

Designed Fashion Identity

The concept of contemporary women

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Introduction

Feminism and the female identity are topics that recently appear all around us in the news.. Questions about what it means to be feminist today raised among us. Women protest groups call for attention to discuss their position in society. The methods to do so are interesting and somehow problematic. Such as in the case of 'Femen', who use their bodies to battle sexism. The angelic appearance and the rough message they deliver is very provocative and seems to fit in with the way women are objectified. However they also do this to themselves in a way. It is hard to decide what to think of women who are so explicit about being a feminist and at the same time do everything to – in a way- offend women. How can you celebrate your sexuality by revealing all about yourself and at the same time pretend to be free of the restriction that has been part of female identity for such a long time?

It seems that this hyper-sexuality is an overreaction to the idea that women should stay at home, or walk behind a stroller. As I am graduating on design history, with a special interest in fashion, I will analyze the representation of women in popular culture. I do realize that a video or an editorial in a magazine is constructed, and not part of daily life, but they do represent an ideal which reflects on daily life. How ready are we to let go of style rules and who is in control of what women should wear? Or are other questions more relevant in our contemporary time? And does the third wave allow women to choose their own identity without feeling repressed?

In my fist chapter the focus will be on the theoretical framework of the third wave theory and I will sketch the importance and actuality of feminism. To find out where we are standing today, my second chapter will zoom in on two case studies in which the use of stereotypes in popular culture will be analyzed to understand if women are free to choose who they want to be, or if they are still limited by ideals on beauty and identify. In the third chapter I will change perspective. In the first part of the thesis I focus on the women who take on different identities, in second part I will focus on design and garments that can change the focus identity and appearances.

My aim is to clarify the problem around the noting of female identity. The female identity and the identity of objects are continuously transitioning and depend strongly on the context in which we see them. It is harder to escape stereotypes than one might think and the only way to escape these standardized self-representations is to differ from the

beauty ideals and to individualize ourselves. I wonder if the ideal women is still based on by male standard, if her beauty and sexuality are defined by forming an opposite to masculinity. I will not focus on the designers, but on the women wearing the designs. In my case studies I will show how different beauty ideals and representations of strong, powerful women diverse in our contemporary time. And how typical connotations are broken.

Chapter I .I Theoretical frame: Third Wave Feminism

In this chapter the focus will be on recent literature on *Third Wave* feminism to point out how much women are struggling with questions about their female identity. To understand *turning points* on the female identity, fashion and sexuality in relation to representations.

The fashion world and the mechanism behind creating new fashions is influenced by social changes. Styling has become a profession, people are really thinking about what to wear, what message their clothes send out. Also a lot of people have a trained eye for recognizing a certain 'type' of person by the clothes he or she wears.

On TV we can see many programs about what to wear and even about how to change our bodies to commit to the ideal. The question is how the styling of different characters in TV shows, movies and daily life is influenced by changing feminist ideals. Because even though the fashion mechanism decides what clothes will be produced, it's the consumers who create a demand.

The women who have financial access can choose 'who they want to be', or better said 'what they want to communicate about their identity'. Choosing your identity is very complicated in an era where vintage clothing is as wanted as the newest clothes. The stylist has a large scale of clothes to chose from, and a lot of types of 'different types', based on stereotypes and attempts to break with old ideals. The choice of women to be who they are finds it's roots in the feminist debate. We are living in the Third Wave, a paradigm of choice. But how realistic is the freedom of choice? Aren't we at all-times influenced by standardized beauty ideals and representations of women? My question is; where are we standing now? Can a woman have multiply female identities? To answer these questions it is useful to have knowledge about the general background literature on the *Third Wave* feminism and more specifically their ideas about sexuality and sexual relations. Sex is always attached to questions of fashion, because the relation to the body involves not only our personal

relation, but also the gaze of the other, based on the standards of the male viewer. Can a women express her sexuality without following the male standard?

Recent book publications, TV shows and recent 'scandals' that have to do with this subject will also be mentioned. The goal is to familiarize my reader with the problem of the search of an identity for women and the urgency of my research. Research is needed, because it is a very actual topic. As a theoretical frame I will use Rebecca Walkers theory on *Third Wave Feminism* and compare her ideas with the more recent publication by Lena Dunham, the director of the hit-series *Girls*. It is interesting to see how the term used by Walker in a 1992 essay is still relevant twenty years later.¹ The reason I was interested in this topic is because *The Times* declared the word feminism as unneeded for 2015, which led to strong reactions in the press, leading to an apology by the editor.² On June 29, 1998 *The Times* made a similar statement posing the question "Is Feminism Dead?".³ Wikipedia states how The third wave feminism theory in general is a reaction on the second wave focus on how women of "different color, religions and cultural backgrounds" 'are women' and how the third wave focuses on the gender role expectations, stereotypes and how they take a different position on female sex workers compared to the second wave. the third-wave feminists are ambiguous about those themes.⁴

Of course it is a short and useful introduction, but it does not explain why women of the third wave generation felt the need of starting a new wave. Generally the literature says that it is because much is now achieved in legal terms. One of the many reactions on the 1998 article by *The Times* is written by Jennifer Gilley *Writings of the Third Wave* and was published in *The Alert Collector* in 2005. She portrayed four pictures; three of American feminists and one of the actress Calista Flockhart, known for her character Ally McBeal.⁵ The writer of the time article, Ginia Bellagante, refers to the character as "a ditzy, self-obsessed lawyer with a penchant for miniskirt". And taking her as an example for the feminists of the nineties, where the culture of celebrity and self-obsession took over the

¹ Rebecca Walker was born in Mississippi in 1969, daughter of a African-American mother, Anna Walker who won the Pulitzer Price, and a father who is Jewish-American and a civil rights attorney . After graduating from the prestigious Yale University she, among others, found *The third Wave Foundation* <http://thirdwavefund.org/> a non-profit organization which encourages women to become the future leaders, 21-5-2015.

<http://www.thirdwavefoundation.org/rebecca-walker/> 21-5-2015.

² <http://time.com/3576870/worst-words-poll-2014/> 14-7-2015.

³ Gilley, p. 187

⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Third-wave_feminism 21-5-2015.

⁵ Gilley, p. 187.

focus on social change.⁶ Gilley states how feminism didn't seem actual to the third wave generation, because in popular culture equality seemed to be achieved. However, women struggled between the combination of a career and being a home mother.⁷

The article states how women seem to not want to identify themselves with the previous generation of feminists, as they have the bad image of being 'angry' women. Several publications from the nineties started to name contemporary feminism *victim feminism*.⁸ The same group of women started to encourage women to use their sexual power against men. Another view born out of this idea is *power feminism* in which the women are responsible for their own repression because they allow it. Those themes resonate in the third wave theory.⁹

Walker published an essay *Becoming the Third Wave* in which she talks about her personal experiences and where she felt women were treated as unequal.¹⁰ She mentions a lawsuit which was more about "redefining the extent of women's credibility and power" than about finding out if a man really was guilty of sexual harassment.¹¹ In the same chapter she refers to some other situations in which she finds herself defending 'being a woman'. As an example she describes men talking rudely about women and then turning their attention to her, calling her 'sweetheart' which she does not accept.¹² In Walkers examples the females are no longer victimized. In the case of the lawsuit we see how easy it still is to portray a woman as unreliable. In the second example we see how men think to have the right to treat women unequally.

Recently in 2014 there was a campaign against being catcalled in New York. A video shows a woman walking for 10 hours, getting catcalled a 108 times. The video stimulated an international discussion about the disrespect women get to hear when they just go around.¹³ The video shows how aggressive men react when the girl refuses to talk to the men. Still there are people saying women who dress sexy ask for harassment. The general public still seems to believe that 'the gaze of the other' leads women to choose clothes that

⁶ Gilley, p. 187.

⁷ Gilley, p. 188.

⁸ Gilley, p. 188.

⁹ Gilley, p. 188.

¹⁰ Walker, p. 78.

¹¹ Walker, p. 78.

¹² Walker, p. 78.

¹³ <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/video/news/video-1131300/Woman-catcalled-108-times-walking-New-York.html> 21-5-2015.

expose their sexuality. It is a very difficult concept, because first of all women also dress for other women and I think that from their viewpoint the male gaze is considered less important than living up to the high standard that women create for each other.

Walker states in the text how she is tired of being disrespected and she tries to figure out what her involvement with the third wave can mean in this situation. In the end she speaks out against being used by men. She states "I am not a post feminism feminist. I am the Third Wave."¹⁴ It is not really clear what Walker exactly means with this statement. She might refer to the new focus of the third wave. Postfeminism usually refers to a historical shift after the Second Wave. Sometimes it is used as a synonym to the Third Wave. It can also mean to refer to the disappointment in feminism, as "a backlash against feminism".¹⁵ Not everyone believes that equality is achieved, at the same time people can use the same term to say "all battles have been won."¹⁶ Third Wave feminists do not victimize the women but they are concerned about the way women are being sexualized by men without wanting it. At the same time Walker argues a women can still be a feminist, even if she makes choices in her life that the second wave feminists would despise. If a woman wants a traditional relation or wants "to be spanked before sex" it is her choice and it does not mean that she can't be a feminist or does not care about gender equality.¹⁷

Reading the essay by Walker makes you realize how complicated the relation of a woman to her own body and identity can be. Women are all different, non-white females seem to have a harder battle to fight than white privileged women. In fashion non-white women are often styled like exotic women. In my case study I will show examples that differ from this 'tradition'. Walker talks about the unpleasant reactions women can get and how in the case of sexual harassment the woman often still gets the blame. At the same time the *Third Wave Feminism* theory does not judge against females who use their own sexuality. This debate of the female sexuality was already part of the second wave. The opinions were divided between feminists who were against women working as sex workers and sex-positive feminists. In an essay published in 1984 Ann Ferguson called it the Sex War in which she divided the feminists in two groups: The radical and the Libertarian Feminist.¹⁸ She

¹⁴ Walker, p. 80.

¹⁵ Gill, p. 3.

¹⁶ Gill, p. 3.

¹⁷ Walker, p.

¹⁸ Ferguson, p. 106.

explains the seven main characteristic views on sex and relations of both groups. The main difference that Ferguson mentions in her analysis is that "Radical feminists emphasize the value of emotional intimacy and libertarian feminist emphasize pleasure."¹⁹ The general idea of sexuality in *The Third Wave* is that it is up to women to decide what they want.

