

A Linguistic and Literary Analysis of Discourses of Fashion: A Foucauldian Analysis of Karen Russell's Flash Fiction

Mohammad Muazzam Sharif¹
Mujahid Shah²
Amjad Saleem³

Abstract

This paper aims to explore how discourses of fashion are shaped by capitalist power structures and how as a corollary they tend to enforce capitalist practices of consumerism. The study attempts to identify and understand the nature of fashion discourses and question the purpose they serve. All this is done by linguistic analysis. The analysis is carried out on Karen Russell's fashion flash fiction, published in Vogue magazine in March, 2012. The nature of the study is qualitative guided by Foucault's theory of "Subject and Power". The findings of the study substantiate the claims made in the research hypotheses, that is, fashion is a construct shaped by power which is exercised through relationships and serves to fortify consumerist practices, both at individual and communal levels.

Keywords: Consumerism, Flash Fiction, Subject and Power, Capitalist Power

1. Introduction

Fashion industry is one of the most profitable industries all over the world which has entrenched its snare everywhere, in all dimensions. One does not have to look very far to discern its far-reaching effects. It is all encompassing and this fire keeps on burning in a desire to fulfill that loss which Lacan expounds upon in his theory of psychoanalysis and which has been exploited by capitalist fashion industries across the globe (2005). However, at this juncture, an important distinction needs to be made. Fashion or buying new clothes or appliances or any other thing for that matter is not what capitalist consumerism basically is. Clothes get tattered, shoes get worn, appliances can frequently need repair or replacement and therefore these industries are also a societal need. Yet, when these products are sold for a feeling of identity and not for their functional use, then this is where

¹ Lecturer, Department of English, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan

² Assistant Professor, Department of English, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan

³ Assistant Professor, Department of English, University of Peshawar

the problem arises. As Marxists say that a commodity's value lies not in what it can do (use value) but in the money or other commodities for which it can be traded (exchange value) or in the social status it confers on its owner (sign-exchange value). So fashion discourses then become a construct which are controlled by false consciousness promulgated by the capitalist powers. This false consciousness makes people believe in a certain identity which is bestowed upon them and internalized within them. When discourses of fashion claim that "buy this to become this type of person", then this is where the problem sprouts its head.

Fashion discourses tend to cloud one's judgment and critical appreciation of people and events. They start judging people by the brands they flaunt instead of their capabilities, competencies or the way they conduct themselves since fashion discourses occupy the status of a deity which in turn occupies the summit of our existence.

And all along, capitalist fashion industries are profiting from this exploitation, by making people subjects of themselves and the products which they are prompted to buy. The question which then surfaces at this point is that how discourses of fashion function to enforce capitalist practices of consumerism.

A lot of research has been conducted in this domain. It has been established that fashion industries working on the capitalist principles identify a lack, turning people into subjects, promulgating a false consciousness within them, thus making them believe that buying a certain product would give them a certain identity. However, this aspect has not been studied extensively through the lens of power relationships. Very less amount of research has been carried out on the nature of fashion and its relationship with power and how these discourses ultimately enforce capitalist principles of consumerism.

This paper thus aims to establish the multiple ways in which discourses of fashion are actually power structures that serve to enforce capitalism and consumerism. Karen Russell's fashion flash fiction published in *Vogue Magazine* on March 15, 2012 has been chosen as a substratum for this research.

The primary reason for selecting this text is the international popularity of *Vogue* magazine, the influence which it has on its audience, particularly women and the significant role which it plays in promoting fashion products. *Vogue* was described by *New York Times* as 'the world's most influential fashion magazine'.

The publication claims to reach 11 million readers in the US and 12.5 million internationally (Statista, 2015). The second reason being the fact that although this piece of fiction apparently aims to promote a certain brand and preaches a certain identity, however it is ironic to its very core since simultaneously it contradicts these very notions and unveils the power structures pulling the strings of the entire charade.

Michael Foucault's (1982) theories regarding power relationships, their location, their sources and their operation have been deployed for the purposes of answering the question and finding a solution to the problem. We are hereby looking at fashion discourses and consumerism as power relationships through the lens of Foucault's theoretical outlook demonstrated through semiotic means, specifically linguistic means.

