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Nothing but Fashion: Effacement of Subjectivity by Representation in Literature and Arts

The paper focuses on the representation of women in public positions by means of fashion and posing. The baroque age is considered as the first time in human history when symbolic representation and self – representation in paintings, architecture, and performing arts were widely used to establish power. As representation is based on media, it is understood as a re – codification of external appearance, a re – writing of a specific ensemble of codes.

Special emphasis is given to the depiction of women who became iconic figures in this form of staging: In her novel *Blonde* (2000), Joyce Carol Oates argues as well as Elfriede Jelinek does in her play *Jackie* (2003) that women in public positions, such as Marilyn Monroe or Jacqueline Bouvier – Kennedy – Onassis are depicted by media in a manner that does not allow to develop a proper subjectivity: “I am not flesh, [...] I am the dress! My silhouette never changes,” says Jackie in the 2003 play by the Austrian Nobel Prize laureate. Both Oates and Jelinek uncover and criticise the creation of public figures by media and scrutinise the mechanism of effacement of subjectivity going hand in hand with this procedure.

Indeed, this form of codification of a female public figure has a long history as a glance at the portraits of the Spanish Infanta Margarita Teresa (1651 – 1673) by Diego Velázquez, Pablo Picasso and others show: In these paintings, the same reductionist features are used to create an iconic figure.

Besides concepts of intermediality and of representation, the paper uses theoretic support from Roland Barthes’ seminal essay *Système de la mode* (1967) and from Barbara Vinken’s *Philosophy of Fashion (Mode nach der Mode, 1993, et al.)*.