Just recently Lena Dunham published her biography *Not that kind of Girl*. And if we read her book in the perspective of the ideas of the third wave we can find many similarities. Dunham is the child of a generation who grew up with the idea of choices.²⁰ In her book she describes her sexually adventurous life as a student. She talks casually about sex and awkward situations. The freedom she takes to undergo these sexual relations and write about it publicly is part of the freedom for women to express their sexuality. In the popular series *Girls* Dunham plays the character of a woman who is in a relation with "the most perverted television character in history". In the sex scenes her character allows her partner to objectify her and make pervert comments that turn her from a grown woman into a little girl. Dunham is not afraid to show the pornification of sex in TV series. At the same time she makes this pornification ridiculous by making the sex between the two main characters awkward. Dunham's publication and series are a reflection of the idea that women can decide for themselves what they want. However, it is surrounded by an uncomfortable feeling as she describes a case of sexual assault that confused her identity. It is uneasy to read the inner doubts of a young woman, however the humorous tone makes it easier. The relation to her own body and therefore her identity is an interesting search and typical for a generation of women who grow up with a lot of images of what an ideal woman should be like.²¹

Dunham can be placed in line with the ideas of the Liberal feminists of the second wave. Her ideas about sexual freedom and the importance she gives to the pleasure in sex for both partners fit their paradigm. Also in her movies and especially *Girls* we see this Liberal attitude towards sex. It is interesting to think back on *Sex and The City* as pleasure in sex and politically incorrect sex were main themes. Sex talk on television with leading female roles became normal in our culture. It seems like people are getting used to it. And

¹⁹ Ferguson, p. 109.

²⁰ As a child of two artistic parents Carrol Dunham, painter and Laurie Simmons, artist and photographer, she grew up in an artistic environment. Her father is Protestant and her mother is Jewish. She also has a younger sister, Grace.

²¹ Lena Dunham does not consider herself as the ideal woman.

also literature knows a lot of examples of openness towards sex. That is why it is surprising that the book by Dunham caused a lot of controversy. She writes briefly about playing with her baby sister and looking into her vagina by the age of seven, as curious children do, and got attacked by the media and on Twitter. Surprisingly not just by conservative males but also by feminists. It is interesting to realize how a young woman who talks about sexual freedom for women and the confusing relation to the ownership of her own body got attacked for being a child at the age of seven by women who should normally defend her.

Jessica Bennett who is a columnist at *Time.com* and writes mostly about themes related to gender, sexuality and pop culture makes a reference to a famous quote of Jo Freeman "Sisterhood is powerful. It kills. Mostly sisters."²² Basically it says women who are too successful are seen as a threat by other women.

If we oppose Lena Dunham's writing with Rebecca Walker's *Third Wave* theory there is a tension between the two. Both authors are in search of equality between men and women. Walker shows examples where women are sexualized by men and how society perceives women as 'lower', like sexual beings who are to blame for calling out disrespect and sexual harassment with their bodies. However she does not blame women for that and she also does not victimize them. Dunham also writes about bad experiences with men, such as date rapes or domination in sexual relations by men but she makes the men look weak. In her work the women chose to have pleasure and go around risking to fall into the hands of a bad person but taking their own responsibility for that. It is very complicated to find the balance between the female as a sexual being (object) and a female with sexual needs (subject). Maybe it is not right to think in oppositions and the female identity should be seen as flexible.

Another recent title is *Bad Feminist* by Roxane Gay in 2014. It is surprising how many people actually started reading this book. And how feminism has become 'sexy' making women use their femininity to present feminist ideas. The idea of the publication is nicely shown in this quote "I am failing as a woman. I am failing as a feminist. To freely accept the feminist label would not be fair to good feminists. If I am, indeed, a feminist, I am a rather bad one. I am a mess of contradictions".²³

The first wave feminism seems to have a clear goal, to achieve equal rights. The

²² <http://time.com/3556776/lena-dunham-feminist-critics-molestation-charges/> 21-5-2015.

²³ <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/aug/02/bad-feminist-roxane-gay-extract> 21-5-2015.

second wave tried to free women of a fixed roll. The third wave is in a way more ambiguous and more complicated. If a woman wants to take her sexual freedom, she has to defend herself and make sure everyone understands she does it for herself. Using her sexual power to overcome men. At the same time women do not want to get disrespected by men. Women like Lena Dunham are at the lead of a turning point where women do with their bodies what they want. They decide to express their sexuality in a nontraditional way.

In regular advertisements we can still see how women are objectified. Thanks to Twitter we can get an overview of reactions on works. For instance, after Kim Kardashian posed naked for the cover of *Paper Magazine*, the reactions on the internet showed a focus discussing her nudity and how (in)appropriate it was. And she was the one to take the 'blame'. There hasn't been paid a lot of attention to the photographer, Jean-Paul Goude, who objectifies women in his work.

There are currently ongoing debates about identity and fashion, also in relation to race and feminism. At the same time sexual freedom and being an independent woman could be expressed without sexualizing the female body as we will see in the case studies in chapter two. Women can find their own expression of their femininity. The ideal woman, who has certain characteristics and interests is fading in our popular western culture. A person can have a more general identity, I think nowadays the border between a male and female identity is blurring. This frightens people as we have seen in reactions to Dunham's book, because if we look at traditional gender role she distances herself from them. Therefore she is called out to be a creep by both feminist and conservative people.

It shows how complicated feminism is today, because there is not one shared vision, neither a shared goal. I do think the focus on the relation to the body can be an interesting pointer. The beauty ideals are changing and there are more and more examples that try to break true (racial) stereotypes. In third wave feminism sexualisation of the female body plays an important role. R. Claire Synder-Hall explains in her publication that the third wave feminism is not about having an uncritical opinion about what women do, neither a thoughtless approval of "choices", she sees their attitude as "a deep respect for pluralism and self-determination".²⁴ Synder-Hall refers to Ferguson's *Sex War* in her explanation of the struggle for both women who want to look sexy and be feminist and women who want

²⁴ Synder- Hall, p. 255.

to be traditional and achieve gender equality at the same time.²⁵ Choice is explained by Synder-Hall as the focus on the individual person who is in control of making the choice without admitting to the cultural tradition and social structure. She argues how women should not have to choose at all, for Synder-Hall it is more about determining a "path of life".²⁶ Because of the lack of a common notion of feminism it is hard to judge another's women's claim to be a feminism as Synder-Hall argues. Women who follow the beauty standard are hard to see as feminist, because they seem to follow what Synder-Hall calls the 'patriarchal standards of beauty'. But Synder-Hall goes further with her theorization and wonders that if women can eroticize feminism, if they help to reach out to "political goals such as reproductive freedom, policies to create work/life balance, and safe affordable childcare."²⁷ However Synder-Hall does believe feminists who are part of the third wave can talk openly about their struggle and don't have to defend themselves, she does stretch out how the life choices of women influence the way people perceive them. Third wave feminism is about "addressing issues of shared concern".²⁸ Now that a lot of goals are achieved by the second wave, it is time to focus on the representation of women. In the case studies, the relation between fashion, body and identity will be explored within the concept of feminism and the influence of the third wave mentality.

Chapter II.I How women are represented in two case studies of 2014-15

We seem to have the possibility to choose who we want to be at a certain time. However it is not that simple, women can take on a role and leave it when they want. They can search to who they want to be and have in a way a flexible identity, but problem is that society is very demanding. Turning women into a subject, who should submit themselves to the ideal. This ideal is influenced by popular culture. It has a great influence on how young women see themselves; at the same time this is a reflection of stereotypes. Women take more powerful leading characters in TV series. At the same time there is not one ideal, one body type and one fashion anymore. This means that clothes are now used to characterize a 'type' of character. Identity and fashion have always been close, but nowadays they are

²⁵ Synder-Hall, p. 256.

²⁶ Synder-Hall, p. 256.

²⁷ Synder-Hall, p. 259.

²⁸ Synder-Hall, p. 260.

used to create new stereotypes, as women are taking on new roles, influenced by the third wave. It is interesting to analyze how the relation between identity, fashion and a personage works. Again the fashion world is the mechanism behind the possibility to create those identities. A garment is designed with a conceptual idea behind it or even an image of the ideal women who wear it. If a piece is on the catwalk, it has a different 'meaning' than in a music video. Therefore the identity of the design itself is dynamic and not fixed, because it depends on the context.

Understanding femininity in relation to feminism and fashion has already been researched and that is why I want to see how the relation is nowadays. In 1991 Caroline Evans and Minna Thornton published *Fashion, Representation, Femininity* in *The Feminist review*. They are interested in the complex matter of meaning when applied to fashion. They state that it is interesting to apply a meaning-generating system as semiotics or sociology to the a meaning-destroying one, like fashion and in their research they use the meaning-generation system of feminist culture analysis.²⁹ As methodology they analyzed the work of four female fashion designers, Coco Chanel, Elsa Schiaparelli, Vivienne Westwood and Rei Kawakubo in relation to questions of representation, subjectivity and the construction of sexual identity. They call two main pointers in their research " fashion's traditional identification with femininity and the primacy of the body within any clothing system."³⁰ In their article they stated how feminism produced a vocabulary to talk about representations of the female body and how the culture constructs femininity. In this cultural construction they relate to fashion. They state how fashion can change meaning within a culture.³¹ They use the work of the four female designers to mark changes in culture. Starting with Chanel's dandyism for women, and modernist rejection of decoration. To continue with Schiaparelli's evening dresses full of embellished erotic details that is associated with the Surrealism.³² They refer to her famous shoe hat as a symbolic repression of the unconscious, symbolizing fetish and the associating pocket/mouth/vagina.³³ The authors state how it is the dress itself and not the body that reflects an image of self-display and therefore the woman is acting as a performer. Based on these two designers in the

²⁹ Evans, Thornton, p. 48.

³⁰ Evans, Thornton, p. 48.

³¹ Evans, Thornton, p. 48.

³² Evans, Thornton, p. 53.

³³ Evans, Thornton, p. 53.

authors analyzed the work of Westwood and Kawakubo. They divide fashion in the 'feminine' look and 'power dressing'. By 'feminine' they refer to women wearing Laura Ashley dresses, by 'power dressing' they recall shoulder pads.³⁴ They refer to Psychoanalysis as necessary for the construction of the gendered identity.³⁵ And as a source they refer to a 1930 publication *The Psychology of Clothes* by J.C. Flügel.³⁶ They cite a part of his work "elements in clothing which are symbolically masculine, which represent the so-called masculine characteristics of power, control and autonomy- the law of the father" and "those male garments that are most associated with seriousness and correctness are also the most saturated with a subtle phallicism".³⁷ Evans and Thornton relate this quote to the work of Rei Kawakubo and Vivienne Westwood and state how those two designers only use feminine symbols. They quote Westwood saying in an interview in *i-D magazine* of March 1987 "I never thought it powerful to be like a second rated man". She made the comment in the context of talking about the designer's dislike of shoulder pads.³⁸ The authors state that Westwood makes a statement about the construction of femininity. And they state how masculinity is the norm and femininity is the *difference* of that norm.³⁹ The authors state that Westwood, in her designs focus on the wearers libido, instead of 'being attractive'. Still we can wonder if the female definition of *feeling sexy* is independent from the male vision.⁴⁰ If a woman wearing Westwood thinks she is sexy, than in the opinion of the authors her approach to her own sexuality is autonomous. But that would mean that the feeling of sexiness is detached from the clothes and the system of meaning completely. Their argument becomes more clear explaining the work of Kawakubo, who presented collections of elastic flaps with gaps that the wearer had to finish around the body. Apparently the critics stated that the collection was unsexy and Kawakubo replied that "the wearer does not rely on clothes to be sexy but on oneself".⁴¹ Kawakubo and Westwood try to redefine sexiness and are critical to the standard idea. They break with clichés and research how the body can be represented without the clichés by focusing on other body parts and new

³⁴ Evans, Thornton, p. 57.

