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Vrai: The Culture of Knockoff Goods in Morocco Their Social Value, Utility, and Context in Contemporary Rabat

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Vrai: The Culture of Knockoff Goods in Morocco
Their Social Value, Utility, and Context in Contemporary Rabat

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Abstract

Fashion has long been an aspect of culture through which people identify, and it serves as a marker for class, nationality, and various other social statuses. With the continued democratization of culture via the internet and its various outlets, such as social media, fashion culture and the divide between high couture and mass-produced clothing, as noted by Bourdieu, is becoming less distinct. In the context of Rabat, Morocco, this has partially played out in the consumption of knockoff goods by the youth, a part of a larger individuation¹ process that includes a “westernization” of dress and a slow departure from “traditional” wear. To examine the motivations, other than economic, for purchasing knockoff couture and whether the authenticity of the good matters to the consumer, this study utilizes interviews and observation of consumers, promoters, shopkeepers of real and fake couture. The qualitative research finds evidence to support the idea that the imagery and myth touted on social media are highly influential in purchasing of fake goods. Though class distinctions between those who can afford authentic couture and those who sport knockoffs are still very much apparent, the identification with global trends allows consumers of fake luxury goods to take part in global trends playing out through the individuation and digitalization of Morocco, and specifically Rabat.

¹*Individuation*: the act or process of individuating: such as a (1) : the development of the individual from the universal (2) : the determination of the individual in the generalb : the process by which individuals in society become differentiated from one another c : regional differentiation along a primary embryonic axis

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Personal Introduction

My alarm goes off at 5:55 in the morning. I'm at school in Claremont, California. I sit up in bed, grab my laptop from the floor, navigate to the right website, and wait. At exactly 6am I hit refresh, click on a t-shirt that features a simple logo and scramble to type-in my address and credit card information. I do it all, hit send, and hold my breath before the screen reads "Order Confirmation." What I have just done is spent \$50 on a white tee. This shirt was designed by *Supreme*, a streetwear brand known for its collaborations with *Nike*, *Louis Vuitton*, *Bic*, and in this case, French couture house *Commes de Garcons*. I have known about this shirts existence for months now. I have seen it on the chests of hip-hop mega stars such as ASAP Rocky and Lil Yachty when I scroll through Instagram. I've read blog posts so I could be sure to try my luck at getting a shirt the moment it came out. And I somehow managed to, even though it sold out in 15 seconds. A month later I post the shirt online and sell it for \$265 to a kid from Korea.

Flash forward 3 months and I'm in Rabat, Morocco, only just arrived. Looking for a sim card, I walk through the old medina and right by a shoe store. I recognize some of the styles but some are new to me. Because I keep up with online fashion culture, and streetwear and sneakers in particular, I can tell immediately that these are fakes. The shoes are made as copies of *Adidas*, *Gucci*, *Puma*, *Nike*, *Valentino* and other prominent luxury and athletic brands. One, in particular, catches my eye. It is a *Nike* model, decorated in the logo of this brand, *Supreme*. It is on the display in the street with the other shoes that are being marketed as the coolest, most popular. In the United States, this model, not even a copy of something that the brand has ever produced,

would be recognized instantly as a knockoff and the wearer would be chastised and humiliated. But in the *souk*² in Rabat, it's the coolest style. How?

Introduction

Key Terms

High culture – culture traditionally experienced only by societal elites—is signified by fine art, food, literature, and clothes that have high aesthetic and intellectual value. Described by Mathew Arnold as “the best that has been thought and known in the world” (Arnold, 1994). This is a concept that has been highly criticized by critics, however holds some operational value for discussing fashion.

High/Haute Couture/Fashion – A part of *high culture* and refers to legitimate brands based in western Europe and America that tend to be reserved for the highest tier of the socioeconomic classes. It generally signifies high prices, luxury, and the finest craftsmanship. ex. *Louis Vuitton, Prada, Gucci, Balmain, Givenchy, and Bulgari*

Low culture – a derogatory word used to reference pop culture, and those appendages of culture that are widely accessible to the masses. Used in contrast to *high culture*

Introduction

The fashion world has been long divided between high and low. Rich and poor. Class and mass production. But never have these divides been more blurred. The age of the internet and an increasingly globalized world is transforming culture in every stretch of the planet. People are

² Arabic word for “market”

communicating and consuming much more broadly, and those who have access to internet are spending much of their time in this online world. On the internet and its various outlets, – Instagram, WhatsApp, Facebook, blogs – pictures and ideas are being shared constantly. Its influence is vast and uncontrollable. Because of this, people’s lives are becoming more and more invested in the images and representations of identity that the internet presents. Fashion is an appendage of culture that is a part of this revolution, and Morocco is taking part.

Styles and fashions that once represented the rich and famous are now consumed *enmasse* via Instagram posts, gossip blogs, and style videos that are popular, especially among the youth, globally. The notion of who can access allowed to consume these “luxury” goods is being democratized and globalized through the internet, and playing out in people’s desire to buy and sport luxury goods, whether they are *vrai*³ or *faux*⁴. It is what these items represent and the fact that people are allowed to identify with them that enables a brand like *Supreme*, a small skating brand making t-shirts in New York City in 1995, to be simultaneously cool in the souks of Rabat, the catwalks of Paris, or a dorm room in California in 2017. The purpose of this study is to examine the culture of knockoff couture in the Rabat, Medina Souk. This research hopes to look at peoples’, specifically the youth’s, buying habits, and how it relates to their identity:

Research Question 1: Why are people consuming knockoffs of luxury goods, compared to non-branded items?

Hypothesis 1: As a part of a larger global trend, some Moroccan Youth are opting for knockoffs of luxury items because of influences from the internet. Because of the current individuation process of Moroccan youth, they are beginning to identify with the myth and

³ French word for “real” or “true”

⁴ French word for “fake” or “false”

trends seen on social media, and therefore many people gravitate towards those styles, which include couture brands.

Research Question 2: Does it matter to the consumer satisfaction that the goods are not *vrai*:inauthentic?

*Hypothesis 2:*The authenticity of the product does not matter. The real item is far out of the budget of most people, and thus knockoffs present a good option. In the end, the essential aspect of wearing the knockoff couture is in that item's representation or sign that it relates it to style, luxury and the internet.

This paper will include a background on the real market for real and fake luxury goods in order to provide context as to the origins of couture and buying habits globally. I will then discuss the research and theory of Barthes, Baudrillard, Bourdieu, and Bentham to provide some philosophical underpinnings to the attraction and purpose of knockoff goods. This will be further contextualized with look at the emerging mix of pop culture, high culture and the online world. My background and review will conclude with contextualizing Morocco in these trends as it pertains to the youth and the process of globalization and individuation.