The concept of subject, according to Foucault, is a very intriguing one. According to Foucault (1982) there are two meanings of the word subject. One is 'subject to someone else by control and dependence' and the second is 'tied to his/her own identity by a conscience and self-knowledge.

Since fashion makes us believe that staying in vogue would make us beautiful and part of the crowd and normal and classy, it (fashion), thus, falls in line with Foucault's theory of Pastoral Power (1982). The objectives and the officials of this kind of pastoral power may have been altered but the principles that it works upon have stayed the same. Previously, pastoral power guaranteed salvation. Now the pastoral power of fashion discourses ensures acceptance and beauty and confidence and inclusion. This power is not exercised by ecclesiastical institutions but by the capitalist fashion industry as a whole; brands, models, media and so on.

In light of these arguments, if one asserts that fashion is nothing but a construct shaped by power which serves to enforce capitalist consumerism, the first question which sprouts its head in one's mind is that how is this power exercised. Certainly not by violence. No one puts a gun to one's head and compels him/her to stay 'in vogue'. What then is power if not violence?

Foucault (1982) claims that power is in fact a relationship. Moreover, it is not simply an individual or collective relationship between partners. Instead, it is a way in which certain actions modify others. Power exists only when it is put in action. It is no sovereign being which exists universally in a concentrated or diffused form. It is a mode of action which acts upon actions, an action upon an

action, on existing actions, or on those which may arise in the present or the future.

So, when fashion modifies one's conduct and induces him/her to perform or not to perform certain actions, it is in fact exercising power and this power as a corollary is enforcing capitalism. However, the paradox is that one would be having an illusion of freedom. Foucault (1982) says that power can only be exercised over free subjects who are faced with a wide range of open possibilities. Slavery is not a power relationship according to him. Thus, when one decides to buy a specific product out of a range of similar products to conform to a certain identity, which that product sells, he/she would be acting under an illusion of freedom without realizing the clandestine working of power relationships which have modified their conduct and induced them to buy that product. And in this way the capitalist industries keep on running and making money.

What is fashion then? An ideology? An abstraction? A relationship? An identity? An absolute historical truth? Or a mere construct?

According to Foucault it is a relationship which induces one to perform or not to perform certain actions. It instills an identity within a person, making him/her conform to it, as if it were the absolute truth. Thus, when one refuses to be what it dictates him/her to be; when one questions the nature of this relationship; he/she shatters the illusion of fashion being a truth. S/he exposes its contingency and asserts that it is in fact nothing but a construct, shaped by power relationships that are entrenched in capitalist consumerism.

1.1 Statement of Problem

Fashion industry is one of the most profitable industries all over the world. Fashion products are becoming a tool of oppression and sell off a certain identity, thus paving way for consumerism (McDowell and Massey, 1994). This paper thus aims to explore the multiple ways in which discourses of fashion are actually power structures which serve to enforce capitalism and consumerism. Karen Russell's *Fashion Flash Fiction*, published in *Vogue Magazine* on March 2012 has been chosen as a substratum for this research. Michael Foucault's theory regarding power relationships, their location, their sources and their operation has been deployed as the analytical framework for the study. The researchers are of the belief that in today's social scenario, this piece of research can be crucial in identifying the nature of fashion discourses and what purposes they are serving.

1.2 Research Hypotheses:

- i. Discourses of fashion are actually a construct shaped by capitalist power, evident from the linguistics means deployed.
- ii. Discourses of fashion serve to enforce capitalist practices of consumerism.

1.3 Research Objectives:

- i. To establish how discourses of power are actually a construct shaped by power.
- ii. To determine how discourses of fashion serve to enforce capitalist practices of consumerism.

1.4 Significance of the Study

Brands are popping all around. Fashion consciousness was never this strong as it has become now, with rapidly developing social, print and electronic media. Thus, it is important to understand how fashion has made us believe that staying in vogue would make us beautiful and part of the crowd, normal and classy, how has fashion bestowed this identity upon us and has tied us with it. In such a social scenario, this piece of research can be crucial in identifying the nature of fashion discourses and the purposes they are serving.

1.5 Delimitation of the Study

Although capitalism and consumerism themselves are very broad arenas and work in multi-dimensional ways, however, for the purposes of this study we would be focusing on fashion discourses primarily, their nature with respect to power relationships and how they serve to reinforce consumerism by critically analyzing the selected text.