³⁵ Evans, Thornton, p. 49.

³⁶ Evans, Thornton, p. 56.

³⁷ Evans, Thornton, p. 57.

³⁸ Evans, Thornton, p. 57

³⁹ Evans, Thornton, p. 57.

⁴⁰ Evans, Thornton, p. 61.

⁴¹ Evans, Thornton, p. 61.

shapes.⁴²

It is an interesting analysis of two contemporary designers who try to break with a male dominated view of the female body. It also shows that designers have to work radically to free themselves from the male gaze. It requires clothes that have no connotations with what we can define as typically masculine or feminine. The body has to be represented in fragments, without focusing on the typically sexualized parts. Therefore the designers need to break with all conventions of sexiness to define a new feminine sexiness, a sexuality that only belongs to women and is not submitted to the male gaze.

The work of Westwood and Kawakubo is fascinating. But it is High Fashion and far from daily wear. However those two designers break with conventions, a lot of clothing is far more conservative. Fashion can be divided into 'feminine' and 'power dressing' and these two categories are still relevant.⁴³ However their article is from 1991 and a lot has happened in fashion and popular culture. I wonder if the female and male identity are still strictly divided or if the identities are blurring. The methodology of Thornton and Evans is interesting and useful to answer their question on the possibility of using feminist cultural theory on fashion. They have shown how contemporary designers as Westwood and Kawakubo are in the search to define femininity, more specifically female sexuality without basing it and opposing it to the male standard.

My analysis of fashion and identity is based on Evans and Thornton's notion on how femininity is based on masculinity. In this chapter I will work on two case studies to focus on the use of fashion to create a specific type of female character. I have chosen for two different case studies, because they are a juxtaposition to each other. One case study is about the use of Haute Couture to create a very exclusive identity for two pop stars. The other case study is about daily clothes that are used in television series to stereotype the female characters. As the goal of the third wave was to break with female and racial stereotypes, it is interesting to analyze changes in popular culture. In my case study it will become obvious that we are still holding on to old stereotypes.⁴⁴ Even though it has become usual to play with gender role. There are many examples available on the catwalk or in fashion photography. However it is a bit more complicated when this play with gender

⁴² Evans, Thornton, p. 65.

⁴³ Evans, Thornton, p. 57.

⁴⁴ Evans, Thornton, p. 49.

is attached to a familiar face, a known person.

Therefore I have chosen two pop artist who use costumes to tell a story in their music videos. Popstars show an enlarged image of possible identities. They have access to the newest fashion and the best stylists and directors. Small changes on the street become obvious in the pop world.

In the first case study I will analyze three video's of Beyoncé and compare her self-representation to Josephine Baker, that of the exotic black women. Questioning if women in general can break with the male-gaze and fashion clichés that divide women in general into 'feminine' and 'power women'. I will answer this question by analyzing the work of Björk, who seems to have found a manner to escape the male ideal and stereotypes, using her "otherness".

In the second case study I will analyze three American TV series and three Scandinavian series with a leading role for a woman. They are a juxtaposition to the artist, because their clothing is more accessible and in line with what people wear in Western Culture.

Chapter II.II Case Study Music Video Beyoncé/ Björk

When looking at role models in pop culture you can question how far women got away from the old stereotypes or still follow the clichés. Take Beyoncé for instance . She is an interesting artist with access to high end designers whose designs frequently grace her music videos. Some of these videos seems to mark her as a modern version of Josephine Baker, an African-American 1920's diva. Beyoncé is a self-proclaimed feminist and talks a lot about the leading role for women. However she does exploit her own sexuality in a similar way to Baker. In some videos she is represented as a strong, masculine woman, in others as a sexual femme fatale. The cliché of the 'feminine' and 'power dressing' seems still to be relevant in the case of Beyoncé. She is an artist with multiply identities. As a businesswomen and singer she knows how to brand herself. The first music video I want to present here is *Run the World*.⁴⁵ The most eye-catching garment is a piece of the late Alexander McQueen (fig.1).

⁴⁵ <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/aug/02/bad-feminist-roxane-gay-extract> 21-5-2015.



Figure 1 Beyoncé, *Run the world (Girls)* wearing Alexander McQueen, 2011. Music video Still.

The same dress has another connotation on the catwalk. Originally McQueen designed the dress as a part of the collection inspired by Medieval Icons (fig. 2).⁴⁶ On the catwalk the dress is presented on a white, thin model. This model represents what a lot of people still see as the Western beauty ideal. The models on the runway were dressed in red or nude fabric, on their head they wear mohawks made of molded gold leave. The red draped fabric of the dress with pleats over the shoulder and hips is constructed on a tight basic dress made of black fabric with gold embroidery (fig.2). Under the dress both the model and Beyoncé wear a pair of over knee high heeled black leather boots. On the runway all the models wear leather boots with patterns of cherubs, broken skulls and references to paintings of Bosch, Botticelli and Hugo van der Goes.⁴⁷

The collection strongly refers to a Medieval past, the arts and the richness of religious decoration. The dress on the catwalk showcases this spirit. It is interesting to see how the dress connotations work in Beyoncé's music video.

⁴⁶ This was Alexander McQueen's final show, the designer committed suicide on 10 februari 2010.

⁴⁷ <http://www.vogue.co.uk/fashion/autumn-winter-2010/ready-to-wear/alexander-mcqueen> 21-5-2015.



Figure 2 Alexander McQueen, fall/winter 2010 RTW. Catwalk shot by Style.com.

Beyoncé has first of all a different body type than catwalk models. Her body fills out the dress; the folds around the hips accentuate her waist and female shape. Her hair is Western styled in long blonde locks. The dress gives her a Majestic appearance, almost like a Queen, dressed in couture. The connotation of the dress in the video is no longer focused on Medieval Europe. Surrounded by lions and worn on Beyoncé's dark skin the dress is overruled by the identity of the singer.⁴⁸

The singer is dressed as a powerful, black woman referring to the song's theme 'Girls run the world'. The different dresses she wears have accents on the shoulders, are fitted and show her body shape. However these clothes also show her sexuality, as they are tight fitted and skin revealing. Despite the cliché 'African slave' references, like chains with handcuffs and lions and the desert like setting, the video does not represent a stereotyped black woman, however the stage setting with the African dancers is fitting her identity to represent herself as Afro-American woman. The couture clothing gives her a distant role of the surrounding and it seems to state that the way to 'white-women-couture is open for successful people.

In another music video *Partition* Beyoncé is fully represented as a sexual woman. Again she wears different outfits. One of them makes her body appear like a piece of

⁴⁸In this dress the singer looks like a powerful women, controlling lions, breaking free from chains (in another shot, dressed in Riccardo Tisci), dancing with her background dancers in a desert like surrounding. Beyoncé's stylist Ty Hunter claimed that the dress is part of the singers personal closet.
<http://style.mtv.com/2011/05/19/beyonce-run-the-world-girls-stylist/> 21-5-2015.

jewelry, dressed in nothing more than a head garment, bra and thong, the lightning and reflection of the image on a smooth surface accentuate her body shapes (fig.3).



Figure 3 Beyoncé, *Partition*, 2014. Music Video Still.

The theme of the *Partition* video is sexuality and how sex empowers women. It is a step further than choosing to be ok with women who showcase their bodies; it is about women who realize they can use their body to empower a message. In a way the outfit in this image reflects Josephine Baker, which could have been the original intention of the stylist which becomes obvious by comparing two images of the singers. In the photograph by Huene Josephine Baker is holding on to a serpent dress, made popular in the theater, movies and inseparable from the fashion of the mid-twenties and early thirties (fig.4). Her body is decorated with luxury jewelry. Both Beyoncé and Baker wear Couture. They are both presented as exotic and fulfill the clichés of exotic eroticism controlled by the male gaze. The reflection in the image of Beyoncé on the smooth surface make the eroticism stronger. Both women are well aware of being submitted to the viewers gaze.



Figure 4 George Hoying- Huene, *Josephine Baker*, 1927. Huene Estate Archives.

The association with Josephine Baker might be seen as cliché and a throw back, but it just confirms how strong the stereotypes live on. Beyoncé got criticized for her song, not least for the lyrics. In one part of the lyrics of the song *Partition* Beyoncé refers to the Lewinsky affair between president Bill Clinton and trainee Monica Lewinsky.⁴⁹ And because a whisper in French interrupt the song saying "Do you like sex? Sex. I mean, the physical activity. Coitus. Do you like it? You're not interested in sex? Men think that feminists hate sex, but it's a very stimulating and natural activity that women love".⁵⁰

By the lyrics Beyoncé only confirms the image that women must like sex. Of course she is representing herself as independent, strong and feminist, but she falls in the trap of defining female sexuality by the male standard.

Beyoncé received criticism for lowering herself to this fixed standard, and by reducing herself to a lust object there are people who disrespect her. At the same time icons like Beyoncé use their sexual power to speak out for the right of women to be sexy as they wish. It is a complicated issue, because on one side a woman can be sexy and choose to use

⁴⁹ "He Monica Lewinskyed all on my Gown".

⁵⁰ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pZ12_E5R3qc 21-5-2015.

her sexiness as she likes. Because the third wave feminists believe that women can be sexy and feminist, but in this case it is not really a choice. It seems like singers as Beyoncé have to exploit their sexuality to be successful. Therefore Beyoncé does admit herself to the cultural tradition in which the black women are seen as erotic.

A third video shows how the play with gender and sexuality can be shaped by dressing up in a masculine way. In the video *Haunted* Beyoncé wears a tight cut suit (fig.5).⁵¹ Her hair is glued to her skull. We look through her gaze to all the strange characters inhabiting a mansion. As stated in different media the video is inspired on Madonna's *Erotica* and *Justify my love*.⁵² In this video Beyoncé represents the other fashion cliché, here she is not the 'feminine femme fatale', but the 'masculine dressed power women'.

The question here is if Beyoncé's dress refers to masculinity, does that mean that we are still looking with a male gaze? However putting on a suit, doesn't turn Beyoncé into a Marlene Dietrich, it does reflect on that. The female suit became a regular part of the wardrobe of working women, but in this frame it confirms the cliché of a women in a suit. As Evans and Thornton stated, the masculine wardrobe is based on masculinity. Beyoncé is a woman with different identities that are reflected in her videos and are strongly built on the two archetypes of representing women in fashion.



Figure 5 Beyoncé, *Haunted*, 2014. Music video still.

⁵¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K4r4lySgLE> 21-5-2015.

⁵² <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-2523034/Beyonce-pays-tribute-Madonna-new-Haunted-video.html> 21-5-2015.

Beyoncé does set a high standard as a role model. She is the beauty ideal for Afro-Americans, with her perfect round shapes and curly hair she raise the bar. It is good that the white ideal is no longer fully controlling the world of fashion, however colored models are rare, there are more and more actresses and singers to take the lead. However they do follow the same clichés as white women do. The choices that are made are still founded in the male gaze as shown by comparing Josephine Baker and Beyoncé. The frame of female sexuality as presented by Evans and Thornton.

There is a possible escape from falling back into fashion clichés. As counterpart to the feminism search on how to deal with sexuality and beauty ideals I will present the work of Björk.