I outline my methods used to conduct interviews and observations in the souk and outside, regarding buying, selling and promoting efforts of both real and knockoff luxury fashion. These interviews were conducted with Moroccan consumers and sellers of fake and real items, in hopes to find the non-economic motivations for purchasing fake products. Further I interviewed a social media fashion influencer from Paris to discuss her role in the promotion of couture and the influence of Instagram.

I will then present the results of my interviews and observation, alongside scholarship on Moroccan fashion literature and semiotic theory. My findings point to the consumption of fake

goods as a form of “low” culture, used as a marker of lower socioeconomic status. Nevertheless, for those who are wearing the knockoffs, their consumption of global brand names stands as a means for engaging in the globalization culture of the internet and the representations of luxury found on social media. This is occurring at a time when notions of “real” Morocco are changing alongside a shifting world of couture culture that is much more invested in street style and the youth.

Literature Review and Background

The Luxury Goods Market

Defined by Thomas (2007), “The Luxury Goods Industry” is responsible for the production of “clothes, leather goods, shoes, silks scarves and neckties, watches, jewelry, perfume and cosmetics that convey status and a pampered life—a luxurious life.” It is a \$212 Billion USD industry that caters to the upper-class of the socioeconomic spectrum across the world (Deloitte, 2017). This industry as it is known today developed in the latter half of the 20th century, as companies used marketing and posturing to develop brand recognition globally:

“trumpet[ing] the brand's historical legacy and the tradition of craftsmanship to give the products an air of luxury legitimacy...stag[ing] extravagant or provocative fashion shows—at a million dollars a pop... dress[ing] celebrities....[and] sponsor[ing] high profile sporting and entertainment events” (Thomas).

This was all in attempt to convey the idea that buying their goods will result in, or heighten, a life of “luxury” (Thomas). As Thomas writes, “the way we dress reflects not only our personality but also our economic, political and social standing and our self-worth. Luxury adornment has always been at the top of the pyramid, setting apart the haves from the have-

nots.” The status and imagery that these products convey has never been more sought after. In the most recent analyzation of the luxury goods market, *Deloitte* found that “the essence of luxury is changing from an emphasis on the physical to a focus on the experience and how luxury makes you feel” (2017: 7).

The feeling and myth that surrounds these companies has given rise to a black market for their brands, counterfeit items sold around the world. Rutter defines “counterfeit goods” as “those which illegally imitate, copy or duplicate a good or use a registered trademark without authorization” (2008: 1146). Counterfeits or “knockoffs,” as they are commonly referred to, present a cheaper option to the more expensive authentic goods. In Rutter’s study, which analyzed consumer’s reasoning behind purchasing counterfeit products, it was found that “cost was the most frequently given motivation for the purchase of counterfeit goods across all product categories” (2008: 1156). The reason consumers seek these knockoffs rather than other cheap alternatives is attached to the experience and representation of luxury. It is perceived as more important than their physicality or craftsmanship: “many of us have an emotional need for authenticity in experiences that doesn’t compare to our need for authenticity of products. So...devotion is not often true from our relationship with Hermes, Rolex (Phillips, 2007). Because of these factors, the market for countrified goods is vast and accounts for as much as \$461 billion USD in imports, worldwide in 2013 (OECD, 2016). This has a large impact on luxury brands as they stand to lose more than \$10 billion USD a year (Thomas, 2007).

What is real?

In 1979, French philosopher, anthropologist and sociologist Pierre Bourdieu published his highly esteemed paper, “*Distinction*,” in which he concludes that the concept of “taste” is defined

by social elites. He uses this basis to argue that fashion, in particular, is “a field ruled by the competition for the monopoly of specific legitimacy, that is, for the exclusive power to constitute and impose the legitimate symbols of distinction in regards to clothing” (Bourdieu and Delsaut, 1975). The elites who are the forces of this decision-making process do so because they possess the necessary capital. While economic capital is the supreme source of this power, symbolic, social, and cultural help to maintain that position:

Social capital refers to the strength of their contacts and their network, symbolic capital to the amount of status they hold, and cultural ... to the set of cultural resources, whether embodied, in bodily manners for instance, objectified, such as in books or works of art, or institutionalized, in diplomas for instance, which allows one to gain social power and distinction. (Rocamora, 2015: 240)

Because of this distinction of power, the elites have crafted *haut couture* as a product and reflection of their prestige. In doing so, high fashion becomes a form of high culture, like fine art, influenced by and created for the upper echelons of society. Bourdieu argues, “when I speak of *haute couture* I shall never cease to be speaking of *haute culture*” (Bourdieu, 1993).

In line with his theory presented in *Distinction*, Bourdieu defines the world of fashion as a binary divided into “large scale” production and “restricted” production (Bourdieu 1983). Restricted production exists as the header for *couture* culture whereas large-scale “caters to a wide audience... popular culture... and is structured by its producers’ quest for commercial success” (Rocamora, 2002: 344-345). This distinction is partially made in the marketplace through price differentiation, where large-scale production is made to be as accessible and accepted as possible, using less expensive materials, wide-spread availability, and functionality. Restricted goods, however, are products of the highest craftsmanship, and their exclusive luxury labels

demand a higher price. Further, these goods are created in limited amounts, a restrictiveness that assists in success in couture.

There is a key observation that must be made here, central to the realm of fashion: The utility of clothing is not generally based in functionality, but rather the representation of class and taste which the accessory or piece conveys. Jeremy Bentham, largely known for establishing the field of moral philosophy known as utilitarianism, defines “utility” as “that property in any object, whereby it tends to produce benefit, advantage, pleasure, good, or happiness...to prevent the happening of mischief, pain, evil, or unhappiness...to the individual” (Bentham, 1907). This notion of utility is essential in relation to the consumption of fashion. The historical, and even biological, reason for clothing is for the protection of our body from the elements. The base-level “benefit” or “pleasure” that clothing has conferred on us is as a barrier from the sun, from attack, from the cold. Nevertheless, the aesthetic nature of clothing, the colors, fabric and images, are the determinates of purchasing patterns. These choices are the result of “signs” or further, “myths” that accessories and clothing hold (Barthes, 1983, Baudrillard, 1994).

