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# Globalized Luxury Fashion is the Crisis: Kanye West, a structure of feeling, and the case of Louis Vuitton

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**ABSTRACT** Globalization, the process of communication and integration among people, companies, and governments worldwide, is a central concept in the study of luxury and fashion, both as innovative activity and guide to the future. This article offers readers an encounter with vital developments within globalized luxury fashion and with one of the most important theoretical arguments of the twenty-first century, namely, that globalized luxury fashion is constitutive of the contemporary crisis. In exploring the idea of globalized luxury fashion as integral to the current crisis and its impact, the article traces the American rapper, singer, songwriter, record producer, and luxury fashion designer Kanye West's (now known simply as "Ye") beleaguered conflicts with

globalized luxury fashion from the point of view of what the Marxist thinker Raymond Williams called “a structure of feeling,” the culture of the present period, or the specific living consequence of all the components in the overall organization. The article concludes with a discussion of Ye’s globalized luxury fashion style through a case study of his work for and *ressentiment* toward the global luxury fashion brand Louis Vuitton and presents an in-depth understanding of globalized luxury fashion which is essential to anyone reading contemporary critical luxury theory.

KEYWORDS: Globalized luxury fashion, crisis, Kanye West, a structure of feeling, Louis Vuitton

### **Introduction: Globalized luxury fashion is the crisis**

The sumptuous enjoyment of globalized luxury fashion, of whatever kind, is tied to a particular time, to a historical moment, to a period, or to an epoch.<sup>1</sup> In this article I pursue the idea that globalized luxury fashion is not merely a signifier of the zeitgeist, of the spirit of the contemporary age, but is in fact constitutive of the current crisis involving everything from sustainability concerns and the reduction of the number of collections shown annually, to the dilemmas over physical and online activities such as digitally streamed globalized luxury fashion shows, and to the ongoing debates about overproduction, overconsumption, and waste. In its most general sense, globalized luxury fashion is the crisis means that, today, the informing ethos I contend is influencing globalized luxury fashion in our particular era is that of a point in the story of globalized luxury fashion wherein many conflicts are reaching their highest tension that, to date, have not been resolved. Why, then, do today’s forms of abundance and indulgence in globalized luxury fashion have a feeling or quality of crisis to them? Is it, for example, that the globalized luxury fashion of the 1990s, of that time of optimism and experimentation dominated by Tom Ford and John Galliano, Marc Jacobs, and Alexander McQueen, and recorded in the documentary TV mini-series *Kingdom of Dreams* has, in the years since, now a time of global war in Ukraine and elsewhere, become marked by a sense of imminent disaster?<sup>2</sup> Or is it that the sudden changes in the course of a disease like coronavirus or the lockdown biosecurity fever that surrounded COVID 19 has impacted the globalized luxury fashion industry to such an extent that none can tell if it is heading towards improvement or deterioration?

I suggest that globalized luxury fashion today registers, sometimes inadvertently, a zeitgeist of crisis in the fashion goods and services it offers within contemporary advanced societies, and especially those made by its globalized luxury fashion designers. It is clear, for example, that the notion of globalized luxury fashion is going through

a variety of reformulations and guises during the twenty-first century, following numerous emotionally stressful events and traumatic changes in several globalized luxury fashion designers' professional and personal lives with different and sometimes opposed interests.

The American rapper and singer, songwriter, record producer, and globalized luxury fashion designer for Louis Vuitton and Fendi, Kanye West, for instance, I describe as possessing the spirit of contemporary globalized luxury fashion and its crisis, with his belief, that is, in the need to critique the mass media and the United States' (US) government's racism; abortion as population control; mental enslavement through, for example, the suppression of free thought; and his alleged antisemitic statements, which resulted in the termination of his collaborations, sponsorships, and partnerships with, among other globalized luxury fashion icons and brands, Vogue magazine and Balenciaga.<sup>3</sup>