2. Literature Review

In this chapter, the researchers primarily define what capitalist consumerism is. This is followed by multiple studies which have been carried out to analyze various dimensions of consumerism in various cultures. This then leads to fashion discourses and their relationship with consumerism. Eventually, the researchers build a link between the two variables formerly mentioned, that is, capitalist consumerism and discourses of fashion to Foucault's theory of subject and power. This nexus eventually serves as the theoretical framework for the study.

2.1 What is Consumer Capitalism?

Consumerism is a way of life combining high levels of material affluence with an emphasis on symbolic and emotional meanings associated with shopping and

possessions. United States is the ruling figure but the phenomenon has seized on the global scope. Categorically, consumerism builds a fire under the economy, assisting the progress of people's leisure and libertarian to structure up their character in the society along with their subcultures. On the contrary, critics delineate the phenomena of consumerism as a form of manipulation and destruction, sabotaging the environment of the market of designing, selling, producing, advertising and discarding (Rosenblatt, 1999). All may agree that "The one unambiguous result of modern capitalism, of the industrial revolution, and of marketing ... is in the way we live now, you are not what you make, you are what you consume" (Twitchell 2002, pg. 01).

Tyson (2006) argues that Marx's concern over the continues rise of capitalist economy was basically about its negative impacts on human values. In other words in a capitalist system of economy human values or added values are detached from human beings in the process of commodifying. The same values are reshaped for market competition in form of brands. The product goes to the market without taking stock of its demand in the market or checking its real worth against its price. In Marxists terms the value of a commodity is not what it can be used for rather it is such a value for which it can be bargained or traded (exchange value), also the place and status it gives to its owner in social terms (sign-exchange value). To become a commodity an object has to possess exchange and sign-exchange values or one of them. These values are given and determined by the same society in which it is traded. The economic system of capitalism depends on consumerism and for its survival capitalist system promotes sign-exchange value in way to make it our basic means of relating ourselves to the world we find around us. There is nothing better for a capitalist system to make its consumers unable to think well about themselves until they wear the new fashion and have a fashionable look which can only be maintained by having the habit of regularly buying new clothes and cosmetics. In other words it is in fact this system which indirectly promotes a sense of insecurity and inferiority in its consumers for motivating them to keep buying and similarly keep fueling the same system which works against them.

However, consumerism apparently is not merely comprised of evil. Stephen Harper (2002), through his analysis of *Dawn of the Dead*, a film that is based on satire on consumerism, directed by George Romero in 1978, brings into light the two opposing debates going on about consumerism and its societal effects. On one hand, he brings into discussion views of Marxian critics who illustrate the menacing encounter of capitalist production and the exploited entity and the

removal of commodity fetishism from under any political influence for the consumers. Another aspect of the argument is that the capitalist subjects are authorized by consumerism, according to some sociologists and post-modern ethnographers. They express that consumerism also provides a politically important space for an ideal survival of autonomy (Harper, 2002).

2.2 Consumer Capitalism- An Ideological Apparatus of Exploitation

However, the researchers align with the former debate, arguing that consumerism is a form of exploitation shaped by clandestine structures of power. In order to fortify this argument, Carolan and other theorists have been deployed.

Carolan (2005) draws upon Veblen's research and asserts that almost a hundred years ago, Veblen coined the concept of 'conspicuous consumption' which has now become a commonplace discourse. Conspicuous consumption implies that most of our consumption is carried out in order to show off our social power to others. The terms consumerism, consumption, and commodification are as valid today as the day when they were initially coined as far as their conceptual utility is concerned. However, as the cultural and economic paradigms continue to shift with every era, therefore it is required that these terms are also elaborated further. Carolan (2005) argues that today's era can be more appropriately renamed as "the era of conspicuous consumption" (pg. 82). Bluntly put, this is the era where one does not find it sufficient enough to be surrounded with 'nice things' as a reflection of their status and power. Instead, they tend to embody the 'nice things' themselves and to become an embodiment of conspicuous consumption. Thus conspicuous consumption moves from societal level to individual level and we end up with a conspicuously consuming society, brimming to the top with conspicuously consuming bodies.

