

# From Fashion Models to Fashion Workers: Towards a Double-Edged Feminist, New Materialist Vision on Fashion



Eline van Uden

Master Thesis

Research Master *Gender & Ethnicity*

University of Utrecht

Written by: Eline van Uden

Title of Thesis:

From Fashion Models to Fashion Workers: Towards a Double-Edged Feminist, New-Materialist Vision on Fashion

Supervisor: Dr. Iris van der Tuin (UU)

Second assessor: Prof. dr. Anneke Smelik (RU)

Cover image: The author's personal portfolio-collection. Photograph by author.

June, 2013.

# Contents

- Introduction..... 1
  - General introduction ..... 1
  - Structure of thesis ..... 5
  - Academic position paper..... 8
  - Methodology ..... 14
- Chapter One: A new materialist critique of fashion..... 7
  - Introduction..... 7
  - Faction ..... 11
  - The academic arena ..... 14
  - Materiality: The (model’s) body ..... 17
  - Feminist politics and fashion..... 21
  - Summary ..... 27
- Chapter two: Fashion modeling and immaterial production..... 28
  - Introduction..... 28
  - The global phenomenon of labor precariousness..... 31
  - A cartography of critical theories of labor ..... 35
  - Deconstructing a cosmopolitan narrative of glamour ..... 42
  - The immaterial industry of modeling and labor precariousness ..... 48
  - Possibilities for labor regulation..... 1
  - Summary ..... 4
- Chapter three: Fashion modeling and bodily labor..... 5
  - Introduction..... 5
  - A double-edged perspective on fashion modeling ..... 7
  - Bodily labor and affective transmission ..... 13
  - Summary ..... 18
- Conclusion of this thesis..... 20
- Addendum ..... 26
  - Interview dialogue..... 26
  - Dairy Notes ..... 31
- Bibliography..... 34

Academic publications .....	34
Digital sources .....	40
Films and documentaries .....	41
Government Reports.....	41

# Introduction

## General introduction

The research for this thesis is motivated by my personal experiences and my work as a fashion model. In fashion, I argue, the body plays a central role. Noticeably, there is an incredible dark side to modeling: My body is being looked at, touched, and worked upon, and it has been molded by my personal, emotional and mental efforts to construct a 'look'. This look, in other words, is an entity which can be symbolically manufactured, economically reproduced and materially performed.

This thesis presents an analysis of fashion and relating material industries. In order to understand the constitutive relationship between the body and fashion, I have chosen to analyze the situation of one specific body: the fashion model's body. This research offers insights in a relating industry that facilitates the construction of fashion: the modeling industry. The situation of the model's body is determined by cultural and material aspects of production. From a material perspective, the interesting question would be how the modeling industry is being structured according to the production of a 'look'. More specifically, how is the fashion model 'working' towards reproducing and manufacturing fashion by practices of embodying fashion? I think that the title of this thesis formulates this intention to understand the role of the model in the production of fashion very well: "From fashion models to fashion's workers" signifies my dedication to view fashion modeling as labor or 'work'. This is because I want to show that fashion is not just an image but produced by the labor-efforts of fashion workers.

In this research am offering material analyses of the modeling industry that is organized to select and produce the right bodies for fashion. While focusing on the labor of fashion models in the production of fashion, my central argument is that models are engaged in the construction of an intelligible body for fashion. Their labor must be situated and positioned in the economic network of production and labor. Fashion modeling is viewed as an embodied situation in the production of fashion. The argument is that fashion models are positioned and situated in this industry and are making a living out of the construction of an intelligible body for fashion by producing the right 'look' fitting the demands of fashion. However, I see possibilities in refiguring the labor of fashion models not by being the mannequin or doll for fashion designers or the 'passive objects of the gaze', but as *actors* in the production of fashion. This perspective is in fact an affirmative view on fashion modeling that turns this idea of passivity around.

I am specifically interested in this specific relationship or 'intersection' between materiality and culture. My aim in this thesis is to conduct a study of the labor situation of fashion models in order to develop a situated feminist theory of fashion that is part of a *material* analysis of fashion. For this, I figured, we have to turn to the modeling industry and find out how fashion is materially and bodily produced by these workers of fashion. My initial plan was to conduct qualitative research, i.e. to conduct interviews with fashion models and investigate how they individually would relate to their embodied situation. While thinking about the questions I would ask them, I soon realized I was being afraid that without a deeply theorized conceptual framework I would not be able to formulate the 'right' questions: questions that on their turn enable productive responses and interesting insights about the topic of, for instance, embodiment. What was it that I thought the concept of embodiment meant and how could a theory of fashion modeling relate to my

initial aim to understand the relation between culture and materiality (the body)? I realize that my own position as a fashion model/scholar would enable me to reflect on the theories, whereas this standpoint informed my interest and motivation to develop this research in the first place. Thus I have chosen to discard my idea to conduct qualitative research and instead write from my own embodied perspective of a fashion model. I acknowledge that once a conceptual framework is made, the idea for conducting qualitative research would certainly be an interesting option for further research.

Next to the personal experiences of working in the modeling industry, the choices I have made in this research are deeply motivated by a feminist spirit. Feminist theories are the bedrock for this purpose and inspire innovative studies of fashion and other objects of body culture. In this thesis, feminist theories on the body are employed for cultural and material analyses of fashion, but have inspired me to take one step further in formulating a different feminist politics, and are intended to reframe the perspectives that are dominant in feminist and cultural studies. The production of a look is in fact bodily labor and demands emotional efforts to construct a look so different from the model's sense of selfhood. Therefore, models are never passive objects; they are active selves who are engaged in practices of bodily labor. To understand these activities and practices requires a tailor-made 'situated' perspective. By conducting a conceptual study of fashion and fashion modeling, as I will show, recent developments in feminist theories of the body and materiality prove to be fruitful grounds for analytical explorations of fashion.

At last, this body of feminist theory enables to envision a different *future* for fashion and fashion modeling and this has become the theme for this thesis. After working in the industry for almost nine years now, I am able to conclude that modeling is both painful and

pleasurable. Consequently there are also positive, highly pleasurable aspects to modeling. In fact, there are multiple reasons, such as pride and excitement, why models continue to work in this industry. I suggest that these positive aspects of modeling need to be addressed and included in analyses and critiques of fashion. This affirmative view on fashion and fashion modeling is probably the first step in the formulation of a feminist politics of fashion because it moves beyond old discussions in which feminism and fashion are considered incompatible. In the following introductory section in the form of an academic position paper, I will discuss these prejudices more in detail.



## Structure of thesis

I have chosen to analyze the labor practice of fashion models in relation to three dimensions of fashion, which I have divided into three chapters. 1) In chapter one, I am conducting a study on the status of fashion as a cultural artifact in Western, late-capitalist culture and position myself in academic studies of fashion. The main focus of this chapter is to trace the status of materiality in fashion as culturally constructed. This requires a study of how the cultural artifact of fashion is analyzed in the field of cultural studies. 2) Chapter two introduces a material analysis of fashion, as the main argument is that fashion as a cultural artifact is not only culturally constructed but is also *materially* produced. This argument is positioned in the contemporary critical debate of immaterial production and labor. I argue that the modeling industry, as the field of production in which fashion models are situated, is structured to facilitate the production of fashion. 3) The final chapter is closely linked to the second chapter, but here the focus is adjusted to analyze fashion modeling as a situated, labor practice and how bodily labor is constitutive of fashion. That is, I discuss the labor market in chapter two and concrete instances of fashion modeling in chapter three.

My study shows how the labor situation is structured, constructed and worked upon by fashion workers and their relation to the cultural industry of fashion. This research acknowledges these complex overlaps, yet also attempts to ground specific interstitial aspects in each dimension. In chapter one, my main argument is that in historical and cultural constructions of fashion, the dimensions of language and matter are enfolded in a particular way and have developed according to a commercial logic. A focus on how these dimensions are, or are not, co-constitutive enables a situated perspective on the position of materiality and the body. I will argue that the construction of fashion is a textual affair and

by their focus on the *meaning* of fashion, this repertoire is often repeated by cultural constructionists.

In chapter two, my focus lies more specifically on the analysis of the labor situation of fashion models. Here, I will discuss the legacy of feminist theories of labor in relation to the immaterial production of fashion. The body plays a central role in this constituency, as it is viewed as both the instrument and object for fashion models to engage in the immaterial production of fashion. To understand their position as workers in the modeling industry as a facilitative industry of fashion, we need a critical-creative theory of fashion modeling, one that is able to grasp the differentiated aspects of immaterial labor and the particular role of the body.

Therefore, in chapter three, I will discuss the importance of the living body and its capacities in the construction of fashion. Ultimately, a feminist focus on the body is, as I claim, part of a renewed vision towards fashion because the bodily work of fashion models as they are in the process of becoming fashion workers, is where a new materialist analysis of fashion modeling and fashion finds its entry.

## **Thesis structure**

### **Main-question**

What do a double-edged feminist vision and new materialism offer to analyses of fashion and fashion modeling?

### **Sub-questions**

- 1) Chapter one: How is fashion constructed and positioned as a cultural discourse, and how is materiality erased from fashion?
- 2) Chapter two: How is fashion modeling as labor structured by and situated in the immaterial production of fashion?
- 3) Chapter three: How is 'fashion' materially produced by the bodily labor of fashion models?

## **Academic position paper**

In this section of the introduction, I am positioning the angle of research in (contemporary) feminist debates about fashion and popular body culture. My intention is to disentangle the discrepancy between fashion and feminism, as fashion and feminism are, in general, seen as an unlikely pair. This means we think fashion and feminism are oppositional in discussions about body culture: Fashion and other modes of self-adornment from make-up (Dellinger and Williams 1997) to cosmetic surgery (e.g. Davis 2003/1997; Bordo 1993; Bartky 1990) and transsexuality (Phibbs 2001), have been subjected to a feminist critique that, to some extent, *agrees* on the objectification of women in the public sphere in the West and their subjection to historical ideals of beauty (Wegenstein 2012; Wolf 1991).

Similar questions are raised in feminist discussions of fashion. To what extent is fashion part of body culture and to what level reinforces fashion a biological determinist view on women and their bodies? According to many feminists, such as Simone de Beauvoir, fashion has historically been active in the reduction of female bodies to their biological sex. Contextualizing fashion in second-wave feminist texts from the 1960s to the early 1980s in European and Anglo-American contexts, fashion was considered an instrument of consumerist discourse and harmful to women. Second-wave feminists were, to some extent, fighting against a biological determinist view of womanhood and femininity and certainly fashion was also object of their fight against oppression. According to the dominant voices in this debate, fashion degrades women as a gender-category determined by their sex and asserts them as an ally of 'nature'. Fashion is regarded as a potential tool of oppression and male dominance, as it is embedded in larger modes of power. This theory of oppression informs a second-wave critical standpoint.

Nowadays the topic is shunned by feminists both inside and outside academia and has resulted in unvaried and relatively few feminist texts written about fashion compared to other objects of body culture: Fashion theorist and feminist Pamela Church Gibson refers to the lack of any real academic confrontation with fashion as with, for instance, the proliferating feminist discourse on pornography: “The pornographic debate is prolific in contributing to the literature of gender studies, while texts focusing on feminism and fashion can be ranged on a single shelf” (Gibson 2000, 353). As a result, feminists are often uncomfortable discussing fashion. However, I want to illustrate in this thesis that a feminist engagement with fashion is necessary, as the labor situation of fashion models will make clear, not only for the formulation of a critique of biological determinism that fashion reinforces on the bodies of women but also as part of the project of envisioning a different approach to fashion. This is in line with Llewellyn Negrin’s argument, who is a feminist scholar and develops a feminist materialist argumentation around the motivation to “envision a new mode of dress, which engenders a sense of the body, not as a visual image, but as an active corporeal presence” (Negrin 2013, 142). This thesis is motivated by the feminist project to both offer a critique and a creative vision of possibilities for reinventing and rethinking the ontological status of fashion. The methodology of feminist new materialism—which I discuss deeply in the methodology section—is crucial to this project, as it offers possibilities for producing situated knowledges of different positions and locations in fashion. But before I continue, allow me to situate my perspective in past and contemporary feminist debates about fashion.

## The debate fashion and feminism

In early second-wave feminist critiques, feminists instead took a stance against fashion as an object of critique within a wider feminist critique of capitalism, the promotion of a consumer culture. Second wave feminists have been in general critical of fashion. Fashion is part of a gender-regime that facilitates the cultural construction of a modern femininity. Western second-wave feminists like Simone de Beauvoir and Adrienne Rich, to name a few, disapprove of any type of discourse that promotes a conformist ideal of femininity. Although this observation may, to some extent, be a non-nuanced statement (as feminism and fashion are too diverse to be reduced to their incompatibility), in general it is possible to argue that fashion and feminism are positioned in a double bind. Therefore, fashion reinforces gender-typical behavior and appearance. Women are 'enslaved' to the whims of fashion, which promotes different trends every season.

In *Second Sex* ([1949] 1997), Simone de Beauvoir describes the function of fashion in terms of gender and sexuality as the main element in the cultural construction of modern femininity. Fashion invites Woman to adorn herself and to become a sexual object. The following quote takes a leap into considering fashion's ephemeral character: "the purpose of fashion to which she (Woman) is enslaved is not to reveal her as an independent individual, but rather to offer her as a prey to male desires... once accepted her vocation as sexual object, she enjoys adorning herself... and allies herself to nature" (de Beauvoir 1997, 543)<sup>1</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> Simone de Beauvoir writes that a woman's social duty is to "make a good show, she 'dresses up'," which indicates Beauvoir's awareness of the social function of fashion (i.e., social dress). Would Beauvoir be against body culture per se? I think that we must understand these quotes within the larger context of Beauvoir's philosophy. By connecting social dress and fashion with the social situation of women in Western societies, raises the question that if the social situation of women improves there would also be a change in the function of fashion and social dress. In other words, it would be worth discussing if in a second wave discussion of fashion the possibilities exist of envisioning a changed mode of dress and fashion.

Fashion as a cultural system gives women the possibility of assuming a certain style of femininity that is designed by men and their desires. By reiterating this feminine style, Woman accepts her vocation as sexual object. Beauvoir considers the social act of 'dressing-up' as both a social practice to "indicate her social standing," which, as a sexual object, results in the creation of a self-obsessed feminine narcissism: "Women use clothing by ways serve and reflect the ego" (Beauvoir 1997, 543). Therefore, the connection is easily made between fashion and the creation of a dangerous, narcissistic, self-obsessed mode of femininity. Read in a particular way, this quote points to the idea that fashion facilitates the degrading of a culturally significant citizenship-status in the becoming of a (sexual) object.

Similar to Beauvoir, Adrienne Rich enlisted fashion and feminine dress as one characteristic of male power that operates to "confine (women) physically and prevent their movement by means such as [...] and 'feminine dress' codes in fashion" (Rich 1986, 37). Other feminists have regarded feminine dress as part of the gender-regime, stating that through media images women are taught to construct and embody a "correct femininity" (Friedan 1965, 318). Later, feminists moved towards a more sensitive approach of the complicated relationship between women and fashion. Hilary Radner who is a cultural and film theorist, rightly states that fashion brings women into the complicated position of having to deal with a "double subjectivity": As both subject and object, "the woman as subject is invited to take control of the process [of commodification] whereby she represents herself. At the same time, she is constantly reminded that she must submit to a regime that externalizes figurability through product usage" (Radner 1995, 178).

Second-wave feminism offers examples of an effective "hands-on-approach" to politics and cultural critique. Their critique is accessible and direct. However, their critiques

about the conceptual and symbolic level of fashion representation and consumption largely ignored feminist involvement with, for instance, the pleasurable and agential aspects of producing and consuming fashion. Furthermore, feminists have largely ignored the role of the body in the construction of fashion. I will elaborate on this critique later.

### **Contemporary feminist discourses on fashion**

Therefore, in my need to position myself in the feminist debate of fashion, I would like to discuss two feminist discourses about fashion. Noticeably, fashion is subjected to either an internal moralist discourse in academic feminist debates where fashion is a much too frivolous subject for feminists in academia. This moralist discourse sees fashion as a frivolous object, unworthy of academic attention. Alternatively, fashion has been used as reference of a new feminist lifestyle and the availability of a popular postfeminist 'lifestyle'-choice for young women. In the latter debate, feminism remains a 'dirty word' for participants who in some way or another identify with fashion. This discourse is presented as taboo-breaking because fashion has become an instrument of identity-politics projects performed by young women who identify with feminist issues but are reluctant to locate their feminist identity in a feminist attitude that is dismissive of fashion and popular body culture. When it comes to discussion about fashion in particular, it is questionable whether this gap in feminist debates is the result of this general presupposed discrepancy between feminism and fashion.

To begin discussing the role of fashion in feminist debates, I refer to an article written by Elaine Showalter who in her contemporary academic feminist work and articles has written and published outside of academia in popular women's magazines and has encountered through the reception of her 'popular texts' the existence of this moralist attitude towards feminists engaged with topics around popular and consumer culture.



Showalter, a well-known figure within academic discourse as a feminist writer, critic and literary scholar, publishes columns in popular women's and fashion magazines, such as *American Vogue*, in which she reveals her love for fashion and other 'feminine stuff' of modern-day consumer culture. In the foreword to the article "Better Things To Do" (2000), Showalter perceives a moralist discourse evident in academic feminism:

This feminist moral discourse regards women who care about their appearance either as "victim or oppressor of the commercial systems that allegedly compel us to consume. As an academic who occasionally publishes in women's magazines, I've learned first-hand that they are both widely read and openly disparaged by my feminist peers. When I wrote an essay for *American Vogue* on my love of shopping malls, lipstick colours, literary makeovers and fashion catalogues, my colleagues in various English departments around the country wasted no time in letting me know either that they had secretly loved the piece, or that they deplored it as a sign that I was frivolous, politically incorrect, and under-theorized" (109).

Showalter colleagues, who spoke in a denigrating and moralist way about her choice to write for women's magazines and who have accused her of not having 'better things to do', are considered by Showalter as participants of a dominant moralist strand in academic feminism. In this internal feminist academic discourse, women who uncritically subject themselves to commercialized practices of self-adornment are seen as victims of the system. Women wasting their precious time on reading women's magazine, shopping or doing their nails is time that could be 'better' spent for the sake of personal development, work or politics. They are either forced by, or forcing other women, to identify with the frivolity of cosmetics and fashion.

This dismissive attitude of gendered practices of consumption also prophesizes what will happen to women who fall into the traps of commerce as they end up, as the moral of the story predicts, being consumed by the system itself. Consequently, women lose their subjective agency and freedom of choice. However, the response Showalter received from her feminist colleagues about her non-academic work signifies a certain taboo. The curious case is that Showalter received letters from academic feminists who admitted to *secretly* have “loved the piece”. In this way, there seems to be a refusal, or even a taboo, for feminists to engage in debates about consumer culture and to be concerned with these topics. In my view, Elaine Showalter describes perfectly the ambivalent relationship between what I assume of the Anglo-American academic feminist debate and popular –female– consumer culture. Her experiences have shown how fashion – as a form of consumer cultural practices – and feminism have been and continue to be situated in a ‘strained’ relationship. Overall, consumer and popular culture is created to stimulate our desires and makes us long for the perfect appearance. In the stimulation of consumerist desires, fashion is considered a primary medium for the promotion of body culture such as cosmetics and self-adorning practices. Both consumers and producers of fashion are women, as female apparel is the largest industry in the total manufacturing of fashion.

Therefore, a feminist assertion with fashion and popular culture is difficult and complex. We have seen that previous feminist critiques of fashion easily fall back to moralist statements advising women on what to do or not do from a feminist perspective. This indicates that a certain dominant version of feminism and fashion, as well as other consuming activities, cannot be combined. Showalter experiences the double position of a feminist researcher interested in consumer culture. Within academic feminism, there remains a moralist discourse about this version of feminism that, in my view, ‘falsely’

perceives fashion and feminism as incompatible. As far as fashion and other modes of consumer culture are concerned, they are a capitalist venture that, as part of the cultural regime, are designed to generate consumer-related desires in women.

However, this should not necessarily pose an obstacle for feminists to engage in the debate. I think that to disengage ourselves with fashion under the excuse of having “better things to do” is essentially an anti-feminist gesture. It means we are literally not following the example of previous feminists who actively asserted themselves with fashion and consumer culture. On the contrary, a feminist occupation with consumer culture and fashion should foreground the importance for feminist analyses of visual expressions of gendered consumerist practices. These analyses are not only important in dismissing the harmful effects of consumer culture for women. A feminist engagement with fashion and other forms of consumer culture should be forced to look further than the points of critique. In my opinion, Showalter represents this type of feminist involvement with consumer culture. She is not only nuanced about the destructive effects of consumer culture but also mentions that feminists have underrated the pleasures and potential of consumer cultural practices for women: “That reading magazines, trying on make-up, or doing needlework could be relaxing, pleasurable, or amusing for busy, bright, successful women seems to go against an unstated belief that women should always be working—caring for others, improving themselves, and casting a rosy glow of morality on all about them” (109).

### **Life-style feminism**

In 2006, six feminists identifying with fashion or writing about fashion (including Angela Davis, a famous second-wave feminist) announced their cooperation in the special fashion issue of *BUST* magazine. *BUST*, a popular feminist magazine founded in 1993 in the U.S., is

situated at the intersection of popular culture, politics and society and aims at an audience of young women who openly identify themselves as feminists. In an article published in the *Journal for Gender Studies*, the scholar Elizabeth Groeneveld assesses the efforts of a feminist engagement with fashion by the feminist popular magazine *BUST*. In the editorial introduction to the magazine, a caricature that reiterates the dominant myth of feminists is depicted. Groeneveld inserts in her article the written foreword to the special fashion-issue of *BUST* magazine. Evidently, the stereotype of the unflatteringly dressed feminist functions as a figure of dis-identification for young feminists. This process of dis-identification is taken to extremely violent statements, for feminism is being stated as tyrannically oppressive of fashion and hostile women who identify themselves with both fashion and feminism:

“For our fashion issue, we thought we’d take a different approach than might be expected of an outspoken feminist magazine. Rather than criticize fashion, we decided to focus on the aspects of dress that we find embraceable. The culture of clothing has been central to women’s lives for centuries, and we think it’s as important to find out what could be right with it as it is to pinpoint what’s wrong. Consider the alternatives suggested by those who’ve wanted to save women from the tyranny of fashion: surely we wouldn’t be better off with everyone in suits, or in Birkenstocks, or – God forbid – in burkas”. (Groeneveld 2006, 6).