Some might claim that such assertions concerning Kanye West, now known simply as "Ye," are implausibly "totalizing": that is, they collapse together many heterogeneous events (Ye's apparent antisemitic statements), products (Louis Vuitton, Fendi, Balenciaga), people (mass media and US government employees), and places (Paris, Rome, Los Angeles), and forge from them an unconvincing singular and unifying meaning about Ye's role in, for instance, a crucial stage or turning point in the course of the claimed rise in anti-semitism. However, it is as well to remember in this sequence of events that some of the contemporary critics of Ye's bald assertions, which they thought of as essentially "outspoken," "controversial," and "hate-speech," sometimes produce, in its place, some almost equally crude alternatives. Ye's former collaborator, sponsor, and partner, the Paris based global luxury brand Balenciaga, for example, offered a 2022 global advertising campaign on its Instagram account that featured children holding teddy bears, which were dressed in bondage and BDSM gear.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, an earlier Balenciaga advertising campaign contained a \$3000 Balenciaga handbag sitting amongst papers which included the text from a US Supreme Court opinion in the *Ashcroft v. Free Speech Coalition* case, which was concerned with child pornography. Following criticism, Balenciaga apologized and removed all posts and images connected to the advertising campaigns and launched an ultimately failed legal action against the production company, North Six, and set designer Nick Des Jardins. Such advertising campaigns including children and sex-related objects in globalized luxury fashion branded photographs might not be suggesting that the *whole* of advanced society during the present unstable period is singularly obsessed with the relationship between luxury handbags and child pornography. Yet there is a sense in which the increasingly monolithic presence and world of global luxury brands such as "Baby Dior" seeks to court the extreme by aiming its "shock advertising" at adults with children, children who, in the advertisements, if not depicted in pornographic poses, are

represented as causes and carriers of the *competing* ideological worldviews of contemporary global luxury brand fashion designers.<sup>5</sup>

This article deals with globalized luxury fashion and that industry's role and engagement with the influences of the contemporary crisis from the theoretical perspective of Marxist philosophy. The work of Ye, it is argued, is a sustained engagement with the influences of globalized luxury fashion in a time of crisis and can be understood through the adoption and application of the work of Raymond Williams (1921–1988), the Welsh socialist academic, novelist, and critic influential within media and cultural studies.<sup>6</sup>

Williams was a Marxist literary critic who, through the elaboration of what he called “cultural materialism” had and has a major influence on studies of culture and history.<sup>7</sup> He was born near Abergavenny on the Welsh-English border. While this was not a Welsh-speaking area, Williams nevertheless identified with his Welsh heritage, authoring novels on the theme. Williams attended Trinity College, Cambridge, where he joined the Communist Party and interrupted his studies in 1941 to join the army. Subsequently, Williams saw active service in the Second World War as a tank commander, returning to Cambridge in 1946 to complete his BA and MA. Later, he became an adult education tutor at Oxford until 1961 when he returned to Cambridge as a lecturer, remaining there until his retirement in 1983, having been appointed professor in 1974.

Williams' first books were on drama and criticism, but his reputation as a critic was made in 1958 with the publication of *Culture and Society*.<sup>8</sup> In it Williams explores the changes in meaning of the idea of “culture” from 1780 to 1950, arguing that such shifts record and reflect the changed conditions of everyday life or what he called “lived experience.” Williams followed this book with *The Long Revolution*, which theorizes the association between social relations, cultural institutions, and subjectivity, with the aim of showing how progressive political ideas emerge and become established as the norm.<sup>9</sup> In *Marxism and Literature* he expanded the concepts of dominant, residual, and emergent cultures to explain the kinds of cultural mood shifts required for ideological change.<sup>10</sup>

Within Williams influenced media and cultural studies, the terms ideology and ideological change are concepts used in close conjunction with his Marxist analyses of society, history, and culture.<sup>11</sup> The link to globalized luxury fashion forms of production, distribution, and consumption concerns the definition of ideology as a set of ideas and values, related to the material interests of social classes, which claim the world, inclusive of the world of globalized luxury fashion, is essentially made up of people who are “inherently” competitive, narcissistic, and who “naturally” seek their own individual, family, or company advantage, before social or international integration and responsibility. Marxists such as Williams would thus identify globalized luxury fashion as a constitutive element of the ideology of bourgeois individualism: a viewpoint that reflects and promotes the

material interests of the wealthy middle and upper classes and corporations such as Louis Vuitton Moët Hennessy (LVMH) which profit most from the capitalist economic and social order. Globalized luxury fashion brands promote this ideology through art galleries and cinema, television, and social media.<sup>12</sup>

