can refer to the idea of an emphatic, quintessential woman (an exquisite femininity underneath); when noted, the boyish look itself has more a temporal than a sexual value...¹⁶⁸

4.2 Fashion Industry

Fashion is about culture, consumption but also it is about production. Fashion has an industrial meaning too. It is a complex of manufacturers, traders, garments, workers, designers. The fashion industry's basic function is to produce images and impose them to people to consume through fashion magazines, films, advertisements etc. Fashion industry is one of the most important locomotives of the market. 'It is both an industry with particular relations of production and consumption and a discursive arena on such topics as identity, gender and sexuality.'¹⁶⁹ How does this industry be efficient in imposing people new clothing habits, some times new garments, new styles? Are the people who work at this industry familiar with the needs of women? How did it affected by the Women's Liberation Movement in the West?

¹⁶⁷ However Barthes is aware of the fact that recently masculine apparel is being feminized too. According to him this is because, "both sexes tend to become uniform under a single sign: that of youth." p. 257, n.18.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 258.

¹⁶⁹ Joanne Entwistle, *The Fashioned Body* (Oxford: Polity Press, 2000), p. 208.

As Joanne Entwistle claims, ‘the history of fashion industry is a shameful one.’¹⁷⁰ Although the raw material was available in undeveloped countries, after the Industrial Revolution Western countries became sufficient in the textile trade. Especially the upper classes of the time were searching the garments, such as silk, to distinguish themselves from the lower classes, so the merchants were to supply these garments from Third World Countries. Entwistle summarizes fashion industry’s development as follows:

Fashion has been significant to the industrial and economic development of a number of countries, such as Britain, where the development of the textile industry set in motion the Industrial Revolution. However, fashion has also played a significant role in global relations between nations. The expansion of capitalism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries depended upon the exploitation of resources in developing nations, with devastating effects on their indigenous populations and environment. The extension of ‘free-market’ capitalism in recent years has meant a continuing search for greater profit by textile and clothing manufacturers, which depends on finding and exploiting the cheapest labor in developing nations, as well as the indigenous immigrant populations at home.¹⁷¹

Textile industry is the type of industry in which exploitation of labor is most visible. It is also a dynamic element of the colonial exploitation.¹⁷² Entwistle argues that, mostly women and children were employed in the textile industry as workers, and in its relation to industrial production types, textile industry was the least developing one. ‘It is the peculiar nature of this industry that such conditions can be found today more or

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 208.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., p. 208.

¹⁷² See; Fernand Braudel’s *Capitalism and Civilization* for his analysis of the relation between technological innovations, Industrial Revolution and the exploitation of Third World Countries.

less as they existed a hundred years ago.’¹⁷³ She adds that even the technological developments during the nineteenth century did not change the conditions, “since technology alone does not produce cultural change.”¹⁷⁴

Fashion industry reproduces the women’s subordinate position in the employment area. While men are mostly involved in the technical parts of the work, women are employed for the non-technical, manual jobs, such as sewing and ironing. Entwistle argues the myths about women in the textile and clothing industry by quoting Elson (1984) “women are not technically minded; they have ‘nimble fingers’; they don’t need to earn as much as men since they are dependent upon men.” She writes:

[S]uch myths are still perpetuated in the developing world by governments who sell these ideas about their female workforce in order to attract multinational companies to produce in their countries. She then explores how these myths are underpinned by assumptions about male and female skills. Female skills are seen to ‘just happen’; they are ‘natural’ and therefore without any real art or technique since, as Phizacklea (1990) argues, the acquisition of skill is located in the domestic arena and largely ‘hidden’ from public view and therefore from recognition.¹⁷⁵

The fashion industry is not only reinforcing the discrimination against woman but also it is strengthening the inequalities between the developed and undeveloped countries’ people. The big companies in developed countries choose to run their factories in the third world countries where

¹⁷³ Howard, A. ‘Labor, History, and Sweatshops in the New Global Economy’, in A. Ross (ed.), *No Sweat: Fashion, Free Trade and the Rights of Garment Workers*. (London: Verso, 1997) is cited in Entwistle, *The Fashioned Body*, p. 211.

