

WASHING DIRTY LINEN IN PUBLIC – SPANISH FASHION IN THE DISCURSIVE FIELD

KİRLİ ÇAMAŞIRLARI ORTAYA DÖKMEK-SÖYLEMSEL ALANDA İSPANYOL MODASI

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, I would like to attempt to explore and comment upon the characteristics of the notions of identity and fashion and the correlation between the two. I will focus on the Spanish fashion represented by companies such as Desigual or Casa de Diego and apply, in the course of the analysis, concepts introduced by Judith Butler, Louis Althusser and Michel Foucault.

My presentation is divided into three main parts; Firstly, I would like to justify the choice of paper's topic i.e., seemingly trivial, fashion. In order to do so, I will address the concept of performativity, as understood in Butler's terms, and connect it to the clothes that are inextricably linked with one's position, beliefs, and worldview. Then, I would like to briefly discuss the Spanish politics towards fashion industry, including Textile Plans and Clothing Industry politics aiming to convey a unified image of Spanish fashion to the external, foreign view.

In the second part of this paper, I wish to present and examine the phenomenon of fashion in the contemporary display created by Spanish brands and recognize whether the principles and the visual representations they provide differ from the ones decades earlier.

Furthermore, I shall incorporate the observation drawn from the analyzed parts and compare them hoping to delineate a parallel between the "fashionable politics" and their material equivalents present in everyday life. I shall employ the Althusserian notions of Ideological State Apparatuses as well as the Repressive State Apparatus in order to explain the mechanism of the feedback and their role in granting one's identity. This process will provide a validation for the theme touched upon and show that fashion is a significant and frequently underestimated aspect of ideology and is worth an attentive academic look.

Keywords: Spain, Identity, Fashion, Fashion Campaigns, Ideology

ÖZET

Bu bildiride kimlik ve moda kavramlarının niteliklerini ve ikisi arasındaki ilişkiyi araştırmaya ve yorumlamaya çalıştım. Araştırmada, Desigual ve da Casa de Diego gibi firmalar tarafından temsil edilen İspanyol modasına yoğunlaşmak ve Judith Butler, Louis Althusser ve Michel Foucault tarafından ortaya atılan kavramları uygulamak istedim.

Bildirim üç ana bölüme ayrılmıştır; İlk olarak, bildirinin görece önemsiz görünen moda konusuna açıklık getirmek istedim. bildiri konusu olarak "moda" gibi önemsiz görünen bir kavramın tercihini gerekçelendirmek istedim. Bunu için, Butler'ın ifadesiyle, edimsellik kavramına başvurarak bunu kişinin konumu, inançları ve dünya görüşü ile ayrılmaz bir şekilde bağlantılı olan kıyafetiyle ilişkilendirmek istedim. Daha sonra, İspanyol politikasının, dış dünyada tek bir İspanyol giyim modasını yaymayı amaç edinen, Tekstil ve Giyim Sanayisinin anlayışı da dahil olmak üzere moda sektörüne yönelik politikalarını kısaca tartışmak istedim.

Bildirinin ikinci bölümünde, İspanyol markalarınca düzenlenen çağdaş sergilerdeki moda olgusunu ele alıp incelemek ve bunların, söz konusu markaların on yıllarca önce düzenledikleri sergilerdeki ilkeler ve görsel temsiller açısından farklı olup olmadıklarını ortaya koymak istedim.

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. Geri bildirim sistemi ve kimliğin oluşumundaki rolünü açıklamak için Althusser'in İdeolojik Devlet Aygıtları ile Baskıcı Devlet Aygıtları kavramlarından yararlandım. Bu süreç, ele alınan konunun geçerliliğini ve modanın ideolojinin önemli fakat sıklıkla göz ardı edilen ve akademik dikkate değer bir konusu olduğunu göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *İspanya, Kimlik, Moda, Moda Kapanyaları, İdeoloji*

1. INTRODUCTION

Seemingly insignificant and minute, yet inextricable from one's existence within the frames of contemporary society, fashion, serves as a conveyor for a dominant ideology and a reflection of political aura. As a common saying states: "Clothes make the man", one may therefore ponder upon their own image emerged from a certain set of clothing and its influence on one's identity as well as the relation between the external milieu and the oversimplifications it imposes upon one's very body.

