



Dressed to Oppress: The Societal Implications of Online Fast Fashion Trends on Gender, Race, and the Environment

BA Thesis

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Abstract

This thesis explores the complex relationships among gender, race, environmental issues, and contemporary online fast fashion trends. It centers on how these trends, propagated through social media platforms such as TikTok and Instagram, both mirror and influence societal standards. Through an intersectional lens, it highlights the persistence of colonial ideologies in current fashion trends, which perpetuate racial hierarchies and the sexualization of marginalized bodies, and how these trends are complicit in sustaining Eurocentric beauty standards and exploitative attitudes towards nature. Three case studies explore these dynamics and reveals how these aesthetics contribute to gender and race hierarchies and reinforce harmful environmental perceptions. Online fast fashion trends perpetuate gendered and racialized constructs of the environment, influenced by colonialism, classism, and racism. It provides insights into the broader implications of these dynamics for understanding contemporary issues of gender, race, and sustainability, emphasizing the critical role of social media in shaping and perpetuating these trends and their implications.

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Introduction

In the contemporary discourse on gender, race, and environmental problems, fashion emerges not merely as a means of personal expression but as a profound influencer of societal structures and individual perceptions. This thesis explores the complex interplay between gender, race, the environment, and modern online fast fashion trends, specifically exploring how these trends both reflect and shape societal norms. It is first important to understand what a social media trend is to examine its impact on gender, race, and the environment.

Social media is defined as "websites and computer programs that allow people to communicate and share information, opinions, pictures, videos, etc. on the internet, especially networking websites" (Cambridge Dictionary). Examples are TikTok, Instagram, Twitter, etc. A trend is described as "a general development or change in a situation or in the way that people are behaving" (Cambridge Dictionary). Therefore, a social media trend is a specific type of trend that emerges and gains traction on social media platforms. These trends can encompass a wide range of phenomena, including viral challenges, popular hashtags, memes, content themes, and emerging discussions. Social media trends often start as niche interests or topics within specific communities but can quickly gain momentum, becoming widely recognized and participated in by a broader audience. Examples include girl dinner and fashion trends like Coquette, Quiet Luxury, and Mob Wife. This thesis explores the role of social media fashion trends in promoting societal structures through online fashion trends. Platforms like TikTok and Instagram not only facilitate the rapid spread of these trends but also play a crucial role in how they are interpreted and integrated into individual identities. The participatory nature of social media allows for a democratization of fashion, where users can both consume and reinterpret trends, thus contributing to an ongoing discourse on gender, race, and the environment.

What I have highlighted is that colonial underpinnings manifest in current fashion trends, perpetuating racial hierarchies and the sexualization of black bodies in relation to nature. The exploration at the core of this discussion involves recognizing the enduring influence of colonialism on contemporary fashion. Colonialism, which is characterized as the practice of one group exerting control over another (Blakemore, 2023), still influences the fashion industry today. It continues to shape global perceptions of beauty and style, reinforcing Eurocentric standards while marginalizing indigenous and non-Western people and cultures. Perceptions of the environment are gendered and racialized, and the idea of nature as something to be conquered stems from colonialism. Our attitudes towards nature also come from colonial times.

To fully understand the hierarchies embedded in fashion trends I take an intersectional approach to explore the topic of racialized and gendered constructions of the environment, specifically through social media and fast fashion trends. Intersectionality, a framework developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw, plays a crucial role in comprehending social dynamics. It highlights how intersecting identities – such as race, gender, class, and sexuality – interact to create individual experiences of oppression and privilege (Carbado et al., 2013). In this thesis I apply an intersectional perspective to explore how fashion trends both reflect and perpetuate various forms of inequality, highlighting the intricate power dynamics that shape individual and collective identities.

I will explore three case studies to shed light on the underlying issues and hierarchies within social media's fast fashion trends. First, I will examine the Coquette aesthetic, its popularization of bows, and its connection to Victorian-era gender and racial ideals. Second, I will analyze the Quiet Luxury aesthetic, which was made famous by Gwyneth Paltrow's court appearances, and has a foundation in classism. Lastly, I will analyze the Mob Wife aesthetic, which relates to American-Italian (mafia) culture and its ties to the racial formations in the U.S. Each chapter will follow a similar structure, linking them to gender and race hierarchies as well as contemporary attitudes toward the exploitation of nature and people. This thesis argues that discourse on and cultural objects of each of the respective styles contribute to this exploitation.

This thesis aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how fast fashion trends promote gendered and racialized constructions of the environment, offering insights into the broader implications of these dynamics for understanding contemporary issues of gender, race, and sustainability in society. Social media and fast fashion, specifically online (fast) fashion trends, perpetuate gendered and racialized constructs of the environment due to the online presence of fashion and how people interact with it. Trends on social media are often rooted in colonialism, classism, and racism, intersecting with fast fashion which fosters harmful attitudes toward the environment.

Chapter 1: Bow trend and Coquette aesthetic

Bows were significant before they resurfaced in 2023/2024. They embrace hyper-femininity and Coquette is about all things idyllic, dainty, and soft. These ideals can be linked to gender ideals, which stem from colonialism, especially apparent through the Victorian era. The bow trend originates from the Coquette aesthetic, which has a much longer history. Coquette is defined as “a woman who trifles with men's affections; a woman given to flirting or coquetry” according to The Oxford English Dictionary and it has its roots in the (western) Victorian era. The word originates from the French “coquet,” translating to “a beau.” The first distinction of coquette as a feminine word began in 1700 (Online Etymology Dictionary).

Bows became trendy at the New York Fashion Week, for spring/summer 2024 in September of 2023 and later also for autumn/winter 2024 in February of 2024, by designer Sandy Liang. Bows have always been a big part of designs, before the attention on Sandy Liang, Miu Miu’s Ballet Flats, with little bows attached on the front,



COQUETTE AESTHETIC
Hair Bow with Pearls £8 ASOS Design
BUY IT NOW

Figure 1: Glamour Coquette suggestion.

were popularized with the autumn/winter 2022 runway, being called “the shoes to be seen in this autumn” (Vogue, 2022). Trends seem to silently trickle into fashion, and the bow trend finds its roots in

Coquette, in July 2022 Glamour magazine reported on the Coquette aesthetic and gave fashion suggestions that included bows (see Figure 1). The offline exhibition of bows, also donned by celebrities and influencers like singer Griff at London Fashion Week in September 2023 (see Figure 2), marked the beginning of the styling videos on TikTok. This started the social media craziness about bows, of course,



Figure 2: Griff AW23.

Coquette did already exist, but bows are an easy

way to (hyper-) feminize or “coquettify” an outfit (see Figure 3).



Figure 3: “Coquettifying” a top.

Bows got mainstreamed, not necessarily standing for the Coquette aesthetic alone anymore. On TikTok #bowtrend has 10.000 posts, #bows has 330.9k posts, and #coquette has 1.9 million posts. For comparison #girlsdinner which was the most popular trend in the United States in 2023 (TikTok newsroom, 2023) on TikTok of 2023 has 251.9k posts.

The Bow trend and Coquette aesthetic are both hyper-feminine trends. Coquette uses a lot of pinks (see Figure 4). The color pink is associated with women or femininity. From infancy on, boys and girls

are conditioned differently. Unknowingly, parents raise their children differently based on gender. How boys and girls play determines a lot about their development. It's how kids learn their first skills. People tend to give children toys that are associated with their gender (Brown & Stone, 2018). As soon as kids understand what gender label they have, they tend to naturally seek out those categories. Girls will gravitate towards pink, and boys will avoid it. The way a toy is presented also changes whether children take an interest in it (Weisgram et al., 2014). Hyper-feminine people thus tend to gravitate more towards pinks as they are socialized this way. This portrays how Coquette is a feminine trend.



Figure 4: "Coquette" on Pinterest.

Bows have an aesthetic appeal because they make an outfit more feminine. They are also easy to add to an outfit and are versatile. They appear on bags, in hair, on shoes, on clothes, etc. They are a small signifier that screams girliness. Noticeable is that this trend is about girliness, building further on (lifestyle) trends like girl dinner and girl math that were popular on TikTok in 2023. These trends share a common theme: they evoke nostalgia for childhood among participants, particularly the sentiment of 'just being a girl' as noted by *Forbes* (2023). As Robin Wasserman (2016) says in her essay: "To be called 'just a girl' may be diminishment but to call yourself 'still a girl,' can be empowerment, laying claim to the unencumbered liberties of youth."

Some might say that wearing feminine clothes such as bows is taking back the power over who they are and their childhood. Making the deliberate fashion choice to wear hyper-feminine clothing can be seen as appropriating signs of traditional feminine fashion attributes, such as makeup and jewelry, as their personal independence and sexual freedom. This perspective suggests that women's liberation is reinforced when they embrace their femininity as an aspect of their individuality. These fashion politics show how dress is politicized and create a juxtaposition of



Figure 5: TikTok on hyper-femininity.



Figure 6: TikTok comments on hating pink.

reclamation of traditional fashion as empowering and traditional fashion as perpetuating harmful stereotypes (Hillman, 2013). For instance, one of her most popular videos @dreamingofdior on TikTok got 806.8k views talking about how her feminine style is not about reinforcing traditional fashion. In her TikTok, she says: "...I'm not hyper feminine in the conservative

conforming to the patriarchy [...] type way but rather 4th wave feminist, borderline misandrist, refusing to accept society's devaluation of anything feminine as inferior [...] type of way" (see Figure 5). She chooses to empower herself by not rejecting femininity but embracing it as a part of her. In an interview with *BBC* (2024), she confirms this and says she feels empowered as she has not been taken seriously as a kid because she likes girly things. Commenters also started a conversation about this (see Figure 6), making it seem like something many women have experienced, girliness was seen as less worthy, and by being hyper-feminine they are now reclaiming the part of themselves that was denied. This showcases how feminine fashion can be seen as empowering and an appropriation of signs as opposed to reinforcing the traditional attributes connected to them.

Bows portray the nostalgia of girlhood, which directly translates to "the period when a person is a girl, and not yet a woman, or the state of being a girl" (Cambridge Dictionary). In this text, I am referring to it as the idealized childhood of a girl which can take on many different forms. It is about reclaiming the past and the youngness that is still in a lot of women, but which is not expected from them when they grow up. On TikTok, users put a bow on everything and play a video with a Lana del Rey song. The bows appear on the arms of boyfriends, pickles, food, pets, etc. For instance, the meme in Figure 7 says "honest reaction when someone asks me about my future plans," pictured with a crying girl with a drawn-on bow. This meme speaks about "girlhood" as something to hold on to, thinking about the future is too much of a burden.

Figure 7: Meme on "girlhood."