¹⁷⁴ Entwistle, *The Fashioned Body*, p. 213.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 213.

they easily find 'cheap labor'. Entwistle points out that some companies in the developed countries employ the immigrants, since they agree to work for lower wages without criticizing the unhealthy work conditions. She claims that this causes racism towards immigrants by the citizens of the developed countries. For instance "In 1995 the contractors El Monte were found to have imported Thai women to work in its Californian factory where they had little freedom and were little more than wage slaves."¹⁷⁶ In fact fashion industry is an industry which allows us to recognize that slavery is not dead, it is still alive.

Other than production stage, there is marketing, which's contribution to consumption of fashion is undeniable. In marketing process we see once more that the male desire is the hegemonic one. Susan Faludi in her book *Backlash* (1991) examines the fashion industry, through analyzing the marketing strategies of well known brands. She also analyses the relation between fashion industry's and women's liberation movement.

Christian Lacroix, a French fashion designer, in 1987, has announced his new collection called "Luxe", which Lacroix said that the clothes from this collection were for women who like to "dress up like little girls." (See Fig. 7). Faludi points out that "the price tags however, were not so pint-sized; they ranged as high as \$45,000."¹⁷⁷ She also says that Lacroix's collection Luxe was glamorized by the fashion press, they defined it with the words: "independent strength and sensitivity." However Faludi uses the term "dressed-up like dolls" to define *haute couture* in general, since the clothes designed in *haute couture* are seem

¹⁷⁶ Su, J. 'El Monte Thai Government Workers: Slave Sweatshops', in A. Ross (ed.), *No Sweat: Fashion, Free Trade and the Rights of Garment Workers*. (London: Verso, 1997) quoted in Entwistle *The Fashioned Body*, p. 217.

¹⁷⁷ Susan Faludi. *Backlash, Undeclared War Against American Women* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1991), p. 169.

far from using for dress-up in real life, it is more like dresses designed for dolls.

Faludi says that most of the couture houses (twenty-one of the twenty-four) had begun selling “the idea of women as dressed-up dolls”. The fashion press named 1987 as “the Year of the Dress.” Faludi writes that despite all promotion of the fashion press and the couture houses, “women just quit buying.”



Fig. 7. Lacroix’s collection: “Luxe” announced in 1987, in <http://www.designerhistory.com/historyofashion/lacroix.html>

Between 1980 and 1986, Faludi points out that the consumption habits of women have changed towards consuming “more houses, cars, restaurant dinners, and health care services, they were buying fewer pieces of clothing – from dresses to underwear.” She explains that this fall has continued in following years, after 1987 which was the year that “High

Femininity” looks was introduced. Faludi claims that the designers should have expected this result, since the American women were not fitting the standards to “little girls” dresses, bubble skirts, and minis. She writes:

How could the industry make such a marketing blunder? As Goldman Sachs’s retail analyst Joseph Ellis pointed out a year later in his analysis, “The Women’s Apparel Retailing Debacle: Why?” demographics “have been warning of a strong population shift to older age categories for years now.” Yet designers, manufacturers, and retailers went “in exactly the wrong direction.” Ellis charitably concluded that the industry must have lacked the appropriate consumer research studies.¹⁷⁸

The change in the shopping habits of American women has also shocked the fashion designers. Lacroix would say later, “[W]ith the women’s-lib movement at the turn of the ‘sixties [and in the]’ seventies, women became less fashion conscious,”¹⁷⁹ Faludi adds that what happened in 1987, in Lacroix sample, was not new. Designers, since the beginning, want women to wear what expected from them, instead of wearing the comfortable, healthy, functional clothes women prefer. She tells that well known French designer Christian Dior, after the World War II, in 1947, has introduced his new collection, called “New Look”, which was actually “an old late Victorian Look – featuring crinolined rumps, corseted waists, and long ballooning skirts.” Dior’s collection “New Look” was protested by ‘more than three hundred thousand women.’ But in two years time, Faludi says, Dior won out. (See Fig. 8)

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 171.