Apart from his concern with ideology and ideological change, during the 1960s and 1970s, Williams also authored three books that further impacted the fields of media and cultural studies: *Communications*, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form*, and *Keywords*.<sup>13</sup> However his most influential book was *The Country and the City*.<sup>14</sup> A prolific author and an engaged public intellectual, Williams was and is influential on Anglophone literary and cultural studies.<sup>15</sup>

Thus, to understand and analyze how globalized luxury fashion is the crisis and the work of Ye, and consequently to build a foundation not only for addressing a research gap which merits further investigation but also for an understanding of Ye's most important ideas, the article embraces and employs Williams' key, if imprecisely defined term, a "structure of feeling" or the "lived experience" of our particular moment in society and in history prior to a consideration of Ye's globalized luxury fashion style through a case study of Louis Vuitton.

### **The work of Ye as a structure of feeling**

How, then, might luxury theorists attempt to understand the crude socio-cultural analyses of Ye and of Balenciaga's "alternative" advertising campaigns highlighting children hugging teddy bears outfitted in bondage clothing? One way, I propose, is to return to Williams' somewhat neglected yet subtle concept of a "structure of feeling," a term coined and developed by Williams in his *Preface to Film*, *The Long Revolution*, and *Marxism and Literature*.<sup>16</sup> Williams employs a structure of feeling, he wrote, "as an analytic procedure" in the study of written and artistic works and, by extension, to explain the way such works express a more widespread consciousness for which there is "no external counterpart" in the material life, socio-cultural organization or dominant ideas of a period.<sup>17</sup> As Williams put it in his *Politics and Letters: Interviews with New Left Review*, the "point" of his conception of a structure of feeling, a "deliberately contradictory phrase," is that it is a "structure in the sense that you could perceive it operating in one work after another which weren't otherwise connected—people weren't learning it from each other; yet it was one of feeling much more than of thought—a pattern of impulses, restraints, tones."<sup>18</sup>

Can luxury theorists not utilize Williams' phrase "a structure of feeling" to name the thoughts and feelings of someone like Ye, his work, and that of others? A representative of the contemporary generation and a globalized luxury fashion designer, Ye is a person who literally expresses what Williams called "a very deep and very wide possession" and its coming to formed consciousness through his

work in the globalized luxury fashion industry.<sup>19</sup> It follows that, after Williams, Ye, with a history of launching his own luxury clothing lines, can be considered part of today's generation shaping its response not only to shoes by Louis Vuitton, which Ye designed in 2009 for Paris Fashion Week, but also to changed circumstances in globalized luxury fashion design in a changed structure of feeling.

A Williams influenced conception of Ye's work, therefore, whether it is, for example, considering his internship at Italian global luxury fashion brand Fendi in 2009 or his ideas for Fendi's menswear collections, is not to be identified with a class-based viewpoint. Nor can Ye's collaborative work with M/M Paris for a series of scarves featuring artwork from his 2010 *My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy* album be understood as representative of the whole of contemporary advanced society. Similarly, Ye's premiering of his women's global luxury fashion label at Paris Fashion Week in 2011 should not be confused with Ye's globalized luxury fashion "ideology." Rather, any theoretical discussions of Ye's work on globalized luxury fashion lines at Paris Fashion Week and his globalized luxury fashion activities elsewhere need to take advantage of the concept of a structure of feeling, which, whether concerned with, for instance, his shoe collaboration deals or the launch of the "Yeezy" clothing line, is a flexible conjunction: indeed, a structure of feeling is most appropriate for today's volatile phase that is fraught with innumerable dangers for the political economy of globalized luxury fashion. The two realms of "objective" structure and "subjective" feeling, for example, suggest how Ye's personal emotions and experience extend beyond his work on the Yeezy clothing line and into the decision to sell Yeezy sports performance products associated with basketball, American football, and soccer, as was the case with Ye's partnership with Adidas. From the perspective of a theoretical approach to globalized luxury fashion based on the concept of a structure of feeling, it is not only that luxury theorists must go beyond formally held and systematic beliefs concerned with class and ideology in globalized luxury fashion, though of course there are times and places where they must be included. It is that, in an era of sudden change, luxury theorists must concern themselves with the cultural meanings of someone like Ye's work, with his political values as they are actively lived and experienced by him.<sup>20</sup>