The future as a burden portrays the desire to avoid the responsibilities and uncertainties of adulthood. The infantilized state of 'girl' can be comforting as it is about the longing for the safety of childhood or the hopeful reclaiming of it as not everybody experienced a safe childhood. The bow used for this meme is the connection to the Coquette and the Bow trend as it is a main attribute of both trends. Bows are traditionally associated with young girls, which can signify innocence, playfulness, and societal ideas of what is girly/feminine. The bow is also pink, which as established before, is a feminine color. This reinforces stereotypical gender roles and expectations by visually coding what it means to be a girl or what showcases girliness.

The picture is taken from the movie *Pearl* (2022), which is a psychological horror which takes place in the 1918's in rural Texas. A review of the film said, "Though branded as a "Technicolor slasher" of sorts, "Pearl" is, in truth, more of a twisted psychological

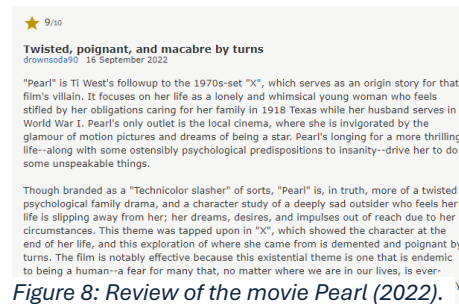


Figure 8: Review of the movie *Pearl* (2022).

family drama, and a character study of a deeply sad outsider who feels her life is slipping away from her; her dreams, desires, and impulses out of reach due to her circumstances” (see Figure 8). This is then an ironic picture to use as Pearl was a deeply wounded woman who outed her sadness and rage of her situation in murder versus the escapism Coquette and this particular meme implies. It can then be concluded that staying in the state of ‘just being a girl’ is idealized. The reclamation of femininity is based on a social construct that gets perpetuated through social media trends, like Coquette.

It is important to dissect what exactly coquette aesthetic wearers are ‘reclaiming’. Staying in this state of being a girl is idealized. Hyper-femininity and its reclamation of the freedom it comes with also is. Coquette portrays traditional gender roles and can perpetuate traditional stereotypes about women. Bows, pleated skirts, pinks, buttons, and lace are all things that are seen on young girls, or what we would stereotypically associate with them. What makes clothes feminine is the way it reduces women to things to be looked at by others. Clothes have been believed to say something about the patriarchal relations of women (Knowles & Lopes, 2023). Coquette can be seen as the emblematic of this, where women’s clothes are worn for the male gaze which can perpetuate traditional gender roles and power imbalances.

Coquette takes inspiration from Victorian-era fashion, in this time women from the upper classes, who were predominantly white, were raised from infancy to marital age to marry. The common opinion of women was that they were weak. Male approval was important, and women were the inferior sex. If a woman was not suitable in men’s eyes, she would not marry. The reinforcement of the male ideal as the norm relies on the exclusion of others, fashion trends can be seen as the manifestation of this (Shaw, 2006). Fashion has historically played a key role in establishing class and, concurrently, racial divisions. The complexity of European women’s fashion during the 1800s and 1900s, particularly its elaborate designs, restricted black and working-class white women from engaging in economically productive activities while dressed in the styles of the time (Shaw, 2006).

The 19th century was a time of significant change, as traditional social barriers gave way to the rapid rise of a market economy and the development of a society defined by social “classes.” This transformation affected all social aspects, including gender roles. During this period, social classes started to take on gender-specific meanings. The traits linked to gentility varied between men and women. Moreover, the notions of manhood and womanhood in the 19th century carried distinctly different connotations (Davidoff, 1979). This change in economy is still noticeable today and is perpetuated through media, thus also fashion trends as Coquette, which promotes femininity that is linked to Victorian ideals of femininity.

To illustrate, this picture from @diaryof.bm on Instagram (see Figure 9), who is a Coquette aesthetic follower, can be analyzed to understand the broader implications of Coquette fashion. There are a few key components in this picture. Namely, the fact that she only photographed her body, the corset, the white floral dress, and the necklace. The following paragraphs will dissect the first two.



Figure 9: Coquette style.

The fact that she only photographed her body, which she does over her whole Instagram, is a form of an internalized male gaze and self-sexualization. The male gaze is a concept posed by Laura Mulvey (1989) and is described as the woman being visually illustrated as the object of heterosexual masculine desire. Women are the sexual objects to be looked at, an “erotic spectacle” (Mulvey, 1989, p. 19). Only showcasing a body reinforces this as the human behind the body is absent, and thus is objectified. Mulvey talks about visual culture, her theory is applied to film, but social media is also a form of visual culture that objectifies and sexualizes women (Ruckel&Hill, 2017). Social media fashion trends are a part of this visual culture, Coquette and bows perpetuate a white ideal femininity that conforms to the male gaze and objectifies and sexualizes the female body. Through this male gaze, which is apparent throughout Western culture, women also tend to self-sexualize to look more appealing (Ruckel&Hill, 2017). Coquette can therefore also be connected to the sexualization and objectification of the female body.

In the picture she also wears a corset, they are a big part of the Coquette aesthetic (see Figure 9). Corsets were also in fashion during the Victorian era. Historically, numerous social rules dictated the appearance and attire of the female body, making it a domain of oppression. (Roberts, 1977). The female body is still a space for oppression, corsets back then could be seen as the physical outcome of this because it was made to realize the ideal feminine shape. These implications are reinforced by what the corset stands for. Corsets cinch the waist and accentuate the breasts, as seen in Figure 9. The corset rendered the wearer delicate, epitomizing the ideal of modest femininity (Aspinall, 2012). On the contrary, women who denied the corset were seen as sexually promiscuous and had moral laxity (Roberts, 1977). The corset embodies the oppression of women, reflecting the constraints imposed by societal norms (Roberts, 1977). When tightly laced the corset has an erotic allure due to the exaggeration of a small waist, this symbolizes weakness which contrasts with the perceived strength of men (Roberts, 1977). This creates a paradox where the wearer is objectified and constrained but also has a certain control over male desires through the manipulation of her own body. This also ties in with the self-sexualization concept, by manipulating the body there is a certain power over male desires. However, self-sexualization can lead to more insecurity and has an impact on the mental health of women (Ruckel&Hill, 2017). The implications of a corset

show how the female body and feminine fashion is a place for oppression and can perpetuate Victorian era feminine ideals.

As shown by the picture analysis Coquette internalizes a male gaze as it is in line with the Victorian ideology of the female body, this raises the question of self-sexualization within people who embody this aesthetic to be perceived as more desirable to a male gaze. This shows how people internalize gender hierarchy through fashion trends as the connotations are implicit but do have the ability to perpetuate certain world views. The perpetuation of a male gaze as the standard often relies on the marginalization of others, including black individuals and people of color. (Shaw, 2006).

Coquette implies not only the gender hierarchy of the white woman but also has racial connotations. The white female body was (is) oppressed but the black female body was (is) even more so. Coquette is embodied mostly by white women and is hyper-feminine. Illustrated by this post by @elleveutdire on TikTok, she talks about reclaiming girlhood and how it differs for white and black girls (see Figure 10). She says that white girlhood is associated with bows and is portrayed in the Coquette aesthetic while her childhood was more like wearing protective hairstyles with beads and barrettes. Coquette is not the first fashion trend that is less accessible to, or not associated with, people of color.



Figure 10: TikTok caption on reclaiming "girlhood."

The historical inaccessibility of fashion trends to black women, coupled with the enduring myths of defeminized black womanhood, has led to the metaphorical masculinization of black women. This process of defeminization is rooted in the institution of slavery and offered a "moral" justification for the various forms of dehumanization inflicted upon black women (Shaw, 2006). Even though slavery had been abolished, white superiority was still embedded in Victorian society. The British perceived themselves as the rulers over all darker-skinned peoples. Black individuals were regarded as reliant and inferior in terms of intelligence and morality (Watson, 2001). Certain groups were perceived as being more in tune with nature than the rational adult middle-class man, who was the prevailing voice in educated circles. These groups encompassed women and various segments of the working class, as well as indigenous peoples in the colonies and, by extension, all non-white individuals. This perceived closeness to nature also accounts for the animal analogies frequently used to describe them in literature and common expressions (Davidoff, 1979).

Victorian literature is loaded with undertones of imperialism which says something about the thinking of that time. Women of color were not seen as people and were excluded from white society. In Charlotte Brontë's novel *Jane Eyre*, a side character named

Bertha Mason, who is a Creole woman married to the protagonist's love interest, is depicted as unhuman which is reflective of the time it was written (Akman, 2019). The book is essentially about the struggle of a woman wanting to liberate herself from societal conditioning. However, black people do not belong to this need for liberation (Akman, 2019). There are racial descriptions of Bertha in the book, emphasizing the negativity of her black features. She is compared to a savage which was used to describe the colonial other and translates to wild or animalistic, this further emphasizes the degrading stereotypes to describe blackness (Akman, 2019). Brontë's *Jane Eyre* exemplifies how Victorian society maintained ideas of racial prejudices. The ideal beauty of this era was white British standards, as whiteness was associated with purity and innocence (Akman, 2019). Anyone falling outside of these standards was the other and descriptions of wickedness and evil were attributed to them (Watson, 2001). Blackness has a complex relationship with the female body, as it requires a reduction of it to fit Western Beauty standards (Shaw, 2006). Traditional media spread incorrect ideas, and so can social media. These racial implications are apparent in modern society and are embedded in aesthetics like *Coquette* as they promote whiteness and purity.

The *Coquette* aesthetic rejects blackness and associates it with sexual promiscuity. The usage of white and lace is symbolic of this, white is the embodiment of purity as it is a clean canvas. Lace is a delicate fabric, this delicacy can be tied to how Victorian women were expected to be, they were understood to be dutiful and have non-existent sexual desire. On the contrary women from colonies were presented with intense sexual desire and exotic charms, a *femme fatale* (Akman, 2019). This oversexualizing was often exploited by white men. Black women inhabit a gender hierarchy in which inequalities of race and social class have been sexualized. Privileged groups, typically white and male, have defined what is considered the norm, as said before during the Victorian era male approval was very important. This shows the dominance they had over societal perceptions, everything outside of the norm was seen as deviant (Akman, 2019). The sexualization of the black body reflects not only objectification but also the need to control another body (Collins, 1990). The *Coquette* style upholds the white patriarchal definition of femininity, which reinforces the notion that blackness equates to sexual promiscuity rather than (white) femininity.

It was not only the body patriarchal systems sought to control, but also the material world. Colonialism and slavery say something about the need to control another body and their land. Colonized people and lands were perceived only as tools to gain wealth and power. Oppression based on race or gender stems from the belief that domination and control are the natural rights of white people, especially men. White supremacy means that moral value is determined through the profit and power of the group, which is to the disadvantage of everyone and everything else (Grudin, 2020). This need for exertion of control extends to the Industrial Revolution and one thing that colonialism, slavery, and the Industrial Revolution have in common is white supremacy. Embedded in

the theory of white supremacy is the theory that (the white) human has supremacy over nature. This creates a disrespectful and harmful attitude towards the earth and together with capitalist society stands for profit and power at the expense of environmental sustainability which we face the consequences of today (Grudin, 2020). Understanding the relationship with nature is crucial to comprehend the causes of environmental degradation and climate change, especially within the framework of racially constructed perceptions of the environment.