*BUST*’s narrative is particularly disturbing because it reiterates negative connotations between fashion and feminism. What the reviewer Groeneveld sees as a ‘cheeky rhetoric’ used by *BUST* is constructed on the ruins of exactly the same old narrative about feminism. In the false light of the old story, a new, popular narrative of feminism emerges: one that is free from political and oppressive tendencies through which the former generation of

feminists operated. The tyranny of feminists is symbolically as oppressive as the burka is for Muslim women “*we wouldn’t be better off with everyone in suits, or in Birkenstocks, or – God forbid – in burkas*”. Groeneveld critiques the editors of *BUST*’s fashion-issue of performing a harmful version of feminism that translates into a rather shallow lifestyle feminism. In this sense, the new narrative that is constructed in the editorial introduction to *BUST* can be considered as a backlash of feminism:

“The representation of feminism through fashion allows *BUST* to present a particular version of what constitutes feminism’ to its readers. This iteration of the movement reduces it to a story that is only about gender difference. The particular narrative thus elides important contestations and dynamic exchanges that have made feminist movements exciting, mutable, and not always ‘safe’ for those in power” (184-185).

The *BUST* example demonstrates the desire to break open the negative connotations of feminism as it is associated with fashion. Nonetheless, the move these feminists make is not productive. Instead, the narration of a feminist encounter with fashion results in a shallow, postfeminist narrative, one that is built on the myth of feminism as anti-fashion. In this myth, the figure of feminism as “bra-burning activism” has become a negative stereotypical figuration of a feminist assertion with fashion. Moreover, every feminist once in her life encounters the stereotypical caricature of the feminist dressed in shapeless flannel and Birkenstock sandals, with unshaved legs and armpits, and wearing her hair in a short, preferably shaven style. Even though the stereotype is considerably inconsistent, like any other stereotype is highly over-exaggerated, the presumed incompatibility and hostility between the discourses of fashion and feminism has not yet been improved or deconstructed. Quite the opposite, in the following case (post)feminists themselves have

participated in the re-production of a false divide between feminism and fashion by assimilating the old myth in a new form of life-style feminism.

In both discourses, fashion functions as a figure of speech that sticks to the bodies of feminists, resulting in a proper feminist discourse that rejects fashion as a worthy object of attention or is expressed as a caricature of an old myth of feminism as a figure of dis-identification. As we have seen for Elaine Showalter, feminists continue to uphold this dichotomy between fashion and feminism by delivering a critique of feminist colleagues for writing about fashion and other consumerist items. They are engaged in the construction of a moralistic type of discourse that disapproves of fashion. So-called feminist efforts to incorporate fashion in feminist discourses, as the case of *BUST* magazine illustrates, often result in new shallow form of lifestyle feminism. Similar to a postfeminist project that clearly dis-identifies with the general idea of feminism, fashion is used as an instrument to get rid of the negative connotations the sign 'feminism' evokes. We can conclude that the weighty baggage of the stereotypical view about the connection between feminism and fashion has not been cast-off. We are left with the fashion versus feminism dichotomy being preserved.

### **A different genealogy of feminist critique on fashion**

Until this point, I have discussed the content of second-wave and contemporary feminist discourses about fashion as embedded in the broader social, cultural and economic discourse of consumer culture. I have concluded that one particular narrative about feminism and fashion continues to prescribe a possible feminist confrontation with fashion, up until today. I must acknowledge that before, and even while writing this thesis, I also *assumed* a feminist polemic in the European/ Anglo-American feminist debate about fashion and popular consumer culture. In my journey to find a suitable object of graduate research, I

presupposed fashion to be an unworthy subject of academic attention. However, after having made my research interests clear in the Gender Studies Department, I was delighted to encounter professors' enthusiastic responses to my research interests in fashion. In my view, fashion and feminism offer significant complementary potential. In this thesis, I wish to generate an alternative feminist genealogy on fashion.

In my effort to do so, I propose an exploratory route that follows up on previous second-wave feminist involvements with the topics of fashion and consumer culture. Therefore, I am interested in asking the following questions: How can fashion and feminism be productively linked? How is fashion an incredibly interesting and complex object for feminist research and vice versa? What would a feminist take on fashion look like? In keeping in mind the critiques of second-wave feminists, I want to add to their critique a perspective on the potential of fashion for feminist theory. Fashion and feminism may not, after all, be incompatible.

In building on the foundations that second-wave feminists have laid for us, this project approaches fashion from a critical and *creative* perspective, an aim that extends beyond the more complex picture drawn by Radner, for example. Women not only inhabit a double *subject-position* in that they are invited to control their position in consumer culture while at the same time becoming objects of that same project. I want to state that knowledge about the situation of fashion models is part of a feminist response to fashion. Knowledge about the position of fashion models, whose work it is to embody and perform a cultural idea of beauty, inexplicitly helps me to reflect on the feminist questions of how beauty and femininity are constructed and distributed through fashion. Therefore, a critical theory of fashion modeling will reflect on how fashion models are 'degraded to nature' by

using their body as an object. They perform their jobs from an objectified and 'mute' subjective standpoint. At the same time, and here I arrive at another aspect of critique that demands creative imagination, models are engaged in practices of corporeal, bodily knowledge. As such, the labor of the fashion model is rooted in 'bodily subjectivity' and 'lived experience'.

In my quest to move beyond the dualist setting of a feminist encounter with fashion and move further in the genealogy of difference feminism, I want to approach the dualism fashion-feminism through this double-edged vision. First, by presuming a vision of fashion and the situation of women in this particular branch of consumer culture, we must overcome a dismissive critique moralizing on the *do's* and *don'ts* of a feminist involvement with the topic. Ultimately, in the cases I have presented, a feminist moralist discourse repeats old dichotomies and reduces the category of women to which society destined her: socioeconomic and sexual reproduction. In order to move beyond this, I want to follow the line of thought set by Kelly and continued by Braidotti. A double-edged vision is rooted in, as Braidotti explains, lived embodied experience and bodily roots of subjectivity. This means that approaching fashion from a feminist angle demands a certain double-edged view: a perspective enabling us to be both critical towards the object while engaging in a creative, visionary mode of thinking that appraises lived embodied experience and the bodily roots of subjectivity, that is in this case, the labor situation of fashion modeling as one particular practice of material and bodily labor in fashion. Indeed, my intention is to limit the scope of this particular aspect of the production of fashion: labor. I am so strongly arguing for this approach because fashion modeling as a labor-practice in the cultural industry of fashion offers us insights into the material construction of fashion and the mediating role of the *body* in constructing fashion.



Developing a double-edged vision of fashion that intends to break a reductive vision fashion is of special interest for a feminist vision on the situation of the material body or biology in fashion: “There can be no doubt as to the narcissism of fashion’s project, that is, fashion presumes a ‘bodily’ form even as it rejects the material biological substance of that body as irrelevant” (Perthuis 2008, 179). This observation by Perthuis points to exactly the reason why a double-edged approach is necessary. Here, feminist theories of bodily subjectivity and lived embodied experience offer productive insights into how the phenomenon of fashion brings women – whose bodies have been historically associated with nature – into a certain situation that is dangerous and harmful to them, as second-wave feminists have already argued. As women continue to be associated with nature, according to de Beauvoir, the situation of women and the body in fashion itself presumes a ‘bodily’ form but simultaneously rejects or finds the substance (i.e., living matter) of its form irrelevant. In this regard, it is possible to argue that the female body as a *form* is the model for fashion. Furthermore, it is part of the signification and meaning of fashion. But at the same time, the living body is rejected, creating an impossible situation for women and women’s bodies. Therefore, a feminist vision on the particular situation of the (female) body in fashion is not only necessary; feminist theory with its emphasis on matter and the body is at the moment the only approach that increases our understanding of fashion’s materiality and its function in the construction of fashion.

At exactly this stage of argumentation, I see possibilities for feminist theory to engage in a productive conversation with fashion. Fashion is a complex object, as Roland Barthes stated in his work *The Fashion System* (2006), in which different dimensions, or what Barthes calls ‘substances’, are enfolded:

“Originally I had planned to study real clothing. I gave up. The reason for this is that fashion clothing is complex in that it employs a number of ‘substances’ the material, photography, language. It was necessary to give priority to problems of method. Because of this I preferred to choose an object as ‘pure’ as possible to analyse, that is one which rests on a single ‘substance’. I studied fashion clothing as it is refracted through the written language of specialist magazines. All I retained was the description, that is the transformation of an object into language” (Barthes 2006, 99).

Fashion can be approached as both a textual and material phenomenon. Yet here a gap in academic studies of fashion can be traced where two dominant sets of approaches determine the field. In the field of fashion studies, fashion is approached through either social or cultural/semiotic methods of study (Tseëlon 2010, 8; Küchler & Miller 2005). The result is a rather dichotomous view of fashion, one that regards fashion as a social or cultural phenomenon and, as such, reduces the importance of fashion’s materiality as insignificant to society or social reality. In my feminist positioning, I want to follow-up on Barthes’ approach of fashion that in his terms “employs a number of substances”. I do not want to choose between the options that exist within the disciplinary borders of an academic field such as fashion studies or fashion theory. By explicitly taking a feminist position in regard to fashion, I hope to proceed in a way that takes fashion as a complex, differentiated phenomenon in which multiple dimensions are entangled and together constitute the object of what we perceive as being fashion.

## Methodology

### Feminist new materialism

As a methodology for writing feminist critical theory, feminist new materialism articulates these questions of embodiment, identity, and politics that are connected to a feminist epistemology. Feminist new materialism, which as a new feminist epistemology connects these thinkers, is especially useful in a critique of fashion. New materialism brings the previous discussed theorists—from Joan Kelly to the newest theories of affect—into a coherent framework. The theoretical works of Donna Haraway, Karen Barad, Rosi Braidotti and Vicky Kirby have been sources of inspiration for this project: Braidotti's *politics of location* used to define a feminist politics and the concept of *embodiment*, which takes the body as the key element in understanding the link between different levels of analysis; Barad's concept of *intra-action*, which I will be using in the first chapter to develop a fuller understanding of fashion; Haraway's groundbreaking concepts *feminist objectivity*, *situated knowledges*, a feminist ethics of *response-ability*, and the non-dichotomy of *naturecultures* have all informed my project of viewing fashion as a *material-semiotic actor*.

These feminist theorists have in common a departure from a critique on anthropocentricity and the dominance of positivism in our universities. Furthermore, what characterizes the theories of all four feminist scholars and scientists is an 'allergy' to dualisms. Although it is impossible to eliminate dualisms, there exists a possibility of changing our approach to challenging oppositions. The leaving behind of dualisms is important for the project of this thesis, because feminism and fashion will be bridged in the attempt to work through questions of materiality and the body of fashion, the role of bodily labor in the production of fashion and its embodied and corporeal roots.

In the fashion of feminist new materialism, I propose taking the following approach into consideration when it comes to the supposed binary of fashion and feminism. As I am curious to experience the borders between them, I want to push the limits by considering fashion and feminism as euphemisms for complex interrelations of meanings, situations and objects. Instead of opening the same old 'dialectical' battle (i.e., if it is feminist enough to work on a "frivolous" topic like fashion), I want to describe a different genealogy of feminist theory that is able to affirmatively assert rather than oppose fashion. This drive for thinking, imagining and describing alternative genealogies is different in that the trend of thinking difference wishes "to surmount rivalry between women by imagining a more affirmative inter-female relationship" (Tuin, van der 2007, 20). This is something I want to explore and experiment with in this thesis by setting up a space where two perspectives that may be thought incommensurable meet.

In order to think through the opposition feminism vs. fashion, we require an alternative genealogy. The description of a different genealogy requires a flexible thinking-attitude. Therefore, in describing a different feminist approach to fashion, I have let myself being inspired by the conceptual methodology of 'jumping generations' "as a manner of affirming and studying feminist genealogies" (Van der Tuin 2009, 22). The concept of *jumping generations* is applied as an effort to bridge feminist theory and fashion and to push the borders that separate them: "The act of 'Jumping', that is, is my term for the bridging of 'classes' that were previously considered to be incommensurable, while being, in fact, part of a non-exhaustive dichotomy" (Van der Tuin 2009, 24). Similar to Iris van der Tuin, I feel enthusiasm for the potential of a new feminist materialist approach to fashion because it challenges fashion in a political, critical and creative manner. Although we previously thought fashion and feminism to be incommensurable, I rather see them as a part of a 'non-

exhaustive' dichotomy, which likely means that they will always appear in a rather oppositional scheme. However, it is interesting to find out not why but *how* this dichotomy is established and how to work and think our way around it. It does not reduce a complex intertwined object such as fashion to language because feminist new materialism does not privilege culture over nature or otherwise (Van der Tuin & Dolphijn 2010).

As such, this flexible approach indicates a different thinking-practice. Jumping generations, as a methodology and thinking practice, facilitates a contemporary 'third-wave feminist' assertion with fashion that does not break with previous feminist critique. A third-wave feminist approach to fashion is one that relates to what has occurred before but also across different fields of methodology, epistemology, politics and identity. I am offering a genealogy of a feminist approach that can intervene in the dualist conceptualization of fashion and feminism. I intend to use this same attitude in my intentions to 'jump through' feminist texts and texts that have a strong affinity with feminist politics and theory, such as *Operaismo*-theory cited in chapters two and three.

### **A double-edged vision**

This methodology section legitimizes and describes the aim and motivation for developing a feminist theory of fashion through the located and embodied perspective of the fashion model. The knowledge produced from this particular standpoint forms a conversation with another position: the feminist scholar. These two positions shape my perspective in the form of a double-edged perspective on fashion. In this thesis, I hope to set up the space for the feminist scholar and fashion model to engage in dialogue. Speaking from my work-experience as a fashion model, I have encountered and experienced the precarious position young girls inhabit in working in an industry that demands that they engage in practices of

commodification, which can often be damaging to one's own self-conception and identity. In effect, these encounters have awakened a feminist spirit in me and have motivated me to conduct research into this world of modeling. The standpoint of the fashion model is one particular and unique situation in the frame of knowledge-production. Her encounter with the object of research – fashion – has been different than that of the feminist scholar. However, this 'double-perspective' grounds my situation as a researcher in a double-edged position and requires a considerable level of imagination and creativity in order to be productive.

Narrating my embodied experiences as a model functions as a framework of reference and connection between knowledge, politics and ethics. My embodied experience as a fashion model helps me reflect on my standpoint as a feminist scholar. Together, both positions form the basis for developing, in the trend of Kelly and Braidotti, a double-edged vision on fashion. This double-edged vision is informed by the perspectives of a fashion model and feminist scholar that together create a different feminist subjectivity, one that is not moralizing or dismissive, but rather one that "aims to locate and situate the grounds for the new female feminist subjectivity articulating the questions of individual embodied, gendered identity with issues related to political subjectivity, connecting them both with the problem of knowledge and epistemological legitimation" (Braidotti 1993, 2). I want to extend this view by formulating a feminist way of (en)visioning the situation of women in the domain of consumer culture by engaging in the development of a 'double vision' in line with Joan Kelly (1979) and Rosi Braidotti (2009). Already in the late seventies, Joan Kelly (1979) signaled that early feminist and socialist theories of oppression inherited the dualities constructed by society. With Kelly, a feminism of difference was born, one that expresses a feminist perspective and positioning in order to overcome these old dualisms as she pleads

in the article for a 'doubled' vision on the situation of women with "a sharpened sense of particularity" (Kelly 1979, 224). This double-edged vision, as further explained by Rosi Braidotti in her situating of Kelly in the tradition of sexual difference feminism, emphasizes the strength of imagination and creativity in our feminist projects: "Faith in the creative powers of the imagination is an integral part of feminists' appraisal of lived embodied experience and the bodily roots of subjectivity, which would express the complex singularities that feminist women have become" (Braidotti 2009, 8).

In chapter one, I will discuss the options for a feminist position through developing a vision on fashion that takes into the forefront at least two substantial planes of fashion: *textuality*, which until so far has been the locus of cultural theories of fashion, and *materiality*. In the first chapter of this thesis, I will further develop an analysis of fashion's status, which is constituted through a complex enfolding of the textual and material. In order to ground this rather abstract and conceptual claim, I have chosen to refer to concrete experiences. This means that in my quest to understand fashion modeling in light of workers' labor involved in the construction of the 'model's body' – in other words the intelligible body of fashion- I will use my personal, embodied experience of working as a fashion model.

The knowledge I have developed in my work as a fashion model informs a critical standpoint and vice versa. Since being active in the cultural industry of fashion and working as a fashion model for nearly ten years now, I have encountered the workings of the fashion system and experienced its exercising power 'on' and 'through' my body. These bodily and corporeal experiences are part of the creative critical theory of fashion I am intending to write. As such I want to use my work experience as 'fuel' for this feminist creative critique of

fashion because as a worker in the modeling industry, I have not only gained knowledge about the material production of the image of fashion but have also developed insight perspective into the daily rituals of a fashion model's life. Readers will find the narrative of my personal experiences and other personal documents in the addendum.

Feminist standpoint theory (e.g. Harding 1991 & 1993; Hill Collins 1990; Hartsock 1999) enables me to argue that my own embodied perspective as a feminist scholar and fashion model is a valuable position in the production of knowledge: "The original formulations of feminist standpoint theory rest on two assumptions: that all knowledge is located and situated, and that one location, that of the standpoint of women, is privileged because it provides a vantage point that reveals the truth of social reality" (Hekman 1997, 349). This superiority of the women's standpoint Hekman describes is evident in Harding's work who argues that subjective knowledge produced by women is inherently *better* than positivist or empirical research. Therefore, women are able to produce knowledge about social reality from a standpoint that traditional and hierarchic schemes of academic institutions are unable to perceive. Although feminist standpoint theory has been criticized and has been subject to debates in feminist academia for its rather suspicious truth-claims, privileged knowledge and universal concepts of 'women' and the 'oppressed' (see Hill Collins 1990; Rich 1985), according to Susan Hekman, feminist standpoint theory marks the beginning of a paradigm-shift for the concepts of knowledge and epistemology.

Standpoint theorists such as Nancy Hartsock argued that "the criteria for privileging some knowledges over others' are not the subject matter of the academic discipline of epistemology, but are 'ethical and political'" (Hartsock, 1997, 372–3). A 'standpoint' is not given; knowledge is never given but is produced from a unique position and perspective.



Feminist new materialism is built on the foundations of standpoint theory. As a thinking strategy, it aims to account for the differences in positioning and to account for the dynamic relations between practice, standpoints, knowledge and meaning.

New materialism is a feminist epistemology that can be traced back to standpoint theory but also differs from it. Standpoint theory aimed to change the organization of knowledge production by arguing against male-dominated disembodied scientism (Asberg 2007, 31). Marcel Stoetzler and Nira Yuval Davis, in the debates on standpoint theory ask questions about the political operation of standpoint theory: “there is little discussion as to how the transitions from positionings to practices, practices to standpoints, knowledge, meaning, values and goals, actually take place” (Stoetzler & Yuval-Davis 2002, 320). In other words, standpoint theory is operating on the political grounds of *equality*—or even superiority (Harding 1986)—to fight the exclusionary practices in science. New materialism takes the initial purposes of standpoint theory to another level by becoming a political and critical discourse that takes the disciplinary organization of science and scholarship to task. The political grounds for the critical discourse is not a politics based on equality which sees the exclusionary and oppressive practices of the reigning discourses as the primary target, but is based on a politics of difference accounting for differences of standpoints, differences between women, among women and within individual woman (Braidotti 2011, 151); but also for the differences in situations, locations and structures that contribute to the proliferation of differences.

## **Insider's perspective and the body**

Therefore, I have chosen to narrate a selection of certain significant experiences in my work as a model to make this double position clear<sup>2</sup>. Through these different texts woven together in one thesis, I hope to demonstrate how important my personal experiences have been in the development of my scholarly work and perspective of fashion. My view on fashion has emerged through the experiences in practicing my job as a model. This has not resulted in the clashing of perspectives while writing this thesis, in fact, quite the contrary. Consequently, a situated perspective on fashion that is grounded in my personal experiences makes fashion not an object I am observing from a distant view, but one that I have learned to perceive from my location as a fashion worker. To conduct a study of fashion while leaving out my personal experiences would have prevented me from falling into the trap of “unregulated gluttony” or “the god trick of seeing everything from nowhere” (Haraway 1988, 581). I want to tread in Haraway's footsteps by positioning myself as a researcher and fashion model and I hope that by honestly chronicling my personal involvement alongside my academic work, and by being reflective about this, a double-edged perspective will emerge.

One may believe that this insider's perspective would make knowledge production easier. Certainly, I am deliberately situating myself in a vulnerable position where from my position as a feminist scholar, I theorize the situation of fashion models, while also having experienced life as a model and having engaged in modeling practices of using my body as a tool and instrument of commodification. Making this double position clear means that I am making myself accountable for the knowledge I am producing. This accountability signifies a

---

<sup>2</sup> These personal texts, diary and interview, are added to this thesis in the 'addendum' and I will mostly refer to these texts in the third chapter.

subject positioned high on the ethical agenda of new materialist thinking. I now want to give an example of a scholar who has been in a similar position and how she accounts for this perspective.

Thus I refer to the work of Ashley Mears who in her book *Pricing Beauty: The Making of a Fashion Model* has inspired me to write about fashion modeling. In this thesis, I often refer to her sociological and anthropological work as the empirical support for my theorization of fashion modeling. Her insights are crucial to our knowledge of fashion modeling. Her book offers a very complete overview of the ways in which the modeling industry is structured to facilitate the construction of the look of fashion. In her book, Mears explores the fashion and modeling industry through a method of feminist ethnography. In the book, Mears combines sociological methods, such as industry statistics and statistics on models as workers, with an anthropological method of feminist ethnography and interviewing. The latter is a strong method through which she is capable of understanding the meaning of the labor-practice experienced by individual workers. Feminist ethnography is based on the idea that the researcher and the research subject are engaged in an inter-constitutive relation and that both actors are meaningful in the production of knowledge, which contradicts the idea that the researcher or observer is neutral. Her work serves as an inspiration, and even though Mears's approach differs from my own, our work is similar on a personal and feminist epistemological ground. We both struggle with the accountability of our situated perspective in the industry.

What attracts my attention in particular is her reflection on her position in becoming an observing participant in the industry. In the afterword to her book, Mears reflects on her experiences in the industry as a model herself. Similar to Mears, I have always worked as a

model throughout my university education. While working as a model in New York and London, Mears completed her PhD program at NYU. Combining these two roles was not easy, something I have also experienced, for combining two careers that bear such differences is not always easy. As a working model and PhD researcher, she had an 'insider subject position' in the same industry she was observing, which created a "tenuous position" as she explains:

"This meant I also spent a lot of time agonizing over my appearance, something I had not anticipated when I headed into grad school. I deferentially went to the gym to 'get stuff off', as one booker advised in my first days in the field, and one year in the fieldwork, I was genuinely worried about my 36" hip measurement, which nearly excluded me from Fashion Week castings. Picking out my clothes in the morning was terribly stressful – trying to dress in a way that (1) showed my body, (2) made me appear thin and young, and (3) would not draw much attention from classmates or professors in my graduate seminars. With all these anxieties, my insider subject position gave me a firsthand account of what it felt like to work, day after day, in a job that might disappear at any moment. From here I was able to experience not just the uncertainty of the job's form (the structural precariousness of freelance labor) but also the ambiguity of its content, specifically in trying to figure out how to work well" (265-266).