Semiotics, defined as the “philosophical theory of signs and symbols that deals especially with their function,” was the field of study in which Roland Barthes and Jean Baudrillard worked (Semiotics). A sign constitutes the meaning of an object, word, or idea such that “/cat/ = ‘cat’” whereas the myth constitutes the notions, stories, stereotypes, and ideals that surround that sign: “we think of the sea as ‘beach’, the mythical material... appears through... signs, such as flags, slogans, signals, sign-boards, clothes, even suntan” (Calefato 73). Barthes, in *The Fashion System*, argues that the notion of fashion culture is a collection of “arbitrary” decision making by magazines, socialites and designers who have monopolized semiotic system in order to assign meaning or functionality to clothing. Each season, each year,

these clothes are given a new “lexicon” to create a new “myth,” always operating within a persisting system of “fashion”(Barthes). This system perpetuated Bourdieu’s notion that fashion is the result of an elite class and that the usefulness or utility of clothing in a particular season is linked to the “myth” that is ascribed to it for that year.

From this line of reasoning, fashion, and specifically high couture brands such as *Hublot*, *Prada*, *Gucci*, *Hermes*, *Goyard* and *Louis Vuiton*, exemplify French Philosopher Jean Baudrillard’s notion of *simulacrum* - “the desert of the real itself” (Baudrillard, 1994: 1). Baudrillard hypothesized that modern culture has lost touch with the “real” such that the sign are indistinguishable from the real, where society “cease[s] to think of purchased goods in terms of use-value, in terms of the real uses to which an item will be put” (Felluga). Couture is a *simulacrum*, in that the imagery, ideals, and representations of brands and items precede the physicality of the object. These ideas are solidified by tastemakers: editors of fashion magazines and houses who pioneer style for a season. This belief, discussed by Bourdieu, is essential for the process of the *simulacra*: “The value of a thing, be it a work of art, a word or a sentence, is not to be found in the thing itself or in its author,” what Boudrillard may consider the real, “but in the field it belongs to, in the interplay between the forces of opposition and conservation that structure the field and give its agents the power to speak and be listened to; the power to consecrate” (Rocamora, 2015: 236),

How Fashion Fits Today

The philosophical foundation of couture culture and fashion set here helps to define the boundaries in which the field of fashion fits. However, these works existed before the age of the internet, a new era which serves to both bolster and undermine their reasoning. Rocamora points

out that “Bourdieu reduces high fashion’s relation to popular fashion to a relation of emulation of the former by the latter”(2002: 346). But in today’s fashion market this conceptual understanding does not hold. Beginning with fashion magazines in the 60’s and 70’s and existing today as YouTube videos, Facebook ads, and Instagram accounts, the accessibility to both mass fashion and couture has never been more abundant. Facebook boasts 2 billion monthly users while Instagram was last numbered at 700 million (Constine, 2017). These platforms are being used as tools of promotion of all levels of fashion from *Cartier* to *Kohl’s*. PR exists in paid ads, celebrity endorsements, and accounts dedicated to style tips and celebrity fan pages. The images are inescapable and present throughout the entire globe. Rocamora points out, “there exist many agents of consecration of culture ...such as popular stars or fashion PRs, whose role is to legitimize not high culture but popular culture” and now, it is rare that you find a celebrity wearing anything but designer fashion. A vast population of the globe, those with internet capability, thus have virtually free access to haute couture. Baudrillard’s notion of simulacra makes this possible. An Instagram picture of *Gucci* sneakers satisfies the consumer, as the images and representation becomes the “real”. Where the purchasing consumption of couture used to be the sign for the myth of class and high culture, knowledge of fashion and intake of its myth is provided by the magazines and the internet has replaced physical consumption, and changed the definition of the *real*. This replacement of authenticity thus allows high culture and specifically high couture, previously restricted to the elite, to become a thing of popular culture, revolutionizing the notion of *high fashion* itself.

Kardashian, West, and the Online Culture

This November, *Vanity Fair*, a magazine renowned for its excess of couture advertisements, Hollywood celebrity centerfolds and glamorous parties for the rich and famous, hired a new editor-in-chief named Radhika Jones. *Vanity Fair*, and its parent company *Conde Nast*, are in large part, the dictionaries of what is *in* for style and fashion around the world. It's publications *GQ*, *Vogue*, and *The New Yorker* are synonymous with the definitions of "cool", "chic", and "educated," respectively. Jones will be responsible for shaping the "culture" of *Vanity Fair*, an institution that has consecrated the myth of fashion in both high and popular culture for decades. In her first interview with the media outlet following her hire, she remarked, "something fundamental shifted in the culture... high and low culture... are so much more mixed now" (Meet Radikha Jones, 2017). The lines of "mass-production" and "restricted," set by Bourdieu, are blurred to the point that the very institutions that define them recognize this revolution. The internet has been the greatest catalyst in obscuring these boundaries. Taking *Conde Nast* for example, *Vanity Fair* alone has over 17 million monthly online users and has recently ended or shifted many of its print publications to online, to "connect to the digital natives who see everything and do everything through their screens" (Pilkington, 2017). The "digital natives" are consumers who exist on all corners of the globe and live on the web, where consumption is just as possible and immediate for an average person with a phone in Morocco as it is in the United States.

No better persons or entity can illustrate this state of transformation of physical to digital, from binary to diverse, from temporal to immediate, and from real to *simulacrum*, than international celebrity couple of Kim Kardashian and Kanye West. Kim Kardashian exists as a global symbol of fashion, social media, consumerism, and influence, while simultaneously representing the highest levels of accessibility and inaccessibility. Her beginnings are in the

world of couture, working for socialite Paris Hilton – previously one of the most familiar celebrities and icons of wealth and style – as an assistant and fashion consultant. If you are one of the 104 million people following her on Instagram (6th highest of all accounts) or 54 million on Twitter (12th highest of all accounts), you know that she is privy to the most restricted high fashion. She receives one-of-a-kind looks from haute houses such as *Givenchy* and *Balmain* which she shares on her Snapchat and Twitter. At the same time, she peddles mass produced fragrance lines and makeup, marketed by her and her equally famous sisters, known to sell out in hours while generating tens of millions of dollars (Calfaseto, 2017). Every move, mistake, and minute of her life is captured by paparazzi or her reality show *Keeping Up with the Kardashians*, which has entered its tenth season and has showcased 2 marriages, 2 pregnancies, a divorce and hundreds of fights that have been both real and constructed. Her life lacks any secrecy and is critiqued and consumed 24 hours a day, all the while, she holds esteem as the most well-known celebrity, Hollywood royalty as untouchable and unrelatable as Queen Elizabeth. Her “myth” is diverse, and made even more interesting by the fact that many see her as being famous for no reason at all.