This Instagram post is interesting in understanding racialized portrayals of the environment (see Figures 11 and 12). A woman is seen sitting on the grass next to pink flowers. She wears a white lace top, a white skirt, a white lace band around her leg, kitten heels, and carries a white lace umbrella with her.



Figure 11: Coquette style.

This influencer places herself in a 'natural' environment, on the grass next to pink flowers, which connects to the construction of white femininity as the ideal or as natural. Both natural environments and white femininity are social constructs. The place she is in is a planted garden, it is created by humans and so is the idea of nature and

wilderness. Coquette is hyper-feminine and by placing herself in a human-created environment that upholds the myth of nature, portrays the myth of white femininity. The idea of wilderness being pure and untouched, much like a woman is expected to be, was a white-settler social construct. It thought of wild landscapes as pristine and pure. These values are reflected in the construction of whiteness (Gilio-Whitaker, 2020). However, in its raw state, wilderness had little to offer civilized people. Its value emerged solely from the potential to reclaim and repurpose it for human ends, such as gardens (Cronon, 1995). The idea that wilderness is in need of civilization can be extended to the black female body as in need of civilization or rather to be controlled.



Figure 12: Coquette style.

The idea that true wilderness was pristine and pure comes from the environmental movement, which is based on white supremacy. Writers like John Muir who was a pioneer of the American environmental movement, saw pristine wilderness as superior to a dirty civilization. On the one hand, BIPOC were compared to savage nature while on the other hand, they were tied to the dirtiest parts of humanity (Grudin, 2020). In *My First Summer in the Sierra* John Muir (1911) wrote that "The worst thing about [Native Americans] is their uncleanliness. Nothing truly wild is unclean" (Muir, 1911 cited in

Grudin, 2020). This perpetuates harmful stereotypes and also justifies the dispossession and displacement of indigenous communities from their lands only to preserve the wilderness. As said before the construct of untouched nature is a white settler's ideology, the existence of Indigenous people is ignored and with that, the history of dispossession is erased which allowed white settlers to claim land as their own (Corliss, 2019). The idea of pristine wilderness is completely ideological, as is white femininity, nature is inherently wild, whether this is in the backyard or untouched woods. It is important to examine the aspects of nature that are harnessed for human purposes and question whether they can be repeatedly used without degradation. This also means that wilderness cannot be imagined as an escape to avoid history and the duty to accept responsibility for human actions (Cronon, 1995).

However, the exploitation of humans and nature continues in today's world. Racialized conceptions of the environment collide with fast fashion's exploitative manufacturing methods and customer demand for inexpensive clothing. The mining of raw materials and the disposal of waste textiles both contribute to climate change and environmental deterioration, which disproportionately affects vulnerable groups in society (Thomas, 2019). The resurgence of trends oftentimes relies on fast fashion to further promote it. Zara and HM were, for instance, participating by offering more coquettish style clothing and bows. This fast fashion participation is a big part of the exploitation of nature and people (Thomas, 2019). Not only our consumption of goods is harmful but also our usage of the internet and social media. The carbon footprint of our gadgets, the internet, and their supporting systems is estimated to contribute approximately 3.7% to global greenhouse gas emissions (The Shift Project, 2019).

The bow trend represents a nostalgia for the alleged innocence of childhood and is based on ideas of hyper-femininity and Victorian ideals. But this nostalgia is complicated since it reinforces existing gender norms and power inequalities by oversexualizing and infantilizing women and young girls. Furthermore, contemporary environmental exploitation and degradation are influenced by the racialized beauty standards of the Victorian era, which gave preference to particular landscapes and natural features over others. The environmental movement has historically supported the eviction of indigenous tribes from their lands and promoted negative stereotypes thanks to the influence of white supremacist ideology. This exploitation of land and body continues within the context of fast fashion, where racialized conceptions of the environment collide with unethical manufacturing techniques and the demand for cheap clothes. Understanding these connections is important to identify the underlying causes of climate change and environmental degradation as well as to promote a more sustainable fashion landscape. To achieve a more sustainable future for all white supremacist ideology needs to be confronted.

Chapter 2: Quiet Luxury aesthetic

Around December 2022 Quiet Luxury found a resurgence online. Quiet Luxury is a trend that emphasizes understated elegance and high-quality clothing without overt branding. Colors like beige, white, and grey are apparent, and the silhouettes are often classy and elegant. *Flair* described it: “It is a form of high-end fashion that speaks volumes through its understated elegance, careful craftsmanship, and attention to detail. Quiet Luxury is all about quality over quantity, focusing on creating timeless pieces that will never go out of style” (Flair, 2023). The trend is often connected to the old money aesthetic, which “refers to rich people whose families have been rich for a long time” (Cambridge Dictionary). It is not the same but is often used interchangeably. Fashion brands associated with Quiet Luxury are, The Row, Bottega Veneta, and Brunello Cuccinelli.



Figure 13: Vicotria Beckham SS23.

This trend gained more popularity with Gwyneth Paltrow’s publicized court appearances. People on TikTok followed the lawsuit and eventually started making videos about her appearances. After the online interest magazines like *People Magazine* and *GQ* wrote reports on it. She was sued for a ski incident that the person suing her said she did on purpose. He sued her for 300,000 dollars, and she counter-sued him for 1 dollar and her legal bills. To counter sue only for a dollar says something about her attitude towards the lawsuit and life even; she has



Figure 14: Megan Thee Stallion after court.

nothing to lose. This was the start of this ‘new’ trend. The clothes she wore to the court were all without a brand name but greatly expensive. For instance, she wore a 1690 dollar The Row merino wool sweater to court (The Cut, 2023). Additionally, the return of the TV show *Succession* also helped fuel Quiet Luxury debates. The program, which follows the lives of the super-rich Roy family, is known for its nuanced and sophisticated depiction of wealth. Characters are seen in expensive, logo-free clothing, which is in perfect harmony with the concept of Quiet Luxury. This, along with Paltrow’s legal battle, elevated Quiet Luxury to the forefront, making it the signature look of the spring 2023 season. #quietluxury now has 31,7K posts on TikTok with videos that are viewed up to 3 million times and on Instagram #quietluxury has 198K posts.

Interestingly, Gwyneth Paltrow’s court style was significantly different than those of other celebrities. For instance, Megan Thee Stallion wore a purple suit (see Figure 14) and Cardi B had several extravagant outfits. They are both black, female rappers and also wore expensive clothing. This is in contrast to how Quiet Luxury goes about expressing wealth.

This expression goes partly through clothing. Clothing can be seen as the extension of the human body as it says much about a person. It influences how we perceive ourselves and others (Oberhagemann, 2023). The resurgence of Quiet Luxury in recent online fashion trends highlights the intersection of clothing, societal expectations, and individual identity. By examining Pierre Bourdieu's (1990) concept of "habitus," we can understand how Quiet Luxury not only reflects personal style but also reproduces social hierarchies related to class, race, and gender (Oberhagemann, 2023). Quiet luxury, characterized by elegance and high-quality clothing without a lot of branding, thus says something about the social status of people who participate in this trend, better said the people on who this trend is based. Gwyneth Paltrow, for instance, wore \$1,200 Celine boots, she does not flaunt her wealth only subtly (see Figure 15). This is real Quiet Luxury, fast fashion brands copying this style go away from what Quiet Luxury entails, it is a lifestyle, and it is a lifestyle only attainable for the rich. Everyone has internalized structures, habitus, that replicate power dynamics based on social position, manifesting across the diverse conditions of existence within different social groups, which in turn shape distinct perspectives and behaviors toward oneself and others (Bourdieu, 1990 cited in Oberhagemann, 2023).



Figure 15: Gwyneth Paltrow after court.

Quiet Luxury promotes class distinction. Quiet Luxury is not only a style it is the way a person is raised thus it does not work as just a trend, the replication of Quiet Luxury is meaningless to the upper class. On TikTok, someone explained that “Quiet Luxury does not work in the hands of masses” (see Figure 16).

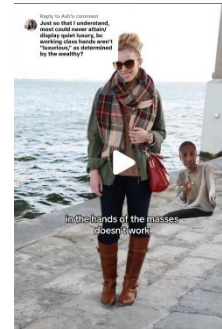


Figure 16: TikTok on Quiet Luxury.

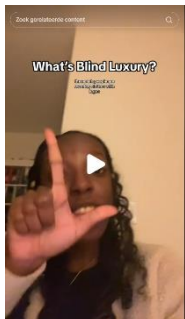


Figure 17: Blind Luxury.

@ohmarni on TikTok further explores this by bringing up the idea of “blind luxury” (see Figure 17), she says “these rich people are wearing clothes with logos in a language you cannot read, therefore you cannot see.” This creator points out the distinction between people of the absolute upper class and people of a lower class. The message is clear: if you're not part of that elite world, its

workings will be foreign to you. Nouveau riche people might buy expensive clothes but where it comes from and how it looks matters. Gucci's designs differ from The Row's; one is bold, while the other is

understated.

As illustrated in Figure 18, this comment further demonstrates how Quiet Luxury is associated with class. Wearers of Quiet Luxury have nothing to prove except to themselves and their peers. In



Figure 18: comment on “Blind Luxury.”

contrast, the nouveau riche and generally the lower classes often feel the need to assert their status.

Children internalize a lot during their first years, such as status distinction and gender. In a study on gender and clothing, Lapierre, et al. (2022) found that higher-priced shirts were less likely to use gendered depictions. This also indicates a historical precedent of upper-class people dressing less daringly (Lapierre, et al., 2022). Looser dress codes for children of higher status can lead to less rigid gender roles, promoting simpler designs and less gender-focused self-perception (Lapierre et al., 2022). Status distinctions also impact the bodily experience of dress. Wearing expensive brands can lead to better treatment by others, which improves an individual's confidence (Oberhagemann, 2023). Additionally, race, as a socially constructed category, impacts individuals' behaviors and perceptions of themselves and others, affecting how they choose and style their clothing (Oberhagemann, 2023).

The absence of accessories demonstrates that asserting their place in society is unnecessary, as that place is already known to be on top (see Figure 19). It is the quiet understanding of the garments' value that exudes power and class. This power can become harmful. When women from privileged intersectional positions use their influence to dominate others, it results in intersectional domination, which has detrimental effects on people of color (Hamilton et al., 2019). Marginalized femininities, which embody cultural ideals of womanhood, are placed just beneath hegemonic femininities and may sometimes derive advantages from them. Whereas subordinated femininities, particularly those associated with poverty and Blackness, are positioned at the bottom of the hierarchy (Hamilton et al., 2019).



