Interrelation of Global Fashion Media and Circulation of Dominant and Alternative Fashion Trends

In this essay, I will discuss ‘The global fashion media plays a crucial role in the circulation of dominant and/or alternative fashion trends and ideas, primarily through creating an image of fashionable individuals.’ I will cover topics including capitalism, discourses and globalization a long with different types of media and their contribution to the circulation of fashion ideals. The field of fashion is: ‘situated at an intermediary positon between the artistic field and the economic field’ (Boudieu and Delsaut, in Lynge-Jorlen (2012) p. 11) Fashion media makes meaningful connections between things that seem to be essentially independent, they give them social lives by creating an imaginary world around them and they create awareness in participants of the field of fashion in which they work.

Fashion media plays a major role in ascribing cultural, symbolic and aesthetic value to the product, circulating ideas about what is fashion through selection and presentation therefore fashion is mediate before reaching people. Fashion media not only maps key shifts in fashion they all reflect and contribute to the socio-cultural and commercial moment in which they were produced and consumed. The appearance of fashion media may change through time but their messages remain the same. This raises the prominence of fashions medias role in the circulation of ideas.

Moeran explains how fashion media provides historical and aesthetic order in a product world that is seasonal, has ‘chaotic quantities’ and that might otherwise go unnoticed (Moeran, 2006:738). Fashion always has a lot going on from creation to reaching closets, fashion media helps to establish what is in trend and guide people’s choices in what to purchase as well as make them aware of options and what has been created for the season in a more stream line approached with categories and easy to read articles and visual ideas. This although agrees that it plays a role it is more than just an image.

Rocamora goes on to explain “Fashion websites have become key platforms of the circulation of fashion discourse” (Rocamora 2015) fashion websites such as blogs allow for more information to be published by a wider group of people with various features and opinions as well as faster than traditional forms of media such as magazines as it can be published immediately and not waiting for a new copy of the magazine to go out as well as printing time etc. Blogs also allow anyone to post content without having qualifications or previous writing experience as well; as nog being restricted by a higher head when it comes to publishing they are in control of what they produce and share. The fashion media we use is changing however has the same aim of circulating fashionable ideas.

Fashion magazines provide readers with a sense of shared community but they also punish readers: they remind us constantly of our fashion shortcomings, our failures and our lack of capital in all its forms. And each month they promise to solve our problems by revealing ‘secrets’ to make us our better selves. As well each month we are encouraged to buy the newly fashionable products displayed in their pages thereby maintaining the fashion media’s authority in the discourse along with the fashion industry’s profitability, and the cycle of production-dissemination-consumption. This creating a deeper thought behind the magazine

and what it does other than just present the ideas of the time.

Moran agrees ‘fashion magazines don't present fast they present the fashion industry legitimating and delegitimizes certain people and brands, also situates fashion in relation to other cultural fields age film, music, publishing, art and entertainment’ (9/2006:735) which makes fashion socially relevant and legitimizes fashion as a whole and how the power in these magazines can change what were interested in and what we see, predetermine the decision of what we will and wont like by only selecting certain brands and people to be featured. Fashion magazines are a key way to distribute the dominant fashion trends and allow people to understand what is fashionable and people believe what is in the pages of a “fashion bible” such as vogue values these ideas.

Bartlett explains ‘Fashion words and images are central to the production, circulation and dissemination of fashion’ (Bartlett 2013); presenting these words and images in magazines as they are a ‘pillar of support’ for the fashion industry (Angela McRobbie, 2000). Fashion magazines support the industry by: Circulating its images and messages to a wide audience with various different people reading them for different reasons. They also legitimize the fashion product and define what fashion is including trends, brands and aesthetics. Fashion Magazines also educate readers about fashion history, news of the industry and translating and ordering coherent information from the plethora of products available to consumers and readers. Without fashion media how would the ideas behind the collections reach members of the public.

A discourse is a way in which knowledge is articulated in society by, for example, the various institutional forms it takes. Knowledge produces and transmits power and includes social practices- ways of producing meaning- and all types of control. Each discourse is part of a wider network of discourses. The media is another example of a powerful institutional discourse. “Fashion magazines represent the fashions shown in the catwalk collections. In so doing, they create ‘a discourse of fashion’ whose key evaluative terms are used by different people across time and space to mark out and contest semantic territory in which local cultural preferences engage with globalizing norms of fashion taste.” (Moeran 2013 120) Discourse is a way of thinking about a topic that is socially constrained and that shapes our perspective on that topic, become evident through language. Following fashion media outlets has in itself become a set of societal standard that we must follow not just what its about but the outlet itself.