Consider Ye's decisions to enter the 2020 and 2024 US presidential campaigns. Here, the relations between the cultural meanings of Ye's work, his political values, and his formal or systematic beliefs, such as engaging a Wyoming preacher, Michelle Tidbally, as his 2020 running mate, are in practice historically changeable, over a range from his formal assent to the US political process (the right to vote etc.) with private dissent from the party system (in 2020 Ye ran and lost as an independent candidate and member of the "Birthday Party") to the more nuanced and ultimately hostile interaction between his beliefs and those of President Donald J. Trump who,

according to Ye, hid in a bunker during the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>21</sup> Thus, Ye's personal emotions, experiences, the cultural meaning of his work, and his political values regarding presidentialism are not publicity stunts but energetically lived and experienced by him, not promotions for his latest music release but sensed in Ye's rallies and his alignment with the philosophy of a consistent life ethic, a principle of a form of Christian democracy that stands in opposition to globalized luxury fashion's expensive outfits. Shaping his own and others' thought and consciousness through a platform that advocates for the creation of a culture of life, the endorsement of environmental stewardship, support for the arts, and for faith-based organizations, the restoration of school prayer, and the provision for a strong national defense ("America First" diplomacy), Ye's work is a cross-roads because it has taken a social form in his observable cultural and political texts such as his albums and his own globalized luxury fashion practices.

A standpoint founded on the concept of a structure of feeling diverges in meaning, consequently, from, for instance, the abstract and somewhat reductive Marxist language of an earlier age and from Marxism's later, postmodern and anti-humanist style.<sup>22</sup> It diverges also, in content, from a term such as ideology. This is because a structure of feeling presents the immediate world of someone like Ye's work, his feelings, and his impulses (e.g. on social media posts such as his Twitter account with 31.7 million followers). At this point a structure of feeling is brought to a new point of expression in the present generation and achieves this in terms that are post-ideological (Ye's cultural politics are effectively devoid of traditional coherent political ideologies such as conservatism and liberalism, progressivism, and socialism), or at least in tension with the dominant ideology's more systematic formulations, such how to run a presidential campaign. The emphasis of luxury theorists must, therefore, be on explaining sequences of events, on forming and formative processes, such as Ye's 2024 presidential campaign, as against fixed explicit political forms such as the Federal Election Commission. The work of Ye as a structure of feeling can be described as what Williams calls a social experience "*in solution*."<sup>23</sup> It is with this sense of a condition of instability therefore that luxury theorists can speak of the work of Ye as the structure of feeling of an emergent would-be US President and of a different kind of celebrity who is critical of the mainstream mass media and the globalized luxury fashion industry, racial disparities, abortion, and mental manipulation.

The concept of a structure of feeling is used predominantly in Williams' own literary and textual studies. However, there is no reason in principle why this concept cannot be used in globalized luxury fashion studies. Here, selected globalized luxury fashion texts—with "text" being understood as the name for globalized luxury fashion's structures, systems of signs, and discourses that may be interpreted



in a number of ways, depending upon, for example, circumstances or context, the interests and values of specific readers, and the relationship between particular texts and others—can be taken up to give the tone to the present or any other period that is experiencing decisive change. A generational spokesperson, Ye's own life is already shot through with personal tragedies and emotional upheavals (e.g. his divorce from reality television star Kim Kardashian in 2022). More precisely, it is possible to identify Ye as a key component of the contemporary shaping consciousness of particular socio-cultural institutions and groups, from Vogue magazine and Balenciaga to Adidas; from Donald J. Trump supporters and black and white nationalists to "conspiracy theorists" such as Alex Jones (Ye appeared on Jones' internet based *Info Wars* show where his face was entirely hidden behind a black mask); from neo-Nazis and art schools (The School of the Art Institute of Chicago rescinded Ye's honorary degree) to the Anti-Defamation League. Williams' two terms "structure" and "feeling," then, suggest the firmness and reality of our particular age as it is experienced by people such as Ye and many others. Yet it is also a structure of feeling that is in existence in immaterial images of everything from racial and sexual violence to the media parade in *Kingdom of Dreams* and elsewhere of High-Net-Worth globalized luxury fashion tycoons, such as Bernard Arnault, the French founder, chairman, and CEO of LVMH, the world's largest luxury goods company, and in a changing widespread feeling for money and advertising, globalized luxury brands, their publicity, name recognition, and near-religious status for many consumers.<sup>24</sup>