Figure 19: Quiet Luxury on Pinterest.

People who have the resources to live a Quiet Luxury lifestyle or are able to follow the trend feel less need to highlight their femininity as they already fit into a hegemonic femininity that Quiet Luxury promotes. To illustrate, Gwyneth Paltrow is a white, rich, heterosexual, and cisgender person and helped through her display of this to resurge the Quiet Luxury trend. On the contrary women of color do feel the need to highlight their femininity. Clothing says a lot about a person and can thus also assert a certain femininity. Black women with a low socio-economic status intersect on various underprivileged identities and assert their femininity in a different way than Quiet Luxury. Evidence suggests that femininity remains a significant aspect for Black women, who often show greater investment and concern for their appearance compared to white women and men of all races (Smith et al., 1999). Many Black women invest significant amounts of money, time, and effort into achieving and maintaining a feminine appearance (Cole&Zucker, 2000).

One way black people of the working class enhanced their feminine features was through exaggeration. One particular dress of black culture is ghetto fabulous which consists of a lot of accessories, sexy and colorful clothing, and extravagant hair fashion (see Figure 20). It is the opposite of Western dress, or Quiet Luxury, Ghetto Fabulous unapologetically embodies blackness without constraint (Shaw, 2006). Where Quiet Luxury is quiet and muted, Ghetto Fabulous is loud. However, it has also come to



Figure 20: Ghetto Fabulous.



Figure 21: Tacky bags.

represent tastelessness and disrespect for the status quo and cultural integration in both white and black communities (Shaw, 2006). Individuals who follow this trend undoubtedly face the same discrimination as individuals whose names are obviously Afrocentric and who are frequently turned down for jobs because of the association their name has with a certain race (Collins, 1990). In actuality, the opposition to Ghetto Fabulous clothing stems more from its innate potential to undermine racial boundaries than from its alleged lack of taste (Shaw, 2006). @amira.bessette, who is a TikTok creator posted a video (see Figure 21) on luxury bags that are not “tacky,” showcasing the aversion the Quiet Luxury trend has to ‘tastelessness’ or just louder fashion. Tastelessness is not necessarily publicly frowned upon it is the notion that wealthy people will know that it is not from a Quiet Luxury brand and will therefore approach people of different classes differently than their Quiet Luxury peers.

Quiet Luxury is not only a fashion trend it promotes a certain lifestyle, which is unattainable for many people. It is thus based on the exclusion of the lower class; rich people flaunt their 500-dollar white tees, and it is seen as fashionable while people embracing part of their heritage is seen as tasteless. Logomania, which *Vogue* (2022) calls a “label-loving” aesthetic, is the opposite of Quiet Luxury and flaunts the logos of designer brands. This trend is associated with the nouveau riche and is a part of black (hip-hop) culture in America.

Dapper Dan started the logomania war that inspired a lot of people, especially the black hip-hop culture of the 80s. He started underground with his boutique and started printing luxury brand logos on all kinds of lifestyle things. Copying logos was/is illegal and Fendi sued him for copying their logo. *New York Times Magazine* said this about it: “The fashion house won the battle, but Dapper Dan won the war.” (NYT, 2019). What they mean is that the logomania of Dapper Dan was finally adopted by these luxury brands that he copied in the first place, finding a market within black culture. In an interview with *New York Times Magazine*, Dapper Dan talked about copying logos and black culture.

He talks about how African American people came to America as slaves and had to rebuild their culture. He said: “We have to take those elements of this new culture that’s been forced upon us and use that to recreate a culture for ourselves. We continue to do that, and you continue to take it.” (NYT, 2019). He says it is an imbalance that a luxury brand can say “you took our symbols” and he cannot say the same. His response is: “Well, you took our freedom.” (NYT, 2019). In a way what Dapper Dan did was a form of protest against the mainstream. Logomania has some similarities with ghetto fabulous fashion which is also a form of protest against discrimination through loud fashion.

Quiet Luxury ties in with purity, and the construction of gender ideals. White femininity is



Figure 22: Cute vs Elegant vs Vulgar styles.

often associated with purity, while black is portrayed as hypersexual and wild (Watson, 2001). This TikTok (see Figure 22) explicitly rejects a “vulgar style, as demonstrated in this and similar videos on the account, which denounce sexy dresses, many accessories, and bold colors as “vulgar,” “tacky,” or inferior to Quiet Luxury. Such videos often contrast this style with the 'Insta baddie' aesthetic, known for its extravagance and portrayal of sexuality. The content seems to specifically target and reject the fashion choices of subordinated women who embrace these styles to affirm their femininity, effectively marginalizing them once more. These styles online have their roots in or similarities to Ghetto Fabulousness.

Quiet Luxury intersects on race, gender, and class. It promotes hegemonic femininity, which means that most of the femininities that intersect are on the privileged side (Hamilton et al., 2019). The women seen as the epitome of Quiet Luxury are Gwyneth Paltrow, the Olsen twins, and Sofia Richie. What these women have in common is that they are white (except Sofia Richie), rich, and cisgender. Women who are white, rich, heterosexual, and cisgender often find themselves in a privileged position to embody certain femininities, which can reinforce group advantages (Hamilton et al., 2019).

Quiet Luxury is a style that is only for Upper-class white women, who are often perceived as the embodiment of ideal femininity, as they are privileged in various identities (Hamilton et al., 2019). The elegant silhouettes serve as symbols that the femininity of the wearer does not need to be accentuated, as they are already seen as the ideal representation of their gender.

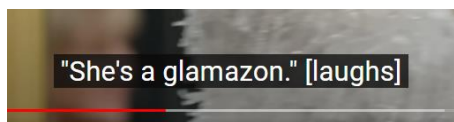


Figure 23: Sofia Richie’s wedding fitting video.

Furthermore, Quiet Luxury embodies the idea of respectable whiteness, this construction is largely based on how women of color are socially constructed as animalistic, nasty, and poor (Benard, 2016).

Discussing her wedding attire, Sofia Richie expressed a desire for a timeless and simple look. She aimed to avoid reflecting on her choice in 20

years and thinking, "She's a glamazon" (see Figure 23). A glamazon is "a woman who is both glamorous and powerful or assertive" (Oxford English Dictionary), the term "glamazon" implies a style that is not considered timeless. Richie's stance suggests that highly glamorized or bold fashion choices may eventually become outdated, which is typical of how trends evolve. This portrays how Quiet Luxury uses their opposites (e.g. subordinate femininities) to praise their lifestyle. This showcases how privileged women can benefit from a colonized lens as their respectability is created through contrast with black bodies. Quiet Luxury, the lifestyle, is then an inherently racist lifestyle based on the exclusion of black bodies, especially black women with low socio-economic status.

The poorest black women in America experience racism through gendered and economic oppression, and because of this Ghetto Fabulousness, and similar online styles have their roots in this, which is a mostly working-class occupation (Shaw, 2006). Lower-class black women have less access to education and wealth, while these are the two transformative points from which black women might limit the effects of racism, which increases how much they are distanced from Euro-centered feminine norms. Next to that, these women feel as if they have to over-exemplify (glamorize) their femininity because they are so distanced from euro-feminine cultural norms (Shaw, 2006). This can also lead to the oversexualizing of black bodies in popular culture. These depictions stem from colonial ideology which is about controlling land and body.

The establishment of the colony was greatly influenced by the dynamics of who could marry and who could have sex. A part of this was the sexual exploitation of women of color, specifically through sexual coercion, as it was not allowed by law to enter in a legal relationship (Stoler, 1998). Asymmetrical sexual relationships between white men and women of color were not merely a component of the colonial framework but were fundamental to its establishment (Benard, 2016). This reflects how racial and gender hierarchies were established during colonial times and how it is perpetuated today. The exploitation of people of color is currently evident in politics, popular culture, and the media. However, it is customized and seen as "choices" made by women of color to display themselves in a hypersexualized manner (Benard, 2016). Which is apparent in the Ghetto Fabulous style. Black women must assert their femininity to fit within Euro-centric feminine ideals (Shaw, 2006).

On the opposing end, this hyper-sexualization and the usage of the body can be seen as something to gain power from. Being fat and black puts women in positions that strategically challenge Eurocentric notions of beauty in a pluralistic society and challenge our understanding of how race and gender are constructed (Shaw, 2006). During colonial times, fatness and blackness were symbols of sexuality and reproduction within white supremacist societies, a notion deeply entrenched in the history of slavery and the sexual exploitation of black women for the gratification of white men (Holmes, 2016). As discussed in Chapter 1, white women in the Victorian time were objectified

and constrained, they also had a certain control over male desires through the manipulation of their own bodies, similarly, black, fat, women being able to control their bodies hold a certain power over their oppressors. They hold the power to assert their sexuality and use it to liberate themselves, even without actualized political power (Shaw, 2006). From a black feminist view sexuality includes the essence of human existence, and the potential for a sexuality that simultaneously oppresses and empowers (Collins, 1990).

This construction of the hyper-sexual black woman is rooted in colonialism, which also constructed capitalist attitudes towards consumption. Patriarchal capitalism and colonialism have very similar structures, ideologies, and methods of conquest and oppression. Both are rooted in white patriarchy and are harmful and exploitative. They both rely on the control or ownership of the bodies of people of color and have profit as a priority (Benard, 2016). This portrays our attitudes towards land and man once again and how online trends help to perpetuate structural problems that stem from the colonizing times. These attitudes are also seen in Western attitudes towards consuming goods and in media which encourages consumption.

The fundamental distinction between colonial and capitalist coercion lies in the nature of control. Under colonialism, control is socially overt, well-defined, structured, and often physically violent. In contrast, under capitalism, especially in democratic societies where extreme social control is less acceptable, the illusion of choice is necessary for both producers and consumers. Here, 'control through culture'—which is subtle, undramatic, and tied to the formation of social categories, expectations, and ideological constructs—becomes a far more potent instrument of oppression, employing symbolic violence (Nader, 1997). Symbolic violence represents a type of domination exerted upon social actors with their own participation and consent (Benard, 2016). Degrading imagery is a form of symbolic violence (Benard, 2016). Hegemonic control can manifest as a form of mind colonization, an impersonal, ingrained, and often unseen cultural control. Even its practitioners may not fully understand it, dismissing it merely as marketing (Nader, 1997). The principal battleground for hegemonic control is the imagery of mass media, thus also social media, which acts as social propaganda. Regarding women's bodies, this propaganda perpetuates and intensifies the colonial narratives surrounding black and white women's bodies (Bernard, 2016).

Quiet Luxury only represents a single perspective, thereby sharply contrasting with the perspectives they exclude, which could be interpreted as perpetuating elitist attitudes that marginalize certain identities. Quiet Luxury fashion employs bold, lower-class styles to create a contrast to their minimalistic and expensive style, which is in line with how whiteness uses blackness to contrast itself from the other. Through this contrast Quiet Luxury spreads narratives about what it entails to be black and poor. These ideas are

rooted in colonial ideas and are based on racism and classism which are all harmful social constructs that impact subordinate femininities.