Wolff (2002) draws upon Althusser's concept of 'ideological state apparatuses' to elaborate the processes of consumerism and consumption and how it serves as an ideological tool to serve the purposes of capitalism. He asserts that the increasing levels of worker consumption are directly proportional with workers' exploitation and serves as a compensation for the latter. The negative social effects produced by worker exploitation are also countered by promoting this ideology. This system can only work if these workers who are exploited embrace an ideology which emphasizes the significance of consumption (Wolff, 2002).

Lukose (2005) has carried out a research amongst the youth of Kerala, India which focuses on the globally-inflected patterns of consumption w.r.t the post-

colonial cultural politics of gender, caste and class. Lukose has studied the ways in which young men and women are made objects of commoditization and subjects of consumption in this terrain. This study has revealed that the link between youth, globalization and consumption is a fraught and contradictory.

2.3 Discourses of Fashion and Consumer Capitalism

Nava (1987) claims that the consumer society is a distinct and advanced form of modern capitalism. Moreover, its perpetuation is dependent upon a number of factors and agents with the inclusion of advertisements, media, spectacle, the image and the fashion industry. According to her, Frankfurt School was the first one to initiate a critical analysis of these aspects of mass culture; however, this movement really gained momentum by the fifties and sixties. Thus, fashion also becomes an instrumental tool in the normalizing discipline of capitalist consumption. Fashion however needs to be understood primarily in order to understand its functionality and positionality as an instrumental tool.

Craik (1994) asserts that fashion is an intriguing and at times an irritating phenomenon, but more than anything else it is compulsive in nature. Reactions towards fashion are ambivalent but there is no denying the fact that it exerts a powerful influence over people. Fashion still observes the old adage which claimed that 'clothes maketh a person'. Craik (1994) also states that fashion is generally associated with the rise of mercantile capitalism which took place in Europe after the Middle Ages. The rapidly changing economic formations in Europe instigated a rapid change in cultural forms as well. Thus, fashion is defined by 'change'; and this change can be understood in terms of a rapid and arbitrary succession of new styles, manner and modes which as a corollary render the previous ones obsolete. Fashion as a consequence is not something innocent. It in fact, is an authoritarian process which is controlled by an established elite body of designers. Similarly according to McDowell and Massey (1994)

“Fashion is the imposition of a prevailing mode or shape. It is a largely arbitrary imposition and it precludes all other modes or shapes, although, of course, variations on the basic theme are permitted.” (McDowell and Massey 1994: 194)

Elite core of fashion dictators define the western haute couture. This high fashion system comprises of fashion designers/dictators, docile consumers/imitators, a rule-prescribed behavior and an equation which identifies fashion with abstract traits such as importance, attractions, desirability and success. This equation in

fact is the palpable index of status and power in its visual manifestation. McDowell and Massey (1994) eloquently states this fact as,

“Clothes were a tool of oppression, a weapon wielded against the poor. They were used to drive home the lesson that the grand were not simply different, they were better, because they were rich. They wore on their backs the proof that they were superior intellectually, morally and socially” (1994: 197).

The scheme western fashion order, thus, is an exercise of power. This fact though, is not merely confined to the Western fashion system alone only. Rather, this is true for all fashion systems, irrespective of their places of origin. This exercise of power cannot be divorced from the development of modern consumer capitalism. However, this relationship isn't as simple as the former statement proclaims it to be. As a matter of fact, fashion (or more appropriately) culture politics and capitalism interact with one another in diverse ways. They are an embodiment of multiple and varied loci of power. Likewise fashion responds to them in various and ever changing ways (Craik, 1994).

Duncum (2007), rejects the modernist philosophical definition of aesthetics and argues that an ordinary language definition of aesthetics ought to be coined which characterizes aesthetics as visual appearance and visual effect. Duncum (2007) also delineates the use of such a definition in various cultural sites. He argues that such a definition would pave way for a more comprehensive analysis of the realities of everyday life under designer capitalism. It acts as a reality check for our socio-economy which survives upon the drive to create a never-satiating appetite for desire. This system thus works by smoothly manipulating our aesthetics.