¹⁷⁹ Cited in Faludi, *Backlash*, p. 172.



Fig. 8. On the left: Christian Dior's 1947 collection "New Look" and on the right traditional Victorian dress in 1850s, taken from www.topfoto.co.uk/gallery/Dior/default.htm and www.thehcc.co.uk

The war between women and the fashion designers has caused identity crises. Who was in the account of deciding women what to wear? Women themselves or the designers? Why were women not in charge of making their own decisions to wear whatever they like or why were designers pushing their styles out to be adopted so hard? Was this only because of economical benefit reasons? Faludi thinks that the war between women and fashion designers has caused "identity crisis" among women. She writes:

The apparel makers had good reason to try to induce this anxiety: personal insecurity is the great motivator to shop.

Wells Rich Greene, which conducted one of the largest studies of women's fashion-shopping habits in the early '80s, found that the more confident and independent women became, the less they liked to shop; and the more they enjoyed their work, the less they cared about their clothes. The agency could find only three groups of women who were loyal followers of fashion: the very young, the very social, and the very anxious.¹⁸⁰

However it seems like fashion designers too having anxiety. They seem to be ambivalent in the style of femininity. But of course the designers were not to consider women's needs, wishes, thought.

4.2.1 "Dress For Success"¹⁸¹

John T. Molloy, the author of the *"Women: Dress for Success"* (1980), after his surveys on women's clothes in business, has come to the idea that women who want to be successful in the business area have to wear business suits. This new style was kind of adoption of businessmen's dress into women's dress (See fig. 9.) So women who want to have equal rights, higher positions at work, had to hide their sexuality under men's clothes. Because femininity is related to "unskilled" labor force, in contrast "masculinity" is related with success. Molloy's book became best-seller in the 1970s.

Molloy's effort was not aiming to change the women's objectification through fashion; his aim was to tell women that their appearance is too much related to sexuality to be successful at business life. Molloy claims: "It is a stark reality that men dominate the power structure... I am not

¹⁸⁰ Faludi, *Backlash*, p. 174.

¹⁸¹ See; John Molloy, *The Women's Dress For Success Book*. (New York: Warner Books, 1978.)

suggesting that women dress to impress men simply because they are men [rather because men have power]... It is not sexism; it is realism.”¹⁸²



Fig. 9. An example of “Dress For Success” style; masculinization of women’s dress in business.

Molloy’s book was bestseller but fashion industry was not happy with it. Woman in business was not something that shops can accept. Faludi says:

But in their enthusiasm, fashion merchants overlooked the bottom line of Molloy’s book: dress-for-success could save women money and liberate them from fashion-victim status.

¹⁸² Chapkis, *Beauty Secrets*, p. 89.

Business suits weren't subject to wild swings in fashion and women could get away (as men always have) with wearing the same suit for several days and just varying the blouse and accessories – more economical than buying a dress for every day of the week. Once women made the initial investment in a set of suits, they could even take a breather from shopping.¹⁸³

Chapkis too points out that woman in business were frightening for the fashion and beauty industry. Because the working woman will need to change her consuming habits. She would buy what is handy, and fashion press was warning the industry that “this is a dangerous conclusion for the industry.”¹⁸⁴ A trade journal; *Advertising Age*, in 1983 warns the industry about the increasing number of employed women:

Today, 49% of America's mothers with children under six years old are employed as opposed to only 18% in 1960... Where women in this group once spent middays at the department store, they are now in the office... Women who formerly had the time to sample and listen and spend money are no longer shoppers. Even when they do visit the store, they do so as buyers.¹⁸⁵

Faludi points out that the fashion industry, which was aware of the new style “dress for success” was a threat for their future, cut their production of women's suits. Faludi points out that this “sudden cutback wasn't inspired by a lack of demand.”¹⁸⁶ She adds: “fashion writers buried the dress-for-success concept as eagerly as they had once praised it.”¹⁸⁷

¹⁸³ Faludi, *Backlash*, p. 176.