Kim, as symbol of this burgeoning trend of converging high and low culture by the youth on the internet, becomes even more acute when you consider the impact of her husband, Kanye West. West, one of the most iconic and controversial musicians of the twenty first century, has found success and influence in both music and fashion, playing a major role in cultivating culture that is more accessible than ever. His ascendance is in hip-hop, the genre and culture of the streets. Fashion in hip-hop – street wear – has historically been stratified from the runways of Paris or Milan. Oversized clothes, cheaper materials and baseball hats used to contrast with meticulously tailored avant-garde works displayed in the windows and showrooms of *Bugalri*

and *Gucci*. This has now changed. White socialites once ruled-outright the space of couture, however, celebrity designers now work in hopes that their shows in Paris are attended by hip-hop royalty, all of whom are black, and most of whom, like West, grew up outside of the upper-class. This total change is in part due to the rise of the digital age and the conduits of culture shift such as Kanye: “Until now streetwear has remained a niche interest. But it is being appropriated by high fashion” (Cocherain). The face of this movement is Mr. West, a leader in bringing this street subculture to the fashion houses of Italy and France. The *Yeezy Boost*, West’s shoe model with the popular mass athletic brand *Adidas*, is known to sell out online in less than an hour with each new colorway and style, popular among young fashionistas sitting front row at catwalks during New York Fashion Week. “Collaborations with hip-hop artists Kanye West and Pharrell Williams... ha[ve] been central to the brand’s revival,” and caused a surge in the mainstream popularity of other *Adidas* products that are not limited nor as pricey (Novy-Williams, 2017). He has *boosted* *Adidas* into high fashion, seen in collaborations with designers such as Alexander Wang and Raf Simmons: couture designers who are making streetwear a staple of high fashion, employing rappers, Instagram bloggers and influencers as models in their shows.

West’s ability to bring “low culture” and “high culture” together is mirrored in his music (Meet Radikha Jones, 2017). Named one of the “40 most groundbreaking records of all time,” West’s *808s and Heartbreaks*, featuring a “balance of singing and rapping” (which could easily be taken as a proxy for the balance of high and low culture), has been often pointed to as inspiration of a generation of hip hop that dominates popular culture today (The 40 Most, 2017). This album gave way to the era of “Soundcloud” rap— “hip-hop musicians who build massive internet followings” – that comprises much of the top 100 tracks (Blasey, 2017). These are artists who have been inspired and cultivated through free online mediums, specifically YouTube,

Twitter, and the free online streaming service Soundcloud. Their sound, taste, and audience is the “masses” who have consecrated the myth of these artists, and in doing so, cultivated the signs of popular culture. Amazingly, these artists, born of services accessible to anyone with internet connection, have followed in the wake of West, and appeared on stages at Coachella and runways in Paris, only months after recording songs in their bedrooms.

The trends and movements that Kim and Kanye have played a part in deconstruct Bourdieu’s binary. Similarly, they demonstrate Baudrillard’s idea of the simulacra. Culture is largely coveted and consumed via representations, as people “no longer acquire goods because of real needs, but because of desires that are increasingly defined by commercials and commercialized images” (Felluga, 2011). West and Kardashian are symbols themselves, and have cultivated myths and ideals which can be consumed instantaneously, where people “approach each other and the world through the lens of these media images” (Felluga). People identify living and the good life with over-hyped streetwear or, Kim’s scripted “reality” TV show, Kardashian branded makeup that’s no different than the drugstore brand, or the stories of artists who are launched into popular celebrity from their basement by a stroke of luck: markers of the state of simulacra, where the real, physical, and obtainable are indistinguishable from the representations.

Moroccan Youth and their Individuation, Identification, and Digitalization

This aforementioned identity shift is occurring in Morocco, in a variety of ways, as a part of a process of individuation. Using the family as an example, larger family homes are being abandoned for apartments and individual spaces as the immediate family is becoming increasingly prioritized over the extended family structure (El-Harras, 2007:145). In the youth, “there is a tendency towards an ideological bricolage, manifested in the many forms of

compromise with modern culture” (152). The youth are “call[ing] for more individual rights in relation to religious and cultural identity, [and have] become louder and louder”(Jensen, 2016: 142). This movement is captivated in Moroccan fashion in both production and consumption. Just as the global fashion world is becoming less dependent on the elites, so is Morocco’s fashion scene:

“individual and artistic Freedom...influenced by both local and global developments...They no longer accept Arab-Muslim identity, seen as representing the elite, as their solemn source of inspiration, but instead turn to Morocco’s cultural diversity represented in popular culture, street styles.” (Jensen, 2016: 142)

This diversity includes a globalizationprocess that is largely at odds with the notion of a “traditional” national identity. Jensen argues that the newest generation of Moroccan fashion designers and youth are making and seeking clothing that “portrays images of the ‘real’ and ‘authentic’” by relating to “pop culture” and “street style” –the culture people are actually experiencing in this 21st century, and not what the youth view as an “invented past” (145). What people are wearing is a transition from *djellabas* to brands and styles that reflect this search for identity and individuality in 2017.

Walking the streets of the Rabat Medina, this dichotomy of new and old is highly visible. The older generations still sport more traditional notions of wear developed post-colonization, while the youth sport much different styles. For many young men, the shoe of choice is knockoff Kanye West *AdidasYeezy Boost*, the pant, some fake *Adidas* sweats, and a replica top by *Philipp Plien*. Young women might wear some *Gucci*-esque sneakers, tight fitting jeans and a watch that reads *Marc Jacobs*. These are brand names and styles that have been historically reserved for the elite, but in this transformative era, where the boundaries of high and low culture are not so

distinct, people are able to access them. While stigma and economic status might have previously denied them this opportunity, the prevalence and popularity of knockoff products bearing the names and styles of haute couture enable the experience of these products made popular by internet icons like West and Kardashian. Just as West and Kardashian have embodied the melding of elite and popular culture, couture and street, these counterfeits follow in the same representation. West and other hip-hop artists, according to a previous history of high culture, are not meant to be seated next to Anna Wintour at a *Louis Vuitton* runway show. Clothing bearing the branding and prestige of *Gucci*, according to a previous history of high couture, was not meant to be found in proliferation in the Moroccan souk. Nevertheless, these knockoff items have been created and consumed. By wearing these items Moroccan youth are taking part in a global undermining of these old norms, and pushing a new representation forward. The *simulacrum* still exists. The myth and sign of the object are more important than the object itself. And though this myth still relates to a lifestyle of luxury and fame, it is increasingly coming to represent a democratization of culture.