Heath (1992), has carried out an analysis of the language of dress in urban Senegal. She has particularly focused upon women for the purposes of this study. She has used the practice of 'sanse' (dressing well) to examine hegemony and its social construction. She has also deployed Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia for this purpose. She observed that the social practice of dressing up conjugated with the production and decoration of textiles personify a dialogue between oppositional voices or between dominant and subordinate strands. Bakhtin (cited by Heath) terms these opposing strands as centripetal and centrifugal impulses.

2.4 Fashion, Consumerism and Power

Analyzing fashion in a consumerist paradigm may be very exciting and serve as an eye-opener for many; however, the matter of the fact is that it tends to be a redundant study. There is a rich body of scholarship out there which deals with the phenomenon of fashion as an index of status and wealth, thus enforcing capitalist consumerism. However, this paper aims to strike a different chord and aims to juxtapose the two variables under Foucault's theoretical framework of subject and power. How does Foucault explain the functioning of consumerism and fashion in consumerist paradigms through the language of power relationships? This can only be understood if one is acquainted with the main postulates of Foucault's theory on Subject and Power.

In order to define power and its subsequent nature, Foucault first defines the concept of subject. The concept of subject, according to Foucault, is a very intriguing one. Foucault (1982) says that there are two meanings of the word subject. One means subject to someone else by control and dependence and the second means tied to his own identity by a conscience and self-knowledge.

He also sheds light upon a new form of political power which has been continuously developing since the sixteenth century. This new political structure, according to Foucault, is the state. He goes on further to claim that most of the time the state is envisioned as a kind of political power which ignores individuals and looks only at the interest of the totality. However, having said that, Foucault (1982) also proclaims that the state's power is an individualizing as well as a totalizing form of power. He explains this tricky combination of political structures by asserting that the modern Western state has integrated in a new political shape an old power technique which originated in Christian institutions. He calls this power technique, the 'pastoral power'.

As far as the exercise of power is concerned, Foucault claims that power is in fact a relationship. Moreover, it is not simply an individual or collective relationship between partners. Instead, it is a way in which certain actions modify others. Power exists only when it is put in action. It is no sovereign being which exists universally in a concentrated or diffused form. It is a mode of action which acts upon actions, an action upon an action, on existing actions, or on those which may arise in the present or the future (1982).

So, when fashion modifies one's conduct and induces him/her to perform or not to perform certain actions, it is in fact exercising power and this power as a corollary

is enforcing capitalism. However, the paradox is that one would be having an illusion of freedom. Foucault says that power can only be exercised over free subjects who are faced with a wide range of open possibilities. Slavery is not a power relationship according to him (1982).

Although, there is an extensive body of scholarship dealing with fashion and consumerist practices, however they have not been extensively studied through the lens of power relationships and this is what this paper aims to do. Thus, the focus here is to investigate fashion as a construct, shaped by relationships of power, which instill a certain identity upon its followers and in doing so, it advertently enforces capitalist practices of consumerism. The theoretical outlook (discussed above) comprising upon the nature of subjects, nature of power and the ways in which power is exercised are, thus, deployed to analyze Karen Russell's Fashion Flash Fiction.

3. Research Methodology

This study tends to be a qualitative analysis of Karen Russell's Fashion Flash Fiction published in Vogue Magazine on March 15, 2012. Thematic analysis for category generation remained of special use, wherein the study is informed by Braun and Clarke (2006).

Being a qualitative research, this study is based on a world view which is holistic and has three important beliefs: 1) There is no single reality 2) Reality is based on perceptions which are different for each person and change over time 3) What we know has the meaning only within a given context.

The theoretical framework selected for the present study comprises of Foucault's theory of Subject and Power (1982). This framework deals with power relationships, their location, their sources and their operation. Since, this study focuses to analyze discourses of fashion through the lens of power relationships; the categories/paradigms of the theoretical framework that are deployed for this study are:

- i. Foucault's definition of 'Pastoral Power', where he defines pastoral power is a productive power that produces subjects. It is concerned with both individuals and totalization, and in so doing produces the submissive subject (Foucault, 1982).
- ii. Subject of Power: There are two meanings of subject. Subject to someone else means by control and dependence and the second means tied to his own identity by a conscience and self-knowledge (Foucault, 1982).