Björk also created a very specific identity for herself. By having access to the newest fashion designs and often collaborating with artist such as Bernhard Willhelm. The first video I want to analyze is *Moon* where Björk wears Iris van Herpen (fig. 6).



Figure 6 Björk, wearing Iris van Herpen *Synthesia* fall/winter 2010 shot by Inez Vinoodh. *Moon* album cover.

The *Moon* video shows Björk in a close up, singing and playing the belt around her waist.⁵³ The belt is part of the dress. She plays the strings on the rhythm of the tackling sound in the music. She is in her own world, the dress becomes part of her body. It does not show her body shape. The gold harp-belted piece is part of Iris van Herpen's *Synthesia* collection.⁵⁴ The dress is made with the technique of lasercut in reinforced leather with foil accents (fig.7).

⁵³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kgm1zi0135E> 21-5-2015.

⁵⁴ <http://thecreatorsproject.vice.com/blog/dressing-bj%C3%B6rk-meet-fashion-designer-iris-van-herpen> 21-5-2015.



Figure 7 Iris van Herpen *Synesthesia* fall/winter 2010. Catwalk shot by irisvanherpen.com.

The collection was originally inspired by the condition of *Synesthesia* in which people hear color and see sound, while Björk's album *Biophilia* is about the relation between music and biology. Already on the catwalk this dress is a piece by itself. The dress could vaguely remind us of 1920's flapper dresses, but at the same time the hard surface of the leather it also refers to an armor.⁵⁵ In the music video the surface of the dress seems to be moving and it looks very natural.

The designer Iris van Herpen states "For my *Synesthesia* collection I used a variety of leathers with special treatments to them, like gold foils, laser-cuts and lacquer impregnations. I tried to create materials that were strong, but very sensitive at the same time, which trigger your senses with reflection, movement/vibration, and the sounds they make."⁵⁶ This statement is interesting, because it means the dress should interact with the person who wears it in a way that normal tissue can't do. The concept behind that dress makes it an interesting piece. In the music video Björk also wears a gigantic orange wig. Her face is painted white with dark circles around the eyes. The styling of her hair and make-up are not following a beauty ideal. It is a very sensitive representation of Björk as an artist, the dress focus on her ability to make music and it represents her as an artist. It does not follow the male gaze or represent her as a sexy woman. Björk has a very different approach to her identity than Beyoncé.

⁵⁵ <http://www.irisvanherpen.com/haute-couture#synesthesia> 21-5-2015.

⁵⁶ <http://thecreatorsproject.vice.com/blog/dressing-bj%C3%B6rk-meet-fashion-designer-iris-van-herpen> 21-5-2015.

In the second video Björk to represent her Icelandic identity. In *Who is it?* Björk is dressed in an Alexander McQueen dress, made out of bells (fig.8).⁵⁷



Figure 8 Björk, *Who is it?* Wearing Alexander McQueen, 2004. Music video still.

The bells introduce the song, again the music and the clothes are in sync. And again we don't see her body shape. The dress looks too big for her, it makes her look young, like a girl that tries on her mother's dress. The bells and the childlike dancing to a dark background give a strange atmosphere, that has a melancholic feeling, of a past time of happiness and protection. The dress forms a harness and a reminder of her youth. Around her there are children dancing dressed in bells. This video is filmed on Iceland, in one shot she has two Husky dogs on a leash.

On the first view this video seems to tell something about the artist's childhood, as she dances in a bell dress like a child in her native country. The Husky dogs are typical for Northern countries. However the dance movements in combination with a dress that makes sound when someone jumps up and down and the complex braided hair makes her look like she is part of a tribe. It reminds me of the African dancers who decorate their bodies with shells. Björk seems to form her own tribe and the dress is a part of their identity.

Björk is a very different artist than Beyoncé. Both have access to the high designer fashion, but they use the clothes in a very different way to establish an identity. Beyoncé represent a fetish for high class designs, using her sexuality and beauty she represents an ideal woman. Björk represents otherness, she is different from Western artists and her work reflects her Icelandic identity. Shana Goldin-Perschbacher wrote an article on this topic 'Icelandic Nationalism, Difference Feminism, and Björk's Maternal Aesthetic' in 2014. In the article she analyzes visual representations of the artist, as well as the meaning of her lyrics,

⁵⁷ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H_AivhgknZU 21-5-2015.

and the self-representation of Björk in the context of feminism and Icelandic Nationalism. She describes how journalists refer to Björk's emotions by describing them as "volcanic" and calling her appearance "Viking".⁵⁸ Goldin-Perschbacher makes an interesting analysis of how Björk influences her audience by using her non-stereotype identity: "By involving listeners in the critique, she invites her audience to identify with her denaturalizing performances rather than see her artistic persona(e) as "other." Understanding this aesthetic helps contextualize her gender performances, which resist normative sexualized feminine stereotypes yet also thoughtfully embody select female archetypes, playing on feminist perspectives ranging from equality to difference and occasionally even essentialism".⁵⁹ Goldin-Perschbacher states that Björk challenges the Western asexual mother type by her performances. Both in her music and in her self-representation. As examples Goldin-Perschbacher mentions Björk's red carpet appearance at the *Annual Academy Awards* in 2001. Dressed in a swan gown, designed by Marjan Pejorskki, Björk dropped an egg on her feet.⁶⁰ The second example is Björk's performance at the Athens 2004 Olympic Games, wearing a huge gown that symbolized the 'Mother Sea'. In both performances Björk refers to motherhood and fertility. Shortly after she released her album *Medúlla* which is completely vocal and Björk stated in an interview with *Rolling Stone's* Jenny Eliscu that for her this related to her pregnancy.⁶¹

It is interesting to understand how Björk relates her later work to her female identity as a mother, as being connected to nature. And by doing so she created an identity that is not controlled by the masculine perspective on a female's sexuality. Björk refers to her sexuality in relation to fertility and the natural capability of women to carry a child, and questions the relation of women to their bodies. Björk escapes the division set by Evans and Thornton. She does not use her sexuality, she does not stereotype herself as a power woman or a feminine type that wears Laura Ashley dresses. Her identity is based on the property of the female body and essentialism.

The first video about the moon can be seen as gendered, it is a feminine symbol, and relatable to the theme of cycles and fertility, Björk represent herself as a mother. The second video I discussed is about childhood and strongly express Björk's Icelandic identity.

⁵⁸ Goldin-Perschbacher, p. 48.

⁵⁹ Goldin-Perschbacher, p. 49.

⁶⁰ Goldin-Perschbacher, p. 53.

⁶¹ Goldin-Perschbacher, p. 62.

As a last example I want to refer to the video the video *Hunter* Björk does not refer to the ideal women. In this video Björk is genderless. Her avatar changes in an animal and it is about the animalistic side of humanity (fig. 9).⁶²

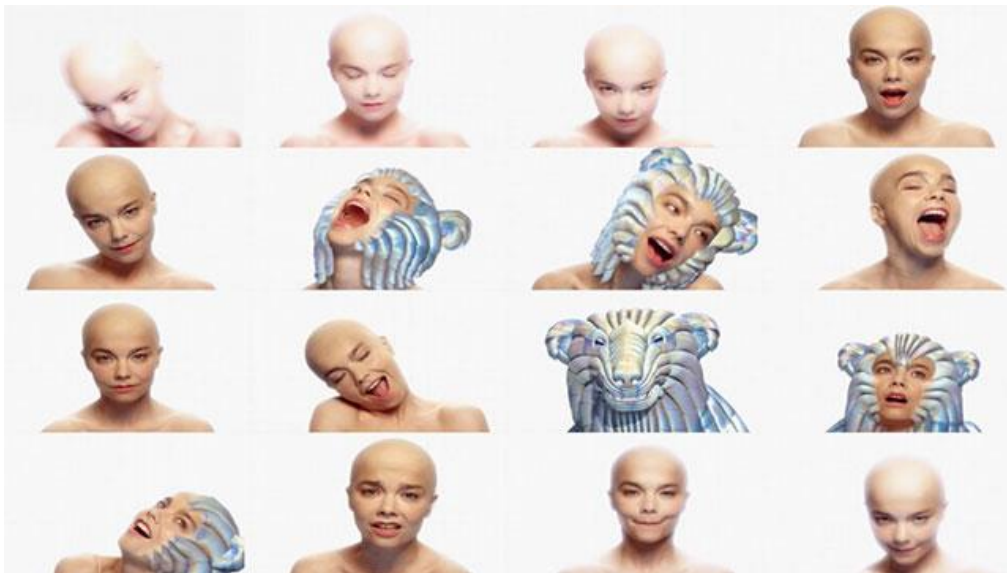


Figure 9 Björk, *Hunter*, 1997. Music video still.

Both cases show how women in popular culture are searching how to represent themselves. Beyoncé refers to cliché stereotypes but uses her 'feminist discourse' to defend her choice and to show that (black) women can choose who they want to be, however her act is not convincing as she simply follows the 'rules' of a male dominated view on sexuality to be successful. It seems like using her sexuality was needed to have success. And by admitting herself to this role means she commits to the male gaze. The shocked response on some of her performances only show that we return to a conservative time. Björk represents an way out, if you free yourself of the beauty ideal and choose to not expose yourself in a sexual way. Her self-representation fits the theory of Evans and Thornton, that women can construct an identity outside the patriarchy surrounding. It is possible to get away from the binary opposition, where femininity is based on masculinity.⁶³ Björk shows that there is an escape from stereotypes of and success does not need to be based on fitting the male gaze. She does not use her sexuality, but rather frees herself from the standards created by the (masculine) society. She uses her fame and work to reposition the role of the

⁶² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A8A9e4Lp0N0> 21-5-2015.

⁶³ Evans, Thornton, p. 58.

women in society, she redefines what it means to be a women, to be a mother in relation to her own body, without male involvement.

Chapter II.III Case Study TV Series USA/Scandinavia

As a second case study I will focus on a leading role for a black actress and a white actress in TV series to understand how the creators and stylist work together to design a leading female role on the screen. I will analyze two TV series to compare the representation of two leading female characters. I think it is interesting to include TV series, because in the past years there is an amazing growth in leading female characters; think of *Homeland*, *Borgen* and *Forbrydelsen*. Women are no longer excluded from crime- and political series. Again I will analyze a black and white role. Recently, there are many TV series with a leading role for a black female in parts that seem to break the stereotype of black women on TV. She is very feminine and strong. We can see similar roles in *Scandal*, *Suits* and *How to Get away with Murder*. In all cases, a black female lawyer is high on the scale of authority. As a counterpart, I want to analyze is *Bron/Broen* in which a white actress plays a very unfeminine role. Both women are dressed in a very different way and the styling of their clothes, cars, and surroundings are interesting.

More specifically I will look at Kerry Washington's role as Olivia Pope in *Scandal* (USA), Viola Davis as Annalise Keating in *How to get away with Murder* (USA) and Gina Torres as Jessica Paerson in *Suits* (USA) to Sofia Helin as Saga Norén in *Bron/Broen* (Norway/DK), Sofie Grabol as Sarah Lund in *The Killing* (Norway/DK) and Sidse Babett Knudsen as Birgitte Nyborg in *Borgen* (DK). The focus will be on the way they represent a female type. All of them play a leading female role, the shows involve crime and politics but the styling of the characters couldn't be more different. They represent different types of contemporary women.