The work of Mears is an example of conducting feminist ethnography. Feminist ethnography is a methodology that offers an alternative to the scientific form of objectivity in which the distance between the observer and observed must be maintained. Therefore, Mears fieldwork experiences as researcher and participant is an example of feminist

ethnography. Mears admits the importance of her insider's perspective: "I came out of the field with a perspective shaped, in part, by a model's position, which likely influenced how I saw the work of my other interview respondents: the bookers and the clients" (266).

Nonetheless, Mears experienced the vulnerability of pioneering this scarcely populated method of research since sociological and anthropological methodologies are based on a scientific view of objectivity (Mears 2011, 266; see Stacey 1988). She constantly had to negotiate and navigate between both positions of observer and observed, which made her feel vulnerable and powerless.

The complex involvement of the researcher with the object of research was in Mears's case a generator of feelings of anxiety and insecurity. This highlighted how much we as researchers participate and are involved in the emergence of the object. As a participant observer, Mears experienced the vulnerability of her location. Taking an insight perspective, legitimized by methodologies of feminist ethnography, Mears produced partial knowledge about the form *and* content of the job and was the basis of her experiences as a participant in the industry. Her location as model/researcher is what Haraway describes as "vulnerability: location resists the politics of closure, finality... That is because feminist embodiment resists fixation and is insatiably curious about the webs of differential positioning" (Haraway 1987, 590). The knowledge produced in this situation, as it is carefully situated and reflected upon, is valuable knowledge: "The moral is simple: only partial perspective promises objective vision. Feminist objectivity is about limited location and situated knowledge" (Haraway 1988, 583).

A perspective from outside the industry could, in part, account for the role of models in embodying a symbolic, fashion aesthetic. However, due to the industry's complexity and

floating, mobile character, it is difficult for outsiders to understand. An outsider's perspective is unable to account for the experience of, for instance, how it *feels* to work in a precarious labor industry; how this type of labor *affects* the perception of the self when being obliged to embody a 'look'. My experiences as a worker in the industry of modeling contributes to knowledge about the embodied and corporeal character of fashion modeling. From my double perspective, I am able to offer knowledge about the emotional aspects: the pain the pleasures of becoming a look. The position of fashion models and the embodied subjectivity is difficult to determine, no matter how carefully one situates oneself in the theory. When it comes to the situation of the body in fashion and fashion models' labor in becoming an intelligible body, as I have illustrated above in references to de Perthuis' theory of the supposed irrelevance of the biological body in fashion, we would not want to limit or finalize an interpretation of a fashion model's situation. However, because female bodies have historically been associated with nature, an act of situating and locating models in a particular location could lead to determinist views about their physical, symbolic and sociological situation in the fashion system, i.e., biological and/or linguistic determinism. These are problems are challenging a feminist challenging of fashion as I will show in this thesis.

At last, I want to add that in my everyday practices as a feminist scholar and fashion model, I have found relief in this feminist materialist perspective on the body. In the last chapter of this thesis, I will discuss a feminist materialist take on corporeality considers the body as an active bodily component that transcends the variables of identity and is, thus, multifunctional: "The body, or the embodiment of the subject, is a key term in the feminist struggle for the redefinition of subjectivity; it is to be understood as neither a biological nor a sociological category, but rather as a point of overlapping between the physical, the

symbolic, and the sociological” (Braidotti 1993, 7). From my perspective as a model I think that a new materialist vision on the body stimulates an affirmative outlook on the body in fashion and modeling. Instead of seeing my body as an obstacle in creating the perfect ‘look’, I want to think of my body in an affirmative way, the aliveness of my body and the pleasures that come with it leads to a constructive view and perception of myself and my work as a fashion model. Instead of perceiving my body as a slave to the whims of a modeling aesthetic, I want to think of my body in the nomadic vision of feminist philosopher Rosi Braidotti as the “grounding of human subjectivity” endowed with the capacity “to be both grounded and flow” and imbued with the potential to become a “transformer of flows, energies, affects, desires and imaging’s” (Dolphijn & Van der Tuin 2012; 33). The following chapters are demonstrative of this aim to reclaim the material body in fashion by enabling a productive perspective on labor, materiality and production in the domain of fashion.

## **Chapter One: A new materialist critique of fashion.**

### **Introduction**

In this chapter, I employ a critical discussion of cultural perspectives on fashion. Fashion has been generally conceptualized by cultural theories of fashion as a cultural performative logic founded and historically constructed within the context of modernity. Fashion is intrinsically connected to figurations of modernity in Western contexts where it is deployed as a site of freedom and possibility (Baudelaire 1986; Benjamin 1989). Cultural theories of fashion contextualize it within modernity, developing into a mass cultural phenomenon in the postmodern age. “Fashion, then, is essential to the world of modernity, the world of spectacle and mass-communication. Mass fashion, which becomes a form of popular aesthetics, can often be successful in helping individuals to express and define their individuality” (Wilson 2003, 12).

Fashion is deeply interwoven in our everyday lives. Fashion consumption is part of our everyday practice of dress, which as a social significant practice is “the insignia by which we are read and come to read others” (Entwistle 2000, 35). In communicating a style of dress in social reality, fashion provides the symbols to which we refer in our everyday practices of dress. “Fashion therefore refers not just to the production of some styles as popular or elite, but also to the production of aesthetic ideas which serve to structure the reception and consumption of styles” (Entwistle 2000, 48). Fashion is a modern, cultural phenomenon embedded in a cultural commercial logic. As a cultural logic, it not only provides us with the symbols to construct and communicate our identity and personal style but also is endowed with a structuring function of how we perceive ourselves and dress ‘others’ in social reality.



In late-capitalist economic structures and postmodern contexts, fashion has been transformed into a commercial logic. Under postmodern conditions, fashion has transformed into a highly advanced, global commercial discourse. The effects of fashion are evidently double-sided: certainly fashion presents its most friendly 'democratic' face to the privileged subjects of this global world, who can use it as 'technology of the self' in their daily identity performances<sup>3</sup>. Fashion is playing a role in the construction of identities and subjectivities and has become an instrument for the consuming masses to perform their identity. In this view, fashion has become an identity-lending discourse for almost anyone in democratic Western societies, and even outside Europe and Anglophone countries. For example, enormous shopping malls have arisen out of the dusty sands of places like Dubai and Qatar. Fashion is, in this sense, universal.

But, as recently witnessed, the less privileged, or subaltern, subjects of this global society are paying the price, as was seen in the catastrophe in Bangladesh (10 May 2013) where hundreds of underpaid employees of a clothing factory were buried under the rubble of a collapsed building. A similar event occurred only weeks after this disaster in a shoe factory in Cambodia where three people were buried under a building's collapsed roof. In response, on May 15, 2013, large, multinational clothing companies have signed an intentional agreement to improve the circumstances of (female) under-paid workers in factories and production sites in non-western areas of the world<sup>4</sup>. Fashion modeling should not be compared to the poor working conditions of clothing factory laborers; however, it is

---

<sup>3</sup> The discourse of fashion offers certain locations and instruments to individuals to position themselves. These tools and instruments enable fashion models to perform their labor, which is what Foucault calls *technologies of the self* that function through self-definition (*subjectivation*) and *subjection* to a discourse that defines individuals (Foucault 1984). Fashion as a *technology of the self* enables individuals to become intelligible subjects by means of *subjectivation* and *subjectification*: Individuals are able to transform themselves into intelligible subjects of fashion by subjectivation, which is only possible by subjecting themselves to the discourse of fashion.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2013-05-09/petition-demands-gap-h-m-sign-bangladesh-safety-plan.html>

certainly the case that even for the most privileged workers in the industry, inequalities result in a rather precarious labor situation.

To adequately comprehend and ultimately criticize these exploitative practices in the fashion industry (and capitalist logic of production in general) we must understand the logic that enables these practices in the clothing industry. The underlying logic is the cultural logic of fashion, which is, first and foremost, derived from capitalism. Fashion has historically developed into a major player in late-capitalist, postmodern society. In the early stages of modernity, fashion's performative repertoire was available in a less advanced form to the privileged (male) subjects of Western modern society and could be used for emancipatory purposes or to express social attitudes. Here, fashion enabled male subjects to express social and political ideologies disclosed in fashion's performativity. Looking more closely to the role of fashion in modernity, Charles Baudelaire had already described fashion in his critical essays on modernity in 1863. In "The Painter of Modern Life," where he describes the male fashion-icon of 'the dandy' and dandyism "as the last flicker of heroism in decadent ages" (Baudelaire 1995, 403), and in terms of a spectacular theater play: "One of these days perhaps some theatre or other will put on a play where we shall see a revival of the fashions in which our fathers thought themselves just as captivating as we ourselves think we are, in our modest garments" (Baudelaire 1995, 547).

Baudelaire had already observed the performative power of fashion and its ability to give individuals the possibility to express themselves and their views on society. The example of the dandy, as Baudelaire describes, is an important figure of modernity that rebelled against the decadence of his age by living a luxurious life without having an occupation 'other than elegance' (Baudelaire 1995, 401). The dandy used fashion and the practices of social dress to express a social attitude. Because fashion is an important instrument for

individuals to perform and express a certain message of social identity, it is also perceived by Baudelaire in terms of signification. Here we see that Baudelaire lays the foundation for what would become the cultural system of fashion. A particular style of dress that may be 'captivating' at the time it is performed may be performed again later to signify the historical conditions of a certain time period. A style of dress survives the trick of time even though those who wore the style are unable to tell their stories. He demonstrates how fashion is a modern phenomenon, an instrument that can be used to fabricate and perform identity. As in Baudelaire's time, fashion's performative power was of great importance for the dandyish rebellion.

Fashion is a performance that exists through a performative logic founded in modern times. If fashion has emerged as a performative logic in the context of modernity, we must ask how it evolved under postmodern conditions. Fashion has, according to Elizabeth Wilson, developed under postmodern conditions into a cultural artifact: *performance art*. This means that fashion, as it was previously connected to social reality and the clothing style of individuals in society, has developed into a cultural and symbolic system that: "acts as a vehicle for fantasy... reflects also the ambivalence of the fissured culture of modernity" (Wilson 1985, 246). In his seminal work *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967), Guy Debord interprets fashion's status as part of the spectacle of modernity that is "colonized by false desires and illusions" and "spatializes time and destroys memory" (Evans 2003, 19). Fashion can be taken as a "plundering of history" (McRobbie 2000, 259). I interpret this quote as saying that fashion, as a symbolic discourse has succeeded in disconnecting itself from society and, moreover, from materiality.

Fashion as a performance is, in other words, to say that *is* its image and exists only in representation (Lehmann 2000). To understand the implications of this idea, I will offer an

example that perfectly illustrates this disconnection between an artistic and cultural interpretation of fashion as *performance art* and fashion, as previously understood, as significant to a material reality.

## **Faction**

Theories that situate fashion in a postmodern spectacle society result in a clash or a conflict between two visions of fashion: an artistic vision of fashion versus a materialist vision on fashion. To illustrate my point, I would like to refer to the term '*faction*' formulated by Diane Vreeland, a former editor of *American Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar*. The term *faction* is a metaphor for how fashion incorporates 'facts' and transforms historical facts into a spectacular and desirable image. In *The Eye has to Travel* (2012), a documentary about Vreeland's life and career, a particular episode focuses on Vreeland's work for the *Metropolitan Costume Institute* in New York, where she curated highly spectacular exhibitions that were so successful in attracting visitors that the institute reappeared on the cultural map. Vreeland has left her mark on fashion exhibitions to come. Her approach to costume history, which was controversial at that time, has now become the norm for fashion exhibitions in museums worldwide.

However, what is particularly interesting about the success of these exhibitions is that it overruled scholars' critiques of the lack of historical accuracy in the exhibitions. In her work as a curator for costume-exhibitions, Vreeland was not particularly fond of representing a *true* or verifiable picture of a particular age. The artistic vision of costume history meant that she refused to settle for historical verifiability. Instead, her curating was directed at producing a fantasy and dream world. She used props, music, lighting and mannequins who became protagonists in the story acting out dramatic scenes. She even

reworked old costumes to make them fit the mannequins instead of the reverse. Costumes were not residues from the past but became celebrations of the past<sup>5</sup>. Like a film director, Vreeland projected an illusion about a certain historical period to the public. As expected, her exhibitions were critiqued by historians who felt the whole purpose of was to offer a true image of everyday life, not to make a Hollywood drama of it. In an interview, Vreeland was asked if she was ever concerned about fashion's references to historical events. In other words, the intention of the question was to ask if Vreeland intentionally replaced the concept of historical verifiability – a notion that has been applied by the institute since its beginning – with the logic of fashion, which is dedicated to the creation of a world of illusion, desire and fantasy. In response to the question of if she was worried about presenting a false narrative of the historical context of clothing, Vreeland responded: "Never worry about the facts, just portray an image to the public... *Fashion is faction*".

Vreeland's concept of *faction* signals this idea of fashion as *performance*. In Vreeland's exhibitions, the costumes have become part of fashion's performance, which is to portray an image to the public that is a mixture of historical knowledge and fantasy. In her exhibitions for the institute, Vreeland breaks with this logic and instead offers a more spectacular version of history in which the lines between historical 'reality' and fiction are blurred. Vreeland uses this logic of fashion as an instrument of irony, in which she breaks with the approach of the institute itself. Costume history, the material-historical approach of the institute, studies clothing as material signifiers of the past. Vreeland's actions can be interpreted as joking with the attempts of historians to display a linear development in costume history as a component of everyday social life in the past. By making history into a 'show' (i.e., transforming costume history into *faction*), Vreeland explodes this distinction

---

<sup>5</sup> See for more information the website <http://www.dianavreeland.com/page/posts/op/read/id/73>

between historical dress and fashion as a modern phenomenon. Fashion - or *faction* in this particular case - is an instrument of irony: It ridicules the desire to produce a unified historical narrative about reality. It is also a powerful medium that can be used to deconstruct normative visions of history and historical facts. Instead of studying them as objects significant to a certain historical period, Vreeland shows how the clothing people have worn in the past still fit perfectly in a contemporary narrative about clothing and other modes of adornment.

Vreeland's approach to fashion is not unproblematic. Vreeland's artistic interference can also be interpreted as an act of imposing an artistic vision of fashion onto a costume institute, which collects and constructs with an eye to historical significance. The conflict between Vreeland's artistic approach and a scholarly view on costume history is grounded in fashion's ambivalence that, according to Wilson, is something that fashion and modern art share (Wilson 2003, 236). Fashion's ambivalence between an artistic view of fashion that sees fashion as a performance, play constructs a different politics than a critical materialist vision on fashion. This ambivalence haunts contemporary feminism: "Is fashionable dress part of the oppression of women, or is it a form of adult play? Is it part of the empty consumerism, or is it a site of struggle symbolized in dress codes? Does it muffle the self, or create it?" (Wilson 2003, 231).

Thus far, I have described the construction of fashion as a cultural phenomenon and placed it in the context of (post)modernity. From a cultural perspective, fashion can be understood as 'performance art', meaning that fashion produces a spectacular image that depicts the desires and illusions of modernity. Within a postmodern framework, we see that fashion has lost links with materiality and social reality. As in the example of Vreeland, fashion as a vehicle of fantasy tends to absorb all types of narratives and transforms them

into an attractive image. My argument is that a study of fashion that moves along this logic of fashion is unable to perceive the complexity of the object itself but instead partakes in the construction of a consumerist 'postmodern' narrative of fashion that endeavors the fantasy of fashion. From a new materialist point of view, I want to argue that an artistic vision of fashion has been cut off from references to a material world. But this does not necessarily lead to an oppositional or conflicting view of fashion. I think that there are possibilities within cultural, textual and visual interpretations of fashion to construct a materialist vision of fashion which both embraces the political potential of fashion while at the same time encouraging a critical attitude.

### **The academic arena**

I think that the conflict between, what we have seen already in the example of Vreeland's curating activities for the *Costume Institute* and previous historical ideas about collection, is a conflict between the status of fashion as art and a rather strict scholarly definition of material costume history. This conflict is also reflected in academic efforts to institutionalize studies of fashion and, as a disciplinary field, to settle within disciplinary borders. Since the 1990s, academic studies of fashion have emerged as an incredibly versatile and multidisciplinary field (Tseëlon 2010, 27). Social forces such as gender, class, ethnicity and sexuality frame the way we dress and choose our style of clothing. For these reasons, fashion has gained credibility as an object of academic attention and has been analyzed as a craft or business (e.g., costume history, design and journalism). When looking at the field of fashion studies, we see that as a heterogeneous field of studies, fashion studies reflect the ambivalent, double and oftentimes conflicting character of fashion.

In her effort to analyze the 'discipline' of fashion studies in an Anglo-American context, Efrat Tseëlon speaks of deep ontological and epistemological differences that are in a continuous power struggle between two traditions or 'ideal types'. The first tradition emerged from the humanities, arts, ethnography and museum-curation, where research methodology is designed for studying and classifying fashion artifacts for a detailed account of material reality. The second strand has emerged from the disciplines of sociology and cultural theory and are interested in fashion as a textual, symbolic system. Their methodology is designed to analyze, interpret and theorize fashion's significance in several cultural, artistic and social contexts (Tseëlon 2010). Within the latter field (socio-cultural studies of fashion), there exists another point of (dis)agreement in fashion studies, namely the distinction between dress and fashion. A sociology of fashion takes fashion as a concept worthy of analytical attention because it signals social activity, practices and identity processes. In sociological terms, "dress" is a material and social practice that can be observed and approached on the level of everyday life. "Fashion", however, is entirely symbolic. It is linked to social reality and identity performance, but only through the practice of providing symbols for fixing identity while simultaneously playing with the instability of identity (Davis 1992). Disciplines such as cultural theory, art history and film theory, approach fashion as a text rather than as a social practice (e.g. Hollander 1993; Barthes 1985; Wilson 1989), causing a conflict between the social notion of social 'dress' and the cultural notion of fashion.

What is occurring today in academic discourses, both inside and outside the disciplinary field of fashion studies, is that attempts are being made to study fashion's singularity: Fashion images are renowned for their fragmentary, postmodern and ephemeral status, outside of the consumerist context. Fashion images are viewed, despite commercial



purposes, as bearing artistic and aesthetic qualities (see Schinkle 2008). I find myself feeling uncomfortable reading these types of analyses because they tend to uphold fashion's disconnection from materiality. Fashion, as a differentiated entity, has developed as a commercial discourse and is embedded in various contexts. From a feminist perspective, I am not able to see fashion as an object 'stripped' from a cultural or material context. I do not have problems with conceptualizing fashion as performance art as such, but I believe that we must keep in mind that the context of production is intrinsically different from art: Fashion images are historically produced with an eye to their commercial purposes and thus are marked by a certain commercial view of sex, gender, race, etc. Speaking from the background of my job as a model in the fashion industry, I feel troubled by a cultural interpretation of fashion that does not take into account the production—and consumption—of the image. Therefore, I want to state that fashion should not be studied as a singular 'artistic' entity but as a cultural artifact that is imbued with meaning and must be properly contextualized in social and cultural contexts.

Recently, feminist academic scholars from disciplines like sociology and communication have begun paying attention to fashion. However, these scholars are more critical about fashion as an artistic and aesthetic object (e.g. Gibson 2007; McRobbie 2009; Wissinger 2007; Parkins 2008). Approaches that take fashion solely as a text or visual information have been criticized as 'reductive'. Instead, these feminist scholars focus on fashion as a system of cultural and material production, epistemology, embodiment and lived experience. They have in common a critique on cultural and textual approaches to fashion that ignore the complex situation of fashion in social and material contexts and possibilities for agency. I will turn to these scholars later.

## **Materiality: The (model's) body**

Analyzing fashion as a symbolic system that only arbitrarily refers to a material reality, the question that has been left untouched thus far is the situation of the body in fashion: “if practices are reduced to texts, the complexity of fashion and dress and the way in which it is embodied is largely neglected” (Entwistle 2000, 71). Cultural explanations have a tendency to explain and describe fashion as a historical system of representation that requires a methodological study using linguistic methods like semiotics and semiology. Cultural explanations that take fashion as a text do not always take into consideration the body, materiality and embodiment. I do not, however, believe that a cultural interpretation of fashion is unable to ask different questions. A cultural study and theory of fashion is not necessarily restricted to textual and visual approaches to fashion. Within a cultural critique and theory of fashion, there are possibilities for rethinking fashion, and its relation to the body and materiality.

Cultural theorists Caroline Evans and Minna Thornton have studied fashion from a cultural perspective. In this below reference, they write about the cultural and materiality of fashion. They take the example of Elsa Schiaparelli, who was seen as the Italian rival and counterpart to Coco Chanel, but much less the businesswoman than Chanel was. Less a businesswoman but more an artist, in the 1930s Schiaparelli created wild and outrageous designs. One of her most famous designs is the creation of the ‘Shoe Hat’, a hat, as the name signals, made into the shape of a high-heeled pump. Evans and Thornton offer a very interesting psychoanalytical interpretation of the ‘Shoe Hat’, as it was part of Schiaparelli’s approach of the repressed aspect in fashion. In their view, Schiaparelli’s ‘Shoe Hat’ is symbolic of the material body, as the material counterpart to psychoanalysis’s repressed

unconscious. This repressed body is an important element in Schiaparelli's fashion designs, as they describe:

“Behind her handling of women's fashion is a meditation on the wider category of dress itself as a cultural language that inscribes the body. Her approach to dress centres around an understanding of how it acts simultaneously to repress the body and to bring it into the realm of language - the symbolic. As repressed material, one might speak of the body as the 'unconscious' of clothing. Schiaparelli's famous jokes, for example the 'Shoe Hat', are made with reference to this repressed unconscious. She uses the device of displacement to suggest ways in which the unconscious is at work and at play within the language of clothes” (Evans & Thornton 1991, 53).

Evans and Thornton analyze Schiaparelli's design of the famous 'Shoe Hat' to support their theory that in fashion as a symbolic system, the material (the body) is repressed and brought into the realm of language.