The intersection of capitalism, colonialism, and sustainability forms a complex web that has historically influenced various sectors, including fashion. The legacy of colonialism, deeply intertwined with the roots of capitalism, has had a profound impact on environmental policies and practices. It is argued that colonialist ideologies have perpetuated a paradigm of exploitation, leading to significant environmental degradation in today's world (Grudin, 2020).



Figure 24: Shein Quiet Luxury picks.

Quiet Luxury in a way promotes investing in quality clothing that last a long time. However, when it gets adopted like a social media trend it only fuels fast fashion brands to adopt their styles. This TikTok (see Figure 24) recommends “Shein Quiet Luxury picks,” Shein is a super-fast fashion company that adopted between 2,000 and 10,000 individual styles daily between July and December 2021 (The Time, 2023). This creator promotes the consumption of fast fashion and particularly to support brands like Shein, which are known for environmental degradation and bad working conditions.

Fast fashion is a retail strategy that involves adopting marketing techniques to keep up with the latest trends by regularly updating product lines with brief renewal periods and quickly rotating stock. Fast fashion retailers also tend to carry limited quantities of each style and strategically manage merchandise displays. Additionally, they often utilize shorter and more adaptable supply chains, such as quick response, just-in-time, and agile supply chain models (Gupta&Gentry, 2018). Fast fashion's accelerated production and turnover rates result in environmental strain, consequently, there is increased waste generation to resource exhaustion (Thomas, 2019). Although real Quiet Luxury may not align with the fast fashion ethos, the online trend certainly does. People are drawn to this trend to belong and follow the newest trends. Fast fashion retailers play into this by selling the latest trends which fuels the construction of temporary identities (Gupta&Gentry, 2018). This concept of a temporary identity is a postmodern occurrence where individuals cannot maintain a consistent identity for an extended period. As lifestyles accelerate, identities shift accordingly. Within fashion, as new trends quickly replace previous ones, individuals experience a continual evolution in their self-perception, resulting in a temporary sense of identity (Gupta&Gentry, 2018).

Our consuming habits have a real impact on the world and ourselves. The Quiet Luxury trend, although appearing harmless, reinforces systemic inequalities and perpetuates damaging social constructs. It serves as a reminder that fashion, as a cultural artifact,

has the power to mirror and influence societal values, frequently at the expense of marginalized groups. As we engage with these trends, it's important to be conscious of their wider consequences and work towards a fashion industry that is inclusive and fair.

Chapter 3: Mob Wife aesthetic

Mob culture has been a fashion inspiration for a long time. Shows from the 90s like *The Sopranos* (1999) and *Goodfellas* (1990) mainstreamed criminal cinema and inspired fashion choices. The men were a big part of these depictions, but it was the women who influenced fashion and lifestyle. The Mob Wife aesthetic is thought to have gained popularity during the 25th anniversary of *The Sopranos*, possibly as part of the show's advertising campaign (Glamour, 2024). This trend draws on racial and gender stereotypes associated with Italian American culture, particularly from New Jersey and New York. The Mob Wife aesthetic on TikTok is a direct reaction to the Clean Girl aesthetic and more minimalistic trends, such as Quiet Luxury, we saw in the past year. Clean Girl also ties in with purity culture which has a problematic connotation of denying blackness as clean and has its roots in Victorian-era ideals.

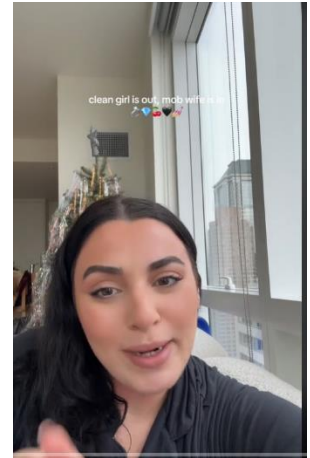


Figure 25: “Clean girl is out, Mob Wife era is in.”

TikTok creator Kayla Trivieri claimed that “clean girl is out, Mob Wife era is in” (see Figure 25). This sound is now used in many other TikTok videos relating to the trend. The Clean Girl aesthetic focuses on enhancing features with a softer, more feminine approach while the Mob Wife style embodies a sultry, sexy, and lavish expression of femininity, marking a shift from sweet to a bold and assertive fashion statement.

The word “mob” refers to a large and disorderly crowd but in this context means an organization of criminals (Cambridge Dictionary). Mobs have been a part of American organized crime since the immigration of Italians during the late 19th century. An example of a mob is the Five Families of New York. The Five Families were established by Salvatore Maranzano following the Castellammare War. He restructured the mafia's hierarchy, forming five distinct groups now recognized as the Five Families. Initially, Maranzano held the title of 'boss of all bosses' (capo di tutti i capi), but following his assassination, the leadership of each family formed the Commission (Britannica).

Mob bosses and their families are the elite class of criminality and had big influences on organized crime in their peak moments. This can also be seen in their fashion; it is extravagant and expensive. Styles taken from the 80s/90s portrayal of mob fashion to now are animal prints, (faux) fur coats, and big gold jewelry, all with a nod to the current times of course.

To understand the rise of the Mob Wife Aesthetic it is important to look at the immigration history of Italian-Americans and the construction of their identity as full American citizens. Before the unification in 1861, Italy was separated into different kingdoms. After the unification north and south Italy were united, which sparked the belief about the biological inferiority of Southern Italians. This partly stems from a history of oppression

by Northern elites and Southern resistance to this. The new school of positivist anthropologists reinforced the ideas of Northern Italian elites and the government. They believed that there was scientific proof of the racial inferiority of Southerners. The argument they provided was that the darker characteristics of southern Italians implied they had inferior African blood (Guglielmo, 2010). Furthermore, they proposed that the cause of crime in Southern Italy was fundamentally influenced by race (Gibson, 1998). One of the founding fathers of these theories, Lombroso, would gain international recognition for his views on white supremacy, women's innate inferiority, and the idea that criminals are born, not created (Guglielmo, 2010).

These ideas are rooted in eugenics and social Darwinism. Eugenics is the belief and practice of enhancing human genetic traits, advocating that certain hereditary characteristics are superior to others. The eugenic movement in America targeted poor whites as they were a danger to white supremacy and the racial superiority that social Darwinism promoted (Lizzi, 2019). Social Darwinism adapted Darwin's key concepts, such as competition, struggle, survival, fitness, and adaptation, for human societies. *On the Origin of Species* (1859) suggested that inherited traits, alongside education, contribute to a population's collective fitness. The fittest individuals—those who could compete, adapt, and dominate—were rewarded by society with recognition for their intelligence and skills. On the contrary, those less able to compete effectively were relegated to lower socioeconomic statuses. Furthermore, the theory posited that the struggle for survival enhanced the human species' quality via hereditary means (Badertscher, 2020).

The classification systems of the U.S. federal government solidified the notion of southern Italians as racially inferior while still categorizing them as white. When formulating their immigration policies, authorities used the ideas of the new school of positivists anthropologists to create them (Guglielmo, 2010). On naturalization documents, officials classified southern Italian immigrants by race, color, and complexion. They were consistently labeled as South Italian for race and white for color, despite often having a dark complexion (Guglielmo, 2004). This categorization mirrors the complexities of race in the early twentieth-century United States and how the biological difference was employed to define the nation. Upon gaining citizenship, Italians were labeled as biologically different from Northern Europeans, being categorized as part of the "South Italian" race and generally "dark." However, they were also considered white. The categorization of "white" was not grounded in physical characteristics but signified a social status during a time when racial boundaries were increasingly rigid (Guglielmo, 2010). This was a paradoxical situation in America for Italian immigrants, being considered 'white' yet also perceived as "racially inferior." They enjoyed certain privileges due to their whiteness but were socio-economically relegated to the lower places of society

Mob Wife stems from the stereotypical narrative of American Italian culture as criminal. The majority of Italian immigrants were not mobsters, it was America's print media that forced this perception on Italian immigrants when entering the country. These stereotypes are harmful to American Italian culture and Italian culture. The Mob Wife trend does not seem harmful as it does not upfront promote violence. The wife does not necessarily participate in crime, maybe she even dislikes it but does enjoy the perks of having a rich husband. This is displayed by the expensive-looking coats and jewelry. The man is the one making the money by running a criminal organization. This crime perception of Italian immigrants comes from their supposed inferiority which resulted in the idea that there was an inherent criminality in them. America learned about southern Italians and their resistance during the unification of Italy, this made Americans scared that their cities would host these violent immigrants. The ideas about criminal southern Italian immigrants were further perpetuated when there was a lot of reporting on organized crime in Italy during this period (Guglielmo, 2010).

And so, the infatuation with the Italian mafia began in America. For outsiders, organized crime became the most distinctive aspect of Italian immigrant communities because of the city's print media (Guglielmo, 2010). This generalization is still intact, so proves the Mob Wife trend, there are mobs from different ethnicities, such as Jewish and Irish mafia, but Mob Wife specifically targets American-Italian culture, as it is inspired by shows like the Sopranos that also perpetuate the idea that American-Italian culture is connected to organized crime. At this time, it was also believed that only the men were the criminals, and the women were seen only as the victims (Guglielmo, 2010). This relates to the Mob Wife trend in that, although a mob is a criminal entity often associated with violence, these aspects are not reflected in the trend or aesthetic. The fashion choices are independent of any violent connotations; it is solely the trend's name that suggests otherwise.

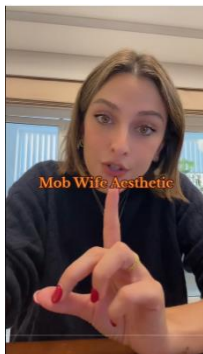


Figure 26: "Mob Wife aesthetic"

The Mob Wife aesthetic originates from the lower-class response to upper-class society and is considered immigrant fashion. The Americanization of Italian immigrants was the mission of middle-class white women who deemed the Italians as in need of learning. This Americanization eventually led to the rise in the ranks of Italian-Americans as whites (Guglielmo, 2010). The Mob Wife aesthetic is called "immigrant fashion" by @datpinkrobe on TikTok (see Figure 26). Mob Wife is a direct reaction to the clean girl aesthetic and Quiet Luxury that is deeply embedded in white supremacy. This creator explains Mob Wife aesthetic as flashy and showy, which it is, look at the big hair, extravagant coats, long nails, and gold jewelry. She explains that these are attributes often associated with immigrants, whether this is Italian or not. These attributes are what separates 'immigrants' from 'white' American citizens.