Of course the two types of women are very different, simply because they have another kind of job. The outfits have to meet with the practical needs. Working at a high classified law firm requires another outfit than working outside. Still, there is a lot to say for the choice of outfits. Saga could simple wear a jeans and a jacket, but we never see her without her signature leather pants. Olivia Pope seems to wear a lot of white and always at any time avoids animal prints, because that will be cliché and lower her status in the 'white

world'. Olivia Pope is a fascinating character, she is a problem solver and has an affair with the president of the USA. She helps people in trouble, but also hides their mistakes and secrets. She leads a team and works with rich clients. Her closet is built up with business suits, wool coats, gala dresses, classy sportswear and very chic loungewear. It is striking how often she is dressed in white, camel and shades of grey (fig.10). Often, Olivia is dressed in high quality brands, such as Burberry and Ferragamo, but there are many brands who copy these styles, which makes them accessible for everyone.



Figure 10 Olivia Pope *Scandal*, wearing diverse designer coats, 2014. Episode stills.

Olivia is always dressed very classical, with minimal shapes and if there is a print, then it will be a very minimalistic one. The clothes are chosen to soften her personality and to make her stand out on the screen. She is dressed for success. In a way she represents the black ideal for business women. Her clothing does fit in the white standard and is even slightly conservative. At the same time she is always better dressed than the other characters and the signature white make her very distinguished. The white of her clothes distracts from the blackness of her skin. This very idealistic representation of a black women is not cliché because she is no longer the 'exotic women'.

At the same time the question of race is still complicated. Lisa Guerro researched the role of Michelle Obama as the first black First Lady. In her article '(M)Other- in- chief' published in 2013 she explains her view on the battle between being feminine, feminist and black in a traditional white role. An interesting quote is:

"For Michelle Obama, the simultaneous containment of blackness and womanhood potentially creates in her a kind of modern day slave, where the master is the message. She

isn't really to be seen or heard as herself per se, like the First Ladies before her, but additionally, she must make sure to not be seen or heard as a *black women*, or she risks distracting people away from the message. So not only must she strive, as all First Ladies have had to do, to be feminine, but not *feminist*, she must also strive to be race less even as she appears black since the role of First Lady has never been forced to be understood through the lens of race as the whiteness of its character has long been naturalized..[.]. being 'feminine 'and being 'feminist 'remain polar opposites in the larger national imagination."⁶⁴

This quote about Michelle Obama, which hints to the topic of racism, is certainly adaptable to the black roles of women in TV series in general. And that is exactly why specific scenes in *How to get away with Murder* are important, the moments where main character Annalise Keating takes off her wig (fig. 11). In these moments we are reminded of her identity as a black woman, because of her natural hair. And we realize that she or they are adapting to the white Western ideal of white people's hair, by wearing wigs.



Figure 11 Annalise Keating *How to get away with Murder*, 2014 . Episode still.

This gives a stronger representation of (black) women, because it unmasks the personage from the white ideal of perfection. Short Afro hair, must be masked with white-people styled wigs to fit the ideal of successful women.

In *Suits* the dresses of office workers are cheerful, everyone is well dressed, men included. The boss of the law firm is a woman called Jessica Pearson. The styling of her

⁶⁴ Guerro, p. 70.

closet is very impressive. All the dresses that are shown are interesting designs on itself and come in many colors. When she is dressed in black, the piece has always special detailing or an interesting cut. The styling of the character is interesting. Again female colors and materials are used to soften the character (fig. 12) however Jessica is also dressed in tight cut black jackets. She often wears big pieces of jewelry and is very feminine. In this show the male and female characters are the most equal and so is their dressing, because it are not only the women who wear tight suits. At the same time, some of Jessica's suits are made of typical male fabrics, which shows how the traditional connotation for fabrics is loosening and women's fashion is no longer restricted to soft and feminine fabrics.



Figure 12 Jessica Pearson *Suits* wearing Roksanda Ilinci, 2014. Slate images.

The costume designer Jolie Andreatta is responsible for the outfits of the characters on *Suits*. She states how she matches the clothes with the characters' personalities and the mood of the episodes. The clothes are adapted to fit the body types. The sculptural shapes of the clothes she wears represent her power.⁶⁵ Not only the clothes match the characters, but also their offices. The design of Jessica's office is very different than that of her male colleagues.

Olivia is dressed the most conservative. We are not aware of her blackness, except for the fact that white is a very powerful color on her skin. Annelise is represented as an Afro-American women, she is more daring in her outfits, wearing leather and big (ethnic)

⁶⁵http://www.slate.com/blogs/browbeat/2014/06/11/suits_season_4_costume_designer_jolie_andreatta_explains_how_they_choose.html 3-8-2015.

jewelry pieces and therefore finds a balance between the white and black way of dressing. Jessica is interesting, because she dresses as well as her male colleagues and wears very high-end and modern garments with dramatic draping and folds. Out of the three she is the most fashionable and modern. She does not try to dress conservatively to meet with the standard of white women. The balance between feminine and masculine fabrics, pastel and hard colors show an identity that is balancing between male and female. The focus is less on race than with Olivia and Annalise, because her clothing is very contemporary and rarely classic or conservative in style, there is always a twist that makes it balance in between feminine and masculine. She is dressed in what I consider to be the new 'power' dressing, in which there is room for softness and a female silhouette.

It is clear how powerful the styling is of strong leading women in American TV Series. It is interesting to compare those with three Scandinavian cases. The character of Saga Norén on Bron/Broen is interesting. Saga is a very intelligent, but also introvert police inspector who basically lives to work and this is reflected in her dressing and her surroundings. Where Jessica has a tasteful and expensive office, Saga has a classic car and a sober house. The design of everything around the characters is matching with their lifestyle. In season one and two we don't see Saga in anything else, but her leather pants (fig.13). She hardly takes showers, but does have casual sex, whenever she gets a call she puts her leather pants straight on and goes to the office. She also occasionally changes t-shirt in the office, which is very confusing to the other characters. Therefore Saga is again an example of liberal thinking, free sex, and she does not seem to care about make-up or any beauty products or hygiene in general.



Figure 13 Saga Norén and the 1977 Porsche 911 *Bron/Broen*, 2014. Nordic Noir images.

The woolen green overcoat and the brown vest are basically her office wear. Of course she wears these in the field, but that is no argument because other female characters in the series do police work with make-up on. The sober clothes tell something about her personality, the masculinity of the clothes reflect her non- flirtatious personality. Saga, other than for instance Jessica, deals with female power in another way. Saga relies on her intelligence, she does not have to interact with a rich client and she does not have to win respect of her co-worker by looking professional.

A comparable situation we can find by the character of Sarah Lund in *The Killing*. Sarah always wears the same kind of pullover (fig. 14).



Figure 14 Sarah Lund *The Killing* in Gudrun and Gudrun, 2012. Daily Mail images.

Sarah is similar to Saga, as a divorced mother, living with her mother she spends most time at work and does not care for fashion. The sweater seems simply to fit her character and as the weather is cold there it looks realistic. But there is more going on. This specific sweater is from the brand Gudrun & Gudrun, hand knitted in the Faroe Islands as their website proudly states.⁶⁶ Gudrun and Gudrun released a line of knitwear pieces that appear in the TV series. For 300 Euro you can dress like Sarah.⁶⁷ It is part of the Scandinavian culture to wear this kind of sweater, and the TV series reflect and promote their culture. Both Saga and Sarah do not follow a beauty ideal and behave 'masculine'. They are very different than the previously discussed roles of the black women in the American TV series. More comparable to the USA leading women characters will be Birgitte

⁶⁶ <http://www.gudrungudrun.com/> 21-5-2015.

⁶⁷ <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-2232338/Theyll-make-Killing-Scandinavian-knitwear-company-releases-new-jumper-designs-worn-unlikely-style-icon-Sarah-Lund-cult-detective-drama.html> 3-8-2015.

Nyborg on *Borgen*. Birgitte is a politician who becomes the prime minister of Denmark. She wears suits and beautiful scarf's and coats. In this series we see a lot of Scandinavian design too. Watching all those Scandinavian series you would expect to find houses full of trendsetting design over there.

Saga and Sarah are refreshing, they do not seem to follow the beauty ideal. If you google the actresses and you see them styled differently, you realize that they have been made 'less glamorous' for the series. They are made more 'realistic' for the TV series. When they appear in interviews and events they are styled perfectly and then again they represent a beauty standard that is hard to achieve in daily life. It is an almost humoristic twist that they are styled down to represent women who have a tough job in daily life. In my opinion a big part of the female population looks more like their characters in the TV show than like the cleaned up version of themselves represented in glamorous events. But of course, most women also would dress up and look the best they can for a TV appearance.

Still it is interesting to look more closely to the styling of Birgitte. At the beginning of the series she is married and mother to two children. In the end her family breaks up. In one of her first TV appearances Birgitte is dressed very feminine (fig. 15) and her décolleté is quite revealing.



Figure 15 Birgitte Nyborg *Borgen*, 2010. Episode still.

During her race to become prime minister her clothes become more professionalized and fancy. She does not have a perfect size and she is not under thirty-five. This makes her interesting. Recently, there seems more space in TV land for mature and powerful women. In those examples we can see how women who work in an office dress all very feminine and

powerful. While the two women who work at the police act more masculine. Does this mean women can be women in offices, but in more traditional masculine dominated fields they should be one of the guys? It seems to go for the lead characters of Saga and Sarah, but at the same time the other female characters on their series are dressed very feminine.

Fashion has a front running role and I think changing beauty ideals and new ideas in the society run at the same time with the new ideals and inspirations of designers. This case study showcase that independent artists like Björk can break with the traditional roles, but in our society women fit to the norm of their surroundings as is showcased in TV series. It is interesting that there are differences between the different surroundings influence the freedom of styling on the screen. However it is also apparent that there is still a big difference in the styling of black and white women. The quote on Michelle Obama refers to the problem of black women. And by comparing the Scandinavian actresses to the Afro-American actresses it becomes apparent that stylist represent black women in a leading role dressed more conservatively than white actresses. It seems to offer a solution to take distance of the idea of the black exotic women, who's sexuality has long be seen as an obscenity. Stylists show that the identity of the black women should be changed and by adapting the black identity to the white ideal they show how black women can fulfill a leading role. The problem is that adapting the black identity to the white ideal also masks the black identity of the women. Therefore a balance should be found.

The Scandinavian TV series show how different women are represented there than in the USA, there is more equality, working women do not need to be represented as sexy and strong to be accepted as role models.