Methodology

For the purpose of investigating the contemporary Moroccan fashion as it relates to knockoff goods, I chose to utilize a few methods of research: conducting in person interviews, observing of marketplaces, and literature review and analysis of social and cultural trends. All but one of my interviews were conducted in person within Rabat, mostly within the Medina. I wanted to hear from multiple sides, so I interviewed shopkeepers at places with knockoff high fashion, a tailor, and a seller of more traditional Moroccan wear. I also interviewed consumers of fashion in Rabat, as well as a couture fashion influencer in Paris. Aside from interviews, I also

observed the clientele, purchasing strategy and product of these knock off stores, as well as legitimate couture stores. This was done before and during my interviewing of the shop keepers. Lastly, my literature review consists of the research and theory of philosophers and pop culture.

Participant Selection

Participants key:

K – Moroccan woman in her late 20's. Works for an NGO in Rabat.

S – Moroccan woman, 19 years old. University student in Rabat.

F – Moroccan man, 19 years old. University Student in Rabat.

C – French woman, 15 year-old fashion influencer, consultant and model.

My process of selecting participants for interviewing was mixed. For the interviewing of shopkeepers of goods of unauthorized products, I simply walked around the Medina looking for shops that I determined to be selling knockoff goods, after observation of the clothing and accessories. We interviewed a seller of simple, non-branded, false goods, an employee at high-end knock off accessories and clothing, a seller of traditional *caftans* and *djellabas*, as well as a tailor who had done personal tailoring for me previously. I interviewed a previous acquaintance as well my translators. Lastly, the girl in Paris that I was able to interview over video chat was the 15 year-old sister of a close friend who models and consults for fashion brands and retailers such as Marc Jacobs and SSENSE, and has a substantial Instagram following of eleven thousand.

Observation was done in all of these shops in addition to a knock off cosmetics store, and daily observation in the medina over the past few months.

Process and Site Information

The medina interviews were largely conducted in one day in late November during which I was able to go into the souk with the help of two translators. I selected the Rabat Medina for my research due to the ease of access and based on recommendation from my advisor, given the time frame and restrictions.

My translators were two university students from Mohammed V University in Rabat. One male, one female, both in their early twenties. I had not expected to have them both as translators, however it ended up being helpful to have two rather than just one. Our process of interviewing started one way and shifted throughout our afternoon in the souk. Initially we began with presenting the consent form, in Arabic, to two shopkeepers that we had elected to attempt to interview, and asked to record. The first person refused the interview after initially telling us that we could interview him. The second shopkeeper verbally consented but did not want to sign the form, even though its purpose was to ensure their anonymity. Both rejected the recording. After the second attempt we elected to conduct interviews and ask for verbal consent, and no longer ask to record. This was done by suggestion of the translators who, in order to avoid upsetting or off-putting people we wanted to interview. Translation was done from Darija to English, and some notes were taken by the translator who was not asking questions for that particular interview. The notes taken, transcription and discussion of all the interviews were done after, in Café Renaissance in Rabat, as well as my interview with my female translator, which was

recorded. I conducted another interview with K, in English, that was recorded and done in the conference room of an NGO. My interview with C was done over Skype in English.

Ethical Considerations and Limitations

Fashion, from a very removed viewpoint, is a relatively benign topic. However, people's clothing choices and how they relate to them, based on the person, can become very strongly connected to self-identity and self-worth. At the start of the interview process, my biggest concern was being the bearer of news that might inform the interviewee that their clothing was inauthentic, especially if they had a high level of pride in that object, or lived under the assumption that it was real. Another issue I was concerned about was that shopkeepers of knockoff goods might not want to talk to me as producing and selling inauthentic goods is illegal, and I could pose some sort of threat to their livelihood. This was only an issue with the first attempted interview, in which the interviewee changed his mind and asked us to leave because of the illegality of his business.

A major limitation that was present throughout the entire interview process was the language disconnect. Interviews done with the assistance of a translator cannot be perfect, and therefore some communication may have been lost, and subtleties of conversation cannot have been received exactly. Additionally, the use of a translator and the manner of which I obtained participants in the souk was not conducive to the most natural of conversations. Non-Moroccans are seen as tourists and a vital part of the economy in Rabat and the Medina. Therefore, my presence may not have helped in obtaining information on issues that have economic consequences for the interviewees.

A lot of the interviewing was done by my translators who had access to my interview guides. There were often long conversations that were had, the bulk of which was not directly translated. This was helpful for my translators and developing a connection with the interviewees that enabled more conversational attitudes, however limited the accuracy of quotes or ideas taken from the interview. Exactness of translation was also hampered since we were unable to record the conversations.

Sampling and number of interviews could have been improved. I might have focused more on looking for people who buy a lot of knockoff items, rather than just occasionally purchasing them. The problem here was approaching people with this question, as it could be taken offensively, as an acknowledgment of someone's lower economic status and stereotyping. It also might have helped to interview more men, as the consumer interviews were with mostly women.

Further, as an American and only a temporary resident of Morocco, my internal intuition and background in Moroccan life is very limited. Differences of history, education, language and other cultural barriers prohibit my full understanding of interests at hand, especially in relation to issues of identity. The impact of religion as it relates to clothing choices is especially important in Morocco, and my background knowledge of Islam is base-level at best.

Lastly, my representation of the consumer community in the Rabat medina is highly limited. I do not wish to state my findings as only as the results of my research and do not wish to impose generalizations as definite accuracies about the patterns of identity of the larger community.

Results

“I basically work for Instagram”

“I basically work for Instagram,” said the shopkeeper at the counterfeit couture store, laughing. I had just asked him about the *Cartier* “Love Bracelet.” A rose gold metal band that must be screwed and unscrewed to fit a round the wrist. Whereas most luxury jewelry pieces are not known widely by name, the “Love Bracelet” has been popularized by Kylie Jenner, sister of Kim Kardashian, and someone S frequently mentioned as an influencer of fashion for Moroccan youth. As that item became popular with Kylie, a queen of social media in her own right, so did it become popular in the Rabat souk. The shopkeeper discussed how people come in with their phones and show the exact pieces they want. “I have people coming in here age 15 and 50” he says. He tells us that people see his shop as a gateway to how to really start “living.” Older women look to regain life and livelihood, influenced by the TV, especially the Turkish soap operas, what both S and K referred to as a “window” into youth and new culture. For those young people who “follow Kylie Jenner on Snapchat” and see her fashion and lifestyle, “those people consider that’s what living is” (S, 2017). Just before walking into this store, we went into a cheap cosmetics shop that S has been to before. Inside there were nail polishes, lip glosses, hair products from floor to ceiling, row after row of every color. Each bore different branding and names, but what stood out were the few items that read “Kylie.” “Last time I was here they had so much Kylie stuff,” S notes. We asked the store attendant where the “Kylie” product has gone, and in a store overflowing with plenty of different options for make-up, nearly everything labeled “Kylie,” almost exact imitations of the originals, had been sold.