- iii. Exercise of Power: According to Foucault (1982) power exists only when it is put in action. It is a mode of action which acts upon actions, an action upon an action, on existing actions, or on those which may arise in the present or the future.
- iv. Illusion of Freedom: Slavery is not a power relationship according to Foucault. Power operates by instilling an illusion of freedom within its subjects (Foucault, 1982).

Keeping in view the said paradigms of Foucault's theory the paper aims to explore how discourses of fashion are actually a construct shaped by capitalist power and how these discourses serve to enforce the capitalist practices of consumerism.

4. Analysis

Literature doesn't merely reflect the culture in which it is produced, but actively contributes to the constitution of culture and, thus, of history. This section discusses how subjects cannot transcend their own time but live and work within the horizon of a culture constructed by ideology and by discourses, so culture in turn becomes a construct itself, shaped and controlled by power structures, the power structures being those of capitalism in this context. This analysis is made on Karen Russell's Flash Fiction published in Vogue magazine.

This piece of flash fiction was published alongside a cover picture in Vogue magazine portraying a very fashionable woman flaunting off her 'Tory Burch Bag' with a cute little poodle safely encased in the bag. The picture wasn't something out of the ordinary. Images of the like kind, with women clad in the latest attire, flaunting themselves off with shoulders thrown back and chin lifted up is no novelty. We come across them frequently in magazines, in advertisements, in commercials, in books, in movies etc. They appear as the epitome of 'chic-ness' and 'vogue-ness'.

In this piece of fiction by Russell, the protagonist whose voice we hear throughout is the little poodle enthroned in the stylish bag whereas the stylish woman with her stylish outfit and stylish accessories and stylish demeanor has been labelled as a 'robot'.

"The female robot is an extraordinary mimic, and no one suspects that I, the dog in her satchel, am controlling her movements remotely." (Russell, 2012, p.1)

4.1 The Subject of Power

Foucault claims that there are two types of subjects. Subjects who are subjectified by an external control, and subjects who subjectify themselves by tying themselves with a certain identity and self-knowledge. It is interesting to note that linguistic analysis, especially thematic analysis of the text shows that both kinds of subjects can be found in the selected text.

The use of this particular signifier “robot” is very significant in itself. The signified is indexical of different meanings. It may imply that the woman’s actions are being controlled by an ideology which is a construct in itself and is controlled by relationships of power. So, her identity is shackled and trapped within her visage. It may also indicate that she is a victim of ideological apparatuses working from within and without.

The robotic woman flaunting off her ‘Tory Burch’ bag is controlled on one hand by the dog, in this context, the capitalist power structures and, thus, she is a subject to it by control and dependence. At the same time; however, she is controlled by an ideology instilled within her which makes her believe that following a certain fashion norm or buying a certain fashionable product would define her as a person, would fill that lack which Lacan (1977) speaks of, would bestow acceptance and other pleasant traits upon her and, thus, she becomes a subject to her own self, subject to this very identity.

4.2 Illusion of Freedom

It is important to note at this juncture that according to Foucault, power operates through an illusion of freedom. It is contrary to Harper’s theory (2002), which suggests that there is another side to consumerist capitalism as well, which liberates and empowers by providing one with an array of choices so that s/he may construct their identity themselves. The woman might assume that she is empowered and liberated since she has the liberty to choose between a ‘Tory Burch’ or a ‘Jan sport’ or any other brand for that matter. She may assume that she has the liberty to choose the way in which she wants to carry herself. But what she forgets is that these choices in themselves are provided by capitalist power structures. Russell very implicitly mocks this illusion of freedom by characterizing the woman as a robot and the dog as the controlling power. So the woman apparently assumes that she has the freedom to make her own choices, but subtly she is being controlled and is in fact a shallow, ideologically controlled robot.

For the purpose of analysis, the researcher assumes that the dog is actually the capitalist ideological apparatus which subtly exerts its power, giving the robot an illusion of freedom and liberty to make her own choices.

Not only did I program the robot to locomote on stilettos as if they were ice skates, I also designed its fabulous outfit; it sips skinny-chinos with an inhuman grace and never spills a drop on its white jacket (Russell, 2012, p.1).

So while Stephen Harper (2002) may argue, at this juncture, that the woman is liberated within her sub-culture since she has right to choose what brand she wants to wear or carry. However, according to Foucault (1982) this is the very irony of power structures. They subtly control you, provide you with the choices they want and then let you assume that you are free to make that choice. Thus, the dog in this text is performing very function. It is the one who is subtly in control of the woman, yet the woman assumes that she is liberated and empowered.