Chapter III.I Daily Fashion and Popular Culture

It is very interesting to see how this reflects back on daily fashion, and since we are living in a consumption society it might not come as a surprise that people want to consume the TV styling. In this paragraph I will explain how this mechanism works. Considering not all of us have access to high class design. A new and interesting dimension is the role of the fashion blogger. Fans of TV series and stylists create blogs to find out where you can buy the clothes worn in the TV shows and give tips about 'cheaper' options. The language used is very inspiring to every young woman who just wants to be as her favorite TV character, but does

not have the funds to access the exclusive fashion “For a style similar to the designer Michael Kors dress, slip into the Adrianna Papell Lace Applique Crepe Sheath. (\$138, Nordstrom.com)” (fig. 16).⁶⁸ For people who have access to high priced and exclusive fashion there are websites like the ‘Worn on TV website’ that find the exact garment, and where to get it. And not only high fashion and popular costume drama’s as *Mad Men* are included, we can also find the ‘geek’ wardrobe of *The Big Bang Theory*. As mentioned before, young people use blogs to create their own style and identity. This questions the relation between the fashion designer and the blogger. Who has the authority on how women should dress?



Figure 16 Olivia Pope *Scandal* in Michael Kors with a cheaper option of Adrianna Papell, 2014. Listwns.com.

The online shops make clothes accessible, the TV series represent a certain kind of character that you can identify with. Consuming true TV series is different than simply choosing a sweater or dress in a catalogue. The clothing is represented in a certain context. It feels like buying a dress similar to any powerful women in TV series, is buying a piece of success. The original connotation of the piece, designed by a fashion designer is replaced by the identity given to the garment in the TV show. The pieces that are ‘tracked down’ as an exact match are sold out within hours. The same happens when Princess Catherine or Michelle Obama publicly appear with a new garment or jewelry piece.

⁶⁸ <http://www.listwns.com/group/olivia-pope-wardrobe-and-where-to-buy-1222> 21-5-2015.

Dress for success has got a new meaning. And women can identify with any role model they want, the silent and smart girl, the leading woman, or a more geeky and introvert character. Does this mean we are free? Not really. Those women are still an idealization of who we can be. There is a liberty to choose a style, but at the same time the risk to be out of style, is bigger.

Popular culture does seem to influence our taste in fashion and because of the accessibility I do think the women on TV did become role models for anyone who wants to find a way to represent their identity. At the same time the high end fashion in TV series became reachable and forces women to dress the best they can, this means the pressure is on. If we link this to the Third Wave paradigm we can see that women are not afraid to use their looks to come across more strongly. Unlike the Second Wavers, who still have the reputation to burn bra's and stay away from make-up, third wavers believe in being a women in all senses and use this as an advantage. Women do not dress for men anymore, but for themselves, to showcase their position and success that is the message that all TV shows seem to deliver. Still in advertising we can find a lot of sexism.

If the culture becomes less about looks and more about achieving your potential and showing your leadership capacities like the women in TV series, does that mean equality is near? Or are the women, even in advertisement and series still too 'standard beautiful'?

Chapter IV.1 Advertisement and the Sexual Identity

Women can be free when they follow the beauty ideal, that is the message of advertisement. The same goes for fashion: you have the freedom to choose to be dressed as a powerful women but then you have to follow the trends and make sure all details are right. Michelle M. Lazar published *The right to be beautiful: Postfeminist identity and consumer beauty advertising* in 2013 on how advertisements use the new view of feminism in relation of feminine beauty, researching as she states " the link between the normative practice of beautification with an emancipated identity".⁶⁹ And the freedom to wear anything. Of course, as Lazar comments, the freedom only exists because of beauty restrictions and ideals.⁷⁰ Lazar describes how women are given the promise to be free of

⁶⁹ Lazar, p. 37.

⁷⁰ Lazar, p. 40.

self-restrictions, that hold them back from living freely, such as body fat, an oily skin and body hair.⁷¹ Lazar states how the advertisements base their ideas on women having rights to take actions and make choices.⁷² It is less of a gender issue than Lazar suggests, because the same rules apply for men. It is an actual problem for anyone who wants to follow fashion and become the 'ideal'. But maybe the percentage of ads for women is much higher and therefore raises the pressure for women to look good. It is interesting to analyze a few advertisements to understand more about the problematic relation between people and an 'ideal'.

American Apparel is known for their advertisements, which are full of sexuality. They caused a shock with the publication of one of their latest advertisements. The ad represents a model, a young innocent woman who is naked except for her sportive knee socks. Her nudity is however not the most disturbing factor to the viewer, in the ad under the line "Safe to Say she loves her socks" there are three headshots of the model who seems to be masturbating (fig.17).



Figure 17 American Apparel, 2006. Advertisement.

This add is screaming porn, and it is a young model, we look down on her. This advertisement could give women the idea that they have to follow sexual liberal ideas to fit in with society. Where is the strong successful woman we see in popular culture in this ad? But then we can also approach it from a different angle, why should young women be seen

⁷¹ Lazar, p. 39.

⁷² Lazar, p. 49.

as sexless? Isn't this advertisement just extremely provocative to make a point about the type of girl that would wear this brand clothes- a daring girl who does not want to conform to other peoples image of properness.

The ad is sexualized and that this is typically and misogynic. Male models are also objectified by the world of commerce. I just need two words to make my point clear 'male briefs' or in capitals 'CK'. A good read on this subject is *The Metrosexual. Gender, Sexuality and Sport* by David Coad, who describes how Calvin Klein uses the conventions of Gay-Porn to sell undies and how the metrosexual breaks the rules of the masculine norms.⁷³



Figure 18 Wendelien Daan, HEMA, *Push-up bra*, 2011. Advertisement.

A very interesting advertisement in this perspective is the HEMA push-up bra campaign. In 2011 the Dutch warehouse published two photos of a model wearing a red dress in one shot and a blue dress in the other picture. Both dresses are form fitted and accentuate the chest of the model. The ad says "mega push-up bra, 2 cups extra 20,-" (fig.18). Now there are two things the viewer might notice, first of all the lingerie ad does not present a half nude woman and second of all she does not has D-cup. In the corner of the ad there is a line saying "Andrej Pejic voor HEMA", and for who is unfamiliar with the face of the model, the meaning of the ad might finally become clear. We are looking at a young man wearing a bra, and the bra is so wonderful that even a masculine body can fill the bra, due to the push-up technique. The abri format ad got a lot international attention. The twenty year old model already worked in high fashion for Jean Paul Gaultier and Marc Jacobs, wearing both men's and women's clothes. The readers of the magazine FHM put

⁷³ Coad, p. 110.

the model on the 98th place of most sexy female.⁷⁴ Pejic is the first openly transgender model to be profiled by Vogue in its May 2015 issue.⁷⁵ It shows how high fashion and popular culture are ready to embrace the fading line between the genders. Still, when the sexes dress like the opposite sex they get associated with transsexuals and transgender, but it is becoming clear that there are people who don't choose to be part of one exclusive sex. The metrosexual break the masculine rules, the transsexual redefines femininity. In advertisement this means that there are new challenging possibilities to address the audience. The HEMA ad can be viewed in the perspective of this new tolerance but it is hard to understand the place of the *American Apparel* advertisement. However it is very aesthetic and basic.

Advertisement in general stereotypes, as a sexual object presented for male pleasure. In the field of social studies and art history the theory of the male gaze is used to describe the objectification of women. The advertisement of HEMA shows how the female identity can be used by a male model, and how simple it is to trick people. As recently is also shown by the case of Rachel Dolezal, an American civil rights activist and African studies teacher. Dolezal was the president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and lied about her own racial identity. She darkened her skin and hair to appear as Afro-American. Until June 2015, when her parents published a picture of her as white teenager.⁷⁶ It evoked a discussion if racial identity is based on biology only and if someone can be transracial. In the case of Pejic we accept him as transsexual and transracial might open up possibilities for those who identify with another racial group.

Identity and self-representation became more important over the past few years, because of the involvement of Instagram and Facebook. Feona Attwood refers in her article *Through the Looking Glass? Sexual Agency and Subjectification Online* to how technological communications access offered new forms of cultural production to women, as online blogs, chatrooms and communities. Attwood sees online possibilities for women to "dominant roles in new practices of sexual and bodily display".⁷⁷ She describes how the concept of visibility and celebrity, sexual display and agency changed and how to represent

⁷⁴ <http://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2011/12/13/zelfs-mannen-krijgen-bij-de-hema-een-decollete-bedrijf-strikt-andrej-pejic/> 25-5-2015.

⁷⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andreja_Peji%C4%87 25-5-2015.

⁷⁶ <http://edition.cnn.com/2015/06/12/us/washington-spokane-naacp-rachel-dolezal-identity/index.html> 25-6-2015.

⁷⁷ Attwood, p. 206.

your sexual self.⁷⁸ Attwood researched the female sexual identity by the use of porn websites hosted by women as case study. For instance the websites hosted by Furry Girl, a woman who does not shave and promotes the idea that menstruation can be sexy. Furry Girl represents herself as a unique self. Attwood states that she carries no agency, because she does not objectify herself, but is an individual identity. One of a shameless and proud self-representation that gives in Attwood's words "a new meaning to bodily display and sex commerce".⁷⁹ Attwood refers to Laura Mulvey's theory of the objectification of women, and to Rosalind Gill's theory on the shift from "an external male judging gaze to a self-policing narcissistic gaze" to explain the new role of sexuality in self-representation.⁸⁰ Attwood uses Gill's theory to research what this means for the self-representation of women in new media, because we can be our own author of our online stories. In this vision women are no longer a victim of male objectification. To make her argument stronger Attwood refers to Duits and Van Zoonen who argue that the girls are "capable and responsible agents" and how "self-representation must be understood as a speak act".⁸¹ Attwood adds to this that "looking and being-looked at no longer signify powerlessness" and calls this "a new way of using femininity and making culture".⁸² So basically Attwood states that now women can be in control of their own representation, they have a choice. And if it is their choice to represent themselves sexualized, then they are no longer the objectification of the male gaze. Because as Duits and Van Zoonen stated, the women own the agency of their representation. Her theory could be useful to understand the advertisement of American Apparel. The advertisement of *American Apparel* is not a self-representation as chosen by the model but it does reflect the choices women have today. And by breaking the taboo around female masturbation and sexuality it must not be seen as only an objectification. The female sexuality is very much present in online media and it might frighten people who are afraid of this female liberation. By using Twitter, Facebook and Instagram anyone can write an online biography, using words or just pictures. This did result in the design of the selfie-stick, which shows how important images and self-images became in our contemporary time.

⁷⁸ Attwood, p. 13.

⁷⁹ Attwood, p. 210.

⁸⁰ Attwood, p. 204.

⁸¹ Attwood, p. 205.

⁸² Attwood, p. 212.