Here it is evident how cultural theories of fashion are able to point to the heart of the conflict. Fashion, as a performance, represses the material body and reduces it to language thereby excluding 'matter'. Is this not the same problem sexual difference feminists encountered in Judith Butler's theory of performativity in which 'sex' – the body, or biology – becomes the passive surface for the inscription of gender (i.e., language)? The dichotomous distinction between nature and culture - as part of a phallogocentric logic - is also evident in the logic of fashion. This is not a new observation, as Anglo-American second-wave feminists have already criticized fashion as an instrument of patriarchy (e.g. Greer 1971; Rich 1986; Walter 1998; Gibson 2000). The crux is that a feminist response to fashion would be endlessly troubled by a logic of fashion that is grounded on the hierarchical binary of culture versus nature. The body, or nature, as the cultural category of woman is

associated with, is in the particular logic of fashion repressed. Biology is situated outside the realm of language and thereby made irrelevant. In my view, and certainly spoken from my standpoint as a fashion model, is a tragedy for fashion's workers.

We should not think lightly about the consequences of the repressed material body in fashion. The consequences are concrete, for as we have seen, fashion exploits the bodies of women who both form the labor-force in clothing production and work as fashion models, whose bodies are the object of fashion's symbolic. Fashion, if we regard it like Wilson who defined fashion as performance art that functions as a vehicle of fantasy, constructs an ideal body or bodily shape in the realm of the symbolic. However, and here I arrive to the center of the argument, the consequences of this constructed ideal body is that the material 'biological' body is rejected as irrelevant: "There can be no doubt as to the narcissism of fashion's project, that is, fashion presumes a 'bodily' form even as it rejects the material biological substance of that body as irrelevant" (Perthuis 2008, 179). The irrelevance of biology in the fashion image is, speaking from a feminist perspective, a tragedy. Let me explain this.

A piece of clothing, folded up and photographed in a two-dimensional manner is a commodity item, nothing more than a piece of clothing. But a 'dressed' body, on the other hand, is capable of representing the meaning of fashion. The body facilitates the transmission from a material piece of textile to a meaningful object. Conversely, the human body adorned by the object of fashion becomes meaningful as well, both socially and culturally. This intimate transmission is the work of the symbolic system of fashion. After all, desire for consumption is not enhanced by perceiving the depiction of a flat, formless set of clothing on a static clothing rack. Nonetheless, the significance of fashion is only to be recognized with the support of the material body, emerging through an intimate encounter

with the human body. The tragedy of fashion, however, is that the biological body in the fashion project is presented as irrelevant. This is a double tragedy for feminism. Referring to Simone de Beauvoir, women are in our Western culture associated with nature. If women identify with fashion, therefore become 'slaves' to the whims of it, it means that at the same time they are obliged to perceive their living body as irrelevant. I think this creates a schismatic relationship with the self and the body. It means having to live in their bodies while experiencing the irrelevance of the flesh itself.

Fashion models, as professionals in constructing a body for fashion are in this logic of argumentation subjected to the same mechanism. From my experiences working as a fashion model, I have encountered the consequences of the consumerist 'fantasy' of fashion as it creates the demands for body types and appearances for the modeling industry that, as a facilitative industry, is the supplier of bodies for fashion. In the interview (see addendum), I have narrated my experiences of becoming a body for fashion, which has failed in many ways as my body did not always fit the aesthetic norm of the moment. As de Perthuis mentions, fashion only presumes a bodily form. However, rejecting the biological body in fashion bears serious consequences for fashion models. As fashion creates an ideal body that rejects the material body, models are placed in a difficult position. Their work, which consists out of becoming an intelligible body for fashion, is essential to fashion. The fashion model gives human form and movement and adds 'life' to fashion. Fashion models are engaged in what Mears calls 'body projects': "By working on the body, models are producing a new self, not just a physical surface... Learning to be a model is like learning a craft. It requires immersion in practice before moving from a conscious series of steps to a tacit knowledge so deeply ingrained in the body that it feels like second nature" (Mears 2011, 108). Nonetheless, when following De Perthuis's argumentation, their work of crafting a new

'model'- self is essentially a practice of bodily labor as Mears explains. However, in regard to fashion, the living body is invisible or similarly rejected as irrelevant and therefore troubles the labor practices of models. Within fashion's narcissist project, the body becomes ontologically *given*, something that is and always has been already there. The results of this schismatic relationship with the body as indicated by fashion experienced by the models themselves, is certainly a possible track of further research.

For now, I choose to think a few steps further. If we agree that the production of fashion depends on bodily labor, I think it is time to rethink fashion as a material-semiotic system in which we are able to locate different bodies and practices. This implies that we must address the possibility of a politics that is able to account for multiple locations and practices enhanced by the system of fashion. This might sound abstract, but it is worth adding that this is a political strategy because it opens up a perspective on fashion in which bodies (in this case, the bodies of fashion models) are active in the materialization of fashion. In other words my intention is to take a step further in a theory of fashion that is politically motivated: I am looking for ways to identify biology in the fashion image and by doing so, ignoring fashion's dependence on an ideal that regards the body as irrelevant. By doing so, it is possible to move beyond the construction of fashion's ideal body and gain insight into how fashion depends on the bodily labor of fashion models. I will further enhance a discussion of bodily labor in the following two chapters. In the last part of this chapter, however, I am aiming at a feminist 'double-edged' vision of fashion from a new materialist point of view.

## **Feminist politics and fashion**

In situating the body of the fashion model in fashion, we have gained interesting insights in how materiality or living matter is made irrelevant in the construction of fashion. This situated perspective needs in my opinion to be positioned in a more dynamic, feminist approach to fashion. In arguing for a more dynamic vision of fashion, a new materialist view is inserted in the re-conceptualization of a strictly conceptual, semiotic view of fashion (or fashion theory). Pamela Church Gibson mentions the possibility of refiguring fashion by addressing the similarities between fashion and feminist politics and argues for a new, materialist mode of theorizing fashion:

“A mode of theorizing fashion that looked to more recent developments in feminist theory – to Braidotti, Irigaray, Le Doeuff and others- might at least consider the possibility of theorizing or ‘figuring’ fashion on its own terms, by beginning with the material as the realm rejected by masculine tradition as the senses: on the one hand, the world of fashion is a world of material things; on the other it is a world of constant change, transformations, shifting surfaces” (Gibson 2007, 355).

According to Church Gibson, a materialist theory of fashion must account for the two sides of fashion, one that is necessarily dialectical and must position itself between what Frederic Jameson calls “beyond a celebration and repudiation of fashion” (Gibson 2007, 361).

However, I would prefer to not refer to a *dialectical* vision of a materialist theory of fashion. Instead, I want to argue that based on a feminist materialist politics of fashion, it is possible to develop a *double-edged* vision of fashion. This double-edged vision is able to perceive both the cultural and material aspects of fashion and is not a dialectical quest. Envisioning fashion beyond its status of a text, image or sign is a new materialist gesture that helps to imagine the complexity of the object of fashion. Moreover, it is a vision with “a sharpened sense of particularity” (Kelly 1979, 224). Moving beyond a dialectics of fashion is a complex

project that requires imagination and creativity. Certainly, the emphasis on the body and the “bodily roots of subjectivity” (Braidotti 2009, 8) is imperative.

Therefore, how I see it, there are two paths that have been taken in academia today that are exemplary for the desire to reevaluate the status of fashion and hence move towards a more embodied and material understanding of fashion. Both examples apply, in my opinion, to be accounted for as developing new and creative visions of fashion. The first approach is to re-evaluate fashion’s status as an image and instead focus on the role of *affect*, the body and corporeality in the production and consumption of fashion images. The feminist scholar Llewellyn Negrin, is searching for the immanent roots of fashion namely in bodily experience and how we ‘live’ fashion. Therefore her aim is to trace the corporeal roots of fashion that emerges from a feminist quest for a “envision a new mode of dress, which engenders a sense of the body, not as a visual image, but as an active corporeal presence” (Negrin 2013, 142). In my opinion, Negrin’s proposal is illustrative for a dynamic vision of fashion, one that moves beyond the conventional image-led approaches.

Secondly, a feminist materialist view builds on existing feminist and cultural theories about fashion and certainly is related to Negrin’s immanent view of fashion, but one that tries sees opportunities in reviewing the ontological foundations of fashion. This particular material approach to fashion’s significance because it not only offers the foundation for uniting the body and fashion but also bridges a feminist politics with fashion, as the fashion scholar Ilya Parkins notes:

“Of course there exists a critical feminist discourse on fashion embedded in, for example, larger theoretical meditations on structures of femininity and embodiment. This is important and influential theoretical work in its own right, but it does not take fashion as its object; rather, fashion appears in these studies as one among a range of



symptoms of patriarchy's discipline of women's bodies. Still missing is a strong feminist theoretical literature that considers the cultural significance of fashion as a textual and material system" (Parkins 2001, 501).

Parkins sees a particular role for new materialism in investigations of fashion's ontological foundations, in particular the potential Karen Barad's *agential realism* as it addresses a feminist perspective from where we are able to perceive fashion differently. Barad's – agential--notion of *intra-action* is a new materialist and posthumanist reworking of the term performativity: "Material and cultural substances form the continuum onto which several events 'intra-act' and "how these places or events are made through one another" (Barad 2001, 103). Based on this idea fashion is no longer a hierarchical structured system based upon dichotomous oppositions; instead, it enables us to differentiate between the different agents that, through a process of *intra-action*, constitute the system of fashion. Here the material body is not rejected as irrelevant or ontologically *given* but rather gains agency in the process of making meaning.

In her discussion of Karen Barad, Ilya Parkins recognizes the object of fashion as a phenomenon that is not ontologically distinct from the body, but is constituted through the distinctions between the dress, the self and the body, a distinction that is 'constructed': "This dress I am wearing is different from me' – yet it does not essentialise them, it does not fix them. Neither the I nor the dress is static. Rather the constructed cut creates the grounds for intelligibility" (Parkins 503). Intelligibility is, according to Parkins, a key concept, for it is the ground on which knowledge is produced and "negotiated between agents as human, non-human, people and garments" (Parkins 506). In this sense, fashion is materialized and produced by different elements: "materialization is an (open but nonarbitrary) iteratively intra-active process whereby material-discursive bodies are sedimented out of the intra-

action of multiple material-discursive apparatuses through which these phenomena (bodies) become intelligible” (Barad 2001, 89). What Barad basically suggests is that there is the possibility of reinventing fashion by localizing the processes where fashion becomes intelligible: It is exactly at these ontological points where matter, language and power *intra-act* and produce the cultural phenomenon of fashion. In this line of thinking, we are also able to situate a perspective on the practice of fashion modeling in the process of fashion’s materialization and which material-discursive apparatuses are responsible for the construction of an ‘intelligible body’. The model’s body, as an intelligible body, is locatable on the intersections of materiality and language and therefore a situated perspective on their location offers great insights in how fashion is *intra-actively* constructed.

Parkins foresees an important role for feminist epistemology in rethinking fashion. Rethinking fashion through a materialist view means that we rethink fashion as a materialization and not as a pure textual concept or cultural artifact. It requires focusing on nodes in the web of these entangled dimensions in order to arrive at an idea of how fashion, as a visual, aesthetic logic emerges and how this is always materialized *intra-actively* with other agents. Barad’s *agential realism* is a critique of representationalism: It offers new conceptual tools to approach fashion without becoming trapped in a binary logic, and as a result of this, resists a reduction of a rather complex phenomenon to its symbolic meaning. Based on this view, a study of fashion must take into consideration the complexity of this cultural phenomenon. This calls for a vision of fashion’s complexity but is in fact, not new: Roland Barthes, the foundational figure of the fashion theory, already mentioned fashion’s

complexity. Fashion resists being reduced to a single substance, as he signaled in *The Fashion System* (2006, 45)<sup>6</sup>.

In other words, a new materialist analysis of fashion is not proposing an entirely new definition of fashion or intentionally breaks with existing approaches<sup>7</sup>. A new materialist approach to fashion is known for its 'transversality' and has "proven to be capable of opposing the transcendental and humanist traditions that are haunting cultural theory" (Dolphijn & Van der Tuin 2012, 94). For the case of fashion, a new materialist approach is able to trace the (ontological) points where materiality and culture intra-act, this is a different approach than most cultural theoretical explanations of fashion seem to offer. Anneke Smelik argues that a break away from the attention for the semiotic aspects and a focus on representation "is necessary because contemporary visual culture is changing [...] careful analysis is needed of the way in which subjectivity and identity are reconfigured and remediated" (Smelik 2007, 191). Therefore a materialist approach has the potential to break with reductive explanations and instead open the path for a different conceptualization of fashion. What I hope to have demonstrated that there is a possibility of connecting feminist theories of embodiment, corporeality on the one hand and feminist epistemology on the other, and make them allies in a confrontation with fashion. This confrontation is inherently grounded in the intention to develop a creative, feminist theory of fashion that emerges from a double-edged vision on fashion.

While in this chapter I have set the parameters for a materialist approach of fashion, in chapter two I choose to focus on the production of fashion. Fashion, as a cultural artifact, is produced, but how can we understand this mode of production? Moreover what is the

---

<sup>6</sup> See addendum for an elaboration of this argument. In this document I suggest that Barthes' experienced methodological problems when using a semiotic approach in analyzing fashion.

<sup>7</sup> See for a critique that new materialism has received in

role of fashion models in the production of fashion? Chapter two and three will further focus on the materiality of fashion modeling and draw a link with feminist attention for 'bodily labor'.

## **Summary**

Cultural theories of fashion have produced interesting and constructive insights about the symbolic repertoire of fashion by focusing on the semiotic and discursive aspects of fashion. I argue that cultural theories of fashion have not always been able to locate the points where a textual and material approach of fashion overlaps. As such, I want to argue that a new materialist approach to fashion enables me to situate the status of fashion models in the performative logic of fashion. It seems that in this specific logic, we encounter a particular ambivalent notion of the body in fashion that supposes a bodily 'form' while materiality is reduced to an irrelevant position outside the cultural frame. While in becoming an intelligible body for fashion, fashion models are simultaneously assigned an irrelevant position in the construction of fashion, which has serious implications for the organization of the modeling industry and fashion models' position within this industry. Having located the position of fashion models in fashion, I theorized implications of materiality's status for (the bodies of) fashion models. These observations have led to the proposal to re-envision fashion with the help of a new materialist feminist vision of fashion that is able to move beyond a commercial logic of fashion. A new materialist view on fashion, as I have shown, critiques representationalism and other exclusionary views and instead focuses on the intertwining of material and cultural aspects of fashion.

## **Chapter two: Fashion modeling and immaterial production.**

### **Introduction**

In the previous chapter, I discussed the status of fashion that, as a cultural artifact, is structured according to a specific cultural logic. As a mass cultural phenomenon, fashion in a postmodern era is understood as performance art; a vehicle of fantasy. However, I want to break open this exclusive focus on the cultural significance fashion. Certainly the perspective of the fashion model needs to be situated in a new materialist approach of fashion. In this and the following chapter, I conduct an analysis of the labor situation of fashion models in the modeling industry. These insights offer a view of the structures that constitute or even construct fashion as a symbolic, cultural discourse.

Fashion models, as workers without a legitimized definition, are most often positioned in-between labor categories. This positioning of fashion modeling in the spectrum of labor is necessary, as I will illustrate, because while lacking a labor-definition, the situated practice of fashion modeling as it is structured today creates an impossible *flux* for workers. This means that as workers, models must constantly navigate roles and positions. I will show how the modeling industry is structured in order to sustain this flux. Therefore, it is necessary to produce a definition of fashion modeling, one that is not directed at fixing modeling in a single position, but pays attention to what models are really doing: bodily labor. I want to show that conducting analyses of the structure of labor in the industry of fashion offers important insights into how a cultural discourse of fashion is materialized through material labor efforts. Fashion models are important figures in the production of

fashion. Analyzing their position in the industry of fashion helps comprehend the activities and practices that are performed in this process.

In this chapter, my argument is that models are actors in the immaterial production processes of fashion. As a cultural discourse, fashion produces new images according to trends and seasonal changes at a rapid pace. Think of commercial or editorial images in fashion magazines or photographs of high couture fashion shows – but these images do not simply emerge from nowhere. Quite the contrary, there is an industry behind it that is organized to support image-production. Therefore fashion is produced. In order to understand how fashion is produced and materialized in images and other forms of representation, I have chosen to theorize fashion by the means of “immaterial production”.

Immaterial labor and immaterial production are terms developed by the writers of the *Operaismo* movement (Negri & Hardt 2001; Hardt 1999; Lazzarato 1996; Virno 1996). This post-Marxist school originating in Italy is known for its political and critical theories of globalization. The movement’s main protagonist is philosopher and critical thinker Antoni Negri, who, with co-author Michael Hardt, published *Empire* (2001) and *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (2005). Their standpoint in the debate about immaterial labor (which has become a large, interdisciplinary discourse in academia and is widely published on) is based on a post-Marxist vision of labor and production. Negri and Hardt describe large transformations and shifts in the organization of labor in global society. Their main argument is that informatization “marks a new mode of becoming human” (Negri & Hardt 2001, 289). Industrial production is transformed by computer and communication technologies and informs the passage to what they define as an ‘informational economy’. In

this new economy, structures of labor are affected by this passage that has changed “the quality and nature of labor” (2001, 289).

Negri and Hardt define different sectors in the informational economy that as a result of the post-industrial shift have changed or even newly emerged. They qualify the sector of productive communication as a domain in the informational global economy, which produces services: “The production of services results in no material and durable good, we define the labor involved in this production as immaterial labor- that is labor that produces an immaterial good, such as a service, a cultural product, knowledge, or communication” (290). In this framework of thinking, fashion can be defined as a cultural product, and the labor involved in the production of fashion as immaterial labor.

In my opinion, fashion modeling as a labor practice has been analyzed insufficiently, if analyzed at all. Fashion modeling is an example of a type of labor that is not measurable in material terms – fashion models do not produce concrete goods by themselves but participate in the production of fashion’s immaterial products – which is one reason why theorists have not widely discussed this particular labor situation. As a result, fashion modeling has been insufficiently analyzed as a labor practice. Operaismo-theory is best equipped in efforts to perceive non-typical forms as labor situated in often, unstable relation with modes of production. Therefore, I see possibilities in *Operaismo* theories of labor that are able to account for the non-typical labor of fashion modeling.

Fashion modeling, as I want to argue, is a labor practice located in processes of immaterial production. The departure point for my argument is that fashion modeling is a highly vulnerable labor situation where appearance, body and beauty are the objects of economic trade. The demand for a ‘look’ or ‘type’ is subject to fluctuations in the market and

requires a flexible worker's attitude. The modeling industry is situated in the fashion industry, where creative cooperation results in the production of cultural 'immaterial' products, such as advertisements, fashion magazines and designer fashion shows. However, the broad concepts of immaterial labor and labor precariousness must be evaluated and positioned in a particular labor situation. However, the contradiction is that fashion models as workers contribute to the production of an *immaterial* product, but because they operate on the bodily and corporeal levels of activity, such as emotions and affect (fashion), their labor is essentially *material*. Fashion modeling is material, as this labor constitutes the material support for the immaterial production of fashion images. Therefore, a new materialist, situated analysis of fashion modeling continues to build on previous feminist debates about labor.

### **The global phenomenon of labor precariousness**

Currently, work is becoming increasingly precarious and affects every mode of labor within the differentiated continuum of labor, including freelancers, flex-, part-time and self-employed workers, but also the growing insecurity experienced by permanent employees of losing their positions. Since the 1990s national governments have successfully integrated labor-policies directed at a temporary workforce, but as an effect of the economic crisis since 2008, companies are becoming more inventive in creating strategies to improve the flexibility of the labor-force. Self-employed workers respond to the market's call for labor-flexibility, which workers must then pay for with an insecure position: "The flexibilisation of the labour market has led to a significant erosion of workers' rights in fundamentally important areas which concern their employment and income security and the (relative) stability of their working and living conditions" (Ozaki 1999, 116). These new tendencies are



especially evident in post-industrial and neo-liberal societies where a normative standard of full-time employment is losing ground to new models of labor, such as self-employment, freelancing or flex-work. We often suppose that such practices occur outside the EU, but the rise of precarious labor is taking place on a global scale and, therefore, also close to home, in the Westernized world.

Since 2006, the precariousness of labor has become a major concern for governmental and transnational state institutions, such as the EU (EU 'Flexicurity' 2008). As a result of labor market trends, which call for labor flexibility, the EU situates the growing trend of precarious work within the maintenance of the social security system. The term 'flexicurity' – based on first the Dutch and followed up by the Danish model of 'flexicurity' – signals a preoccupation with overcoming the demands of the labor market situated at the nexus of flexibility and security (Withagen & Tros 2004). In theory, the concept of 'flexicurity' seems an interesting and potential concept, but evidently lacks a proper theoretical framework (Withagen & Tros 2004). Withagen and Tros argue that governmental institutions, such as national parliaments and larger European Union organizations, are involved in an impossible flux of having to create movement in the fixed labor markets and capital while simultaneously being called into cooperating with social partners for social cohesion. This means that the EU faces an almost impossible task, as the call for flexibility irreducibly leads to erosion of the social security system and "worker's rights" while building up a system of social security for those who suffer the consequences of economic crisis or participate in precarious labor. According to the European Union's *Flexicurity* report (2008), it is mostly women, migrants and other minority groups who suffer the harsh consequences

of this trend in the labor market. The regulating policies of 'flexicurity' have been implemented and integrated in the EU's 'European Employment Strategy'<sup>8</sup>.

In academic spheres there have been intense discussions about labor precariousness in the context of the liberalization of the labor market. For instance, *post-Fordist* discussions about labor have discussed the liberalization of the labor market in relation to globalization. In this debate that positions the phenomenon of precariousness in the context of de-industrialization in the West caused by globalization where workers have been removed from conventional modes of labor and are often pushed into flexible, yet precarious, working situations. This creates a new class of flexible, often high-educated precarious workers: "Although there have always been many people living a precarious life, the modern precariat is a contrived structural feature of global capitalism. Globalization was built on what we now call 'neo-liberalism,' ushering in a market model based on maximizing 'competitiveness,' commodification of everything possible, and regulatory control of collective bodies perceived to be barriers to competitiveness and commodification" (Standing 2012, 591).

Fashion modeling as a labor practice is highly precarious because workers are often under-aged, self-employed and unorganized. The model as a self-employed worker is hired on a temporary contractual basis. Currently, only in the Netherlands, self-employed laborers account for at least 800.000 workers.<sup>9</sup> This heterogeneous group of workers share significant characteristics: high chances of future unemployment and low social security and income security, meaning that from such unstable, insecure working positions can be defined as precarious labor according to a *post-Fordist* view on precariousness. In this view, the

---

<sup>8</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=102&langId=en>: last accessed 24<sup>th</sup> of June, 2013.

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/economic-crisis-hits-the-netherlands-a-891919.html>. Last accessed: 24<sup>th</sup> of June, 2013.

position of freelance self-employed workers is precarious because they do not have the same access to national systems of social security, insurance or labor rights as do contracted laborers. They are not obliged to apply for national forms of social security, such as disability and employee insurance, national retirement funds and national benefits.