¹⁸⁴ *Advertising Age*, “Toiletries and Beauty Aids Supplement,” February 28, 1983 cited in Wendy Chapkis, *Beauty Secrets* p. 91.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

¹⁸⁶ Faludi, *Backlash*, p. 176.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 177.

4.2.2 Whose Secret Is 'Victoria's Secret'?

Once more women were forced to accept to wear what they are told. In 1987, under the name "High Femininity" the fashion of 1950s pushed women. And in lingerie area, there was an unexpected development. The fashion industry has started to produce various women's lingerie, while male's lingerie remained same. Victoria's Secret an international well known lingerie brand had its golden years in 1980s. The company's lingerie styles were based on the Victorian dress. The uncomfortable, unhealthy corsets, which women had to fight against hundred years ago, were back. Faludi points out that the company actually was not making any consumer or market research. She says that instead of asking what women want, the company managers were doing brainstorming sessions to decide the styles for women to wear. She also points out that through the market researches, it was clear that women were buying the comfortable underwear. The customers were actually men who were buying corsets, g-strings etc. She writes:

Even proprietress Becky Johnson says she buys "good ol' basic bras and panties" here. So who's buying the frilly Victorian stuff? Johnson: "Men." While men represent 30 to 40 percent of the shoppers at Victoria's Secret stores, they account for nearly half the dollar volume, company managers' estimate. "Men are great," sighs one of the salesclerks at the Stanford store. "They'll spend anything."¹⁸⁸

However there were also companies which were aware of women's choice in underwear. For instance the men's underwear manufacturer Jockey International's president Howard Cooley, despite all the resistance of company's executives' decided to produce women's

¹⁸⁸ Faludi, *Backlash*, p. 192.

underwear with the same comfort and quality as the men's. The executives were anxious of this strategy destroying the masculine image of the company, besides they were claiming that women would not "buy underwear without lace, panties with the 'male' Jockey label on the waistband."¹⁸⁹ Cooley did not change his mind and finally the company, in 1983, introduced 'Jockey for Her'. "The brand became an instant success; within five years, it was the most popular brand of women's underwear" in the United States.

Despite the success of the company, and women's positive attitudes towards comfortable, healthy and practical underwear, some companies insisted in selling G-string style. After the interviews done with focus groups of women Maidenform's Ad agency declared that women were complaining for no one understanding their needs about lingerie. Faludi writes:

"The women complained that no one understood their needs," creative director Jay Taub says. "They wanted to be treated like real people." But in the new Maidenform ad campaign that resulted, the only "real people" featured were male celebrities and the only "needs" the men addressed were their own. As Omar Sharif explained in one typical ad, he liked lingerie because it "tells me how she feels about me."¹⁹⁰

Instead of the profit they can make through marketing what their target customers want, the lingerie companies have preferred to satisfy male desires even this caused to get less profit.

¹⁸⁹ Faludi, *Backlash*, p. 193.

¹⁹⁰ Faludi, *Backlash*, pp. 193-194.

4.3 Mass Media and Male Gaze

Media has the major role in exposing the images to society. Through mass media the gender roles are being reproduced. On the other hand media is a tool for increasing consumption. Therefore media is an indispensable instrument of both capitalism and patriarchy.

Whenever we look at an image on TV, newspaper, magazine and so on, we actually look at an ideology. The images are presented in a composition as they are real. However they are the desires, dreams, and pleasures of the eye behind the camera. A viewer never gets the images as they are in the real life through media. Baudrillard states that “every image, every media message and also every surrounding functional object is a test.” He says:

[I]n all the rigor of the term, it triggers response mechanisms in accordance with stereotypes or analytic models. The object today is no longer ‘functional’ in the traditional sense of the term; it doesn’t serve you, it tests you.¹⁹¹

He writes that mass communications with the “signs of catastrophe (deaths, murders, rapes, revolution) heightens the tranquility of daily life.”¹⁹² On the other hand Baudrillard thinks that by using body as its main element, media awakens the narcissistic desires of people. Fetishized female body/object is shown as a subject of pleasure. It is especially women’s bodies used by media, again as objects and one that is highly sexualized.

¹⁹¹ Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, p. 63.