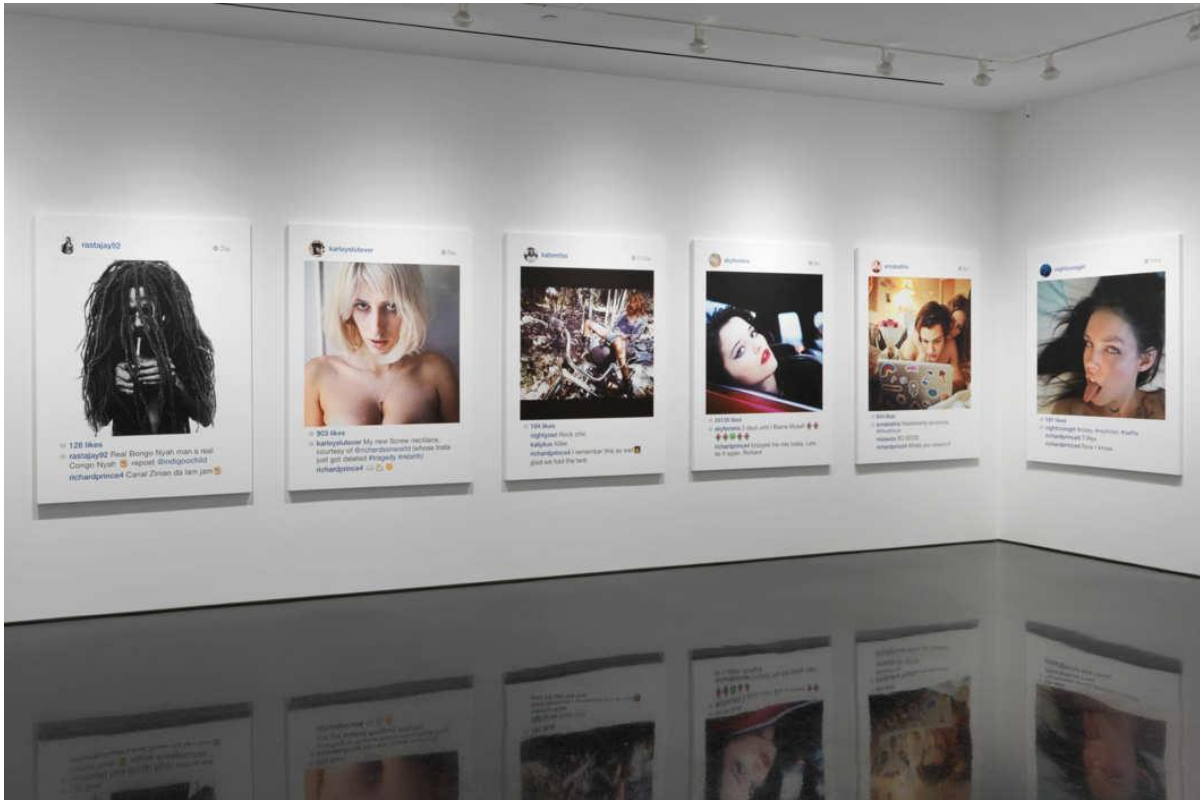


Figure 19 Richard Prince, *New Portrait*, Gagosian Gallery, 2014. Robert McKeever.

But there is a problem around this theory because pictures on social media are used not only to represent yourself, but also to gain the adoration of others. And therefore the sexualisation of the body for both male and female users is represented by the traditional notion of the male gaze. At the same time the authors are no longer exclusive male, so the representation of women must be influenced by the big number of female users. Shelly Budgeon states in her article *The contradictions of successful femininity* in 2013 how women achieved an autonomous subject position, because they defied their own identities, independent of relations to others. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim called this a shift from 'living for others' to 'living a life of one's own' giving women the possibility of self-invention.⁸³ It declares the success of women, but it also stresses the gender roles. Budgeon states that it is troubling for women to move between the traditional femininity and masculinity, they must exercise a traditional feminine mode, while exhibiting individual agency previously associated with masculinity.⁸⁴ This declares why women feel the need to represent themselves as individuals and call out for attention on social media. Shaping their own

⁸³ Budgeon, p. 284.

⁸⁴ Budgeon, p. 285.

individual identities, rather than admitting themselves to the mainstream ideals, based on the likes of women following them on social media. It is in line with the theory presented by Attwood in which women own their own sexuality, by individualizing themselves and not following the male ideal by being in control. This theory only works if women break with the standard beauty ideal.

Artist Richard Prince sold stolen Instagram photos that he printed on canvases and the exposition of the work shows how people represent themselves, including the reactions of followers. The work shows a very diverse self-representation in which users characterize themselves (fig.19). The Instagram culture and the individualization in the porn industry by women shows how this generation is in search of a sexual-self. Individuality became a pointer in our culture.

This is visible on social media where people try to create new styles and inspire followers. The need to be unique in style or to follow an ideal is a theme in the project *Exactitudes* by Ari Versluis en Ellie Uyttenbroek (fig. 20).⁸⁵



Figure 20 Ari Versluis en Ellie Uyttenbroek, *Exactitudes 135. Capuccio Girls Milano*, 2011. Exactitudes.com.

For their project Versluis and Uyttenbroek photographed people who dress alike, and who have the same attitude. It is no coincidence that we find people who are similarly dressed and have the same kind of attitude towards life. All people have a style (even the non-stylish ones who claim to not care about fashion belong to a group) and this style is provided by the world of fashion. We might think that we chose how to dress and what to

⁸⁵ <http://www.exactitudes.com/index.php?/series/detail/135> 20-5-2015.

wear, but actually this diversity of styles is structured by our consumption society.

Chapter IV.II The Identity of Designs : Feminism

Designers are looking for new ways to approach today's women. Now, there are also products which are relatable to the break with one beauty ideal. We are in an era where our lifestyles are re-designed and strongly influenced by not just fashion but also technology and new ideas about sex-orientated education. For example the Lammily Doll, that was designed to break with the idea of a perfect unrealistic body (fig. 21).



Figure 21 Lammily Doll, 2014. Lammily.com.

This doll is designed and launched with the purpose to give girls a better self-image. It should give young girls the feeling that it is fine to look like a 'normal' woman as an alternative to Barbie. The doll comes with stickers of pimples, cellulite, freckles, acne, blushing, scars etc.⁸⁶ More dolls will be available in the future. And this is a trend we can also see in advertising. Sloggi, Dove and other brands are recently using more voluptuous models, representing the normal women, instead of using skinny models to represent different beauty ideals.

⁸⁶ <http://lammily.com/product/lammily-marks/> 21-5-2015.

Chapter IV.III The Identity of Designs : Blurring gender

It seems like gender differences are becoming smaller in the Western society when it gets down to appearance. There are more and more unisex possibilities, such as the boyfriend jeans for women and tight low cut shirts for men. In daily life the fashion lines are blurring. Still they keep their connotations. Men can use beauty products and the 'hipster' seems as conscious about his looks as his female style buddies. The magic words for the products they feel attracted too are *authentic* and *unique*. And preferably *green* and *locally* produced.

The hipster can be seen as the ideal unisex style. Both men and women wear a bun on their head, nerdy glasses, bow ties, funny prints and whatever is not mainstream (and then, of course, becomes mainstream). They borrow style elements from each other and make them genderless. Still some of their garments are specifically male or female by connotation. And then of course to outbalance the sexes the males all started to grow beards. Nevertheless, both sexes do approach their bodies and style in a similar way. They look like they do not care how they look, which takes a lot of effort.

However the style might be unisex, the approach of big brands is to stereotype this movement and categorize the clothing to males or females. And to brand remakes of vintage pieces as hipster style. The style women and men use to represent themselves carries the same message, being hipster means being creative and authentic. However the style of the clothes might be unisex and androgynous, still different behavior is expected from men and women.



Figure 22 Stromae, *Tous Les Mêmes*, 2013. Single cover.

To illustrate this point I would like to introduce a music video once more. In Stromae's *Tous Les Mêmes* the singer plays both a male and female character. His hair is braided on one side and trimmed on the other. As his male character he drinks milk from the carton, picks his nose and acts rude. As his female character he moves more elegant and applies make-up. But of course he shows both identities at once, however he is a man (fig.22).

In fashion the blurring between male and female cloth is already ongoing since the eighties, with the introduction of the male skirt by Jean Paul Gaultier in 1985. The beloved designer called *Enfant Terrible* by the press is responsible for breaking rule after rule and reversing existing codes. Also in his recent menswear collection this spirit is present, by designing a floral male jumpsuit Gaultier adapts a feminine piece to a male model (fig.23). For his Haute Couture line and collaborations with movie directors Gaultier even designed more over the top outfits including a skin colored dress with pubic hair and breasts for Pedro Almodovar's *Kika* (fig.24).



Figure 23 Jean Paul Gaultier, Spring RTW 2014. Lookbook image. Style.com.

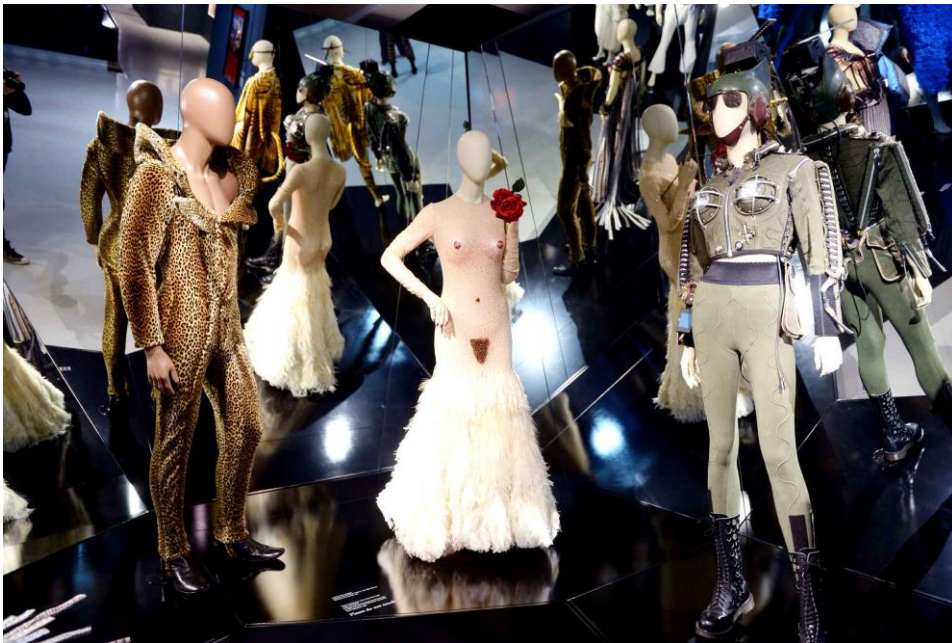


Figure 24 Jean Paul Gaultier, Costume Almodovar's *Kika* and *The Fifth Element* by Besson, Barbican London, 2014.



Figure 25 Rei Kawakubo, *Comme des Garçons*, Fall RTW 2006. Style.com.

Gaultier is not the only designer who likes break the gender codes in his playful designs. Another interesting collection is the Fall Ready-to-wear collection of 2006 by *Comme des Garçons* (fig.25). In this collection the female silhouette is mixed with masculine suits, inspired by the Venetian carnival. Rei Kawakubo merges the male and female identity by using a mix of materials and style elements. This collection shows how fashion clichés and the traditional notion of materials can be used and twisted by making unusual combinations.

Chapter V.I: Biocouture, Interfaces and Technology

Designers who dare to use different materials and approaches to the human body are interesting, because they question the meaning of fashion, which is always changing. Recently designers start to integrate technology into fashion. In the literature the definition of fashionable wearable is called to be “designed garments, accessories or jewelry that combine aesthetics and style with functional technology”.⁸⁷ There has been Hussein Chalayan’s Remote Control Dress already in 2000.⁸⁸

An interesting book on this topic is *Functional Aesthetics* by Sabine Seymour who

⁸⁷ Seymour, p. 10.