A *post-Fordist* conceptualization of labor precariousness leads to a view of reinforced regulatory control of the welfare state and the EU 'flexicurity' policies respond to this call (Withagen & Tros 2004). Without offering a detailed account of the precise shifts in the labor market, it is correct to state that the labor market is changing, and not always in a sustainable way. A post-Fordist view of labor precariousness is not misguided in this observation. There is, however, another element that is left out of a framework that inspires a regulationist view of labor "in the light of state and international institutions that mediate the social relations of production cannot account for the ways in which the production of labour power entails the *production of subjectivity* (Neilson & Rossiter 2008, 58). Neilson and Rossiter argument is that regulationist views of the labor market leave no room for the construction and understanding of political subjectivity for the simple reason that changes the organization of labor are not being questioned or acknowledged.

Withagen and Tros, as theorists and critics of the regulationist 'flexicurity' strategy of the EU, also acknowledge the importance of developing adequate representations for precarious labor but argue for a better understanding of precarious labor and how this trend can be situated within a conceptual framework of labor: "Studies on the flexibility-security nexus should be *theory-inspired*. Concepts such as 'flexicurity' represent a challenge to current theories in industrial relations and labour law research and analysis. The question here is whether our theoretical and analytical tools, as developed, for example, in corporatist theory, rational choice, (old and new) institutional economics and sociology can

adequately account for the emergence of the new concepts and strategies” (Withagen & Tros 2004).

In order to understand the reorganization of labor in a global era, it is necessary to not only comprehend shifts in the flow of capital (i.e., the capital shift from material to immaterial modes of production) but to also think about new concepts and representations of labor. I think that we also are in need of a feminist response to the global framework of labor, as women and feminine labor are more important than ever before. Therefore, the next section presents how discussions of labor are positioned in three debates: *Operaismo* theory, socialist Marxist feminism and standpoint theory. From there I make the move to an analysis of the modeling industry and the position of models within immaterial structures of production.

### **A cartography of critical theories of labor**

The concept of immaterial labor, however “ill-defined” (Gill & Pratt 2008, 20), holds transgressive potential, as it signals changes in the global, conceptual framework of labor and production. *Operaismo* theory emerges from a post-Marxist mindset and has become a highly important player in academic debates of labor. In a deepened understanding of labor precariousness I now want to view the concept in the light of *Operaismo* and feminist theories of labor. Labor precariousness is not a new phenomenon; it has been a reality for centuries as seen in examples of women engaged in domestic labor in the home (Hochschild 2000; Weeks 2007). Labor precariousness is also an important and relevant issue in the Italian *Operaismo* movement (Negri & Hardt 2001; Hardt 1999; Lazzarato 1996; Virno 1996). The Italian Post-Marxist *Operaismo* movement analyzes the collapse in the conceptual framework of labor through the concepts of immaterial and affective labor, which refer to

large global, political and economic changes in labor and production. Their work is subject to a growing academic debate on global politics and citizenship and has inspired many scholars to propose new theories and critiques of labor. *Operaismo* theorists argue that the proletariat transformed from a conception of industrial workers playing a more important role than other types of laborers, such as those engaged in reproductive labor, care work, domestic labor or even peasant labor. Here we find possible points where a feminist and *Operaismo* approach might overlap. I come back to that later.

In *Empire* (2001) Negri and Hardt position their discussions about labor precariousness in an approach of contemporary society. They argue that despite changes in modes of production under the post-industrial shift, the industrial working class has been displaced from its hegemonic position by other figures of production and “marks a new mode of becoming human” (Negri & Hardt 2001, 289). There are indications of shifts in the dominance and hegemony of labor, which thus far has been dominated by productive and material labor, or the production of ‘things’. In a late-capitalist, post-industrial era, changes in flows of capital are redirected to the production of services and other forms of immaterial production relations.

They also mentions that shifts in production such as the introduction of new communication technologies and the development of the service-industry has displaced the figure of the male industry worker. Therefore, departing from a Marxist viewpoint, *Operaismo* theorists want to formulate a more inclusive and expanded framework of *class* that includes the growing variety of labor today: “proletariat is a broad category that includes all those whose labor is directly or indirectly exploited by and subjected to capitalist norms of production and reproduction” (Negri 2000, 52). Taking Spinoza as a point of

departure, Negri and Hardt try to overcome this dichotomy between by reformulating the concept of class no longer as the domain of white males but in terms of multitude that signifies a “multiplicity of singular differences” (Negri & Hardt 2005, xiv). Thus a multitudinous class of workers is the “expanded notion of the proletariat, which becomes ‘multitudinous’ because it is no longer tied to specific nation states, and thus includes migrants and refugees moving across continents in search of a better life” (McRobbie 2010 66). Understanding class as multitudinous creates a more inclusive idea of class but also falls into the trap of reducing differences between workers and labor situations to a single category. Braidotti states that working class becomes multitudinous, which, it should be noted, is not the same as Deleuze’s complex singularities (Braidotti 2006, 64, 146). Deleuzian singularities are immanent processes of difference that are not organized in particularities (all, whole, substance etc.) but as singular events. In my view, Braidotti offers an alternative mode of thinking linked to sexual difference that contradicts the rather restrictive notion of multitude. Modes of labor are distinguished by different modes of mobility (Braidotti 2011, 7). This may be more effective in theorizing labor, as it accounts for differences among laborers, between forms of labor and within laborers themselves<sup>10</sup>. In chapter three, I will offer a description of fashion modeling in terms of mobility and travel.

The concept of multitude is an interesting philosophical concept, but encounters critique from both political and feminist views. I think the concept of multitude is problematic in the context of advanced capitalism. George Caffentzis critiqued Negri and Hardt for their celebrative attitude towards the concept of multitude and immaterial labor

---

<sup>10</sup> This approach of the labor situation of fashion models is linked to sexual difference and refers to Braidotti’s scheme of feminist nomadism in which “the key terms are “embodiment and the bodily roots of subjectivity and the desire to reconnect theory to practice” (Braidotti 2011; 150). She distinguishes three levels of this project: “difference between men and women”, “differences among women” and “differences within each woman” (151).

for he accuses Negri of ignoring the 'renaissance of slavery' in factories, agricultural sites and brothels in other areas of the global community (Caffentzis 1998). In a similar trend of critique Nick Dyer's critique to the concept of immaterial labor and the class-concept of multitude that arises from this debate appoints to exactly this paradox between a more inclusive category of class but one that might cover up differences that are gathered under the header of multiplicity: "may reveal valuable commonalities but can also cover up chasmic differences, fault lines of segmentation, veritable continental rifts that present the most formidable barriers for the organization of counterpower" (Dyer 2001, 73).

From a feminist point of view, the problem is that *Operaismo*-theory tends to formulate a political critique for a society without sufficiently accounting for the specificity and local differences. This critique of immaterial labor has proliferated in feminist critiques of *Operaismo* theories of immaterial labor, some of which I will discuss more in detail in the next chapter (Clough 2007; Weeks 2007; Fortunati 2007). What these feminist critiques of *Operaismo* theory have in common is the accusation of *Operaismo*-theorists for approaching the issues from a male perspective of labor that, despite wishing to overcome the binaries that have long haunted Western thought, have fallen in the trap of universalist accounts of society.

For instance, Angela McRobbie accuses Negri and Hardt of not accounting for the feminization of the labor force. McRobbie's critique on Negri's concept of multitude that lacks an understanding of an intersectional approach (McRobbie 2010, 62). They restrict the mentioning of women to figurations of a post-Fordist regime as they came to embody processes of mobility and transition (McRobbie 2010, 68). McRobbie argues that the labor-participation of women created new activity and dynamics in the post-Fordist, post-industrial system. She also argues that although *Operaismo* theory acknowledges the role of

gender in changed notions of labor and the extensive feminist research on labor, they have not enhanced a discussion of how feminist attention to the body and corporeality could enrich their notions of immaterial labor and affective labor. The result is that their theories present a rather general and universal account of bodily labor.

McRobbie's other point of critique is that gender is not taken into account by *Operaismo* writers in their post-Marxist discussions of capitalist consumption and its relation to new visual technologies. With the rise of media culture, capitalist processes such as consumption and spending have become gendered as feminine (McRobbie 2010, 66). Thus, media culture is not enforcing the mobility of women but instead fixes them in the role of consumer. Angela McRobbie rightly points to the missteps in the dialogue between *Operaismo* theory and feminist micro-political theory. *Operaismo* theory does not take into account the gendered spaces of capitalism but rather speaks from a universal, Eurocentric male perspective typical of a post-Fordist school of thought. *Operaismo* theory as such is adequate in pointing to the locality and specificity of labor-practices that extend the perspective of classical theories of labor, but does not fully account for social differences and specificities within and between forms of labor and their relations with different processes of production.

The question that arises is how to situate a feminist perspective within this framework: one that accepts the relevance of *Operaismo* theory in our global society and the position of workers in relation to instable flows of capital but that adds a feminist perspective on gender, race and sexual differences – which is developed through elaborations of socialist Marxist feminism and standpoint theory – that also play a key role in the structuring of labor and production. After all, materiality in feminist materialisms was



first and foremost an economical notion, following the work of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels.

Feminist Marxists since the 1970s have hotly debated domestic labor in relation to Marxist theories of exploitation, arguing that the domain of the home was a locus of capitalist control where material production was still dominant: “when work was typically still equated with waged production and material goods” (Weeks 235). Capitalism exploited the immaterial, reproductive labor that was performed by women in the privacy of the home. This economic status demanded that women settle for a gendered contract based on the ‘breadwinner principle’ where the man performs material labor and the women reproductive, immaterial labor. Within this critique of labor structured by gender and sex, feminist Marxism opened up a debate on unwaged domestic labor.

Arguably, this gendered distinction still exists in today’s global services and information and technology economy. Whereas material production previously dominated national economical labor activities, today material forms of production are, in large part, outsourced to low-cost countries. This is particularly evident in the fashion industry where the fabrication and production of clothing occurs in countries like Bangladesh and China. In post-industrial countries, reproductive and immaterial labor, which previously has been situated outside the frame of capitalist production in the private space of the home, has entered into the public space of today’s labor market. From a feminist Marxist perspective, the ‘new’ global economy has not changed the gendered model of labor. Instead capitalism has changed relations of production and affected the labor-participation of women who left the domestic, gendered space of the home. As a gendered category of workers, women have historically been associated with reproductive labor. Evidently, gender, sexuality and ethnicity have been sites of reproductive and immaterial labor.

The women's movement of the 1970s opened up the labor market for women who came to embody a new type of worker. Gender, sexuality and race are structural mechanisms that structure the labor market. Considering the conceptual hierarchy of labor, women have historically been responsible for performing reproductive labor, such as care-work, domestic labor, and the reproduction of the new generation has become associated with feminine types of reproductive work. Labor that is traditionally located outside a conceptual frame of the labor market (and even outside the category of the proletariat) is now making its way *into* the public labor-market. Therefore, capitalism opened doors for women to become part of the labor-force based on their presupposed skills of production and to shift to performing immaterial types of labor. Immaterial laborers are engaged in the production of immaterial products such as services, knowledge, cultural products and communication technologies (Negri & Hardt 2001). Simultaneously, women performing waged labor are increasingly targeted as consumers and customers of products, as seen in the example of female apparel of which sales have resulted in fashion becoming a billion-dollar industry.

Feminist Marxist debates produced important critiques regarding how labor has been structured to prevent women from entering the labor market that have focused on the gendered distinction between material waged labor and reproductive unwaged labor, but have lacked a detailed and situated perspective on micro-levels of labor. A feminist perspective derived from feminist standpoint theory in the later 1970s and early 1980s (Harding 2004; Hartsock 1998) focused on the differences in the spectrum of labor, such as that of reproductive labor of care. Standpoint theorists

“embraced its (that is, reproductive labor) differences from industrial production as a potential source of alternative epistemologies and ontologies... the contradiction

between the exigencies of capital accumulation and social reproduction gives rise to a variety of disjunctures and conflicts that could generate critical thinking and political action [...] from these exploited practices and marginalized subject positions” (Weeks 2007, 237).

In other words, the domain of reproductive labor in standpoint theory has appeared in various forms, more adjustable to the situated materializations and aspects of labor than a Marxist view has achieved.

Standpoint theory’s views on the gendered distinction of labor would validate the local and specific differences between labor and would account for the local positions of individual workers and *knowledge* about specific labor practices, including those that do not fit in a dominant framework of material labor. In feminist standpoint theory discussion of labor, Kathy Weeks cites the work of Hilary Rose who “explores the possibility of a feminist epistemology that integrates the knowledges gleaned from labors of the hand, brain and heart” (Weeks 237). This means viewing labor from the perspective of standpoint theory is not focused so much on the distinction between material and reproductive labor but rather on the possibilities of formulating an inclusive concept of labor; that is, standpoint theorist’s view of this concept integrates the different natures of labor, which may include emotional labor or the corporeal nature of affective labor. In spite of, or thinking along the lines of above-mentioned critique, *Operaismo* theory connects with a feminist political subjectivity that is based on the materiality of the body and embodiment.

### **Deconstructing a cosmopolitan narrative of glamour**

Until this point I have presented in macro-perspective theories of labor and the current situation in the global labor market. In the rest of this chapter, I will embed a more specific

understanding about fashion modeling in the discussion. The first important link with the rise of labor precariousness on a global scale is that fashion modeling in various ways applies to be accounted for as precarious labor. A modeling career is dependent on unforeseeable combinations of events: One day you are hot, the next day not. As I have experienced it, I found confirmation in the literature that is written about the fashion- and modeling industry (Mears 2011; Entwistle and Wissinger 2012). I realize that my modeling job generally fits the dominant glamorous idea of fashion modeling. The reactions I receive to my work are overall positive, even admiring. Certainly, beauty remains one of the most valuable assets for women. I admit that having been able to work as a model, whose work is based on the core asset of representing and performing a form of embodied beauty, is regarded as a privileged position in society. In the popular media, models are endowed with a cosmopolitan aura of glamour. They are important figures in the story of a neo-liberal, capitalist version of the cosmopolitan utopia of 'free world citizens' in their travels around the world.

Cosmopolitanism, as an ethical philosophy coming from a stoic tradition and further developed by Immanuel Kant, is a "normative philosophical framework for global ethics and international relations [...] it is the view that the moral standing of all peoples and of each individual person around the globe is equal" (van Hooft 2009, 2). However, cosmopolitanism is a term that has been incorporated in many global activities that bear imperialist, Western Eurocentric qualities. This notion has been incorporated in a variety of ways, including religious missionary practices, trade, or bringing civilization to native communities ("white man's burden") and scientific discourses (see Stoler 2002).

Cosmopolitanism is also evident today as it is absorbed in consumerist, capitalist discourses through the phenomena of mass tourism, global communication and information

technologies and through the promotion of global multiculturalism in fashion, music, and cinema. Rosi Braidotti calls this capitalist narrative of global world economy the capitalist brand of 'pseudo nomadism' that is "a commodified form of pluralism" in which "goods, commodities and data circulate more freely than human subjects, or in some cases, 'the less-than-human subjects who constitute the bulk of asylum seekers and illegal inhabitants of the world'" (Braidotti 2011, 6).

I feel obliged to deconstruct the dominant 'cosmopolitan' narrative that the figure of the fashion model represents in order to account for the precarious situation of fashion in the spectrum of labor and global capitalism. I choose to view the cosmopolitan, glamorous figuration of the fashion model within Braidotti's critical framework of capitalist *pseudo-nomadism* because it facilitates a critique of the economic role fashion models play in a global society. Viewed in light of cosmopolitanism, fashion models are the embodiment of cultural entrepreneurs, expressing a cosmopolitan construction of "political utopias in aesthetic or ethical guise, so that they may more effectively play that often proves, on inspection, to be ultimately an economic role" (Brennan 2003, 45).

Fashion models, similar to pop-singers and actresses but bearing differences in terms of labor, are indeed regarded by mass-cultural representations as cultural (female) entrepreneurs. However, the aura of glamour that surrounds these female figurations of cosmopolitan lifestyles reveals itself to be the aesthetic guise of a political utopia, playing an economic role in a global economy. In order to criticize and theorize this economic role fashion models play in the promotion of global capitalism, we must theorize fashion modeling as a form of 'pseudo-nomadism' and analyze their activities in terms of mobility: "The contrast between an ideology of free mobility and the reality of disposable others

brings out the schizophrenic character of advanced capitalism. Namely, the paradox of high levels of mobility of capital flows in some sectors of the economic elite with high levels of centralization and greater immobility for most of the population” (Braidotti 2011, 7). The structural labor situation of fashion models as embodied pseudo-nomads in which high mobility is compulsory is of interest to labor theories of the new global economy: “modeling work itself, while only performed by a minority of people, exemplifies wider trends in freelance and project-based work evident in other cultural industries” (Entwistle 2012, 5; see also McRobbie 2002).

The figure of the fashion model embodies the ideology of free mobility. However, this ideology makes us believe that fashion models are a privileged group, endowed with a glamorous aura as they travel around the world and live exciting, personal lives while being admired for their beauty everywhere. The ideological construction of free mobility associates the high level of mobility with a cosmopolitan narrative. Nonetheless, this narrative plays an important economic role in the promotion of a pseudo-nomadist form of cultural entrepreneurship. Supermodels like Doutzen Kroes, Kate Moss and Naomi Campbell may indeed live a glamorous lifestyle as the popular story tells us to believe; however, we must keep in mind that these women are the lucky few in the business. The remaining ‘anonymous’ working models in the industry experience the everyday reality of having to work hard in order to secure an income in a market where their labor is constantly revalidated according to the ever-fluctuating aesthetic views of the fashion industry. The figure of the fashion model in the form of popular and commercial images is a false representation of the workers’ everyday reality in the modeling business.

One of the conditions of mobility expressed in the demands for sustaining a successful modeling career is *travel*. In this view, we think of travelling in terms of privilege and world citizenship: “the world is my playground” (VanToch 2013). But for models – as is also true for flight attendants, academics, and NGO-workers, among others – traveling is a *necessity*. Here we encounter the other side of the global coin. Even within an economic class with high levels of mobility, mobility is enforced on the bodies of fashion models. This relatively small group of workers is positioned in an impossible flux: As a group of laborers, fashion models can be characterized by high levels of mobility. “All modelling markets are rooted in cities. Different cities have different histories and norms, all of which set the tone for how ‘the look’ happens regionally” (Mears 2011, 55). To supply the demand for looks, modeling agencies are located in almost every city around the globe and place where there is a demand for looks. Bookers working at modeling agencies are recruiting new models in the local area and send their models to other cities. The consequences are that this high level of mobility does not necessarily lead to a privileged subject-position but that a high form of mobility is imposed on the bodies of the workers for economical reasons.

Joanne Entwistle’s term aesthetic economy is meant to describe the complex interplay between modes of fashion production and the demand for looks (Entwistle 2002). Modeling is part of this aesthetic economy and models embody aesthetic value as their looks are being valorized in accordance to fashion production. Fashion models must move along the flow of capital. In other words, if a client in Tokyo wants a particular look, models that match these aesthetic criteria are flown in from different parts of the world. In other cases, as the demands of looks are as ever unpredictable, modeling agencies in fashion capitals keep a group of models in an apartment in order to always be ready to meet the demands of

their clients. When a girl does not match their expectations and is never booked by a client, she is sent home with a large debt to her account<sup>11</sup>.

If we view the reality of the job as it is the case for the majority of anonymous models, the cosmopolitan facade of glamour is instantly brushed away. From here, we are able to further theorize the situation in terms of labor precariousness and the risk of high mobility and flexibility in performing the job. Fashion models are highly mobile travelers, rushing behind the flows of capital, hoping to be one of the lucky few to be in the right place at the right time. They are endowed with an aura of glamour and their world is represented as the domain of privileged (female) subjects. But behind the glamorous glow exists a precarious labor situation that requires feminist attention. Therefore, fashion models can be regarded as pseudo-nomads – or pseudo-nomadic bodies – and not as nomadic *subjects*. As embodied workers, the bodies of fashion models are under continuous governance:

“Advanced capitalism is a surveillance society, a system of centerless but constant security that pervades the entire social fabric” (Braidotti 2011, 5). I think that the position of fashion models in the global world economy is significant for a critique of global capitalism. Fashion models as pseudo-nomads are subjected to high-demands of flexibility, mobility while lacking access to social system of welfare: “As a labor market, modeling is prototypical of precarious work in the new economy” (Mears 2011, 253).

A project aiming to define fashion modeling as fashion work needs to have an eye for the complexity of their labor including the power relations that control and allow to emerge this multitudinous class of workers. In performing their labor models are pervaded by a system of surveillance pervading the social fabric: “Stripped down, exposed as objects for

---

<sup>11</sup> The documentaries *Girl Model* (2011) and Channel 4's tv-series 'The Model Agency' (2011) detail practices in the modeling industry, from model scouting and agency's commercial activities, and are, in my view, well presented.



inspection against anonymous criteria, models work under constant surveillance. Exposure is a key disciplinary mechanism through which models mold their bodily capital. At castings, at jobs, and among bookers, a constant gaze breaks down the model's body, ruthlessly, carefully, searching for its faults" (Mears 2011, 99). But as I will demonstrate in the following section it is difficult to define fashion modeling in terms of labor: "Like athletes, dancers, and sex workers, models use their corporeality as a form of capital" (Mears 2011, 88). Models are in other words, entrepreneurs of the flesh. How to define their labor situation without losing an eye on the complexity of their situation? What exactly do models do? How can we ever possibly speak of a labor situation if we are not sure what kind of labor fashion models are performing?

### **The immaterial industry of modeling and labor precariousness**

In overall, there is a lack of understanding of what models do in their daily labor is illustrated in the below example. Fashion modeling is not always taken seriously as *labor*. This is evidently illustrated by the case of immigration laws in the USA for fashion models. According to 'Bloomberg' (a multinational mass media company based in New York City), after having assessed the data on visas given to different classes of workers, it seems that fashion models have never been labeled as categorized workers who can apply for an American visa:

"In 1990, Congress revised immigration laws to create visa classes for performers, athletes, and other specialized workers. But it was only after the revision was passed that Congress realized they had forgotten to include any mention of models — so foreign models were suddenly ineligible for any kind of visa to work in the U.S. In 1991,

Congress passed an amendment that tacked models on to the H-1B, a visa intended for temporary foreign workers in "specialty occupations (Sauers, Jezebel.com)".