2. THE SPANISH DRESS CODE

In this paper, I would like to attempt to explore and comment upon the concepts of identity and fashion. In order to do so, I will focus on two Spanish brands, Casa de Diego, founded in Madrid in 1858 which witnessed the reign and the death of dictator Francisco Franco and a brand established in 1984 in Barcelona, namely, Desigual.

Each of the two has been developed in different political milieus and been influenced by, and in all sorts of ways, ideology. The latter understood as a set of norms and beliefs imposed upon, most of the time, unaware of this fact, people.

As stated by Louis Althusser, "**Ideology has a material existence**"¹ (Althusser, 1970 : 165) and I am inclined to believe it is par excellence "material". Items of clothing are ever-present in one's life and are thought to express one's opinions, personality, and even mood. People tend to think of clothing as a choice, and it is one, indeed, prearranged for us.

During the very first years of democracy organized in a constitutional monarchy (after Franco's death) the Spanish Textile and Clothing Industry faced many difficulties. The economic situation and the quality of the products produced by the branch were not comparable to foreign ones and, at the same time, the workforce was more expensive and demanding. Spain faced two solutions: one was to allow the foreign companies entering the market, which, given the low cost of production offered by the external sources, would have brought disastrous effects on the domestic market or, create a competitive fashion channel- unique and distinctive Spanish vogue. In 1981 The Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE) introduced the Restructuring Plan of the Textile and Clothing industry which aimed at providing one, unified vision of a Spanish citizen. As María Jesús Escribano, the president of The Center for the Promotion of Design and Fashion said they sought "a single concept"², a philosophy, a way of understanding life". Each philosophy had its own aesthetics and visual atmosphere and this one, was complemented with the national flag colors being yellow and red. As it can be seen, the idea of Spanish nationality glimmered through the policy not only in the visual stratum but in the textual one as well as one of campaign's slogan was "parte de ti" – "a part of you" (Gimeno Martínez, 2006) which connects, or even ties together, the individual and the collective, the state.

This process reflects the mechanism that Louis Althusser describes as interpellation that addresses the individual and makes him or her the subject proper. By submitting to it, which is the only choice, one is 'hailed' into the subject position. This phenomenon of unknowingly identifying oneself with the imperative Weltanschauung is pivotal as it creates the identity. It facilitates the recognition between "us" and "them" and intensifies the bond between the fellow subjects. Having acquired "identity" one is therefore constructed according to an ideological function that was projected by the media or school or family. Those powerful forces controlling units and

¹ Althusser Louis, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* 1970 : 165

² http://www.imageandnarrative.be/inarchive/house_text_museum/gimeno.htm

propagating chosen paradigm are known as 'Ideological State Apparatus'³ and they are responsible for not questioning the imaginary construction that we are a part of. ISA formulates our daily reality, including the clothes we think we pick, and appears to us as "true" or "obvious."

The "obvious" Spanish panache was that of superb quality sartorial elegance. Casa de Diego represents those qualities and, to my judgment, it displays the feature of a Spaniard that emerges from the then-valid governance which aimed at putting its citizens into frames of being Catholic, dancing flamenco and speaking castellano. To a foreign eye, Spain was a nation of uniformed people denied any diversity.

It was in 1858 when this traditional commerce opened its shop in "La Puerta del Sol." It specializes in exclusive and handmade fans, umbrellas, traditional mantillas, or castanets.

The products are of one kind and their price may reach more than thousand euros and epitomize national pride and a feeling of a bond among members of society.

Tradition and aura of Spanishness' essence may be attached to this boutique which would distinguish it from the external influence manufactured in thousands of copies. The uniqueness of this establishment did, to quote Judith Butler "constitute identity, the internal coherence of the subject, indeed, the self-identical status of the person" (Butler 1999 : 23) yet, paradoxically, during Franco's reign, the clothes were of one kind and it was the identity that was to be duplicated. Choosing an outfit and wearing is one of the most noticeable performative acts and it is the reason for uniforms, or badges to be crucial as products of a regime.