### **Ye's globalized luxury fashion style: The Case of Louis Vuitton**

Adopting, adapting, and refining Williams' basic concept of a structure of feeling for use in globalized luxury fashion studies in a time of change does not have to assume that it fully explains the reality of the current period or that its emphasis on the experience of people such as Ye is a completely worked-out luxury theory. The idea of a structure of feeling may well, for example, incorporate immaterial images of globalized luxury fashion and its mutating sense of luxury branded goods and services. However, the aim of a luxury theory that utilizes the notion of a structure of feeling is not to become over-involved in the identification of those relations between phenomena that are understood to be somehow causative and those that are comprehended to be in some way an expression of or an effect of a cause. In globalized luxury fashion studies, for instance, the idea of Ye's globalized luxury fashion style can be appreciated as an expressive phenomena *and* as an oppositional cause, particularly concerning the case of his relationship with Louis Vuitton, which began in January 2009 when Ye introduced his first shoe line for the global luxury brand during Paris Fashion Week.

Originating in Ye's long-held high fashion aspirations, his globalized luxury fashion style can be referred to as ambitious or to Ye's desire to make a mark in an era wherein increasingly antagonistic elements confront each other. Yet the term Ye's globalized luxury fashion style, it can be contended, has a very specific sense: in globalized luxury fashion studies it might be referred to as Ye's distinctive, recognizable pattern or form of what Friedrich Nietzsche, in his 1883 *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, calls *ressentiment*—that form of revenge, real or imagined, that creates a feeling of power relationships or at least makes everyone appear to be “equal”—initially toward his longtime friend and collaborator the late Virgil Abloh—the former artistic director of Louis Vuitton's menswear ready-to-wear line.<sup>25</sup> There are, therefore, as a minimum, two globalized luxury fashion designers of Ye's globalized luxury fashion style. The term Ye's globalized luxury fashion style can thus be used to characterize both his *individual* bitterness has stated that he felt resentful at Abloh being appointed and himself being passed over for the artistic directorship of Louis Vuitton's menswear ready-to-wear line) and his impact on the *collective* socio-cultural patterning of Louis Vuitton.<sup>26</sup> For instance, Ye's globalized luxury fashion style is such that he called himself the “Louis Vuitton Don,” a self-given nickname that Ye first rapped on his 2004 album *College Dropout*. Indeed, Ye's influence on the collective socio-cultural patterning of Louis Vuitton is such that the global luxury brands' current creative director of menswear, Pharrell Williams, declined the title “Louis Vuitton Don” when it was suggested to him in a June 2023 video interview with music producer Swizz Beatz.<sup>27</sup> “Ladies and gentlemen, this is my brother, Pharrell,” ... Beatz, who was joined by Williams following his debut runway show, said. “The Don. The Louis Vuitton Don.” “Nah nah nah nah,” Williams interrupted. “I'm a student. ‘Louis Vuitton Don’ is the one, great Kanye West. Period. That's the Louis Vuitton Don. I'm the pupil king, I'm forever the student.”<sup>28</sup> If the term Ye's globalized luxury fashion style can denote the impact made on globalized luxury fashion by a single person using such phraseology as “Louis Vuitton Don” (thus sustaining a direct physical link between Ye's individual human body and the global luxury brand Louis Vuitton upon which the impact is made), it can also be extended to include *all* his forms of visual representation in the mass and social media, including those inherently collective in nature. For this reason, it is commonplace now to refer to, say, the style of Ye's globalized luxury fashion or perhaps to the angry style of his *ressentiment* towards Abloh. In the case of Louis Vuitton, of course, it is possible to assume that Ye's globalized luxury fashion style refers to his characteristic and relatively- fixed visual patterning of shoes and, for instance, his Louis Vuitton X Kanye West—LV Don Sneakers and effects that originate from Ye who can be identified as their designer.