Compared to the earlier discussed aesthetics, it is clear that Mob Wife stands in stark contrast with Coquette and Quiet Luxury, which have a lot to do with purity and ideal (white) femininity, symbolized by neutral, pink, and delicate or elegant fabrics and styles. The opposite of that is dark clothes, faux furs, and a certain toughness to it because of these attributes. When analyzing Mob Wife like this, it can be connected to the way black women with low socio-economic status adopted a Ghetto Fabulous style that emerged to assert femininity and a sense of belonging and how Mob Wife is also seen as tacky. Similarities are big hair and a lot of jewelry. Ghetto Fabulous has more color but Italian women might also have felt a similar need to assert their femininity and place in society through a louder look. Nonetheless, the historical context of black Americans is more intricate, given the greater hostility they faced (and continue to face) in America. This isn't to diminish the challenges Italian immigrant women encountered; rather, it underscores the broader impact of marginalization, and the various ways people resist it.

Even if Mob Wife is originally an immigrant aesthetic based on Italian culture, they achieved the status of whiteness through transculturation and this created an Italian-American identity. Marie-Christine Michaud (2011) introduces this concept and the Italian-American identity. The process of transculturation led to the creation of a new culture and a distinct social status for the descendants of Italian immigrants. Whiteness encompasses social, political, and cultural dimensions, forming the basis of the racial formation system in America. It extends beyond biology, despite the creation of race science to assert inherent inferiority, encompassing moral, religious, and social values (Michaud, 2011). Irish immigrants were also not perceived as white when entering the country, but they achieved their white status upon the arrival of a new wave of immigrants from southern Europe (Michaud, 2011). The process of adapting to the American environment comprised a process of whitening. Transculturation helped Italians to feel white and act like white people, this was also necessary to belong to American society (Michaud, 2011). The Mob Wife aesthetic portrays this transculturation through its style influences that come from Italy but also the portrayal of a high socio-economic status through the expensiveness of these items. Think of brands like Gucci and Versace that have their roots in Italy but do participate in loud fashion and logomania, which is often associated with the 'nouveau riche' (see Figure 27).

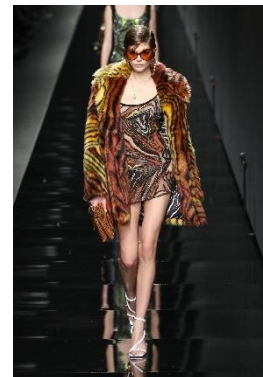


Figure 27: Kaia Gerber for Versace AW21

When achieving this new identity as Italian-Americans, they desperately held on to this by actively distancing themselves from other minority groups, especially after the Civil War when black people gained some rights. This ruined the progress Italian immigrants made in American society (Michaud, 2011). Working-class Americans, despite having more in common with black people, often chose not to ally with them. Instead, they perpetuated a vision of white supremacy that upheld capitalism (Roediger, 2007). This

ideology excludes Blacks from being recognized as (economic and social) participants in society, permitting a focused attack on dependent Blacks rather than on the most powerful whites. The fundamental power of this ideology lies in the guarantee it offers to whites, who are perpetually anxious about social decline, that regardless of any other losses, their whiteness remains intact (Roediger, 2007).

Italian-Americans by resisting Black people and public policies that supported their integration into society, tried to defend their status and their territories. Had the younger generations of Italian migrants remained largely at the same social status as black individuals and continued to be seen as outsiders, they would have demonstrated resistance to assert their entitlement to the full social and political rights of American society members (Michaud, 2011). Incidents like these happened, for instance, the killing of Yusef Hawkins in Brooklyn, Bensonhurst, which was a predominantly Italian-American working-class neighborhood, in 1989. The killing was racially motivated even if residents tried to deny this. Hawkins was allegedly murdered for being involved with an Italian-American girl (Dobie, 1989). This portrays the hostility towards people of color, in an interview with The Guardian documentary maker Muta’Ali, who created a documentary on Hawkins’ death, said “a lot of the components that led to Yusuf being killed exist today” (Horton, 2020). This showcases how even if trying to deny it structural racism is still in place and a danger to the lives of black people and other people of color.

Mob Wife is rooted in white supremacy. Without even knowing, this structural racism is perpetuated through fashion trends, as shown, it is perpetuated through Coquette and Quiet Luxury but also through Mob Wife. It is intriguing to observe that the individuals engaging in this trend are predominantly white (see Figure 28). To discover black creators who have adopted this style, one must actively search for them, as these videos do not appear when searching for only “Mob Wife” on TikTok (see Figure 29). This phenomenon is partly due to racial biases in algorithms, serving as an example of the deep-seated racism that is perpetuated in everyday life, including through social media and the trends that gain popularity on these platforms.

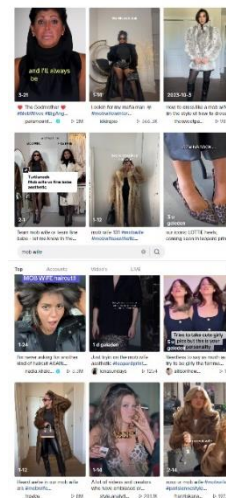


Figure 28: “Mob Wife”



Figure 29: “Mob Wife Black Creators”



Figure 30: Cultural appropriation debate.

The discourse on cultural appropriation surrounding the Mob Wife trend further illustrates how racism and white supremacy are intertwined with this phenomenon. The conversation began with TikTok creator @longislandlibra stating, "our culture is not your costume," which many women of color responded to online (see Figure 30). Cultural appropriation has been a longstanding issue for people of color, and now that a 'white' culture is being appropriated, others are beginning to comprehend the implications and feelings associated with having one's culture

appropriated. @marquislizz joined the debate conversation on TikTok (see Figure 31). She said: "so now the mob wife is trending y'all get with cultural appropriation, oh okay, so put down the name plate neckless." What she is suggesting that it is interesting how a white culture is talking about appropriation, while this has been happening to people of color for even longer.



Figure 31: Cultural appropriation debate.

Trends like Mob Wife are embedded in patriarchal oppression. The name Mob Wife is embedded in a historically subordinate role. Wife and girl are words to describe females, the first referring to a historically subordinate role. Upon marriage, a woman was considered her husband's property. In 18th and 19th century Britain, married women were subject to coverture, which meant their husbands held financial and legal authority over them. Under the law, husband and wife were unified into one entity (Stretton & Kesselring, 2013). The aesthetic being called Mob 'Wife' shows the role that women have, their worth, and style through romanticizing their husband's job, it is similar to the rockstar's girlfriend aesthetic. The man is the one making the aesthetic instead of the woman who it is aimed at. Calling the aesthetic "Mob Woman" or "Mob Girl Boss" would have different connotations as it is not connected to a subordinate role.

The Mob Wife aesthetic is heteronormative and portrays traditional gender roles. The wife is the child bearer, and carer of the family, and before she has a role as a mother, she is the candy on her husband's arm. In a reality TV show that is called 'Mob Wives', the lives of real-life mob wives are followed. They have four basic rules: family is everything, trust no one, code of silence, and the sit-down/confrontation if these rules are broken. The first one in particular requires the wife to stay protective of their husbands, even when the things he does are wrong. It is a difficult position to be in and corners women. This is not to say that this is the position of the people partaking in this trend, but it can perpetuate these ideas that are embedded in the mob culture. But what is the appeal of this trend?



Figure 32: Hailey Bieber in long fur coat and sunglasses.

Power is the appeal of this trend, a specific piece that symbolizes this of Mob Wife is wearing sunglasses everywhere, also at times and places where it is unnecessary to do so (see Figure 32). Large, bold sunglasses serve as a statement accessory, portraying an aura of mystery and command. They represent not only affluence and fashion but also a level of societal influence and the power to shape one's public persona. Next to that, sunglasses protect the eyes, meaning people cannot see your eyes through them. This adds a level of mystery, it is difficult to fully see someone's characteristics and looks. The wearer of big sunglasses thus holds a certain power over their image and over what the people around them think. When in conversation this might cause insecurity for the other person as if it almost seems they are holding something back.

This assertion seems glamorous and showcases why people are attracted to this trend.

However, it is also an aestheticization of a dangerous lifestyle.

@heymisskelsey said this about the trend on TikTok (see Figure 33)

“The lifestyle of a Mob Wife is just constant suffering, getting cheated on, constantly wondering when your life is going to fall apart any moment because your husband is involved in criminal acts.”

In contrast, it also provides women the safety of white patriarchal oppression. White women can get caught up in being victims of oppression but also forget their privilege. To be able to forget your privilege is a privilege. It is easy to stay in the comforting place of white patriarchal oppression, also if the complexity and the limits it forces upon you are clear (Phipps, 2021). In an article for *Vulture* about The Sopranos P. E. Moskowitz, who is a trans New York based writer, talks about the pain of Carmela Soprano that they identify with. They say, “Carmela may be a mob boss's wife, but she also is the embodiment of a womanhood that many, cis and trans, yearn for, against their better instincts.” The womanhood they talk about is the “one that replicates the infantilized yet secure state of the suburban housewife, where we can be both victim and perpetrator, but mostly have our agency taken away from us.” This showcases how white oppression, as in the role of the Mob Wife, can be understood as a ‘safe place’ and therefore also a lifestyle that is difficult to leave.

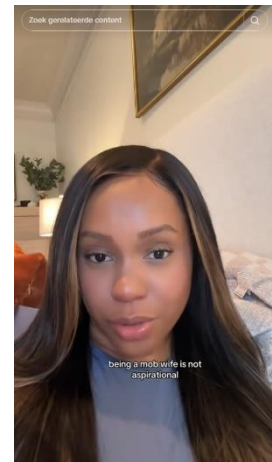


Figure 33: Mob Wife is a violent aesthetic.

This aligns with the narratives constructed in American media during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, which portrayed Italian women as oppressed by Italian men, depicted as lazy and violent. Undoubtedly, there existed men who were violent, abusive, and unmotivated to work; nonetheless, news articles and academic literature primarily focused on this narrative. The construction of these narratives is reinforced in popular

media. Italian women were generally portrayed as loyal mothers and wives, whereas Italian men were frequently depicted as hot-headed and driven by bad desires, therefore their interest in crime. There was often no internal hierarchy when it came to Italian women as they were viewed as oppressed by Italian men and therefore in need of saving, and because they were white, they were entitled to it. On the contrary, Asian immigrant women and African American women were still portrayed as savages and depraved even if they were victims of crime and they faced heavy forms of oppression because of this (Guglielmo, 2010). White middle-class women could solely focus on the oppression of Italian Americans as they were white and still worthy of saving. This is a problematic stance as it promotes the exclusion of people of color and does not consider the privilege white women have, even when also oppressed by white men.