The case of immigration laws in the USA shows that fashion models as workers fall 'in-between' either the large categories of cultural workers, athletes and performers or the similarly large category of educated tech workers. Although fashion modeling as a labor practice has more similarities with the visa-class created for artists, athletes and performance than with tech workers, they have not been included in this category by Congress. Fashion modeling is a highly local, specific and different type of labor and, therefore, does not lend itself to being properly accounted for by rationalist theories of labor that have produced a classificatory view of labor. Fashion modeling is a form of non-typical labor, and it is very difficult to see these practices as real forms of labor, simply because models do not produce a recognizable product. Rather, they are participants in the making and production of an immaterial product of fashion. As such, fashion models always fall in-between categories of labor, as we have seen in the example of visa policies in the USA where models are placed in the category of 'specialized labor'.

This ignorance towards fashion modeling is a prime example of the lack of knowledge about fashion modeling as a labor-practice, or even worse the ignorance of being able to define fashion modeling as a labor-practice at all. The fact that models are not organized in labor unions, that they are self-employed and, most importantly, that a definition of what they do professionally is lacking contributes to this general ignorance. Because fashion modeling is not defined as a labor practice, this translates into precarious labor situations, such as numerical flexibility, high dependence on bookers and agencies and high levels of mobility. Lacking labor protection and security, fashion models become free-floating objects

in the sea of the new global economy without the privileges granted to a grounded, protected working class.

The example of the immaterial organization of the modeling industry illustrates the necessity for a located perspective of the organization of labor in immaterial industries of production. The immaterial organization of the modeling industry prevents a view of labor intending to regulate the profession within traditional arrangements of labor and instead demands an improved understanding about its complexity. As said, the organization of the modeling industry appears to be emblematic for a structural, precarious position that applies to the category of labor precariousness: short-term, insecure and poorly paid jobs – which apply to ‘editorial’ and prestigious jobs – combined with precarious, insecure working conditions create structural uncertainty. How exactly is the production of labor power of fashion models, who become fashion workers, related to the immaterial industries of fashion? In the following paragraphs a situated perspective on the modeling industry is employed that captures the level of precariousness of the workers in the modeling industry.

Models are independent contractors who fully depend on their agents, who rely on a sense of the aesthetic trends in the fashion industry. This situation has been utterly ignored by the academic fields of media and cultural studies, which have (with notable exceptions) woefully neglected cultural production or have, at times, become caught up in the hyperbole of fields like web design or fashion, believing their myths of ‘coolness, creativity and egalitarianism’ (Gill, 2002, 70). Fashion modeling demonstrates how the characteristics of precarious labor, such as the lack of systems of social security, affect even those privileged subjects who are free to move with the flows of labor and capital. As a fashion model, I am a self-employed independent worker who works on a freelance, independent contractor basis.

Characteristics of freelance, self-employed labor include an overall lack of security, including income security, labor security and social security.

This precariousness is very much related to the immaterial production of fashion. The position of models is structured in accordance with the demands of the fashion industry but is situated in the economic network-structure of the modeling industry. The modeling industry is a facilitative industry for the promotional purposes of fashion, cosmetics, cars and other goods. The modeling industry in itself is organized to facilitate the immaterial production of fashion that consists of, as I have argued in the previous chapter, the continuous production of new images and symbolic information translated in 'trends' and 'looks'. The practices of the modeling industry are established as economic trade through an immaterial asset: beauty, which is culturally valued and highly appreciated but is also economically valued in the fashion and cosmetic industry. The modeling industry facilitates the immaterial demands of these markets by supplying them with workers' bodies. To meet the demands of the ephemeral cultural industry of fashion (see chapter 1 of this thesis), the industry of 'looks' is structured in order to provide flexible, mobile workers who are able to embody such fluctuating aesthetic demands.

Fashion models are self-employed workers represented by (multiple) fashion modeling agencies. The way the modeling industry is structured creates a high dependence of workers on agencies, enhancing the precariousness of its workers. Without their modeling agents, who are powerful actors in the network of immaterial production, as they are the tastemakers in the market and for that ones who create a 'buzz' or hype in the industry (Mears 2011, 155). Certainly, modeling agents have the power to make or break a model's career as they are considerably the inventors of modeling careers. The transaction between

a model offering her services and the booker's sales qualities is essentially *immaterial* because: "Bookers do not sell models at some predetermined market price, since, of course, none exists. Nor do wages emerge from a set of rules 'out there' waiting to be followed, because a model's human capital is ambiguous, her productivity is unobservable, and her return on investment is fundamentally unknowable" (Mears 2011, 161). The interdependence between models and bookers is an example of how immaterial production is organized. The production of labor power in the modeling industry is not measurable because the specific trade in human capital is highly insecure and unknowable. Modeling agents are always on the hunt for 'new faces' in order to be able to feed the demand of fashion for new looks.

This demand for new looks is also translated in the flexibility of the modeling agencies to provide the newest looks, but also to offer special arrangements in the form of economic transactions. Modeling agencies offer services customized to the demands of flexibility in the fashion industry. An illustrative example is the free services modeling agencies provide for their clients in which they are able to place an option, or request a model, which they can cancel free of charge within a certain time limit. "This gives clients the right, but not the obligation, to make a purchase" (Mears 2011, 22). For models, this particular system of free-of-charge options requires considerable flexibility. If a client expresses interest in my services and looks as a model, and uses the service of placing an option, I must mark this block of time in my agenda. But options are made out of air: the chance that an option results in a booking is not at all clear. The options can be cancelled at any time, free of charge. Options, as Mears has observed; "leave behind an anxiety-producing trail" (Mears 2011, 84). The days in the calendar of a model are no longer hers to fill, but are in the hands of the agents and the client.

## Possibilities for labor regulation

After experiencing the precarious situation of a fashion model myself, I have been given it a lot of thoughts to labor regulation. The modeling industry, so highly unknown to the most of us, how would any form of labor regulation enhance improvement in the labor situation of fashion models? Based on my knowledge of feminist politics, I can offer two possible approaches. The first approach is to think in terms of *equality* by offering fashion models 'labor rights'. If we view fashion modeling as a practice embedded in the market-space of looks, models can be figured as workers for whom it is a primary task to become a valuable 'look' that can be sold and traded in the modeling industry. This is clearly a strategy of emancipation and equality politics, which continues to be the "most efficient way to effectuate a solution for certain problems" (Van der Tuin 2007, 12). Equality politics strives to be a form of emancipation that makes excluded or inferior others equal, primarily by according them the same rights as the privileged subjects of society (Scott 1986).

For fashion modeling a political strategy of equality would *not* actually be the best option because it has the tendency to make differences irrelevant and to evacuate differences between positions and situations. I foresee that in allowing models the package of labor rights the problem occurs that the specificities of their bodily labor are made irrelevant. Because their labor is not directed at causally producing a durable 'tangible' good but their looks, personality and bodies are invested in the production of cultural, symbolic and immaterial goods of fashion, their labor situation demands a localized perspective on the complex relation between various forms of labor and production. As we have encountered in the strategy of equality politics in feminism, the female body becomes a

barrier to the greater goal of labor rights. Any acknowledgement of the bodily roots of subjectivity would be missing in the process of granting models labor rights.

Another aspect of equality politics and the demand for labor rights is the possibility for so-called 'top-down' regulations. For example, in January 2013, the government of Israel passes a law intended to ban the use of underweight models in commercial ads and campaigns (NYdailynews). The outcome of this law is that models must actually prove a healthy medical status by not superseding the indicated minimum body mass index of 18.5. Those who fail the test are banned from working. I think this will have harmful effects for models. The work of fashion models is similar to other types of work in which the female body is used as an instrument and object of labor and is highly precarious, such as sex work or domestic labor. Again, models are becoming the object of a governing gaze that makes claims about their appearance, which results in a double-burden for models. After all, they are involved in a relation of dependence with their bookers and fashion designers. In my view, the Israeli government is reacting to the media's cry articulating the public's discomfort with the display of skinny bodies and is not acting in the interest of the workers. Here we see that regulations of immaterial industries of production are often not concerned with equal labor rights for the workers (Uden, van 2012. web).

The second approach may be more productive in passing by the negative outcome of a 'top-down' regulative approach. It is possible to describe fashion modeling in terms of the model's relation with the type of production in which we acknowledge differences. As entrepreneurs, models are located in the marketplace for looks where their human capital is for sale in the form of bodily services. The advantages of a politics of difference is that it is able to account for the differences between workers and locations in which the body and

bodily labor is no longer an obstacle. However, a political strategy based on difference may also be less effective in the context of traditional labor arrangements in the form of labor unions and other institutions because the organization of labor rights is based on traditional arrangements functioning according to general commonalities between groups of workers, which, then again are based on clear definitions of labor. Secondly, the bargaining power of labor unions is structured within the space of nation-states and are unable to perceive the growing number of highly mobile workers who are lacking of a stable basis (Stone 1995, 991). Fashion modeling is a specific labor situation positioned within structural organizations of particular immaterial industries. The structure of this labor situation prevents to organize and regulate their labor in traditional arrangements because transactions are not made in a traditional, material market-place where goods are being traded for a predetermined market price. Furthermore, they are workers who easily escape from the bargaining power of labor unions because their labor transcends national borders.

To think of strategies of empowerment would demand a local focus on their structural situation in immaterial industries of production “where entrepreneurs are not engaging in traditional organizational membership contracts and roles” (Gill & Ganesh 2007, 247). This requires to think passed traditional and regulationist approaches of labor. Instead, the acknowledgement of different subjectivities in the world of labor requires creative imagination. Such a strategy benefits from the conceptual framework of *Operaismo*-theories of labor and production. Therefore, in the following chapter I will extend the discussion about immaterial labor and fashion modeling but with a focus on material and *bodily* labor. It is at this point where only a feminist focus on the materiality of labor is able to account for the complex situations fashion models are involved. A feminist take on the immaterial labor



debate may lead to knowledge about feminine gendered types of labor, thereby creating a distinctive view on corporeal aspects of labor.

## **Summary**

Having focused on possible ways of theorizing and accounting for the structural situation of fashion models situated in the global modeling industry, it has become apparent that we must be very careful to account for the complex labor situation. The political potential of *Operaismo* theories is evident, as the writers have noticed that new forms of struggle from newly emerged forms of labor are positioned outside of traditional organizations of labor. Fashion modeling is situated in the immaterial industries of fashion. Their situation oftentimes escapes a regulatory view from governmental institutions and within these traditional institutions it is difficult to organize and regulate a class of workers without a general definition of labor activities. A labor-perspective informing a regulationist view would for these workers probably do them more harm than it brings solutions. *Operaismo*-theories of immaterial labor have more potential than standard views of labor and regulation, for the reason that it offers the ground for acknowledgment of the political subjectivity of laborers.

## Chapter three: Fashion modeling and bodily labor.

### Introduction

In this chapter, I want to conceptualize fashion modeling as labor that grasps not only the meaning of their labor but also the materiality of the position itself. I realize that it is not desirable to position a group of workers in a particular category because this may lead to a determining focus and make them an object of governing power. Therefore, I situate my perspective in the genealogy of sexual difference feminism and new materialist methodologies and theories. As I indicated in the introduction of this thesis, this means that approaching fashion modeling demands a certain double-edged view: a perspective enabling us to be both critical and creative and that results in a visionary mode of thinking embracing lived embodied experience and the bodily roots of subjectivity. A double-edged vision is rooted in, as Rosi Braidotti explains, lived embodied experience and bodily roots of subjectivity. Furthermore, a vision rooted in embodiment resists “fixation and is insatiably curious about the webs of differential positioning” (Haraway 1987, 590). In other words, a definition of fashion modeling that is informed by feminist embodiment is not fixed but acknowledges differences: differences between workers, situations and experiences. To take fashion modeling as a bodily situation in fashion, I believe, activates a new materialist vision on fashion, which is, indeed, the main purpose of this thesis.

We must understand how fashion not only structures desires and perceptions of women’s bodies but is also *structured* and *produced by* the labor of women’s bodies. In other words, my wish for this final chapter is to offer a definition of fashion modeling in which a particular definition of their labor is made central in our accounts of fashion as a

material-semiotic system. I want to call for a perspective on the model's body and how the body as a cultural significant plays a crucial role in the production of fashion. I think that fashion's narcissistic project of constructing an ideal bodily form leads to a dangerous ideal of the body that affects the labor of models in the severe ways: If tailors' mannequins with their ideal sizes could move, models made out of living matter would soon be unemployed. The model's body in this case signifies the status of the body in fashion, which, as I illustrated in the first chapter, is only recognizable as an ideal body (see e.g. Perthuis 2006; Hollander 1993). From this position, the model's body is only significant as a material support for fashion: a clothing rack of flesh. Consequently, the human body is entirely dissolved in fashion's disavowal of reality and lived experience. It is therefore a feminist political project to re-define the function of the body in the labor of fashion models who are fashion's workers.

Taking the labor of fashion models seriously as a bodily situation in fashion is a feminist political strategy that is part of a feminist materialist response to fashion. Fashion modeling as a labor-practice in the cultural industry of fashion offers us insights into the material construction of fashion and the mediating role of the *body* in constructing fashion. But the status of the body in fashion, as it is now, certainly does not enable a re-envisioning of fashion modeling. Therefore, I propose rethinking the situation of the body in fashion by defining fashion modeling : "as an experience of embodiment and the outcome of practical actions taken by individuals on their body" (Entwistle 2000, 71). In other words, by interpreting the labor situation of fashion models as the outcome of actions models practice through their bodies, we can perceive the measures they must take to become an intelligible body. Furthermore, in this regard it is possible to understand fashion modeling as a material

labor practice because models are the embodiment of fashion and thereby constitute the materialization of fashion.

### **A double-edged perspective on fashion modeling**

Speaking from a feminist theoretical standpoint, I want to focus on the agential and empowered aspects of fashion modeling and view them as agents in the construction of a look or rather in their individual projects of *becoming* a look. A focus on fashion modeling as a combination of embodied and subjective acts and not as a social position prevents us from reducing a complex embodied situation to one single social position from that is to be made fit to classificatory labor theories. This vision enables the fashion workers to construct a situation on their own through the narration of shared experiences, knowledge and social practices. Therefore, I take fashion models as agents in the production of fashion. Fashion models are workers in the fashion industry, and their bodies support the creation of the image. This type of labor is material, corporeal and embodied. Their situation is defined by the *narratives* about the embodied meaning of their work. In producing situated knowledges about fashion modeling, we must value their embodied experiences as valuable contributions to a material analysis of fashion.

The product the model delivers is a commodified 'look' that is created through combined efforts of the body and the self. According to Joanne Entwistle, the distribution of valued knowledge about a fashion aesthetic is intertwined with economic calculations: "A culturally valued look (the model's body) is produced through processes of cultural valorization, through the exercise of culturally valued forms of knowledge and through winning prestigious forms of work within the fashion modeling network" (Entwistle 2002, 319-320). In other words, economic calculations are made on symbolic knowledge, which

enables professionals to recognize and trade on potentially right looks and appearances. As a model, it also works in reverse. Fashion models must incorporate the knowledge of how to perform, behave and look good according to a valued cultural aesthetic. This means that fashion models 'do' more than just wear clothes and look good.

Understanding how to dress, move and behave is crucial for subjects to become a model and constitute the embodied bodily situation in fashion. In this sense, fashion models are obliged to acquire symbolic capital in order to successfully commodify their bodies and personalities to make their 'look' valuable. The symbolic capital alleges aspiring models to sell and trade on their looks and type. However, a double-edged perspective on the body is necessary because the body is the object of commodification while also contributing to the materialization and thus commodification of a fashion image. The body is, in other words, active in embodying the right 'look', but is at the same time the object of these practices. In such processes of immaterial production, there is a great amount of emotional labor involved to expand the proximity between the body as a product and as an instrument of labor. Producing the right embodied look requires knowledge about fashion's logic and how it is deployed in a market of looks.

According to Braidotti, Negri defends Spinoza's materialist metaphysics as a new political ontology. Spinoza advocates a republican and democratic *potentia* against the dogmatic and autocratic *potestas* (Braidotti 2006, 147). In understanding power as not simply constraining (*potestas*) by thinking power as *potentia*, it is possible to imagine "decentralized or mass conceptions of force and strength" to challenge capital at its core (Negri & Hardt 2000, 262). A situated 'double-edged' approach is necessary here for we must take into consideration the complex but situated notion of power in order to analyze

the restraining effects of modeling as well as the potentiality of the practice itself. By improving our understanding of the material labor situation of fashion models, we produce situated knowledge about located practices of fashion. From the viewpoint of embodiment, it is possible to perceive both the restraining (potestas) and potential (potentia) aspects of fashion modeling.

How can we think of fashion modeling as a type of labor that is concerned with becoming and embodying a look to fulfill the demands of fashion? What are the restraining aspects of bodily labor and how can this type of labor enlist emancipatory, pleasurable and even liberatory elements? “Women and men, far from being docile bodies, can experience pleasure and agency in settings rife with powerlessness and objectification” (Mears 2011, 117). A double-edged perspective of the labor situation of fashion models accounts for both oppressive practices in the modeling industry and the pleasures involved in bodily labor. Fashion modeling consists of probably the greatest part out of disciplining practice of both the Self and the body.

However, behind the painful and even traumatic side of modeling, there remains a strong sense of pleasure and desire for individuals to do this work. For many models, the rewarding aspect of this type of labor is the motivation to continue their work. Also during my modeling career, I have experienced the euphoria of being booked for a prestigious job or glancing over images of oneself in a shiny fashion magazine make the efforts worthwhile. I am arguing that a focus on the restrictive and potential elements of fashion modeling is necessary in order to attain a sharper picture of a certain situated and embodied practice of fashion. In my view, a double perspective on both the restrictive as potential aspects of labor

applies for all types of bodily labor such as the sex-worker who might experience pleasure and satisfaction simultaneously to the less pleasurable aspects of the job.

The move I want to make here is to define the structural situation of fashion modeling not in terms of immaterial production. A logical step would be to typify the labor of fashion as immaterial labor framework of immaterial labor helps to explain the work involved in the production of an immaterial good: fashion. The labor involved in the production of an intelligible body for fashion, i.e. fashion modeling, is not immaterial but is a form of material production because in the process becoming a fashion model, the workers of fashion *are* their bodies: “In the market for looks, women and men become commodified bodies for sale” (Mears 2011, 89).

Here a feminist critique, one that stems from the feminist Marxist debates and standpoint theory, enables me to make the point that fashion modeling is material and not immaterial. Marxist feminist critique of labor intended to bring the material labor performed by women under the attention of Marxist theories. Material labor as a form of labor suggests a reference to industrial, productive labor. Reproductive labor is a term defined by the Marxist feminists to signify the undervalued and unwaged bodily labor performed by women outside of the economic borders of the labor market. Bodily labor, as we see in these early materialist debates about labor is seen as material labor and contradicts the *Operaismo* discussion about immaterial labor.

Feminist critique on labor as defined in (post-)Marxist theories of *labor value*, is directed to the way these debates conceptualize labor it in relation to production: Domestic or reproductive immaterial labor belongs primarily to the second type of immaterial labor as characterized by Marx, i.e., labor that is not separable from the act of production (Fortunati

2007, 140). This implies that fashion models are involved in processes of immaterial production and are inseparable from their act of production. The problem with defining fashion modeling as immaterial labor is that it creates a limited vision, one that is unable to perceive the excluded *material* aspects of labor involved in the production-process but that nonetheless remains constitutive of the end product. Models as fashion workers are involved in bodily and emotional labor performed to produce an embodied self that is made intelligible for fashion. Their product is not inseparable from their mode of production for the simple fact that the act of production is a commodification of the self and the body. In my opinion, an exclusionary focus on the immaterial aspects of fashion modeling overlooks the material aspects of labor.

Marxist feminist critiques of labor intended to bring the material labor performed by women to the attention of conventional theories of labor. Reproductive labor is a term defined by Marxist feminists to signify the material labor performed by women outside of the economic borders of the labor market. Similar feminist critiques recently expressed in debates around immaterial labor have accused *Operaismo* writers of employing a universalist account of labor in a global society such as Leopoldina Fortunati who formulates her critique on debates of immaterial labor as follows:

“But this debate, which developed in relation to aspects of the immaterial and the sphere of the individual, I argue, completely ignored the material labor of the domestic sphere (cleaning the house, cooking, shopping, washing and ironing clothes) and above all, ignored the labor done in order to produce individuals (sex, pregnancy, childbirth, breastfeeding and care), as well as the other fundamental parts of the immaterial



sphere (affect, care, love education, socialization, communication, information, entertainment, organization, planning, coordination, logistics)” (Fortunati 2007, 140). Fortunati inserts a Marxist feminist critique into the post-Marxist discussion of immaterial labor. Fortunati’s critique on the Operaismo treatment of labor is that theories of immaterial labor have overlooked the sphere of unwaged, reproductive labor that has been traditionally performed by women outside of the labor market. Domestic labor is essentially material, as is sex-work and childbirth a type of bodily labor just as much the worker in the factory employs the bodily capacities in the manufacturing of products.

Reflecting on fashion modeling through this feminist Marxist intervention in debates about immaterial labor, it is becoming clear that the situation of fashion modeling supports this feminist critique of (post-) Marxism. First, the case-study of fashion modeling also illustrates that there is an element that (again) is excluded from immaterial theories of labor: the body. This disavowal of the body fits the initial critique of Marxism that inherited a dualist and sexed view of labor. Bodily labor has historically been viewed as feminine labor. Here we see that in the immaterial labor-debate the same assumptions dominate the debate. Theories of immaterial labor overlook a sphere of unwaged, reproductive labor that has traditionally been performed by women. Domestic labor is essentially material, as is sex-work and childbirth.

The case-study of fashion modeling also illustrates that there is an element that is (again) excluded from the process when theorized in exclusive terms of immaterial production: the body. From a feminist scholarly perspective, the bridge between feminist theories of the body, becoming and embodiment are of great importance for an improved awareness of the corporeality of immaterial labor. If a feminist analysis readjusts its focus to

the social fabric of the bodies involved in immaterial production of fashion, we see that the body, corporeality and embodiment play immense roles in the construction of fashion. The embodied perspective of the fashion model contradicts the ideal body constructed in fashion that, as I explained in the previous chapter, is “repressed” (Evans & Thornton 1991, 53); or its living substance(s) is made irrelevant (De Perthuis 2008, 179). The paradox is as follows: living substances of the body contribute to the immaterial production of a fashion image, but unfortunately the material labor is not regarded as a valuable or relevant product by itself. Thus for the situation of fashion modeling, there are arguably some disadvantages of theorizing the labor practice in terms of immaterial labor. Therefore I want to state that fashion modeling is material labor because similar to athletes, actors, sex-workers and domestic labor, modeling is a form of bodily labor. But this raises the question how we are able to account for a feminist account of bodily labor in conversation with theories of immaterial production and labor.