We left and went to interview a tailor. As we stood talking to the tailor, I noticed a colored print of Hollywood celebrity Ryan Gosling hanging above his workspace. I asked S to talk to him about the photo. It was a picture brought in by a customer, showing the exact style of

jacket they wanted, “style is what the internet offers” he declares. Admittedly, I had been in the day before with some pictures I retrieved online to help describe and show him what I wanted, a task that would have been hard to do without the resource of the worldwide web. Interestingly, however, the tailor had no idea who the person in the picture was. He referred to Ryan Gosling as a model for the clothes, like a “mannequin.” This online culture of pictures can disperse fashion trends and styles that are imitated around the world. As Michalove remarks, “the world wide web dispersed and democratized authority – fashion-related and otherwise – and anyone with a computer sits equidistant from the cultural ‘metropole’” (2014: 23). He’s not “working for Instagram” in the same way as the shop keeper selling fake Gucci, but he’s certainly working for the internet, offering people styles that are acceptable via the web, and are spread because of celebrity culture, whether the person having them made or making them knows who the celebrity is or not.

Consider C, a 15 year-old middle-class Parisian who just 3 days before our interview was featured on *Vogue*’s Instagram next to pictures of *Victoria’s Secret* models, Pharrell Williams, and Adam Levine. C does work for Instagram. She models, appears and consults for high end fashion outlets and publications, who take her pictures and post them online to get traction. People want her because she is young, hip and has 11 thousand followers on Instagram: “its new, now fashion, everyone who does their own brand, they want to talk to young people. I do so much consulting for brands.” Just the other day I clicked on a link to an Instagram page posted by Virgil Abloh - the hottest designer in fashion at the moment, Kanye West’s cousin, and streetwear legend. When I arrived at the page, I saw two pictures of C, a girl who has gained credibility because she started wearing things found in her brother and mom’s closets and in Parisian flea markets. C and her three best friends, collectively known as the “Gucci Gang,” now

work for luxury brands because they dressed themselves in a way that suited them. The youth, and not even the rich youth, now define what is *in*. C admits, “the fact that you can be front row of a fashion show because you have 20k followers on IG is crazy.” She is apart of this culture where cool comes from a picture online, disseminated across the world. Just the one picture of her and her “Gang” on *Vogue’s* Instagram had the potential to reach 17 million people worldwide.

Popularity and the exposure that comes along with it has a big effect. F and S both admit that a lot of the people who have *Gucci*, *Louis Vuitton* or *Fendi* on their hats, bags, shirts or shoes don’t even know what those are: “Is it a person? A place?”, F jokes. “They just see a lot of people with it,” and then they buy it. This is particularly interesting when taken with F’s anecdote about a wealthy friend who can afford any label he wants. But F tells me that his friend will not buy any of these couture brands, as his thinking is: *why should I when everyone is already wearing it?* His reference is to the proliferation of these fake versions which have rendered those luxury brands, at least in F’s friend’s eyes, undesirable. These brands, so long seen as a symbol of wealth, have been somewhat subverted and democratized. This is, in part, what the internet and knockoff goods provide, enabling a brand or trend to be spread instantly, broadly, and often without any explanation. Thus, the representation or symbol of what an item is, what a brand even is, is replaced by a new meaning. As Jensen summarizes the words of Lindorm, “authenticity is not only used to establish a contrast to whatever is believed to be fake, unreal or false, but most of all, to gather people together in collectives that are felt to be real, essential and vital, providing participants with meaning, unity and a surpassing sense of belonging” (2016: 139). Whether clothes are *vrai* or not, they provide people with a connection to the masses, an identity that is based in the internet: “The importance of the internet as an

international forum then cannot be overstated; more than any other form of media, online social media both influences Moroccan youth and includes them in a multi-national discourse on fashion, as well as an increasingly universalized experience of youth” (Michalove, 2017: 24-25).

“Everything in Morocco is An Imitation”

“Everything in Morocco is an imitation,” replied the shopkeeper when asked about counterfeit products. My translators S and F laughed at this reply, a gross overstatement and oversimplification the question asked. The shopkeeper didn’t seem to find it so funny. His sentiment was rather matter of fact, and seemed to mean to apply his words beyond fashion to Morocco as a whole. He went on to say that “yeah,” his stuff is fake, just as all the other stuff in the souk. But “nothing” is real in the souk, everything that you find there is just a copy of someone else. His merchandise, he offers, was at least made in Morocco. We ask him about the luxury branded items, the shirts that say *Gucci*, *Moschino*, or *Prada*, “who are buying those things?” He responds with a derogatory word that makes use of the darjia phrase for “trash.” It’s a matter of money in his eyes, those with no money buy these fake items to appear like they have more money, but to him, S and F, it doesn’t fool anyone. Conversations of class began to appear here. F and S made a point to say that some people of a higher class view those who wear knock off items as lower, classless. These opinions are often aimed at people who buy the items sold on the ground or in the very cheapest shops that are popular in the souk. At the same time, those who buy the more expensive replicas are exhibiting a trend of “living.” No matter, all three make the point in saying, that to the people who wear these couture knockoffs, it doesn’t matter if they are *vrai*. In my interview with K, she remarked that for people who wear those items,

“they feel like they are taking brands that are the good ones, but a good price,” “they feel like it is really a good option.”

Though the statement “everything in Morocco is an imitation” is bold, it holds some what of a symbolic sentiment than a literal one. There is a feeling among older Moroccans that the “real” true Morocco is giving way to a new culture, that is signified by stereotypically “western” or “European,” or “modern” ideals or imagery, a trend that is actually more global than anything. Speaking of contemporary Moroccan fashion designers, a proxy for the young generation of Morocco, Jensen writes, these designers “[seem] to be working towards an end to cultural dominance by the elite, Arab-Muslim identity and cultural homogenization” (Jensen, 145). This runs counter to a post-colonial history that was defined by nationalistic hopes, an era that wanted to disassociate with the culture and image of its colonizer. However, this new generation seeks to engage in a new process identification, one that is much more international. The divide between the youth and older generation’s views is becoming less and less controversial as the new Morocco becomes more widely accepted. Talking with K, she discusses this rift that exists in Moroccan fashion which is the *roumi* vs. *beldi*. “Two things we consider differently,” K says. The former is the “modern”, “casual”, “western” clothes worn on a daily basis by most younger people in Rabat. The *beldi*, however, relates to the “tradition”: the *caftan*, the *djellaba*. When shopping for clothes in the souk, a popular question to be asked is, “*beldi* or *roumi*?” (K, 2017). Jensen paraphrases Belder (2000) when she writes “*beldi* is very much related to nostalgia for an idealized and fixed point in time when culture was supposedly untouched by the corruption that is automatically associated with commercial development.” However, after my interviewing, this notion seems slightly outdated. By S, K, and F’s experience, *beldi* is indeed associated with this “tradition” and “nostalgia,” but this sentiment seems to exist now as mostly reserved for special