4.3 Exercise of Power

Foucault (1982) claims that power is not an omnipresent, essential being. Rather, it exercises itself in the form of relationships. Actions which induce other actions. Thereby, our societal makeup whereby we tend to encourage and compliment this ideological entrapment is a form of exercise of power whereby the hold of capitalist ideological apparatuses gets strengthened.

Men and women alike are always giving the robot their phone numbers, complementing its haircut, inviting it to tapas (Russell, 2012, p.1).

How is this capitalist power being exercised in the first place? Does someone put a gun to the woman's head and make her conform to capitalist ideals? According to Foucault (1982), this power is in fact exercised through relationships. There is no sovereign being exercising power, rather these are relationships, actions which modify other actions. So when people praise the woman for her "Tory Burch Bag", it reinforces the false consciousness which capitalism internalizes within its subjects (Tyson, 2006). When readers of the Vogue magazine get inspired from her snapshot, her flawless fashionable attire and her 'Tory Burch' bag, they tend to emulate her, be like her and this is where power stakes its territory. This is where actions gets modified by other actions and thus power relationships develop.

4.4 Pastoral Power

When the robot woman believes that her expensive fashionable bag and her fashionable attire would guarantee acceptance, beauty, confidence and inclusion, she becomes a victim of ideological state apparatuses, in other words a victim of Pastoral Power (Althusser, 2005). This pastoral power may not be exercised by ecclesiastical institutions but by the capitalist fashion industry as a whole; brands, models, media etc. So, while the dog himself is an embodiment of capitalist power keeping an eye on its subjects at all times and enticing their desires, the bag in which it is carried, the brand which that bag flaunts, media which propagates this image etc. are all “agents of this power” (Foucault, 1982).

It is evident in this passage how our behaviors tend to be controlled by these hegemonic cultural ideological apparatuses. In contrast to Hegelian humanistic and rationalistic unity, the text provides inside into the superficiality and robotic nature of our conduct, without us being aware of it; all for the sake of conformation to an ideology which in turn seeks to reinforce that identity which has been constructed for us.

Although it may have been a tactical error to stage the takeover from this particular bag, which is so luxurious that occasionally passersby ignore me completely and choose to pet the ‘Tory Burch’ instead. Next time, perhaps, a Jan Sport (Russell, 2012, p.1).

The text is satirical and ironic in itself. The dog, hereby the impersonation for capitalist powers, is working in the background all the time, pulling the strings which control our thoughts and actions, yet what we focus on is not on them but on what they want us to focus on, that is, “The Tory Burch Bag”.

Thus, as Althusser (2005) says, these repressive ideological structures which include schools, media, family, art etc. foster ideologies- a set of ideas and attitudes which is sympathetic to the aims of the state and the political status quo, hereby the capitalist fashion industries. Thus, what the woman feels she is freely choosing is actually being imposed upon her, eventually turning us into ‘ideologically controlled robot’ (Russell, 2012).

5. Findings and Conclusion

The research hypotheses posed in the beginning of the study which asserted that discourses of power are actually a construct shaped by power and that they serve to enforce capitalist practices of consumerism gets fortified through the analysis of the selected text.

The analysis of the text clearly suggests that fashion is a form of power which has subjugated us and made us a subject of our own selves. It not only made us believe that staying in vogue would make us beautiful and part of the crowd, normal and classy, but it has also bestowed this identity upon us and then has tied us with it.

Fashion also falls in line with Foucault's theory of 'Pastoral Power'. Though fashion as a form of power, is not exercised directly by some governing institutions, but it is exercised by the capitalist fashion industry via different brands, models, and media etc. and the paradox is that the subject of capitalist power have an illusion of freedom.

Thus, we see that, these repressive ideological structures, which include fashion industries, brands, models and media, foster ideologies, that Althusser (2005) has called a "false consciousness". As a result of this false consciousness, we have willingly become subjects of the capitalist power (fashion in this context), where we feel we are free to choose but actually, in reality, they are being imposed upon us, eventually turning us into 'ideologically controlled robots' (Althusser, 2005).

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