Should the study of Ye's globalized luxury fashion style and its constitutive elements theoretically place the structural analysis of,

for instance, his Louis Vuitton sneakers at the forefront of its concerns? Or should it prioritize questions concerning the feeling of Ye's globalized luxury fashion style? Such a distinction raises the spectre of a possible antagonism between the structural form of Ye's globalized luxury fashion style and its feeling. Is there a correct analytical procedure? The methodology of the concept of a structure of feeling does not start with the identification of "reality" or structural matters (the color, material form, lines, and tone of Ye's Louis Vuitton sneakers, etc.) as this would suggest that the feelings about Ye's Louis Vuitton sneakers (their luxurious symbolism and cultural context) come later, analytically and experientially. This is because, to do so, luxury theorists would have to assume that globalized luxury fashion designers such as Ye themselves maintain a distinction in their heads between, in the present case, the structural form or globalized luxury fashion style of his Louis Vuitton sneakers and the feelings that are attached to them by Ye and others such as their consumers. It is, then, important to circumvent such disabling distinctions in globalized luxury fashion stylistic analysis between something called the "structural" and something called "feeling." Consider the issue of this distinction concerning two quite distinct kinds of globalized luxury fashion works designed by Ye, such as his Louis Vuitton sneakers with three different models (i.e. Don, Mr. Hudson, and Jasper) and ten colorways and Ye's limited edition collection of five silk scarves with the artist George Condo and M/M (Paris). For, whilst Ye's Louis Vuitton sneakers are material things in the world, Ye's silk scarves, whilst also material things in the world, refer to immaterial things *beyond* the world—to his album packaging for his *My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy* album, which Ye had commissioned Condo to create along with a series of paintings featuring the characters who populate Ye's musical fantasies. Is Ye's proclivity for immaterialism a kind of "revenge" against the structures of globalized luxury fashion branding he represents and also rebels against? Are these two Ye objects, sneakers and scarves, luxurious, fashionable, and stylistic in the same sort of way?

Ye's globalized luxury fashion style remains, therefore, a contestable and complicated idea for luxury theorists. Yet it is crucial within any endeavor to elucidate the work of Ye and the structural place and feeling of that work in today's specific historical context characterized by crisis. Even an attempt to define Ye's *personal* globalized luxury fashion style as a historical or contemporary category would have to map everything from his athleisure-centric Yeezy brand and luxury sneakers for Louis Vuitton to the ever-changing color of his hair; from his numerous tattoos and experiments with atypical layering to his playing with sartorial collocation and an elevated sense of the casual, not to mention his often very controversial claims made whilst frequently wearing his trademark military style camouflaged bomber jackets.

## Conclusion

In opening the question of the role of globalized luxury fashion in the current crisis through the work of Ye, the concept of a structure of feeling, and Ye's globalized luxury fashion style through the case of Louis Vuitton, this article has explored the importance of Ye's account of the necessity of critique for thinking about the potential that globalized luxury fashion might have to disrupt the established mass and social media. Because Ye's critiques can present various uncomfortable truths, details, and happenings concerning racism, abortion, and mental enslavement within and without mass and social media, they can point to new possibilities for consideration about freedom of thought and action about globalized luxury fashion brands such as Balenciaga. In contrast to Balenciaga, which relied on the argument that the strength of globalized luxury fashion brands in the present-day crisis is that they have the potential to present shock advertising campaigns in the mass and social media, Ye sees his role within globalized luxury fashion brands in the current crisis as shattering peoples' common-sense understandings of the way the globalized luxury fashion world works.

For Ye then, globalized luxury fashion offers the possibility of disrupting established globalized structures and luxury fashion itself by attesting to the existence of the contemporary crisis, not as something missing from the substance of globalized luxury fashion but as a *force* that shatters traditional ways of advertising or communicating through mass or social media. Ye's understanding of globalized luxury fashion is disorienting: it breaks the rules of globalism—the attempt to comprehend the interconnections of the present world and to elucidate the configurations that motivate them—and undermines the categories of luxury fashion that luxury fashion theorists and luxury fashion consumers are used to, and raise the questions of “what is globalisation?” and “what is the reality of luxury fashion today?”

Unlike Balenciaga's notion of globalized luxury fashion as a way of generating shock, then, for Ye globalized luxury fashion's potential to disorient, disrupt, and challenge is the key to its importance. The globalized luxury fashion world, Ye says, must bear witness to the current crisis.