¹⁹² Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society*, p. 99.

Feminist media studies allow us to analyze the biased presentation of women in the media. These biased attitudes of media towards women are indeed visible, however the most striking and the less obvious one is “face-ism”. Whereas “men’s faces are more prominent in magazines and advertisements, women’s bodies are more prominent.”¹⁹³ Face-ism needs to be taken into account because:

[S]ee[ing] more of a person’s face, and less of his or her body, in visual images leads us to think of that person as more outstanding in character and ability. The widespread tendency to show more of men’s faces and women’s bodies may function without our awareness to focus attention on men’s character – and women’s physical characteristics.¹⁹⁴

In construction of gender stereotypes, media has the biggest influence. Why do media insist in reproducing gender roles? Why does the image of women sell? How does the fashion industry use media, and how do women’s bodies used by both?

4.3.1 Male Gaze

There is only one gaze and it is male. Visual arts, films, TV programs, and photography place women as the subjects of the male gaze. It is not a matter what audience’s sex is. Audience, female or male, bears male gaze while watching / viewing visual arts. Berger puts it as:

The social presence of women has developed as a result of their ingenuity in living under such tutelage within such a limited space. But this has been at the cost of a woman’s self being split into two. A woman must continually watch herself. She is almost continually accompanied by her own

¹⁹³ Peach, *Women in Culture*, Introduction to 4th Chapter, p. 120.

¹⁹⁴ Mary Crawford, *Transformations : Women, Gender, and Psychology*, (Boston, Mass: McGraw-Hill, 2006), p. 68.

image of herself. Whilst she is walking across a room or whilst she is weeping at the death of her father, she can scarcely avoid envisaging herself walking or weeping. From earliest childhood she has been taught and persuaded to survey herself continually. And so she comes to consider the *surveyor* and the *surveyed* within her as the two constituent yet always distinct elements of her identity as a woman.¹⁹⁵

Berger's argument is not simply; men act and women appear, he argues that "men look at women; women watch themselves being looked at." The gaze women bear as a surveyor is male, and the "surveyed is female."

In his book *Ways of Seeing* (1972), Berger discusses the similarities between Western Art and contemporary media images. The story of Eve and Adam told in Genesis, which he claims is the story European oil painting got its inspiration from. This story would be used over and over in the European oil painting. He points out that in the beginning it was Eve and Adam nude on the paintings but later on it turned out as painting mostly women naked. He says it is because looking at a nude woman was giving a pleasure to the viewer. On the other hand a painting of a nude woman watching herself at the mirror was a symbol of her being narcissistic. Berger also examines that, nude women on the paintings look like communicating with the male viewer. Women are there as objects to be looked at therefore they are mainly not linked with the composition of the painting. And Berger claims that this tradition of picturing women as images goes on through tools of media.

Berger's theory is adapted by Laura Mulvey for analyzing the cinematic gaze. She examines the pleasure in looking. Her first objection is to

¹⁹⁵ Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, p. 45.

psychoanalysis and phallocentrism. Mulvey says that criticizing phallocentric theory is a problematic one for feminists, because:

It gets us nearer to the roots of our oppression, it brings closer an articulation of the problem, it faces us with the ultimate challenge: how to fight the unconscious structured like a language (formed critically at the moment of arrival of language) while still caught within the language of the patriarchy? There is no way in which we can produce an alternative out of the blue, but we can begin to make a break by examining patriarchy with the tools it provides, of which psychoanalysis is not the only but an important one.¹⁹⁶

However she thinks that psychoanalytic theory can at least advance our understanding of the *status quo*, of the patriarchal order in which we are caught. Therefore she borrows the terms *scopophilia* and *voyeuristic*¹⁹⁷ to understand the “look” in cinematic features. “Voyeurism is a conversion of exhibitionistic tendencies from passive pleasure (displaying one’s body) to active pleasure in looking (scopophilia).”¹⁹⁸ According to Mulvey:

In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active / male and passive / female. The determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁶ Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” in *Visual and Other Pleasures* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1975)

¹⁹⁷ Scopophilia: pleasure in looking and voyeurism in Freud’s theory is: “curiosity about other people’s genital and bodily functions, about the presence or absence of the penis and, retrospectively, about the primal scene”.