Gender, race, and class were not separated domains, they intersect and create individual experiences (McClintock, 1995). Black women in particular intersect on a variety of identities that reinforce discrimination. Before southern Italian women obtained their status as white, they were discriminated against on some of the same things black women were discriminated against. It was believed that sexual otherness was the result of poverty, madness, and depravity which were according to the positivist innate characteristics of southern Italians. In their study on female criminal pathology, they used this to explain how southern women were more inclined towards crime, prostitution in particular. Southern Italian prostitutes were also compared to other inferior races, such as black people, and were thus perceived as savage and immoral (Guglielmo, 2010). As posed before these traits were assigned to women who displayed sexual promiscuity (Akman, 2019). This study said that southern Italian men were also sexually deviant and were on a quest to enslave women instead of working for a better society. These positivist sentiments sexualized the entire South and were victims of the projection of patriarchal relations. This portrays the colonial mentality which is the need to control. This idea easily extends from the colonies to the need to control the bodies of (European) women (Lode, 1995), in a way, Northerners also felt this need to exert control over Southern Italians, and in order they also felt the need to control the female bodies of the south.

The Mob Wife aesthetic promotes the exploitation of the environment, specifically of animals. (Faux) furs are a good example of this, real furs are made of animals that are often exploited and killed only for their fur. This is an extremely violent and harmful treatment of animals. Faux furs are also bad for the environment, they are not biodegradable and are often made out of harmful chemicals that release tiny plastics into our environment and contribute to landfill pollution (Good Maker Tales).

It is also connected to bad labor conditions for garment workers in the Global South. These working conditions, ironically, are something akin to how the working conditions for immigrants in America in the garment industry were. When immigrants entered

America they had the lowest paying jobs, for Italian women this was garment work, with very poor working conditions. Asian women and African American women were at even lower-paying jobs as homeworkers and were not allowed to manufacture. There was a big concern for the poor working conditions of the Italian women, as they were deemed white and worthy of saving. Asian and African American women were not worth the help of white middle-class women as they were apparently the embodiment of moral decay (Guglielmo, 2010). Next to that not the people in power were held accountable for providing bad working conditions, it was the workers themselves.

As labor conditions for garment workers in America gradually improved through legislative acts that targeted sweatshop practices, the industry began to shift overseas. By 1991, nearly half of all clothing purchased in America was domestically produced, but by 2012, this figure had plummeted to just 2.5 percent. This outsourcing reignited sweatshop conditions, not in the West, but in the Global South (Thomas, 2019).

The systemic exploitation that marginalized groups faced in America is now mirrored in the global garment industry today. The exploitation of Black people in America, from slavery to segregation laws, was characterized by brutal working conditions, disenfranchisement, and economic exploitation. These same patterns of exploitation are evident in the Global South, where garment workers, often women, endure unsafe working conditions, long hours, and low wages (Thomas, 2019). These workers, much like the marginalized groups in America's history, are subject to systemic abuses driven by global capitalism and the relentless pursuit of profit and power. The overpowering majority of garment workers are women, while the other part is men who are most of the time managers (Chang, 2020). This ties in with the colonial ideology of exploitation which is based on the idea that women are compared to nature which has to be discovered, is fertile, and needs to be owned (McClintock, 1995).

As consumers of fashion and media, it is important to be conscious about our consuming habits, through what we buy but also through what kind of media we

consume, and which trends we participate in. Influencer

@mikaylatoninato says “We all want to be the mob boss’s wife because she is a boss in and of herself, she is unbothered” (see Figure 34) She tries to reinforce that the people partaking in this trend are not intentionally perpetuating any narrative, the trend is more about feeling powerful and sexy. However, we should not fail to forget what kind of history aesthetics have and why we tend to aestheticize certain lifestyles. We are promoting harmful stereotypes of Italian Americans, the segregation of people of color, the harmful production processes of garments, and the overall oppression of multiple identities. Social media trends are not merely frivolous; they can have serious consequences, and we should approach them carefully.



Figure 34: “Mob wife is a boss in and of herself.”

Conclusion

In summary, the study effectively shows that fast fashion trends both challenge and reinforce gendered and racialized perceptions of the environment. An analysis of the Coquette, Quiet Luxury, and Mob Wife aesthetics reveals that these trends are not just shallow fashion choices but are closely linked with societal standards and structural problems, like racism.

Firstly, I analyzed the Coquette aesthetic, which is characterized by its hyper-feminine features such as bows, corsets, and lace, which offers a perspective to explore the intricate interplay of gender, race, and environmental exploitation. This style represents the idea of embracing traditional femininity and youthfulness. While some view it as empowering and a reclamation of personal identity, it also reinforces established gender norms in line with a patriarchal viewpoint. This is evident in the use of traditional garments, that were popular in Victorian times. For instance, I analyzed the usage of corsets and the symbolism of lace as a delicate material, suggesting that the wearer is adopting a fragility often preferred in women. This viewpoint not only objectifies and sexualizes women but also promotes a narrow view of femininity closely linked to white supremacy, and white femininity as the ideal form.

The promotion of idealized white femininity within the Coquette aesthetic sidelines women of color, perpetuating racial stereotypes that associate blackness with sexual licentiousness and deviation from white feminine standards. This bias stems from a deep-rooted colonial mentality that oppressed women and justified the subjugation and exploitation of non-white peoples and their environments.

The case study has highlighted the portrayal of nature and femininity in social media, where white femininity is idealized in 'natural' settings like manicured gardens, reinforcing social constructs of purity and civilization. This mirrors how wilderness has been historically viewed by white settlers—as pristine and valuable only when reclaimed for human use, a view that justified the displacement of Indigenous peoples and ignored their histories. The idea of untouched wilderness is a settler construct, used to erase Indigenous presence and claim lands as new.

This ties in with the exploitation of the environment that is experienced right now, especially in the fast fashion industry. Racialized beliefs continue to be mirrored, just as in colonial times, except now this exploitation is outsourced to the Global South. The pursuit of inexpensive clothing intensifies environmental harm and climate change, which both affect vulnerable and marginalized groups the most. This showcases the importance of reevaluating human attitudes towards nature and the historical and societal frameworks that influence it.

Overall, the Coquette aesthetic, perpetuates gender stratification, racial disparities, and environmental harm. Recognizing these interrelated issues is essential for questioning established standards and striving for a more equitable and ecologically responsible future.

Secondly, in my analysis of Quiet Luxury, I found that the trend is linked with class, race, and gender dynamics, favoring those who can afford its elegance. Quiet Luxury promotes an inherently exclusive lifestyle, accessible mainly to those with high financial resources. It fosters class distinction, as it not only a fashion statement but a way of life that is inherent in one's upbringing. The replication by others with cheaper clothing, e.g. social media, is then insignificant to the upper class. The minimalism yet expensiveness of Quiet Luxury represents confidence in social standing. This confidence emphasizes power and status.

It represents a form of hegemonic femininity that corresponds with ideals of purity and respectability, typically associated with white, upper-class women. This exclusivity is highlighted by the contrast between Quiet Luxury and the more pronounced, expressive styles adopted by black women and other marginalized groups, who are often coerced into adhering to Eurocentric beauty and femininity standards. In the case study, TikTok discourse on Quiet Luxury is discussed and shows how Quiet Luxury explicitly but more often implicitly rejects more sexy and louder fashion aesthetics. It uses these aesthetics to contrast and put itself above them. Examples are Ghetto Fabulous and logomania, which also act as a form of resistance and self-expression for marginalized communities, defying mainstream cultural norms and addressing racial and economic injustices

The hegemonic femininity that Quiet Luxury promotes is racist and is rooted in colonialism and intersects nowadays with capitalism and fast fashion. The intersection of capitalism and colonialism has left a lasting impact on fashion and environmental sustainability. While Quiet Luxury advocates for quality and longevity, its adoption by fast fashion brands highlights the challenges of aligning consumer trends with sustainable practices. The continued popularity of fast fashion, driven by social media, underscores the urgent need to address the environmental and ethical implications of modern consumption patterns.

Lastly, I looked at the Mob Wife aesthetic, the paradoxical circumstances of Italian immigrants in America, seen as "white" but deemed "racially inferior," provide an important background for this aesthetic. While seemingly just a fashion trend, it bears significant undertones of cultural and racial connotations.

The Mob Wife aesthetic conjures a glamorized perception of organized crime, which glosses over its violent nature and stereotypes Italian culture as violent. Gender, race,

and class are deeply intertwined and shape individual experiences, particularly for Black women who face compounded discrimination. Historically, southern Italian women faced similar prejudices before being considered white, being stereotyped as sexually deviant, and compared to other marginalized groups like Black people. These biases, rooted in colonial and patriarchal control, extended to southern Italians and their portrayal as immoral and inferior. In America, middle-class women resisted patriarchal oppression while Black women were unfairly cast as sexual threats. Marie-Christine Michaud's (2011) concept of transculturation underscores the development of a distinct Italian-American identity (as white), illustrating how the merging of cultures has historically influenced social standing.

Mob Wife is an immigrant fashion style, as highlighted through the attaining of the Italian-American identity and recent TikTok discourse. However, Mob Wife is also rooted in white supremacy as Italian-Americans actively distanced themselves from other marginalized groups, such as black people. Additionally, the trend predominantly features white women, which has sparked a debate about cultural appropriation—a conversation that has been ongoing within black communities but is only now gaining serious attention from white individuals.

The Mob Wife aesthetic reinforces traditional gender dynamics by relegating women to a dependent status linked to their male counterparts. Adopting terms like "Mob Woman" or "Mob Girl Boss" could significantly change its meaning, highlighting women's independence rather than their reliance on men. The enduring nature of these racial and gender hierarchies, although less apparent, continues to be a profound societal challenge.

Furthermore, the fashion industry reflects colonial ideologies through the exploitation of land and people, often drawing parallels between women and the natural world – both seen as rich in resources and open to exploitation and control. Furs, a significant element of the Mob Wife aesthetic, contribute to environmental harm; real furs are associated with animal cruelty, and faux furs are not biodegradable. Additionally, the garment industry employs a substantial number of women who frequently endure poor working conditions, thus continuing patterns of gender-based exploitation and environmental harm.

In conclusion the case studies have shown that online fast fashion trends do more than reflect societal norms; they are active participants in the dialogue concerning gender, race, and environmental exploitation. This underscores the necessity for a more discerning and accountable approach to fashion, one that recognizes and confronts the intricate connections among culture, identity, and environmental impact.

Nevertheless, it is important to recognize certain limitations. The thesis concentrated mainly on gender, race, and class without an in-depth examination of how other intersecting identities, like sexuality, impact or are impacted by fashion trends. Moreover, despite its intention to offer a comprehensive analysis, the thesis did not entirely consider the diverse personal experiences of individuals, which can vary significantly based on individual circumstances. Consequently, additional research is warranted to understand how these trends are perceived and lived by people of color and individuals from various backgrounds, given that their engagement with these aesthetics is intricate and layered.