occasions: prayer, weddings, and holidays. K, a woman very much connected with her religious identity and Moroccan background admits, “I feel proud when I see people wearing *caftan* or *djellabas*, that we keep this a part of the culture today.” At the same time she says, “*roumi orbeldi*,” it doesn’t matter, people won’t “judge” you for either, “they aren’t ‘true’ Moroccan style, but today they become a part of the culture.”

The culture of *roumi*, which includes this culture of “imitations,” brands, and the internet, is becoming accepted more widely. In this way, the new wave of culture follows in the footsteps of the previous generation. Both S and K, as well the women in Michalove (p.21), talk about how they see old photos of their parents wearing styles that were new, more “western” and global for that era. Today, they consider the *caftan* to be the outfit that defines *beldi* for women. Jensen’s studies find that the *caftan* is “today [is] considered to be the most ‘ancient/traditional/authentic’ of female fashions” (139). Ironically, “it was only relatively recently introduced under the influence of Moroccan fashion designers and strongly influenced by European fashion aesthetics.” There is always a continuum of rejecting and accepting change generationally. S tells me her opinion on the matter: “perspective changed... *caftan* is more whatever.” These perspectives and opinions do vary from place to place however. The shopkeeper of a women’s traditional wear shop tells us “in the last 5 years people have not bought as much.” This serves as some evidence that there is a real transition happening in terms of consumption as well, at least in Rabat. S talks about how Rabat, a more global and urban place, is changing very quickly, whereas other cities in Morocco are not quite as accepting of the *roumi*. She says, “a girl wore a *caftan* to class and I think she had a lot of people talking about her, like why is she wearing a *caftan*? But if she was in Fes I don’t think it would be a big deal.” Differentiation between the “real” Morocco and the “fake” Morocco, cool and uncool does

depend on the person, and their age and location. This lack of unity in defining these terms, however is a marker of the new generation, which seeks to be more individualized. The wearing of fake brands changes depending on the person. For some, those who identify with the social media culture, fake brands or imitating style from celebrities are a sign of “living,” a sign of being on the *in*. K admits, “I know some girls who are really obsessed. Even if it is a bit expensive for them, they will go for it. Sometimes even they will go to the tailor if they cannot find it and have it made in the same style.” For others, S will say, about the people wearing fake clothes, “I mean really me and my friends make jokes of them.”

Knockoff clothing is one aspect of this process, as it allows the youth, and in some cases the older generation, the ability to take part in a culture that they relate to, or aspire to be like. This process is highlighted nicely by a text I received from S, only 30 minutes after departing following our day in the souk;

“I was thinking about the topic of how serious people used to take traditions and culture back then and how it’s fading now... and I believe that it’s since our parents and grandparents experienced the French colonization first hand and they actually were scared for themselves so they grew this deep attachment to Morocco and Moroccan culture ...if you look at it from our perspective it’s nothing but words in history books and almost like a fairy tale...so that’s why we’re leaning more into being indifferent about everything and blending in with the current flow.”

Conclusion

While knockoff clothing might offer people the feeling of luxury, the consumer’s societal status is not changed in the eyes of others. In talking with S, F and some of the shopkeepers, the

wearing of fake luxury only confirms the lower socioeconomic status of those who wear it. People are very aware of what is authentic, and it serves as an economic class indicator. If you can afford to buy real *Gucci*, people know it and you can differentiate yourself as upper class, someone who can access the *vrai*. If you are wearing a knockoff *Louis Vuitton* hat, people know, and it acts as a reinforcement of lower class. But in the context of Bourdieu's idea of the *simulacrum* in modern culture, this differentiation seems to become less and less important, at least to the person who is wearing it. The way people identify is such that representation of the brand is more important than if it is an authentic product or not. The logo that adorns your hoodie, whether crafted in China or Italy, becomes the marker of style, and connects the wearer with the world and the worldwide web. These are the frameworks with which the youth identify, globally, and specifically in Morocco: "The clothed body is therefore recognized as a distinguishing feature... one that can be considered as the symbol of a life style... a common sense, ideology and values shared within a social group that are aestheticized and are therefore mainly expressed through visual semiotics" (Calefato, 2008: 77). This phenomenon is a product of the ability to individualize and express yourself freely. In talking about the idea of America with S, she says strongly, "we [Moroccan youth] look forward to being independent as much as Americans." The desire for individualism is a reflection Morocco's globalization, and departure from previous nationalistic visions of the postcolonial era. That seems to be why, from discussion, it appears that what a product represents is most important, and not if it is real or fake. Previously the *beldi* – "Moroccan Arabic word for traditional, local, authentic as opposed to foreign objects/influences" – was what constituted "real" Morocco. But the contemporary culture, in part due to the internet, is increasingly diverse and global. The notion of "real," in

respect to the youth and fashion culture in 2017 in Rabat, is more in line with what is *actually* happening in Morocco.

In order to further understand the fashion culture in Morocco, it might be important to consider the pressures from within and outside the country to hold tight to the *beldi*. It is to Orientalize Morocco to reduce what is “real” to mean only *djellaba* and *caftan*. Dexheimer summarizes Edward Siad’s scholarship of orientalism:

“the west has created a dichotomy, between the reality of the East and the romantic notion of the Orient...a culture, history, and future promise for them. On this framework rests not only the study of the Orient, but also the political imperialism of Europe in the East.”

The Western world seeks to portray Morocco as *other*, and sustain it as an untouched bastion for mysticism and romantics, an idea curated by people like Paul Bowles, Yves Saint Laurent, and William Burroughs. At the same time, the older generations of Moroccans, those who experienced colonialism, want to hold tight to a past defined in the postcolonial era. While this Western exoticism helps fuel an economy centered around tourism in Morocco, it attempts to stifle Morocco’s processes of globalization, something every nation should be entitled to.