¹⁹⁸ Tseñlon, *The Masque of Femininity*, p. 68.

¹⁹⁹ Mulvey, *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*

Viewing films; besides other power relations, such as race, class, and age is a gendered activity. As Chapkis points out “the content of the global image is determined by the mechanics of the sell.”²⁰⁰ And she asks: “who creates the images for what products to be marketed through which media controlled by whom?”²⁰¹ In the case of fashion the male gaze is dominant from fashion shows to advertisements, from fashion photography to the mannequins.

4.3.2 Advertisements

In consumer society image of the product is more important than the product itself. Every product in other terms every image bears various messages. It is assumed that the consumers consume these messages. The importance of the advertisements lies in it is being “related to consumption but also because it itself becoming an object to be consumed.”²⁰² Advertising plays a crucial role in constitution of new meanings and so it is “one of the central purveyors of the new consumer culture values.”²⁰³

The main promise of the advertisements is through consuming the good told, an individual will have a better life, will look better, will have more fun, and will feel younger and more beautiful. The target of advertisement is emotions and desires. It bases its discourse on a duality; first it assumes that individuals are not happy with their own lives.

²⁰⁰ Chapkis, *Beauty Secrets*, p. 38.

²⁰¹ Ibid. p. 38.

²⁰² Jean Baudrillard; translated by James Benedict. *The System of Objects*, (London; New York: Verso, 1996), p. 164.

²⁰³ Featherstone, *The Body in Consumer Culture*, p. 173.

Second it imposes that a life with full of happiness is not far, and this can only be possible through consuming. The message is simple: what he/she has is bad and insufficient on the other hand what he/she has not got is good. So besides targeting the present desires, it constitutes new desires and needs. Featherstone points out:

Consumer culture has its dark side, the realities of poverty and unemployment amidst images of affluence and the good life. Whatever the shortcomings in capitalism's ability to deliver consumer goods and the consumer lifestyle to all sectors of the population, it has never been short of images – and for those who inhabit the dark side of consumer culture, consumption is limited to the consumption of images.²⁰⁴

Baudrillard claims that “the mechanics of buying gives way to a complete eroticization of choosing and spending.”²⁰⁵ Images of the body in this case are the ones which sell best. “Individuals had to be persuaded to adopt a critical attitude towards their body, self and lifestyle.” According to Ewen (1976), business leaders in the United States, in the 1920s needed new markets to increase the capacity for mass production. He claims that modern advertising “helped to create a world in which individuals are made to become emotionally vulnerable, constantly monitoring themselves for bodily imperfections.”²⁰⁶ As discussed before, it is especially the woman's body which consumption culture bases its discourse on. Advertisement as dynamics of consumption culture carries on this tradition. Woman's body appears in promotion of any goods even if it is for women or not. Woman's body is a perfect object for the advertisements the goods.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 177.

²⁰⁵ Baudrillard, *System of Objects*, pp. 172-173.

²⁰⁶ Stuart Ewen (1976), cited in Featherstone, *The Body in Consumer Culture*, p. 175.

Through analyzing advertisements, division of labor, subordination of women, heterosexism, discrimination against lower classes and racism in ads, it can be easily seen that the advertisements are ideologically the voice of the hegemonic. In advertisements women are shown mostly as faithful mothers and wives, related with housework while men shown as independent individuals, mostly in the public and business sphere, as dominating characters. Woman's body's other function in the advertisements is to appear as sex objects. Even the goods such as chocolate, cars, aftershaves, and jeans, ice-cream and so on are embellished with the signs of sexuality, especially with female sexuality.