I have argued that globalized luxury fashion is the crisis, that, nowadays, the principle that is actually shaping and structuring globalized luxury fashion in our specific age is that of the drama of globalized luxury fashion, in which numerous battles and disagreements are attaining their maximum hostility that, up to the present time, have not been settled. Such conflicts and hostilities, it has been suggested, far from serving to reassure people's common-sense, only highlight the fact that utilizing Williams' concept of a structure of feeling, within the context of a globalized luxury fashion industry in crisis, can be employed to comprehend Ye's critiques and to demonstrate the limits of our understanding when it comes to analyzing luxury

brands such as Louis Vuitton. Using the concept of a structure of feeling in globalized luxury fashion studies thus points to new possibilities since it offers the radicalization of a term such as ideology. From the perspective of ideology, Ye's critiques appear through the medium of social class, as a misrepresentation of reality, and as a remote echo of a profounder reality, whereas from the viewpoint of a structure of feeling, Ye's critiques enact a disruption not only of the social but also of the formal mode of class itself.

Thus, today, the Marxian theory of ideology, with its contentions that ideology is embedded in objective economic class relations, that it defines and fixes people's position in class struggle, and that socialism is the necessary ideology of the working classes prior to their victory over capitalist society following revolution needs criticism and revision. The representation of "reality," as open-minded Marxists such as Williams, as well as, for instance, feminists highlight, is more complex: representations of reality must incorporate, for example, psychoanalysis and gender related issues, rather than merely economic or social class, as models of human identity and relations. Artists such as Ye cannot be encapsulated or represented by ideas like ideology but only as a multi-layered structure of feeling, a structure of imagined socio-cultural relations, irreducible to a single component or dynamic.

Within Ye's critiques and related disruptive political activities in the present period, his interpretations of the social and of class have not depended on an ideology but on a meaningful view of subjectivity and personal, if globalized, luxury fashion identity as complex and moveable, active, and expressive: well aware of how people in global capitalist consumer societies dominated by the luxury fashion industry are addressed by many types of ideological mechanisms, including advertisers, state institutions, and the agencies of popular culture, Ye seeks to *readdress* or *redirect* people's sexual and social, gender, ethnic, racial, religious, and national senses of identity. Ye's globalized luxury fashion style, created with the aid of advanced technologies such as social media are fundamental to the production of himself as a structure of feeling, a contemporary socio-cultural spectacle wherein senses of reality and illusion, materiality and immateriality, have become, especially for Ye's many detractors at least, perilously, and possibly incurably, confused.

In conclusion, the example of Ye's critiques reminds us of the multifaceted relation of his work as a differentiated structure of feeling to the differentiated concept of social class. This is historically and contemporaneously mutable. In the US currently, for instance, Ye's work as a structure of feeling within the globalized luxury fashion industry can be effortlessly discerned, although neither in its global luxuriousness nor in its fashionableness, is it reducible to Ye's globalized luxury fashion "ideology," to his high-profile group of friends including Pharrell Williams, or to their formal and compound class relations. The rise of Ye's work as a new structure of feeling in the

globalized luxury fashion industry is unrelated to the rise of a new class dynamic; rather, it is related to our own time as to a globalized luxury fashion industry in crisis, to its contradictions, to its ruptures, or to its transmutations within and beyond the realms of social class. The exemplar of Ye utilized in this article would no doubt benefit from further detailed research corroboration. But what is today in question, theoretically, for luxury researchers, is the hypothesis of a mode of socio-cultural configuration, clear and identifiable in particular sorts of globalized luxury fashion, from Balenciaga to Louis Vuitton and beyond, which is distinguishable from other socio-cultural and globalized luxury fashion configurations by its articulation of its own presence.

## NOTES

1. Armitage and Roberts, "The Globalisation of Luxury Fashion: The Case of Gucci," 227–246.
2. Misfits Entertainment, *"Kingdom of Dreams."*
3. Beaumont, *"Kanye West: God and Monster."*
4. Paton, Friedman, and Testa, "When High Fashion and QAnon Collide."
5. Sekhon Dhillon and Roberts, "An Exploration of Children's Understanding of Luxury," 39–62.
6. Williams, "Preface to Film," *"The Long Revolution," "Marxism and Literature," "Politics and Letters: Interviews with New Left Review," "Problems in Materialism and Culture."*
7. Williams, *"Problems in Materialism and Culture."*
8. Williams, *"Culture and Society."*
9. Williams, *"The Long Revolution."*
10. Williams, *"Marxism and Literature."*
11. McGuigan, *"Raymond Williams: Cultural Analyst."*
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