3. IN A CASUAL FASHION

Together with the advent of democracy new fabric of society appeared. Rapid economic development, exchange of goods, services and most importantly, perspectives, resulted in a new attitude towards clothing.

Catalan Desigual is a brand "known for its intense prints, innovative graffiti art and flamboyant splashes of color."⁴ The concept behind the company is based on "positivism, tolerance, commitment, fun and unlevelling"⁵- notions that could not be further from the nationalistic dispositions of Francoism. The seeming detachment from the past may be seen in Desigual's advertising campaigns as models on the runway carry a banner that says "I want to be free" and the bold slogan on a billboard claims "new and good" and "It is not the same"; some have even taken it to another level and say "this party is not the same" containing a subtle political ambiguity. The visual message of Desigual contains diversity and multiculturalism. Models casted for campaigns come from various ethnic groups and are both male and female. They seem to accent individuality that Desigual encompasses as they assert that they "dress people, not bodies."

Even the brand's name ("Desigual" meaning "uneven") itself suggest a breakage, irregularity that clearly elevates little imperfections and imply floatation and flow, especially of identity. In contrast, Casa de Diego, calls up rather opposite associations, that of something stable, rooted deeply in tradition and history, unchangeable which can no longer be employed in a country with nations willing to gain authority and independence and speaking several languages. Desigual seems to understand this and grants voice to all; at the same time, it does not deny the past, but rather draws inspiration from it and uses saturated colors, typical for Spanish clothing and incarnates them to modern designs selling it as a collection titled "DiverFolk"⁶.

4. FASHION VICTIMS

What I want to underline is that the purpose of this analysis is not to glorify egalitarian nature of Desigual but to draw attention to the mechanisms that have not changes throughout the decades. Desigual is as much an element of ideological propaganda as is Casa de Diego. What distinguishes them is the message. Political correctness and promoting the idea of multi-culti is done in the same way as praising nationalism. Take for instance one of the Desigual's method of

³ Althusser Louis, Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays 1970 : 142

⁴ <http://kargergallery.com/clothing/Designers/SitePages/Desigual.aspx> [access: January 2012]

⁵ <http://kargergallery.com/clothing/Designers/SitePages/Desigual.aspx> [access: January 2012]

⁶ <http://blog.desigual.com/suenos-que-se-hacen-realidad/?lang=en>

advertising called “**Entra casi desnudo, sal vestido**”. The customers wait for the store to open in their underwear and leave in Desigual clothes they received for free. That is the ultimate and literal example of how the ideology requires material existence and how willing people are to facilitate this process. Transparency of this procedure, its seemingly innocent undertone aids to interpellate the target audience. Customers – subjects, cannot walk “naked” in the street, they need to be dressed, in other words, they cannot be empty canvas, they need an ideology, paradigm to be imposed upon them and they work better, if one is convinced to need them and happy to display them upon one’s very own body. In so doing, they become subjects proper constituting a well-designed social fabric.

As I have hopefully, successfully, demonstrated, Spanish fashion industry has changed in terms of values it promotes, but, at the same time, it has gone in circles as to the ways and means of how those values are advertized. Spanish identity, and, as a matter of fact, any identity, and feeling of belonging can be defined by slogans and clothes and even though political environment and its objectives may change, the manners of projecting it do not. And even though what we see “is not the same” I want to remind that the more things change, the more they stay, precisely, the same.

Fashion reflects attitudes and the changes that country underwent and, as clothes operate in a political context, they contribute and enhance it. The Spanish brands I examined co-exist on the market and the mental field of their customers and one can say there are a tangible exemplification of Michel Foucault’s idea of a discursive field (Foucault, 1991 : 55) upon which ideas intermingle and clash determining social behavior and one’s comprehension of identity. The latter is therefore not an ephemeral apparition but a product of, among others, clothes - fictive label veiling genuine experience of being Spanish.

5. CONCLUSION

This paper aimed to provide a new outlook on the matter of, usually academically neglected, fashion and the mechanisms of manipulating the perception of a Spanish citizen as well as taking a closer look at the manner ideology interferes with textile policy of Spain. Having analyzed this phenomenon I proceeded to more general observations concerning the workings of ideology and the issue of fashion constituting one of ideology’s primal implement.

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