Besides many other social agendas, body politics, ideology of beauty and gender roles, which are the subject of this thesis, can be examined through fashion photography, images and discourses in the advertisements. As it is already mentioned, "Media images are constructed for the male spectator's gaze and embody his expectations of women and of male-female relationships."²⁰⁷ According to Barthes, "in fashion photography, the world is usually photographed as a décor, a background or a scene, in short, as a theater."²⁰⁸ He adds that within this thematic scene "signifying décor, woman seems to live: the wearer of the garment." And he notes:

Actually, and this is what is strangest about Fashion photography, it is the woman who is "in action," not the garment; by a curious, entirely unreal distortion, the woman is caught at the climax of a movement, but the garment she wears remains motionless.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁷ Mulvey 1975 cited in Diana Crane, *Fashion and Its Social Agendas*, p. 205.

²⁰⁸ Barthes, *Fashion System*, p. 301.

²⁰⁹ Barthes, *Fashion System*, p. 302 n. 22

Goffman, in his study “Gender Advertisements” (1975) analysis the objectification of women in advertisements. Although advertisements seem like they belong to another world, the world of dreams, desires, Goffman asks: why do most ads not look strange to us? He claims that the lives presented on advertisements are actually far away from the reality. However this is the world which is desired by the hegemonic male gaze which creates the world of advertisements. Most advertisements look strange to women; that is why advertisements are largely studied by feminists. But Goffman’s contribution is undeniable.

Goffman claims that women and children are pictured on beds or floors, positioned lower than men which gives the idea that they need the protection of a male. His other important observation is, “in advertising the best way to understand the male/female relation is to compare it to the parent/child relation in which men take on the roles of parents while women behave as children normally would be expected to.”²¹⁰

According to Goffman “self-touching can also be involved, readable as conveying a sense of one’s body being a delicate and precious thing.”²¹¹ Self-touching marks female body as the source of the pleasure, which was also common in European painting art. Goffman points out that the subordinated objects mostly pictured from behind a person “with the consequent opportunity to overlay distance with a differentiating expression, in the extreme, collusive betrayal of one’s shield.”²¹²

²¹⁰ Sut Jhally, “Advertising, Gender and Sex: What is Wrong with a Little Objectification?” *Working Papers and Proceedings of the Center for Psychosocial Studies* (edited by Richard Parmentier and Greg Urban) No. 29, 1989.

Taken from <http://www.sutjhally.com/articles/whatswrongwithalit/>

²¹¹ Erving Goffman, *Gender Advertisements* (Harper and Row: New York, 1979), p. 31.

²¹² *Ibid.*, p. 72.

Women are related with emotions while men are related with reason in gender stereotypes. Both fashion photographs and advertisements reproduce these stereotypes. Women's expressions are more exaggerated than men, "women smile more, and more expansively than men."²¹³

These advertisements are not only reproducing gender stereotypes but also they are distributing an ideology to all over the world. This reproduction of gender roles feeds the consumer society, thus capitalism, which gets its power from the division of labor: "men are related to labor, women are related to consumption."²¹⁴ Media tools serve for the continuity of this ideology: women as the objects and men as the bearer of the "look."

²¹³ Ibid., p.48

²¹⁴ Veblen, *The Theory of Leisure Class*

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Since the emergence of the first wave feminism, women have got most of their rights in the society. The concern of the first wave feminism was the women's unequal situation in politics, legal rights and employment while second wave feminism focused on sexuality, body politics, psychoanalysis, racism. On the other hand postmodernism and post-structuralism have opened the way of new arguments in feminist theory. Women started to question the male dominant cultural structures like language. Besides, postmodernism has led feminists to get aware of the *differences*. Accordingly, feminism since Mary Wollstonecraft's major work *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* had published in 1792²¹⁵ is fighting against the male hegemony. Although women have won visible rights during the last two hundred years, the male dominancy continues to exist and oppress women.

In this study I tried to analyze the hegemony of body politics through the system of fashion and ideology of beauty. Feminist studies show that the beauty myth is oppressing women by reproducing the patriarchal discourses that make woman the object of male desire. However the discourse of the beauty, which surrounds us, is more powerful than it is thought, consciously or unconsciously we find ourselves practicing it. In reality we want to stay young, we want to have slimmed bodies, we

²¹⁵ See Josephine Donovan, *Feminist Theory* (1985), (İstanbul: İletisim Yayinlari, 1997.)

consume cosmetic goods. Being aware of the fact that these practices reproduce the patriarchal discourse, we feel guilty for not showing resistance. This study has shown that beauty is a socially structured ideology which bears the values of hegemonic Western culture and religious belief. The beauty ideology causes women to feel insecure and dissatisfied. The continuity of this feeling is one of the main marketing strategies of cosmetics sector.