Bourdieu is a major theoretical voice on; cultural practices and objects of high/low culture that are embedded in ‘everyday life’, the aesthetic value of these practices, the impact on social processes. Bourdieu sought to expose the underlying structures within social and cultural life, particularly looking at the struggle for power and capital what influences/shapes taste and orthodoxy. Determining what creates a fashionable individual and how this happens. “The material production of cultural objects is only one aspect of their production; the other is symbolic production or the production of value of the work, or, which amounts to the same thing, of belief in the value of the work” (Rocamora 2009:54). Bourdieu argues multiple institutions participate in the process of symbolic production whose role is to institute reality or teach us how to interpret and understand the stuff of culture, fast magazines do this through fashion discourse, a particular kind of celebrity discover that describes and prescribes at the same time. This idea creating a deeper meaning behind the trends and the impotance of them.

Fashion media legitimizes brands and helps establish them. ‘Made a hundred times, by all those who are interested in I, who find a material or symbolic profit in reading it, classifying it,

deciphering it, commenting on it, combating it, knowing it, possessing it' (Bourdieu in Rocamora 2015:235). A brand needs fashion media to help get their name out there but also reinforce the meaning behind it to create and established level of what this brand means to people creating a personnel connection to them.

Globalization is often conflated with cultural imperialism, in which a powerful country imposes its values, culture and cultural products on less powerful countries, and implicitly claims superiority by doing so. Foucault's concept, understanding how social institutions work, fundamental concepts, assumptions and methods w accept them without question, Foucault claims that rather than simply accepting these concepts, assumptions and methods. Western media circulates its cultural products and their ideologies and discourses –representations of the West as well as the Western interpretation of cultures and ethnicities that are not Western. Characterized by an uneven distribution of cultural media products –the cultural sphere of one country is being infiltrated by products of another country/ culture without a similar flow in the opposite direction. "Cultural imperialism implies a fairly passive, receptive stance on the part of viewers [...] instead, our research so far among various ethnic groups in Israel and America supports our hypothesis that the viewing process is actually active and social [...] if we are right, a complex process of cultural interaction is going on" Liebes and Katz, (1993) With fashion media allowing people to connect across the globe it is enabling those dominant trends to create monotized fashionable image around the globe quicker and reaching more people not just those interested in fashion like previously those would only read fashion magazines or pay attention to the industry but now it reaches ore accounts online through suggestions and the ability to see more people's ideas of fashion.

In fashion media and the industry, the dominant cultures are Western (USA, UK, France, Italy) as the economic capital and cultural capital of the industry is concentrated into the hands of corporations and publications based in these countries. This replicates the myth that fashion is Western and tied with Western modernism (think of the 'Big Four' fashion cities- New York, London, Milan, Paris): 'Fashion is more than a white, bourgeois (upper middle class), heterosexual female affair. Yet the stories that get told and retold reinforce the myth that fashion is only Western or white or female' (Kaiser, 2014: 34)

A way of understanding the social world that considers both the practices of individuals within socio-cultural structures– 'fields' – and the structural forces that underpin these practices divided up into sites of 'fields' Fields possess their own set of rules, knowledge and forms of capital, they are 'fluid and dynamic, rather than static, entities' (Webb, Schirato and Danaher 2002) as they are comprised of the relationships and behaviors of players in the field contributing to, maintaining, challenging the field. This allows for internal shifts and transformations as well as convergence with other fields useful when we consider e.g. fashion advertising. People within this space struggle for power and dominance within the hierarchy of positions, A field's structure is made up by the positions of agents within it and the relationships/forces between them as they compete for specific kinds of 'capital'. For example, think of the seating at a high-profile fashion show 'LFW mapped out, quite literally in spatial terms, all the key agents and institutions within the field of fashion. These key people include designers, models, journalists and buyers from stores around the world, fashion stylists and celebrities, as well as less important figures, such as fashion students, who exist on the margins of the field.'

Entwistle and Rocamora (2006) 'The Field of Fashion Materialized', (Sociology 40(4), p. 736.)

Makes visible the boundaries between the field of fashion and people who are not involved in it, accessible only to players in the field. SpaQal arrangements reproduce hierarchies and makes visible people's capital making it easier for those involved to gain an understanding of someone's capital and allowing them to be giving a materialized value.