⁸⁸ Seymour, p. 10.

sees the rise of technologic fashion from the need to merge virtual and physical spaces.⁸⁹ The book gives a selection of fashion and accessory designs that are related to technology, but not every collection in the book is evaluated from a critical viewpoint and it is not always clear why a certain work is chosen. The author states that different technics are used to enhance fashion, such as engineering, digital technology, biotechnology, nanotechnology, textile technology and so on.⁹⁰ Seymour places the birth of the rise of technical fashion with the electronic dress by Atsuko Tanaska in 1956. Seymour also names the birth of the term cyborg in 1960 and recalls the visionary fashion in films by Stanley Kubrick.⁹¹

Seymour states how technical wearables are already used in sportswear and medical care. But in fashion the aesthetics are also important and give meaning to self-expression. I think the need for technology is born out of our hunger to self representation, both online and in our daily life.

Biotextile, biocouture and technical wearables as these are completely new. It is interesting to understand what this means for the identity of the women who wear the design, because the garments made of new material don't stereotype her identity and are also not typically tissues that would be used for a male jacket or decorated with a female pattern. You don't have to use them to 'change' the meaning of that material. Simply, because the material does not have a meaning or connotation in that sense.

In the final part of this thesis four design project will be introduced, in which the technical wearable's will change the focus from the identity of the wearer to the new abilities the wearer gets dressed in the garment. The first one 'Air' by Lauren Bowker, who is part of the *UNSEEN collective*, is a biodesigned shield that reacts on the natural elements (fig.26). It is interesting to understand what this means for the identity of the women who wear the design, because it does not dress the woman but merges her identity with the environment. The Airshield reacts to wind and is changeable, therefore has an association with animals like the chameleon that also adapts to its natural habitat. Because her identity is controlled by external influences and not by her own it is like her true identity is hidden. However this design is mostly speculative about the relation between the wearer and the airshield itself. In the end the women will still be 'categorized' by the styling of her other

⁸⁹ Seymour. P. 12.

⁹⁰ Seymour p. 13.

⁹¹ Seymour, p. 15.

clothes and her hair and make-up.



Figure 26 Lauren Bowker, *Air*, London 2014. Seetheunseen.co.uk.

The experimental Airshield is interesting of because of its material aspect that does not give away the wearer as easy as more traditional clothes do. It is fascinating how technology is used to place back the wearer in a natural environment. This Airshield gives the wearer animalistic features and allows the wearer to merge with nature. It reflects on the position of humankind in the world that is strongly influenced by our progress in technology. Yet wants to connect technology with nature.

Technology wearables and biocouture seem to influence our social relations. By focusing more on the relation to our body, or our body to the natural environment, we focus less on traditional connotations. Of course those wearables are not accessible to everybody and therefore owning a piece would still only be accessible to people with the financial possibilities. Still it does influence our thinking on social relations, because it shows how people become conscious of their bodies capabilities and less on race or gender, because the technologies and wearables do not belong to certain race or gender. It gives men and women a chance to become part of a new social code where they are free of history and their identity of their clothes matters less than the capabilities of their outfits which brings equality to the wearers. The main problem is to make this technological fashion accessible, because there must be formed a collaboration with factories of high-tech materials and designers.

The second example that suits the argument that biocouture and fashion technology can truly blur one's identity is Philips *Fractal: Living Jewelry* project (fig.27). The project is part of the research initiative called *Skin* based at Philips Eindhoven. The project is aimed on post-2020 and challenges designers to rethink social changes and economical dynamics in relation to artificial intelligence and the creation of intellectual property.⁹²



Figure 27 Philips, *Fractal: Living Jewelry*, 2008. Design.Philips.com.

The jewelry of the August 2008 *Fractal* project is 'living', as it responds to the body. Philips explains on their website how sensors measure movement, excitement levels and proximity of others- that alters the intensity of its integrated lighting. The website also states how it is a test for a possible future and not a prescribing one.⁹³ This design has a very futuristic look and in the photograph the human figure is almost lost, it is hard to recognize the model (fig. 28). The jewelry does not tell anything about her status or her likes for a certain style of dressing. It could be worn by a man as well. It reacts on the tension of the body, that is influenced by the wearers emotion. It does not mean that the wearer is in control over the coloring of the jewelry, because maybe you can hide your real emotions away with a masked smile, but it is hard to control all your body. It is a shame that the name

⁹² Seymour, p. 45.

⁹³ http://www.design.philips.com/philips/sites/philipsdesign/about/design/designportfolio/design_futures/fractal.page 3-7-2015.

of the designer is not mentioned and that there is no explanation for the choices that are made in this design.



Figure 28 Philips, *Fractal: Living Jewelry*, 2008. Design.Philips.com.

Fractal and the *Airshield* are projects that have a futuristic look. They both mask the identity of the wearer. The *Airshield* makes the wearer merge with nature, the *Fractal* bodysuit communicates the emotions of the wearer rather than the identity. I would like to state that this kind of projects that break the codes of fashion give the wearer a position of equality. It does not matter if a man or woman is wearing the design. However both designs are presented on a female model it does not make them a womenswear, because it is about the technical part of the design. These two designs change the identity of the wearer by responding to the body and emotions or the elements of the environment.

In another project the garments itself contain information. Martin Rille presented *Cold Sensation* in 2009 (fig. 29). He designed a second skin that was designed as a black suit, that is described as "an electromagnetic shell that carries coded information from magnetic tape cassettes".⁹⁴ The suit contains information, music, stories and poems that

⁹⁴ Seymour, p. 70.

can be unlocked by touching the surface of the suit. It turns the person into a device and denies the person completely, it makes you an utility.



Figure 29 Martin Rille, *Coded Sensation*, 2009 Vienna Artfair.

I would like to end this chapter with designs that connect the wearer to the web. The wearer has the possibility to interact with other people online. Our lives are not exclusively taking place in the real world any longer, many of us have a virtual identity and we represent ourselves with this identity on social media. Designers are looking to connect those two worlds by the use of fashion. Of course we have our gadgets, but those are not as close to our real-life identity as the clothes we wear. *Rambler Shoes* sneakers allow you to allows you to interact with social media as Twitter. The shoes are created by Linz in 2010 and designed by Ricardo O’Nascimento and Tiago Martins, and make it possible to leave a virtual footprint while walking in the real world. Social interactions between people are growing with technology, with clothes, shoes and accessories as interfaces.⁹⁵ There are more projects that work in a similar way, such as Jennifer Darmour’s *Ping: A social Networking Garment* of 2010. The hoody allows you to interact on social media. The sensors are hidden in a knitted jersey (fig.30). You can stay in touch with your friends by sending Pings with

⁹⁵ Seymour, p. 58.

your sweater, such as the sneaker sends Tweets by every tap.



Figure 30 Jennifer Darmour, *Ping: A Social Networking Garment*, Pasadena 2010. Promotion image.

The Rambler and Ping projects focus on social relations of the wearer and we can wonder how this relates to one's identity. In this case the design of the clothes is not futuristic, but based on traditional well known pieces. A hoody and a pair of sneakers, that we probably all associate with sports, leisure wear and teenagers get a new meaning here. They become an interface and this is very interesting, because in the real world they give a different representation of the wearer than online. In the picture of the Ping project we see a young, blonde model, with angelic curly hair, her pose and expression are sexy and fresh. However online she is a complete different entity.

I think that fashion can be used to combine a virtual reality with our daily lives as in these examples, but I think it are two completely different representations or ourselves. A lot information gets lost online and the information that we do connect to us can be misleading. However when we wear a piece that has a technical device integrated we bring the two worlds and our two identities closer to each other. But does this change our identity? I do not think so. However it does change our social interaction, because we would be connected all the time. People will literally follow your footsteps and movements, which makes them also very controlling wearables, taking away a part of freedom and anonymity.

Conclusion

In this thesis I researched the identity of the contemporary woman, questioning how ready we are to let go of style rules and stereotypes, which are strongly influenced by the male gaze and discriminating ideas on race and gender related to identity. In the first part I researched the different types of female representations. I have showcased how diverse the representation of women in popular culture is. Taking the third wave feminist theory as a theoretical frame I tried to research the sexuality and liberalization of women, relating the third wave to the way we dress to represent ourselves. I revealed the problem of the styling of women in popular culture, because breaking stereotypes seem to result in creating new stereotypes to oppose the previous ideal. The successful black woman, is a extravagation of the white ideal. But the case study on TV series showed that a balance can be found. The sexuality of women in general is defined by male ideals and when the question of race is involved in the sexuality of black women, such as Beyoncé, she is still represented in the same way as in the 1920's. However Björk shows a possible escape from the male-dominated perception of the female sexuality.

At the same time, people like Lena Dunham seem to be more honest, closer to most women. The imperfection and the struggles of women represented in her book and film are in a way more feminist than all the brushed up, perfect identities which are represented in other forms of popular culture. This tendency is also visible in the design of the Lammily doll. Metrosexuality and unisex wear and lifestyles influenced fashion and our perception of the gender.

We use fashion to communicate something about our identity, the philosophy of the product recently became more important because clichés are broken. Under influence of changing ideas about our lifestyles we see how new trends and changes in fashion occur. We can relate fashion to new political ideas and we see how it reflects the lifestyle. In our contemporary time the identity of the ideal women is not easy to catch in one sentence, but under the influence of the third wave she can be feminine and opt for a traditional lifestyle and still be a feminist.

However this does not mean that we escape the division in 'power dressing' and 'femininity'. Both styles are based on stereotypes. And even when designers play around with those themes, the ideal is still based on our perception of masculinity as stated by Evans and Thornton. Even androgyny is based on the male standard. It is hard to escape

these clichés and it is even harder to translate them into daily wear. We are still falling in the trap of the ideals that women have to live up to. We seem not to be able to simply escape the connotations that are part of our wardrobe. It takes a new material and a new perspective on designing to break with all stereotypes.

In the last part of my thesis I stated how new technologies influence fashion and the relationship with our body. The focus of technical wearables and biocouture is no longer on the identity of the wearer, but on a direct relation with the function of the body without acknowledging or focusing on the gender or race of the person. However it is not affordable, accessible or that wearable, yet it is interesting to understand how much our daily wear is influenced by thoughts on identity. Clothes can be used to become part of something and at the same time high fashion is used to exclude people of accessing a certain status. Nevertheless fashion is influenced by new ideas about who we can be and want to be and the third wave allows us to be who we want to be and embrace our femininity and sexuality.

Biocouture gives the opportunity to break free of gender roles as these clothes that are made with technology are not gendered. Even though at this time it is not accessible to everyone it does show how designers search for a new way to 'design' the women and men of the future. The tendency of releasing women of their fixed roles is visible in different layers of popular culture. It also influences advertisement and more accessible wear, because our Western culture is ready for a different perspective on fashion and identity in which the dress enforces the abilities of the person. These abilities and technologies do not belong to a certain type of people, race or gender. They are universal and at the same time focus on the personal identity of the individual person.

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