The hegemonic beauty perception and oppressing body politics are practiced through fashion. Fashion through the signs it bears reproduces the gender roles. The “feminine” and “masculine” are produced and disseminated through the signs produced by fashion. Fashion is a world of signs and images. And in today’s visual culture, we perceive our environment through images. People no more wear dresses, but dresses wear bodies in our ‘modern’ world. The system of fashion is the system of signs which are exchanged among cultures. In addition it is an area which women can only exist as fetish objects, objects of male desire.

This study has demonstrated that fashion is an intersecting system which operates on women’s bodies through the common discourses of capitalist and patriarchal order. The Christian belief, especially the Protestant ethic, which is slightly argued here, seems to have a crucial role on producing the hegemonic Western ideology of beauty. The discourse of consumer culture on body care is similar to the discourse of the Christianity on caring the soul.

Fashion’s objectification of women’s bodies is legitimized by the agents and discourses of both patriarchy and capitalism. The hegemonic gaze is male and we perceive the world through the male gaze. Fashion system is based on the economy of the male desire. It does not only fabricate new

costumes but it also fabricates femininity, which is accumulated by men. The ways of seeing is not a neutral activity; rather, our ways of seeing is a gendered one. It is showed in this study that the male gaze is the active one among all the agents of fashion; from designers to promoters, from advertisements to retailers. I have also argued here that fashion exists not simply as a form of aesthetics or art; rather it is a system which includes agents of production and consumption. Therefore it is examined here through its links with production and consumption processes.

Fashion industry is one of the guiltiest one in terms of the exploitation of labor. Moreover it uses the less developed technologies from the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. Fashion industry has played a crucial role in economies of the countries; the cheap labor and raw material sources have resulted as colonial exploitation. Inequality in the production process of the fashion industry exists in consumption process.

The findings of this study can be summarized as follows:

- Male hegemony oppresses women through the ideology of beauty. The capitalist system, sells women to women by reproducing the beauty myth.
- Woman's body as the object of the consumer culture, exchanged by men in the capitalist system which legitimates male hegemony.
- Our way of seeing is not gender neutral. As a result women's position as objects to be looked at, since the European painting art, continues to exist in advertisements and fashion photography.

Fashion's main concern is the body, besides; body, especially woman's body is the main object of the consumption. Women are forced to be passive victims of the consumer culture. However, as it is argued in this study, women did not always passively accept the styles imposed to them. During the times when women's liberation movements gained power, the fashion industry has fall into crises. For instance in 1950s Dior has announced his creation "New Style" which was a redesigned model of Victorian Dress. When Dior has explained the long skirt is the one, women should wear to look beautiful, some women have protested him by wearing mini-skirts. Within decades women would claim that mini-skirts cause to show women as sexual objects. In addition in 1980s women have quit buying the Victoria's Secret's uncomfortable underwear which is designed for male desire, have caused industry to produce new styles which women like to wear. These examples are the symbols of the women's resistance against the oppression, and they are addressing the women's desire to get the power of controlling their own bodies.

The problem is; capitalism is a system which reproduces itself by using the tensions in the society. Any resistance to the capitalist system will be transformed into a consumable thing. As it happened after the 1980s when Women's Liberation movement gained power in the United States, the advertisements started to use the discourse of liberated woman. Even the cosmetics firms are marketing their goods by declaring that the real beauty is not the one imposed through media, but it is the one every woman has naturally. Within last few years, the image of 'free woman' became one of the favorite themes of the TV commercials, whether it is a product for woman or not. We fought for our right to exist in the public sphere. As a result of women's involvement in the public sphere, the marketing strategies have changed in the consumer society. The

companies started to produce goods for working woman. We fought to live our bodies freely, we became sexual objects. The more we resist, the more we are repressed.

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