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Appendix

Appendix A: chapter 1




| Figure in Text | | Date posted/published | Author/retrieved from | What |
|----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 |  <p>COQUETTE AESTHETIC Hair Bow with Pearls £8 ASOS Design</p> <p>BUY IT NOW</p> | 29 July 2022 | Glamour | Coquette aesthetic fashion choices/advise what to buy. |
| 2 |  | 18 September 2023 | Elle | Griff for Simone Rocha London Fashion week September 2023. |
| 3 |  | 2 December 2023 | TikTok @jianingniu | How to coquettify a top |
| | #bowtrend #bows | Retrieved on 19 June 2024 | TikTok | #bowtrend has 10.000 posts, #bows has 330.9k posts, |





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|---|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 4 |  | Retrieved on 8 June 2024 | Pinterest Search: "coquette" | Coquette outfits. |
| 5 |  | 28 May 2023 | TikTok @dreaming ofdior | "Me having to explain to every new man that I meet that I'm not hyper feminine in the conservative, conforming to the patriarchy, "women should marry a strong man and have his babies" type of way but rather the 4th wave feminist, borderline misandrist, refusing to accept society's devaluation of anything feminine as inferior, living like a Sofia Coppola movie type way" |
| 6 |  <p>Sunny pps Me, hyper fem as an adult after teenage me rejected all "girly" things because I thought hating other girls was feminism 🤔🤔 1214 2023-5-... Antwoorden</p> <p>Still Not Cool Me too. I „hated“ pink because I was ✨ not like other girls ✨ now everything I own is pink including my hair 38 2023-5-... Antwoorden</p> <p>Fafalle I hit that phase at around 10 and by the time I realized the error of my ways it was too late and I was left with all the yellow board game tokens. 38 2023-5-... Antwoorden</p> | 28 May 2023 | Comment section TikTok @dreaming ofdior @sunny @stillnotcool @fafalle | @sunny: "Me, hyper fem as an adult after teenage me rejected all "girly" things because I thought hating other girls was feminism" Reaction of @stillnotcool: Me too. I hated pink because I was not like other |




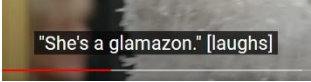
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| | | | | girls now everything I own is pink including my hair” Reaction of @falfalle: “I hit that phase at around 10 and by the time I realized the error of my ways it was too late and I was left with all the yellow board game tokens” |
| 7 |  | | @sparklysequel | “Honest reaction when someone asks me about my future plans” (crying girl with bow in hair) Caption: “Can we talk about sth (something) else.” |
| 8 | <p>★ 9/10 Twisted, poignant, and macabre by turns @drownsoda90 16 September 2022</p> <p>“Pearl” is Ti West’s followup to the 1970s-set “X”, which serves as an origin story for that film’s villain. It focuses on her life as a lonely and whimsical young woman who feels stifled by her obligations caring for her family in 1918 Texas while her husband serves in World War I. Pearl’s only outlet is the local cinema, where she is invigorated by the glamour of motion pictures and dreams of being a star. Pearl’s longing for a more thrilling life—along with some ostensibly psychological predispositions to insanity—drive her to do some unspeakable things.</p> <p>Though branded as a “Technicolor slasher” of sorts, “Pearl” is, in truth, more of a twisted psychological family drama, and a character study of a deeply sad outsider who feels her life slipping away from her; her dreams, desires, and impulses out of reach due to her circumstances. This theme was tapped upon in “X”, which showed the character at the end of her life, and this exploration of where she came from is demented and poignant by turns. The film is notably effective because this existential theme is one that is endemic to being a human—a fear for many that, no matter where we are in our lives, is ever-present—all of the “what-ifs”, the mourning of “lost” time, and even worse: the possibility that where we are is in fact where we belong.</p> | 16 September 2022 | IMBD, drownsoda90 | Review of the movie Pearl (2022). Used part: “Though branded as a “Technicolor slasher” of sorts, “Pearl” is, in truth more of a twisted psychological family drama, and a character study of a deeply sad outsider who feels her life slipping away from her; her dreams, desires, and impulses out of reach due to her circumstances.” |


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| 9 |  | 29 December 2023 | @diaryof.b m on Instagram | Instagram post of a coquette dresser on Instagram. Corset and flower dress. |
| 10 |  | 3 May 2024 | @elleveutdi re on TikTok | Caption: "reclaiming girlhood" and you're a 30 in jet black bust down. If you were really about it, you'd put your hair in 4 cornrows with the little barrettes at the bottom #fyp #coquette" |
| 11 |  | 10 May 2024 | @thealondr aflores on Instagram | Girl in a flower garden. |
| 12 |  | 10 May 2024 | @thealondr aflores on Instagram | Girl in a flower garden. |

Appendix B: chapter 2

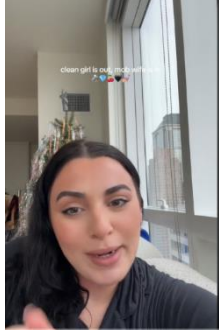
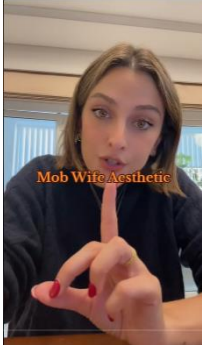
| Figure in text | | Date posted/published | Author/retrieved from | What |
|----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 13 |  | 6 March 2023 | Vogue | Gigi Hadid for Victoria Beckham summer/spring collection 2023 |
| 14 |  | 14 December 2022 | Page Six | Picture of Megan thee Stallion after her court day. |
| - | #quietluxury | Retrieved on 28 June 2024 | TikTok and Instagram | #quietluxury on TikTok and it has now 31,7K posts with videos that are viewed up to 3 million times and on Instagram #quietluxury has 198K posts |
| 15 |  | 31 March 2023 | New York Post | Picture of Gwyneth Paltrow outside court with 1200 dollar Celine boots on. |

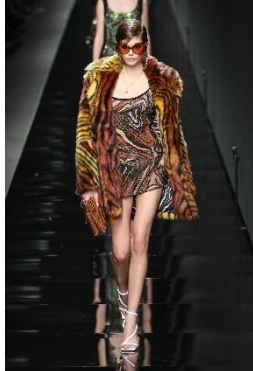
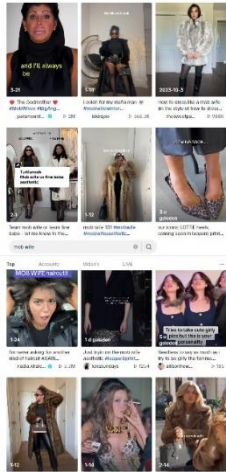
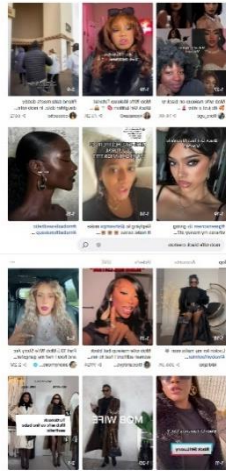
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| 16 |  | 2 January 2024 | @jesicaelise on TikTok | TikTok talking about how Quiet Luxury does not work for the masses because it is not meant for the masses. |
| 17 |  | 9 March 2024 | @ohmarni on TikTok | TikTok talking about 'Blind Luxury': quiet luxury is a style language only for the rich that is also embedded in upbringing not only through style. "these rich people are wearing clothes with logos in a language you cannot read, therefore you cannot see." |
| 18 |  | 9 March 2024 | TikTok comment of @rosy on | Comment on @ohmarni's post: "and rich ppl (people) don't stunt for poor ppl ! they stunt for they friends who get it !!!!" |
| 19 |  | n.d. | Pinterest | Search: "quiet luxury" |




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|----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 20 |  | 13 December 2020 | Medium from Godisable Jacob on Pexels | Example of Ghetto Fashion. |
| 21 |  | 28 March 2023 | @amira.bessete on TikTok | TikTok which suggests what bag to buy if you do not want to look "tacky". "5 Luxury Bags That won't make you look TACKY" |
| 22 |  | 22 Ma7 2024 | @amira.bessete on TikTok | TikTok that compares three different styles; Elegant, Cute and Vulgar. |
| 23 |  | 22 April 2023 | Vogue on YouTube | A video about "Sofia Richie's wedding Dress Fitting" where she explains the style of her wedding and the ideas behind it. |

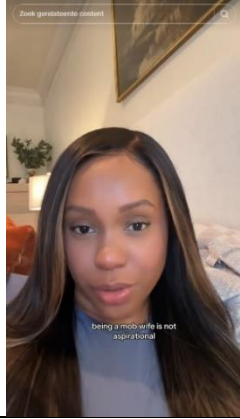

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|----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|---------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 24 |  | 3 July 2023 | @ellaprettyblog on TikTok | TikTok suggesting Quiet Luxury styles from Shein "Shein Quiet Luxury Picks" |
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Appendix C: chapter 3

| Figure in text | | Date posted/published | Author/retrieved from | What |
|----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 25 |  | 6 January 2024 | Kayla Trivieri @ktrivz on TikTok | The video that helped the Mob Wife aesthetic gain traction. "clean girl is out mob wife is in" |
| 26 |  | 15 January 2024 | @datpinkrobe on TikTok | "Mob Wife Aesthetic" video talking about how Mob Wife is an "immigrant aesthetic." |

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|----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| 27 |  | 9 February 2024 | Teen Vogue | Kaia Gerber for Versace Fall/Winter 2020-2021 |
| 28 |  | Retrieved on 26 July 2024 | TikTok search 'Mob Wife' | The posts for 'Mob Wife' |
| 29 |  | Retrieved on 26 July 2024 | TikTok search 'Mob Wife black creators' | The posts for 'Mob Wife black creators' |

| | | | | |
|----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 30 | <p>'Mob Wife' Aesthetic Ignites Cultural Appropriation Debate: "My culture is not your costume"</p> <p><small>On TikTok, actual ex-mob wives are saying their culture is being co-opted as a trend, but women of color are calling out the hypocrisy.</small></p>  | 3 February 2024 | @dietprada on Instagram | <p>"'Mob Wife' Aesthetic Ignites Cultural Appropriation Debate: "My culture is not your costume. On TikTok, actual ex-mob wives are saying their culture is being co-opted as a trend, but women of color are calling out the hypocrisy."</p> |
| 31 |  | 18 January 2024 | TikTok @marquislizz | <p>"so now the mob wife is trending y'all get with cultural appropriation, oh okay, so put down the name plate neckless."</p> |
| 32 |  | 4 March 2022 | Getty Images Credit: Pierre SU | <p>Hailey Bieber in a paparazzi picture in a long coat and big sunglasses at evening/night.</p> |

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|----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 33 |  | 18 January 2024 | @heymisskelsey on TikTok | “The lifestyle of a Mob Wife is just constant suffering, getting cheated on, constantly wondering when your life is going to fall apart any moment because your husband is involved in criminal acts.” |
| 34 |  | 10 January 2024 | @mikaylatoninato on TikTok | “We all want to be the mob boss’s wife because she is a boss in and of herself, she is unbothered” |