### **Bodily labor and affective transmission**

I propose that a new materialist vision of fashion modeling moves beyond the dualisms (Post-) Marxist views on labor have inherited but nonetheless builds further on the epistemological foundations. New materialist thinker and feminist philosopher of sexual difference Rosi Braidotti foresees a possible alliance between *Operaismo* theories of labor and a feminist political critique. In *Transpositions*, Braidotti situates the *Operaismo* movement of Antoni Negri and Michael Hardt as one of the foundations on which feminist new micro-political theory might emerge. Even though the *Operaismo* movement would not label themselves as feminist, their critique of globalization and their notion of Empire point to a fertile ground for feminist endeavoring to think and formulate a “new political

ontology” (Braidotti 2006, 50). New materialism, with its emphasis on the materiality of bodies, as Braidotti explains, “departs from earlier Deleuzian emphasis on immanence and becoming, but displays strong affinity with the radicalism, the creativity and hands-on approach of the second feminist wave” (Braidotti 2006, 51). This political strategy is informed by a materialist politics and therefore is part of the strategy of *jumping generations* (van der Tuin). New materialism’s link to *good-old* feminist materialism can be found in the feminist Marxist critique of the *Operaismo*-debate about immaterial labor that are related by their attention for the materiality of the situation of women in society. But a new materialist approach of fashion and its workers is able to take one step further because it views material bodily labor from its very *corporeal* roots of subjectivity.

A new materialist analysis of fashion and the social fabric of the bodies involved in the immaterial production of fashion. In the production of fashion corporeality plays a significant role. The bodies of models are mediators in constructing the meaning of fashion in reference to feelings and emotions. Models as fashion workers are, in material terms *entrepreneurs of the flesh* and embody fashion: Embodiment it is to be understood as neither a biological nor a sociological category, but rather as a point of overlapping between the physical, the symbolic, and the sociological” (Braidotti 1993, 7). To view fashion modeling in terms of corporeality and embodiment produces surprising results. This is the case in Mears’ anthropological research of fashion modeling when she asked models about the pleasures of their job. Mears found out that the models who were most successful in their jobs had learned the creative skill of finding pleasure in a type of work that is emotionally and physically demanding: “For many of the women I interviewed, stories of rejection, pain, and resentment flowed back to back with excitement and pride” (Mears 2011, 117). Many of the experienced models in her sample compared modeling to acting “a

craft that demands the mature willingness to engage” (118). Mears concludes that modeling as a form of freelance aesthetic work enables the challenging of a view that modeling is one of ‘dehumanization’; “because, above all, it demands creativity with both body and mind” (118).

The surprising result produced when the focus is directed to embodiment and the body is that the pleasures of this job, such as pride and excitement, are decisive in the decisions of models to precede their careers. As an experienced ‘older’ model I recognize the contradiction between the pain and rejections that come along with the job but also the excitement and satisfaction Mears describes. The emotional and sensory pleasures of the labor have helped me to cope with rejections. The emotional and physical pain have been evident as I experienced my body as an obstacle in becoming the perfect ‘look’ because of my body measurements deviated from the norm<sup>12</sup>. Simultaneously the aliveness of my body in my performances and its capability to affect others signify the pleasures of this profession. The reason why I have not been able yet to ‘quit’ my career is that more than ever, I find joy and pleasure in expressing and performing emotions and moods in front of the camera. I feel confident and ‘embodied’ in the sense that I no longer view my body as a strange entity that is subjected to my will but as a cooperative actor in my labor of becoming a fashion model. My clientele consist out of a reliable group of customers who have come to appreciate my labor-skills. As an ‘older’ model in the business I have incorporated the knowledge and experience in both maintaining a slender and healthy body but far from perceiving my body as ‘docile’, I learned to feel the engaging capacities of my body that acts as a living entity in affecting other bodies and thereby producing new images.

---

<sup>12</sup> See for the painful experiences the document ‘interview’ in the addendum of this thesis page (..).

I have to admit that without the knowledge I have obtained during my university education in Gender Studies I might have never come up with this reflection about my work as a model. Without feminist knowledge I would rather have focused on the oppressive aspects of modeling. Therefore I am convinced that a new materialist analysis of fashion modeling is the basis of a critique on the situation of the body in postmodern fashion where it has seemed that bodies of fashion models do not count as living bodies. The model's body in this case is only significant as a material support, a clothing rack of flesh. This 'not-mattering' of bodies is translated into the normative ideal of beauty that subjects fashion models to fashion. But, as I want to argue, *life* – or biology – as such is an important, indistinctive aspect of our labor. Fashion models' bodies embody fashion. They have learned to use this restricted space to employ the potentiality of the body in transforming and functioning according to a corporeal knowledge in embodying and becoming symbols of fashion. Furthermore, in our jobs we have learned to effectively use the body's affective capacities, to be receptive to affect and engage in affective play with the spectator. Thus, and this is my critique of postmodern interpretations of the body in fashion argued from the embodied perspective of the fashion model, in large part, fashion depends on the capacities of the *biological* body to calibrate *bodily affects* in the production and consumption of the fashion image.

Here I arrive to my final argument of this thesis that is a quest for a new materialist vision of fashion. Argued from the double-perspective of the fashion model/feminist scholar I see great possibilities in theorizing affect as lying at the very bodily roots of labor. Producing situated knowledge on fashion from in this case the embodied perspective of a fashion model is critical towards approaches that regard fashion as a text or a visual

medium. Using the concept of affect makes us more aware of understanding what it is that models do and helps to move beyond the dominant view of model's bodies as docile bodies.

First it enables a situated vision on modeling is productive on a very material level, namely in terms of affective transmission meant to “act, to engage, and to affect a substrate of potential bodily responses, often autonomic responses, in excess of consciousness” (Clough 2007, 2). The subjectivity of fashion models as fashion workers is rooted in affective transmissions between bodies and meaning: “Affect results from encounters between bodies, connects them and gives rise to diverse sensations and forms of knowledge” (Paasonen 2011, 69). Understanding fashion modeling in terms of affective transmission contradicts well-known analyses of fashion as about death and viewing models as zombies or corpses<sup>13</sup>. In these analyses, models are compared to ‘living dolls’ or mere ‘clothing racks’, particularly in regards to a fashion aesthetic that promotes a beauty ideal of extreme slenderness. The framework of affective labor contradicts such a view, as fashion modeling is linked to what Clough describes as “the self-feeling of being alive, that is aliveness or vitality” (Clough 2). They are agents, active in the process of making meaning and their biological body is essential to this.

Secondly, thinking affect and the living body contradicts a view of fashion modeling as a passive practice of simply being beautiful. Instead, fashion modeling can be understood as a labor practice that is grounded in the capacity of the human, biological body in affective transmission between bodies, meaning and knowledge. The experiences of fashion models as fashion workers show that fashion is materially produced and consumed through affective encounters between bodies. Thinking affect as a capacity of the living body helps us

---

<sup>13</sup> For instance, fashion theorist Caroline Evans studies fashion in relationship to Guy Debord's notions of the spectacle and modernity and connects this to a notion of death in her book *Fashion at the Edge: Spectacle, Modernity and Deathliness* (2003).

understand modeling as a labor practice that productively participates, on a very material level, in the production fashion image. This helps to reconfigure the fashion image as making it no longer matter as only an image, but through knowledge about the situation fashion model we are able to re-think the fashion image as an active “corporeal presence” (Negrin 2013, 142). In a similar trend Anneke Smelik, professor in film studies and visual culture has argued that a focus on the sensory and emotional experience of visual imagery “brings the analysis beyond the purely textual and visual” (Smelik 2007, 191). Both views contradict the idea that fashion and its image are purely textual or visual in which biology is irrelevant. Instead, the fashion image as an immaterial product is produced by bodily. The fashion image is not dead, nor is the fashion model a mere clothing rack. She is alive, and so is fashion.

## **Summary**

There is great political and emancipatory potential in a feminist materialist, situated perspective on the labor situation of fashion models. The rejection of the biological body as irrelevant in the cultural repertoire of fashion brings fashion models in an impossible flux. Therefore, a feminist engagement with fashion modeling as bodily labor will benefit their labor position significantly. *Operaismo*-theories of immaterial labor open a route for thinking their labor practice outside of corporatist and economic theories of labor. The advantage of the immaterial debate of labor is that the conceptual framework allows situating the labor practices of fashion models within global and international structures of production and labor. Their observations contribute to a more inclusive concept of labor and working class that have transgressed gendered borders of the domestic sectors and the public labor market.

But this brings along necessary challenges in spite of the dualisms it inherited from the universal perspective of Marxism. Feminists have inserted a critique in the debate that concerns their lack of understanding the corporeal aspects of labor and their refusal to include feminist theories about labor and embodiment. The *Operaismo*-framework continues to offer a male-oriented universal standpoint. For instance Fortunati's critique is very strong as she argues that immaterial labor-theorists have largely ignored the material labor involved in the feminine gendered spheres of labor. A new materialist feminist perspective on bodily labor and affect challenges these distinctions and is therefore a necessary acquaintance.

Feminist attention for fashion modeling in the immaterial labor debate has a reductive effect on descriptions of their labor. Immaterial labor insufficiently accounts for the material and bodily labor that is involved in the production of immaterial goods. Again, this results in a trap for specific types of labor that largely involves the body and its capacities in production processes. Therefore, I have pointed to the advantages of including a theory of affect in situating the labor of fashion models. Affect explained in this way is the bodily capability to transmit energies and emotions between bodies. It produces encounters between bodies which in effect gives rise to knowledge and experience. In this route of thinking, fashion models can be situated as actors in the immaterial production of fashion. Their labor is not passive or entirely subjective. Rather, their activities are based on the level of the body.



## **Conclusion of this thesis**

The underlying theme in this thesis is a focus on the intersection of materiality and culture in fashion. This translates in an interest for the material side of fashion and in specific for the role the body plays in the construction and production of fashion. A study of fashion, in my view, could not be conducted without knowledge about the material 'reality' that lies behind the cover of an image. This standpoint is informed by my personal experiences of my work as a fashion model. I have experienced what work is needed to become a model including the work involved in controlling the body, looks and personality to produce a valuable 'look' for fashion. These experiences informed my standpoint towards studies of fashion and have created a rather different outlook on fashion.

My intention was to make this personalized outlook coincide with a scholarly, feminist perspective on fashion. As a discourse in Western body culture, fashion has been and remains to be, a topic shunned by feminists because it tends to degrade women to their sex. In my view, feminism and fashion can be compatible. Recent developments in strands of feminist theory, such as new materialism, enable a situated perspective on fashion enabling to perceive the material and bodily roots of fashion. Thus my motivation for writing this thesis is the strong call for feminist 'materialist' involvement with systems of dress and fashion. A consequence of this is the activation of a feminist political critique that unsettles cultural beliefs of fashion and the way they have enabled the historical development of a narcissist project that marks fashion and similar cultural industries. In overall, this thesis is constructed along these lines of thinking. I wanted to investigate the ontology of fashion through a feminist perspective, thereby gaining some understanding about the construction of fashion. A new materialist feminist theory of fashion would support this claim for that it

looks specifically at the intersection of matter and culture as the foundational structures of fashion. Once I would understand how matter and culture are related, I hoped to be able to trace the points where a feminist politics of fashion would be possible.

Therefore the first chapter is also the first step towards a feminist theory of fashion. In this chapter I analyzed the ontological and historical foundations of fashion which nowadays is seen as a cultural artifact (or cultural system). I argued that fashion as a modern phenomenon evolved into a specific cultural logic that is embedded in consumerist discourses. I started with a historical analysis of this commercial logic as already perceived by Baudelaire in the twentieth century as a 'theatrical play' or spectacle. As being a 'spectacular' commercial logic, fashion developed throughout modernity and matured in the late-capitalist economic and cultural system. In contemporary Western culture, fashion has a high cultural and/or artistic status and is studied by the means of performance art (Wilson 2003). I am not arguing against Wilson's interpretation of fashion, but a fashion as a purely artistic performance is not interested in the material layers of fashion, nor does it tell how biology and matter are potential sources for different interpretations of the object. My central argument, argued from exactly this feminist new materialist perspective, was that cultural interpretations often clash with material views on fashion. It ignores or even finds irrelevant the materiality of fashion. But this should not be necessarily the case.

In a new materialist account of fashion as material-semiotic I have called for a feminist political project that takes into account the materiality of fashion. From a feminist new materialist *and* insider's perspective, the irrelevance of matter (and the body) in the cultural construction of fashion is a tragedy; for the reason that, logically speaking, women's bodies which are associated with fashion are made irrelevant by fashion. I proposed to

envision possibilities to account for fashion's materiality. As an exemplary route, I mentioned work of the new materialist Karen Barad. Especially her post-human concept of intra-action is a visionary approach of a project to rethink the ontological foundations of fashion. Most importantly, the notion is helpful to make a move, beyond, what she defines as a problem in cultural studies; representationalism.

The transition from the first chapter to the second and third is the focus on the creation of a counter-discourse set against the exclusionary 'representationalist' focus on fashion. I started chapter two by offering an outline of the structural conditions and (material) situation of fashion models within the perspective of the global labor market and the rise, of what academics have defined as 'labor precariousness'. I explained that the labor of fashion models needs to be taken seriously in material analyses of fashion. The switch from a cultural study of fashion to a discussion of labor is part of this intention to produce a material analysis of fashion. Therefore I have chosen to view fashion in line with *Operaismo*-theory as 'immaterially produced', and while fashion models are part of the immaterial production network, I view them as important actors in the materialization of fashion.

After discussing this framework of thinking, I described the feminist intervention in this framework of immaterial production and labor. The feminist voice (Weeks 2007; Fortunati 2007) in the immaterial labor-debate, articulates a critique against the *Operaismo*-movement, accusing them for lacking a situated perspective on labor and differences within the spectrum labor practices. While continuing this feminist standpoint, I argued that fashion is immaterially produced but that fashion modeling is not necessarily immaterial. Fashion modeling is bodily labor and therefore *material*: something that these theories not seek to address.

Reflecting on this approach now, I notice that by the means of addressing the feminist intervention in the immaterial labor debate, I have also accessed another discussion: The feminism versus fashion discussion. By interpreting fashion not only as culturally constructed but also 'immaterially produced' by the efforts of material labor, opened possibilities to see fashion differently. The view that the material labor of fashion models is part of the immaterial production of fashion also gives the opportunity to analyze the role of the body in fashion: A role that is not necessarily reduced to a passive natural status, but as playing a considerable active role in the process of production. I think this approach offers a lot of potential for further research and ultimately to bring separate discussions closer together.

This reflection makes the transition from the second to the third chapter clearer. In chapter three, I focused specifically on bodily labor and the situation of the body in structures of immaterial production. I argued that by taking into account fashion as materially produced and embodied by bodies, we are able to perceive the labor situation of fashion models as an 'embodied' situation. Models as fashion workers are engaged in the practice of becoming intelligible bodies for fashion. I think that their particular embodied subjectivity is potential for a project that wishes to reinvent fashion because it would see the body as the locus of rethinking the status of fashion. However, I my intention in the last chapter was to perceive the body not as yet another signifier, but as a biological entity. The question of fashion suddenly was linked to the situation of the *living* body in fashion. Fashion models as embodied workers are interesting objects of new materialist research. They have learned to use the capacities of the biological, living body to calibrate affective transmissions between body and meaning.

But how can we understand this connection between the body (material) and meaning (cultural) or what Haraway notices as ‘material-semiotic actor’? To perceive this meaning-making process, the concept of affect is a productive notion. Affect studies has made its way into cultural studies and feminist theory. The body and meaning are through the concept of affect engaged in a constitutive play. This literally transforms the way we think about materiality versus culture. Furthermore, it helps to refigure fashion, as the new materialist thinker Negrin has argued, to “envison a new mode of dress, which engenders a sense of the body, not as a visual image, but as an active corporeal presence” (Negrin 2013, 142). Therefore research on fashion modeling as a bodily situation in fashion affects our understanding of fashion that is no longer limited to culture and representation. Fashion is materialized in the enfolding of matter and language. This literally transforms the ways we see fashion, not as an image, but, since it has been produced through the efforts of bodily labor, as an active corporeal presence.

So, then there is time left for some final reflections: Have I served the purpose of this research? Have I complied with the aim for conducting a material, situated feminist study of fashion? And was the situated perspective on the labor of fashion models fruitful for this purpose? In overall, I think to have met the purpose of writing, studying and analyzing fashion from very localized and situated perspectives. I have analyzed the structural situation of fashion models embedded in the larger fields of labor, labor theory, globalism and critiques of capitalism. In the last chapter I reviewed fashion modeling from a localized perspective with a focus on viewing modeling through the notions of embodiment, bodily labor and affect. The knowledge gained from these different perspectives melted together in a new materialist theory of fashion, and more importantly, played with the dualist notion of nature versus culture which is underlying our perception of the world.

My main concern is, and what was simultaneously the most challenging aspect of this thesis, that I have threaded slightly too many directions and pathways in my approach; some of which might not always cohere with the initial goal of this research. There are lots of interesting and innovative takes on the subject possible. I have found out that this terrain has been almost left unexplored which made making the right choices even more difficult than it already was. I think that making choices is certainly a trap for beginners in feminist theory with an interest in the complex object of fashion. What has also been tricky, are the narrations of my experiences as a fashion model which I have tried to weave coherently through the text. It has pushed me to make this thesis more or less into an activist or political quest, with the danger of infatuating or blurring the scholarly gaze.

Nonetheless, I want to see this thesis as the first exploration of a complex topic while it meets my personal engagement with the labor situation of fashion models. My hopes for future research are that I would be able to elevate these different perspectives up to a higher level. My wish is to focus more and make better links between the discussions, notions and theories I have touched in this thesis. And last, I think that (new materialist) feminist theories of fashion and fashion modeling are a terrain worthwhile for further investigations. They are not incompatible; feminism creates understanding about the bodily and material aspects of our culture. A new materialist analysis of fashion through the perspective of the fashion worker is part of a feminist project that traces the corporeal and bodily roots of fashion.

# Addendum

## Interview dialogue

**Interviewer: Layla te Rehorst, interviewee: Eline van Uden. January 31, 2013.**

L: When and how have you decided to become a model?

E: Becoming a model is not really a decision you make at that particular age as most models become models in their teenage years and start working while being in high school. At the time I started, I was sixteen years old. I have met a stylist who said to me that I should become a model. According to his advice, I sent some pictures of myself to the first agency on the list he provided for me. Soon after that I received an email back, urging me to come to the agency in Amsterdam. Already the next day I started working as a model. A modeling career starts overnight.

L: At that young age, were you aware about the content and expectations of the job?

E: No, not at all! I did not have a clue what it modeling was. There weren't any 'next top model'- shows on the television at the time and I was not particularly interesting in reading teen-magazines. But if you ask me if I have received education for performing the job, have to respond sadly that I learned it the hard way: Nobody ever explained me, or even was *able* to explain the descriptions of the job. I learned it through experience; trial and error-method.

L: So, you arrived at this modeling agency, is this by the way still your 'mother-agency'?

E: Yes, the agency I went to at an age of sixteen is still my mother-agency. This means every booking; national and international are handled by the bookers of the agency. I have to pay them commission over every booking.

L: Well done, you are a loyal model! In the modeling industry, this form of loyalty is unique. I am interested in how a model's career starts. Tell me something more about the beginning of your career.

E: Well, I was sixteen/seventeen and living with my parents in a small provincial town in the south of the Netherlands. It was the first time I took a train by myself to Amsterdam. I remember being scared to death meeting these people.

L: Really, why have you been so afraid?

E: Yes, well, it is an entirely different world than I was accustomed to at such a young age. The bookers working at the agency were very kind. But they are professionals in a business and not your parents. They can't prevent you from being thrown into the fashion business. It was a shocking experience to encounter the existence of this peculiar business. It was a trauma.

L: Can you remember your first photo-shoot?

I remember doing one of my first photo-shoots for a young Dutch designer. I asked one of my best friends, who once posed herself for a befriended amateur photographer, for some tips and advice. She advised me to keep my eyes wide open and try to look natural. I followed her advice and the result is that on every picture, I look like an innocent little girl with her eyes wide open as if perceiving the world for a first time. Even though I was not a good, experienced model yet at the time, the pictures are beautiful. They have been part of my portfolio for a long time. I know that pictures of pre-adolescent girls are popular in fashion. Somehow people want to look at pictures with pretty innocent girls who have not lost their youth yet. I guess this is how we are trained and socialized in perceiving fashion images.

L: How have you managed to become a 'better' model?

E: Just by working lots and lots.

L: Later on in your career, you have travelled to Milan and continued to work as a model full-time. You also worked for the Italian *Vogue*. How did you feel when you found out that this client booked you for the magazine?

E: Working for *Vogue* made me feel wanted, accepted and appreciated for my work. The moments when such clients like *Vogue* show their interest in you brings so much joy and happiness. In a way, part of the job is to get addicted to this lovely feeling. But the downside of it all is that as soon you experience a peak like this in your modeling career, the easier it is



to expect more of them. I have accepted that this is part of a modeling career; these type of booking are the ones you are really doing it all for!

L: What happens after a model has reached the highest point in a career?

E: Oh yes, also that is part of a modeling career of course. Since I have passed the age of 21, I expect any day to receive a call by my agency to announce the end of my career. I am 26 now, and still working mainly as a hair model. But the job has gotten more difficult if you are older and develop a mature mind and foremost a mature body.

I want to tell you something about a shift in my career. When I was in Milan, and worked for *Vogue* in 2006, major changes in the demands from the fashion industry were about to happen. Not only technological changes such as the shift to digital photography. At that time, photographers were still working with 'analogue' equipment. This is unthinkable today.

Despite technological changes that have affected the structures in the modeling industry immensely, I have also observed a change in a fashion aesthetic and the demand of 'looks'. In 2006, when I was in Milan, I witnessed the introduction of skinny jeans. With my rather classical female look and body, I was unable to fit the small, straight cut of these jeans.

Two years after my Milan-period, I was booked for a Spanish magazine. On the shoot, the stylist wanted me to fit in extremely skinny jeans of a size 26. This was ridiculous; it really was children's pants. With my mature female body, I could not even get these jeans over my calves. This was the first time I experienced difficulties in finishing a shoot. From that moment on, I had trouble wearing the tight clothing provided at photo-shoots: They wanted me to wear tight leather tube-skirts, skinny jeans, and squared pants while before when I was used to wear dresses, trousers designed in a more feminine shape. This made me confused and thought there was something wrong with my body.

You know, while the shape of my body was not a large problem before, it seemed to have become a major obstacle in my job. From that point I was advised by my agents to quit my international career. International modeling agencies were no longer interested in representing me, you know, because I was a model with a body that highly deviated from the norm.

L: It is striking to see how much a fashion aesthetic relates to a certain bodily aesthetic. What was your size really?