A person's capital can come from a few areas including: Economic capital: value connected to financial assets/wealth. Cultural capital: value associated with the accumulation of culturally-acknowledged resources embodied (tastes, accent, skills, values) objectified (ownership of prestigious goods) Institutionalized such as attaining a degree or through a long period of immersion in the field. Bourdieu argued that having access to cultural capital – which requires access to and knowledge of cultural codes – was class-based and therefore reinforced social divisions between the classes. Symbolic capital: an intangible quality, signifying the way that an agent is recognised/perceived by others in their field (e.g. Anna Wintour, Nick Knight,) Social capital: the value and strength of an agent's social connections and contacts within their field. These different kinds of capital are what 'agents in the field' exchange to establish and reproduce their position. 'Culture relies on giving things meaning by assigning them to different positions within a classificatory system. The marking of 'difference' is thus the basis of that symbolic order which we call culture' (Hall 2013: 236) We make sense of things- people, places, aspects of identity, etc.- by classifying them by type. This differentiation is fundamental to cultural meaning but it can also give rise to negative practices and feelings: 'stable cultures require things to stay in their appointed place. Symbolic boundaries keep the categories 'pure', giving cultures their unique meaning and identity' (Hall 2013: 236) Those with greater amount of capital have a larger impact to a greater impact allowing their versions of a fashionable individual to be the prominent ideas. This includes an individual's ideas such as an Instagram blog or a featured page in a printed established magazine such as vogue.

Fashion media both reflect and create the zeitgeist (the spirit of the times). Fashion media also normalizes and supports the consumption of fashion and a consumerist lifestyle: To establish a sense of belonging, to individuate ourselves - in terms of how we see ourselves and how others see us. We display a concept of personal identity through our association with particular goods and fashion brands. We call this style, which according to Michel de Certeau (1984) is a 'tool for constructing personhood to locate ourselves'. 'Advertising and fashion combine individuality and conformity in curious ways. Individuals consume and peruse fashion to individuate them yet do so in order to be socially accepted, to fit in, to be popular. Moreover, it is mass produced goods and fashion that are used to produce individuality.' (Kellner 2009:177)

'The content of the fashion picture is not the clothes alone but also the attitudes and conventions of the people who wear them; it is an index in miniature to culture and society, to people's aspirations, limitations and taste' (Hall-Duncan, 1979: 10) Model embodies an idea of fashion/fashionability. Always about an idea: of beauty, femininity, ugliness, the grotesque: but it has an appeal aesthetically and prompts fascination and desire. Sometimes, this relationship of desire is to embody what the model embodies: to replicate his/her style, beauty - i.e. to want to be him/her. We need to think about the power of such images- in their suggesting of an idealized way of being, they also define what is ideal, ideas about people, identities, beauty...

Ideology is a concept developed through Marxist readings of power and culture and posits that culture circulates false knowledge (in contradiction to true facts about the world) that keep people satisfied with unjust power, economic, labor relations. Barker argues "world views of dominant groups that justify and maintain their power and that are counterpoised to truth"

(Barker, 2012, p.73) The dominant ideas, beliefs, and values that inform the social, cultural and political practices of a group or society. These certain groups hold the majority and higher power allowing them to create ideals. For example, a fashion blogger such as Samantha Maria with 573k Instagram followers posts an image of what she considers fashionable will have be considered more ideal than someone else posting the opposite outfit with only a few hundred follower as she already is considered an idol her actions will automatically gain this interest and be considered the norm causing few people to want to go against.

Ideology is a discursive phenomenon i.e. it works through discourse: ways of structuring knowledge and ways of understanding. Ideology works by constructing us as subjects: or by producing new subjective/identity positons for us to occupy these can change throughout time, be taken up or rejected in relation to cultural texts. Ideology is concerned with the connection between cultural representations and power relations, an approach that: ‘affirms the importance of images, values and discourses in construc7ng and reproducing the social order’ (Gill 2007: 54).

Ideology in fashion media is circulated through discourse and through representation explored extensively by Stuart Hall who argued that representation of people does not just represent a pre-existing idea but constitutes our understanding of the world and frames our understanding of what is authentic, normal, desirable etc. ‘Representations signifying practice that engages feelings, attitudes and emotions and it mobilizes fears and anxieties in the viewer, at a deeper level than we can explain in a simple, common-sense way’ (Hall 2013: 226)

In conclusion, the ideas from the research mean the dominant fashion ideals has the globalization westernized ideal then filtered through those with higher capital in the field to narrow down what is current and in style at the time and what we should be following to all fit the ideal of fashion. These trends will change and start again with fashion known to repeat its self. This dominant and alternative idea of fashion is what differentiates it from style which is what we use to then distinguish the ideas brought to use to make them unique so we aren’t all the same as each other wearing the exact same outfit removing individuality. Although following trends can be criticized for lack of thought and subconsciously just following other people’s opinions we then take on these ideals. All the way from the reports of the runway what is in season is chosen for us from those with larger expertise in the industry, what we see is filtered and chosen for us, even brands such as supreme and vetements who try to go against the system only are established due to fashion media allowing for their name to be recognized and with alternative brands having such big following are they still alternative if they use the same processes as those brands who are involved in the system.