E: My hip-size at that time was between 94-96 centimeters, while 90 centimeters are seen as the maximum size in the fashion industry. If you want to do the fashion shows in the large fashion cities, you supposed to be even less. The problem is that these 'numbers' are being

understood as objective measurements. The hip-size is the most important parameter in an erratic industry. For modeling agents, these measurements are used to promote their models. It is very important for models to have their bodies comply with these numbers.

L: I wonder if these measurements or numbers have come to prescriptions of a certain bodily ideal. What do you think?

E: This has always intrigued me as well! Of course I have thought of different scenarios of why models have to conform to rather unrealistic ideals. What I have observed during my years working abroad, is that in general the norm for models to deal with is “you can never be skinny enough”. I have never met a model who was not told to lose weight, or in scarce cases of worried agents, extremely underweight girls are told to gain some weight. This weight-issue, as Susan Bordo has noticed for example in her work about advertising and the portrayal of the female body in popular images, the message is all about body-weight.

The concept of ‘fat’ bears negative associations in our culture. Certainly for female models, the 90 cm hip-size is haunting us. Even if a model has perfect body-sizes, she is subjected to the same discipline as models whose body sizes slightly deviate from the norm. At some point in my career, I noticed I was literally *fighting* biology by excessive exercise and extreme diets. Why do you think the main part of the model’s labor force in only the USA is under-aged? It must have something to do with this imaginary ideal body fashion maintains.

L: Do you think this bodily ideal is gendered?

Why fat is a non-issue in the modeling industry has in my view to do with a certain gendered ideal of beauty. Well, if you ask me my opinion of what I want to call the skinny jeans ‘era’, what has happened is that in the domain of high-fashion culture, a classical ideal of feminine beauty is out-priced. Angela McRobbie once wrote that this boy-ish ideal propagates a pre-pubertal body that does not show the signs of a certain sex yet (2009). It appears to be a sex-neutral ideal; both boys and girls can wear skinny jeans, right? My conspiracy about the construction of this sex-neutral, ideal of body, is that the markets for both female and male apparel are blurred intentionally, probably to increase profits.

However, sex-neutral does not mean a transcending of sexual difference but rather a compliance with male apparel. Femininity is erased from fashion’s aesthetic chard that results in new norms for the female body. This is not really a surprise to me since the fashion market the important designers are gay men! They are not attracted to a female shape of body.

L: The last comment, in which you draw the connection of gay designers with a gender-neutral ideal of beauty, is in my opinion a fallacy.

E: Of course, it is an unproven hypothesis, a speculation. But, still, we have to take into consideration the option that the prevalence of male gay designers in the fashion industry are in the top of the hierarchy (e.g. Karl Lagerfeld, Marc Jacobs, Michael Kors, John Galliano).

L: How did your international modeling career end?

After having been in Milan and having explored a couple of other European markets, I chose to go back to the university. I had problems dealing with my position as a fashion model in which I felt, I had limited agency. And I was tired of dieting and disciplining my body. I had to keep a close watch on my hip-size. The measuring tape used to measure my hip-area had become a cause of anxiety. I remember that for example in Barcelona, I was called a 'fat cow' because my hips were a couple centimeters bigger than she had expected.

L: This is shocking!

E: Every time I arrived at a new city and agency, I was taken to a little room where the booker would take out this instrument and started to measure my body. These were not always good experiences!

L: This is ridiculous, in my opinion. What if your agent at home employs different measuring practices than the booker in Barcelona?

E: Indeed. These measurements are presented as objective but in reality are not. We are not robots; we have bodies made out of organic material! Therefore I think that we need a dense and intense critique on how we think about bodies, how we want to see them and circulate images of bodies. We need to get rid of this mechanic view on the body because again, the bodies of women, as I have experienced in the modeling industry, are the objects of control.

**Original transcript in Dutch. Interview text by interviewer; edited and translated by author.**

## **Dairy Notes**

Notes from my personal diary. Comments and reflections are written in italics.

### **Notes**

12 February 2013, 09.00

Today I am flying to Hamburg to meet a potential client, a renowned name in the commercial hairdressing circuit. Six days ago I received an email from my booker in Amsterdam about an option-request for a hair advertisement in Hamburg. The question was if I would be able to send the client some updated 'polaroids'. I was very pleased to hear about the wage I was about to receive for this job. It would be the best-paid job in the last three years of my eight-year modeling career, especially at my age! With an exciting feeling I spent about two hours making pictures of myself in the space of my living room. After sending the pictures, an hour later, I received an email from my booker that I was invited to the casting! The client would be accountable for my expenses, the only thing I had to do was to get on the plane to Hamburg and meet them during a casting they have organized.

12 February, 20.30

The casting went really well! I was relieved that the casting was not overcrowded with young girls and boys. I think the chances of getting the job are high. The client created seven looks and needed seven models and they liked my hair and my face a lot. The time I have invested in applying for the job was one day on travelling to the casting, three hours making polaroids, sending e-mails around to my bookers in Amsterdam and Berlin. A worthy investment, that is, if I get the job. Otherwise the time I invested in getting the job – traveling, doing the casting, meeting the client, making pictures, sending e-mails- is wasted... But there is nothing I can do now. As a model, I have no idea about what happens behind the screens of the modeling agency and their interactions with clients. All I can do is waiting for the news and hoping for the best.

13 February

I just received an email from my booker. The client is very interested in me, but they asked if it was possible to receive full-body images of me. My booker asks me if I can send some pictures of myself wearing a bikini and showing my legs?! I wonder what role my legs play in

a shoot for a hair-campaign and why the client wants to see polaroids of me in bikini. I mean, I went to the casting where they have seen me in real life. Did my legs appear too big?

I am feeling insecure, and honestly also a little bit angry. I know my legs are not the best part of my body. What happens if the client finds another girl with a pretty face and perfectly shaped legs? My plan for today was to write my thesis, but I feel anxious and nervous. I think the option will be cancelled. ☹️.

15 February

Good news! The client booked me for the job! I am so happy! Probably the client just wanted to make sure my legs looked alright. Whatever it was, I am happy to have the job because I really need the money. I hope that with these pictures my bookers can promote me to other clients as well. Looking forward going to Hamburg next week! Keep you updated...

### **Reflection**

*After having done the casting and meeting the client, I had to wait for another few days to hear the good news, or to receive another rejection. If the latter is the case, I always worry about what I might have done wrong, whether I gave the client a bad impression by wearing the wrong clothes or performing not well enough in a model's manner, or that my pictures in my portfolios were not their taste or that my body looked a bit 'fat'. Even after being around in this business for quite a while, I still have not managed to develop a harness protecting me against their gazes or to deal with the rejections. Being a model, it is not my skills or my personal qualities that matter but my appearance, my body, my 'type'.*

*In this particular case I was fortunate. My and the modeling agency's investments in getting me the job certainly paid off. The client booked me for two days work. Now, after having done all the preparatory work, I could finally begin doing my 'work' at the photo-*

*shoot. Oh yes, it all seems so simple and easy, making a good amount of money in only a few days by posing for the camera. This particular job, which has been in overall a positive experience, except the anxiety it created at times, was relatively easy money. But for the rest, it is particularly stressful to do castings, spend time at looking my best; be charming to the client while being aware of the critical gazes observing me. In my career I have encountered rejection more than acceptance: I have visited more castings than photo-studios. I have met clients who were seated behind the table at a casting who, without paying attention to the pictures, flipped through the pages of my portfolio or being spoken to in the third-person at jobs. But, in overall, I still enjoy doing this work. I love doing what I do best: posing for the camera and perform different characters, create and channel different moods and emotions in the image and to work with amazing creative teams and make fashion modeling worthwhile.*

# Bibliography

## Academic publications

Ashcraft, K. L., & Kedrowicz, A. "Self-direction or social support?: Nonprofit empowerment and the tacit employment contract of organizational communication studies." *Communication Monographs*, 69 (2002): 88–110.

Barad, Karen. Posthumanist Performativity: How Matter Comes to Matter." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 28.3 (2003): pp. 801-831.

Barad, Karen. "Re(Con)Figuring Space, Time, and Matter." *Feminist Locations: Global and Local, Theory and Practice*. Ed. Marianne DeKoven. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2001. 75-109.

Barthes, Roland. *The Language of Fashion*. Ed. Andy Stafford and Michael Carter. Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2006.

Bartky, Sandra Lee. *Femininity and Domination: Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression*. New York: Routledge, 1990.

Baudelaire, Charles: *Selected Writings on Art and Literature*. Ed. P.E. Charvet. New York: Viking, 1972.

Beauvoir, Simone de. *The Second Sex*. London: Vintage Publishers, 1997.

Bordo, Susan. *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body*. University of California Press, 1993

Braidotti, Rosi. *Transpositions: On Nomadic Ethics*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006.

Braidotti, Rosi. "Embodiment, Sexual Difference, and the Nomadic Subject." *Hypathia* 8 no. 1 (1993): pp. 1-13.

Braidotti, Rosi. *Nomadic Subjects. Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory*, Second Edition. New York: Columbia University Press, [1994] 2nd edition 2011.

Braidotti, Rosi. "Learning from the Future." *Australian Feminist Studies* 24, no. 59 (2009): pp. 3-9.

Brennan, T. "Cosmopolitanism and Internationalism." *Debating Cosmopolitics* ed. Daniele Archibugi, Mathias Koenig-Archibugi. London: Verso, 2003.

- Caffentzis, George. "The end of work or the renaissance of slavery? A critique of Rifkin and Negri." Presented at conference, *Globalization from Below*, 6 February, at Duke University (1998).
- Clough, Patricia Ticineto. "The Affective Turn: Political Economy, Biomedicine and Bodies." *Theory Culture Society* 25 no. 4 (2008): pp. 1-22.
- Clough, Patricia Ticineto and Jean Halley. *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2007.
- Collins, Patricia Hill. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. Routledge, 2000.
- Davis, Fred. *Fashion, Culture, and Identity*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992.
- Davis, Kathy. *Reshaping the Female Body: The Dilemma of Cosmetic Surgery*. New York: Routledge, 1994.
- Davis, Kathy. *Dubious Equalities and Embodied Differences: Cultural Studies on Cosmetic Surgery (Explorations in Bioethics and the Medical Humanities)*. Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003.
- Dellinger, Kirsten and Christine L. Williams. "Makeup at Work: Negotiating Appearance Rules in the Workplace." *Gender and Society* 11, No. 2 (1997): pp. 151-177.
- Dolphijn, Rick and Iris van der Tuin. *New Materialism: Interviews & Cartographies*. Open Humanities Press, 2012.
- Dyer, Nick Witheford. "Empire, Immaterial Labor, the New Combinations, and the Global Worker, Rethinking Marxism." *A Journal of Economics, Culture & Society* 13 no.3 (2001): pp. 70-80.
- Entwistle, Joanne. *The Fashioned Body: Fashion, Dress and Modern Social Theory*. Cambridge/Malden: Polity Press, 2000.
- Entwistle, Joanne. "The Aesthetic Economy: The production of value in the field of fashion modelling." *Journal of Consumer Culture* 2 (2002): pp. 317-339.
- Entwistle, Joanne & Elizabeth Wissinger. "Keeping up appearances: aesthetic labour in the fashion modelling industries of London and New York." *The Sociological Review* 54 no.4 (2006): pp. 774-794.



-Entwistle, Joanne & Don Slater. "Models as Brands: Critical Thinking about Bodies and Images" In *Fashioning models: Image, Text and Industry* ed. Joanne Entwistle and Elizabeth Wissinger. London & New York: Berg Publishers, 2012.

Evans, Caroline. *Fashion at the Edge: Spectacle, Modernity, and Deathliness*. Yale University Press, 2003.

Evans, Caroline and Minna Thornton. "Fashion, Representation, Femininity." *Feminist Review*, no.38 (Summer 1991): pp. 48-66.

Fields, Jill. *An Intimate Affair*. London: University of California Press, 2007.

Fortunati, Leopoldina. "Immaterial Labor and its Machinization." *Ephemera* 7 no. 1 (2007): pp. 139-157.

Foucault, Michael. *The Foucault Reader* ed. Paul Rabinow. New York: Pantheon Books, 1984.

Friedan, Betty. *The Feminine Mystique*. London: Penguin, 1965.

Gibson, Pamela Church. "Redressing the Balance: Patriarchy, Postmodernism and Feminism." *Fashion Cultures: Theories, Explorations and Analysis* ed. Stella Bruzzi and Pamela Church Gibson. New York: Routledge, 2000.

Gill, Rosalind C. "Cool, Creative and Egalitarian? Exploring Gender in Project-based New Media Work in Europe." *Information, Communication & Society* 5 Vol.1 (2002): pp. 70-89.

Gill, Rebecca., & Ganesh, S. "Empowerment, constraint, and the entrepreneurial Self: A study of white women entrepreneurs." *Journal of Applied Communication Research* 35 (2007): 268-293.

Gill, Rosalind C. and Andy Pratt. "In the Social Factory? Immaterial Labour, Precariousness and Cultural Work." *Theory, Culture & Society* Vol. 25. London: Sage Publishers (2008): pp. 1-30

Greer, Germaine. *The Female Eunuch*. St Albans: Granada Publishing, 1971.

Groeneveld, Elizabeth. "'Be a feminist or just dress like one': BUST, fashion and feminism as lifestyle." *Journal of Gender Studies* 18, no.2 (June 2009): pp. 179-190.

Haraway, Donna. "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective." *Feminist Studies* 14.3 (1988): 575-599.

Haraway, Donna. 'Modest Witness'. *Modest\_Witness@Second\_Millennium. FemaleMan Meets\_OncoMouse tm*. New York and London: Routledge, 1997. 23-39.

Harding, Sandra. *Whose Science, Whose Knowledge?* London: Open University Press, 1991.

Hardt, Michael. "Affective Labor." *Boundary 2*, 26 No. 2 (Summer 1999): pp. 89-100.

Hartsock, Nancy. "Comment on Hekman's 'Truth and Method: Feminist Standpoint Theory Revisited'." *Signs* 22 no.2 (1997): pp. 367-74.

Hekman, Susan. "Truth and Method: Feminist Standpoint Theory Revisited." *Signs* 22 no.2 (1997):pp. 341-65.

Hochschild, Arlie Russell. "The Nanny Chain." *The American Prospect*, 11 (2000): pp. 357-360.

Hollander, Anne. *Seeing Through Clothes*. Berkeley: University of California Press , 1993

Hooft, van Stan. *Cosmopolitanism: A Philosophy for Global Ethics*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009.

Kelly, Joan. The Doubled Vision of Feminist Theory: A Postscript to the "Women and Power" Conference. *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 1, (Spring, 1979), pp. 216-227.

Küchler, Susanne and Daniel Miller. *Clothing as Material Culture*. New York: Berg Publishers, 2005.

Latour, Bruno. "Postmodern? No Simply Amodern. Steps towards an Anthropology of Science: An Essay Review. *Studies in the History and Philosophy of Science* Vol.21 (1990): pp.145-171.

Lazzarato, Maurizio. "Immaterial Labor" trans. P. Colilli and E. Emery ed. M. Hardt and P. Virno (eds.). *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press (1996): pp. 133-147.

Lazzarato, Maurizio. "From Biopower to Biopolitics." *Tailoring Biotechnologies* 2 (Summer 2006): pp. 11-20.

Lehmann, Ulrich. *Tigersprung: Fashion in Modernity*. Cambridge Massachusetts/London: The MIT Press, 2000

Maynard, Margaret. Fashion Modelling in Australia. In: *Fashioning models: Image, Text and Industry*. Ed. Joanne Entwistle and Elizabeth Wissinger. London & New York: Berg Publishers, 2012.

- McRobbie, Angela. "Top Girls?". *Cultural Studies* 21 (2007): pp. 718-737.
- McRobbie, Angela. Reflections on Feminism and Immaterial Labour. *New Formations* 70 (2010); pp. 60-76.
- McRobbie, Angela. Hollyway to Hollywood: Pleasure in Work in the New Cultural Economy?" In *Cultural Economy* ed. P. du Gay and M. Pryke. London: Sage, 2002.
- McRobbie, Angela. *The Aftermath of Feminism*. London: Sage Publications, 2009
- Mears, Ashley. *Pricing Beauty: The Making of a Fashion Model*. University of California Press, 2011. Negri, Antoni 2001/1989
- Negri, Antoni & Michael Hardt. *Empire*. Harvard University Press, 2001.
- Negri, Antoni & Michael Hardt. *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*. USA: Penguin Group, 2005.
- Negrin, Llewlyn. "Fashion as Embodied Art Form" In: *Carnal Knowledge: Towards a 'New Materialism' through the Arts* ed. Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt. New York: IB Tauris, 2013.
- Paasonen 2011.
- Neilson, Brett and Ned Rossiter. "Precarity as a Political Concept, or, Fordism as Exception." *Theory Culture Society*, 25 no. 7 (2008): pp. 51-72.
- Ozaki, M. *Negotiating flexibility. The role of the social partners and the State*, Geneva: International Labour Office, (1999).
- Paasonen, Susanna. *Carnal Resonance: Affect and Online Pornography*. MIT Press, 2011.
- Parkins, Ilya. "Building a Feminist Theory of Fashion – Karen Barad's Agential Realism." In: *Australian Feminist Studies*, 23 No. 58 (December 2008): pp. 501 – 515.
- Penley, Constance, Andrew Ross and Donna Haraway. "Cyborgs at Large: Interview with Donna Haraway." *Social Text* no. 25/26 (1990): pp.8-23.
- Perthuis, Karen de. "Beyond Perfection: the Fashion Model in the Age of Digital Manipulation." In *Fashion as Photograph: Viewing and Reviewing Images of Fashion* ed.

Phibbs, Suzanne. *Transgender Identities and Narrativity: Performativity, Agency, Corporeality*. University of Canterbury, 2001

Radner, Hilary. *Shopping Around: Feminine Culture and the Pursuit of Pleasure*. London: Routledge, 1995.

Rich, Adrienne. *Blood, Bread, and Poetry: Selected Prose*. London: W.W. Norton & Co.

Schinkle, Eugenie. *Fashion as Photograph: Viewing and Reviewing Images of Fashion* ed.

Eugénie Schinkle. New York: I.B. Tauris &Co, 2008.

Scott, Joan W. "Gender, a useful category of historical analysis." *American Historical Review*, 91, no. 5 (1986): pp 1053-1075.

Showalter, Elaine. "Better Things to Do." *Media History* 6 no. 2(2000): pp. 109-110.

Smelik, Anneke. "Lara Croft, *Kill Bill*, and the battle for theory in feminist film studies". *Doing Gender in Media, Art and Culture* ed. Iris van der Tuin and Rosemarie Buikema. New York: Routledge, 2007.

Stacey, Judith. "Can There Be a Feminist Ethnography?." *Women's Studies International Forum* 11 (1988): 21-27.

Standing, Guy. The Precariat: "From Denizens to Citizens?" *Polity* 44, no. 4 (2012): pp. 588-608.

Stoetzler, Marcel and Nira Yuval-Davis. "Standpointtheory, situated knowledge and the situated imagination." *Feminist Theory* 3 (2002): pp. 315-333.

Stoler, Ann L. *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule*. Rev.ed. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.

Stone, Katherine Von Wezel. Labor and the Global Economy: Four Approaches to Transnational Regulation. *Michigan Journal of International Law* 16 (1995): pp. 987-1028.

Tseëlon, Efrat. "Outlining a Fashion Studies Project". *Critical Studies in Fashion and Beauty* 1, no.1, 2010.

Tuin, Iris van der and Rick Dolphijn. "The Transversality of New Materialism". *Women: A Cultural Review* 21, no. 2 (2010): pp. 153-171.

Tuin, Iris van der. "Jumping Generations: On Second – and Third-wave Feminist Epistemology". *Australian Feminist Studies*, 24 no. 59 (2009): pp. 17-31.

Tuin, Iris van der. "The arena of feminism: Simone de Beauvoir and the history of feminism". *Doing Gender in Media, Art and Culture* ed. Iris van der Tuin and Rosemarie Buikema. New York: Routledge, 2007.

Vantoch, Victoria. *The Jet Sex: Airline Stewardesses and the Making of an American Icon*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013

Virno, Paolo & Michael Hardt. *Radical Thoughts in Italy: A Potential Politics*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996.

Weeks, Kathi. "Life Within and Against Work: Affective labor, Feminist Critique, and Post-Fordist Politics." *Ephemera* 7 no. 1 (2007): pp. 233-249.

Wegenstein, Bernadette. *Body Modification and the Construction of Beauty*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2012.

Wilson, Elizabeth. *Adorned in Dreams*. Rev.ed. London: Tauris & Co, 2003.

Wigfield, Andrea. *Post-Fordism, Gender and Work*. Athenaeum Press: 2001.

Wissinger, Elizabeth. "Modelling a Way of Life." In: *Ephemera* 7 no.1 (2007): pp. 250-269.

Withagen & Tros. The concept of 'flexicurity': a new approach to regulating employment and labour markets. *Transfer* 2 (2004): pp. 166-186.

Wolf, Naomi. *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty are Used Against Women*. Rev.ed. New York: HarperCollins, 2002.

## **Digital sources**

"Diana Vreeland at the Costume Institute." *Dianavreeland.com*, The Diana Vreeland Estate, *n.d.* Web. 2013, June 28.

MarketLine. Global Textiles, Apparel & Luxury Goods. *Reportlinker.com*. 2012, May. Website. Date of last access: 2013, June 28.

NPD Group USA. Reports on the U.S. Apparel Market. *Npd.com*. 2012, March. Website. Date of last access: 2013, 28 June.

NYdailynews. Israel passes law banning too-skinny models; Mannequins with BMIs below 18,5 are nixed from the catwalk as well as from photo shoots and advertising campaigns. Nydailynews.com. January 8, 2013. Date of last access: 2013, 29 June.

Sauers, Jenna. The New Immigrants Coming for Your Job: Models. *Jezebel.com*. 2013, May 22. Website. Date of last access: 2013, June 28.

Uden, van Eline. The Working Status of Models in the Fashion Industry. *Talktoaletta.nu*. Website. Date of last access: 2013, June 29.

Vina, Gonzalo. Petition demands gap, H&M Sign Bangladesh Safety Plan. *Bloomberg.com*. 2013, May 9. Website. Date of last access: 2013, 28 June.

## **Films and documentaries**

*Girl Model*. Dir. David Redmon & Ashley Sabin. 2011. Documentary.

*The Eye has to Travel*. Dir. Lisa Immardino Vreeland. Hanway Films, 2012. Documentary.

*The Model Agency*. Maverick Television for Channel 4 (UK). 2011. Television Series.

## **Government Reports**

European Commission. *Towards Common Principles of Flexicurity: More and better jobs through flexibility and security: Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities*. July, 2007.COM 359 final. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee of the Regions, adopted on 27 June 2007. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2007.