Further, it might be helpful to explore more in depth the process of individualization occurring here. The various elements that constitute culture are changing. You can see it in Moroccan eating habits, living arrangements, and what people wear. How do governmental and religious traditions support this process, and how do they run counter? Is this a positive thing for the country’s identity or not? Is the transition hurting those whose livelihoods are invested in a more “traditional” Moroccan identity, such as those who own *beldi* clothing stores? Further, this is a black market, it would be beneficial to consider the production and distribution of these

products. Is their manufacturing and trade done in a way that is harmful? Is purchasing these knockoffs in support of criminal practices? Lastly, it would be apt to consider what kind of effects these luxury ideals and identifications are having in terms of empathy and a culture of vanity that surrounds them?

Personal Reflection

Going into the semester, the prospect of selecting an ISP topic was not easy, and only grew more difficult as the semester went on. There is an endless amount of interesting, research-worthy, important topics that exist in Morocco, and even just in Rabat. Initially, I thought it would be most appropriate to pick a topic related to my major: Philosophy, Politics, and Economics. My personal focus is in criminal justice and so, though organizing interviews may have proved to be some trouble due to the sensitive nature of the topic, I figured that I should probably follow that route.

I came to Morocco, and decided to do study abroad, because I felt that college had become a chore, that I was not challenging myself in ways that I used to and that had once fulfilled me. This semester has provided me relief from these emotions and worries as I have been thrown into a country that I have very little previous knowledge of, and been put in situations, many of which I had never before experienced. I feel that over the past 3 months I have gained much from the people and places that I've been so lucky to experience here. These things have opened me up to think critically about what and who matters to me. The space and opportunity to explore this is a privilege and maybe the greatest gift I have received in my time here. One thing I have found and considered is that I am often stuck thinking about what people

think of me, and how I am considered against my peers, often times negatively. What I don't give enough priority to is my creative and independent side. I love art, music, and fashion. I discuss them daily with my friends and constantly in my own head, but never make the time to actually create. I have a passion politics and justice work, and want to do all I can to help build a better world. This is a big part of who I am, but not the only part. So, when it was time to pick my ISP topic, I decided that I wouldn't take the route that might look best on a resume or satisfy my typical tendencies. I decided to pick the topic that was interesting to me based on thoughts that had crossed my head and intrigued me on a more creative level.

I selected studying this knockoff culture because I like fashion. It is something that crosses my mind frequently. I spend hours online, usually every day, looking at new clothes and designs on social media and blogs. In preparing to come to Morocco, I was most concerned about what clothes I should bring, how I wanted to dress while I was here, not really knowing what people typically wore. In arriving, and seeing young people like me wearing many of the same styles and fashion choices here as I do at home or on the internet, I felt an immediate connection. Over the course of completing my ISP I have been able to further this connection by discussing the topic of clothing and in context of the way in which the youth navigate the internet. I admittedly spend much of my time on social media. It is a phenomenon that I share with many of my peers in the 21st century. Because of this, I have been able to relate to other people here in Morocco through very intriguing and passionate discussions, and think critically about my own usage of social media or my fashion choices.

Over the past few weeks at times I have questioned this choice, and felt concerned that I should have followed in similar studies as many of my classmate, talking with refugees, the disabled or homeless. I have some sense that my topic is benign and superficial. I've felt that I

may have limited myself in picking this topic. However, I didn't think I'd be able to do justice to those very heavy and critical issues, given the timeframe, my personal limitation of language, and my desire to really engage with myself and others for my ISP. So, upon reflecting, I feel my choice was well suited. I have engaged with a 15 year-old Parisian girl, a 20 year-old Moroccan woman and a 50 year-old Moroccan man about a topic that we can all relate to and that feels relevant. I have challenged myself and been challenged by others. I have learned about trends and ideas that pertain to me in the US and others around the globe.

I think going abroad and traveling is about finding the humanness and commonality between peoples of many places. The tendency to Orientalize or exoticize aids in highlighting the differences between the western traveler and the places they travel to. When considering the *vrai* and the *faux*, it is easy to believe that this *beldi* culture, the culture often presented to tourists is what is real Morocco. It is something that might heighten the uniqueness of a week or month in a new place. I thought that Morocco would be a great place to travel to because it was so "different" from what I was used to. And I've gotten to experience those "different" things, like riding camels or listening to gnawa music. But after three months here, as I walk the streets more comfortable in my daily activities, having met many people *seemingly* dissimilar to me, what is most apparent is not the differences, but how similar everyone is. Yes, there are many tangible discrepancies and dissimilarities between Morocco and the US. I might appreciate the reverence of family and community that exists here. As S put it, some Moroccans might appreciate the American ability to be more individualistic. But these are topics that we can engage with, discuss and learn.

We are at a place in politics and society where our differences are the things that are usually highlighted most brightly. This trend helps us build community and resources, and brings

attention to minority groups who are able to find hope and strength after histories of inequality. However, at the same time, it divides people, and stratifies us further. I am a tourist still here in Morocco. I have many privileges as a white man from America that do separate me in very distinct ways. This positionality is something I consider very often. However, this semester, while I have still tried my best to keep my perspective and privilege in my mind, I've really been able to consider how similar humans are though interacting with so many people. In the past 10 days I've talked with a Sierra Leonean in Takaddoum about immigration, a Berber man in Mount Toubkal about Islam, and my little host brother in baby talk. All of these conversations have not lead to highlighting differences, but highlighting what emotions and experiences we share.

I am very much appreciative for this country for giving me the opportunity to live and connect with people in this way. It is one of many debts I could never repay, and as an American tourist I have taken a great deal from Morocco with little to give in return. I am so thankful for the kindness of Morocco and the Moroccan people, and hope to one day contribute to some greater good that might help me repay the generosity of this place.

Appendix A

Interview Guide - Consumer

- Where do you like to shop?
 - Why?
- What influences what you wear and where you buy clothing?
 - Does pop culture, Instagram or Facebook influence you?
- What is important to you when it comes to style?
 - What do
- How does that reflect you?
- Are brand names important to what you are wearing?
 - Why?
 - Does it matter if those items are *vrai* or authentic?
- Is there a look or looks that represent Moroccan fashion?
- What direction do you see Moroccan fashion going?

Appendix B

Interview Guide – Shopkeeper (Knockoff)

- What is your role here?
- How long have you worked here?
- How often do you work?
- Who is the average person who comes into your store? (age, nationality, economic status)
Other people?
- What items do they like the best?
- How much do they buy?
- Do they know that what they are buying is not *vrai*?
 - Do most people, do all?
- Does that matter to them, or not?
- What do you think is the attraction of your goods over other goods?
- Do you think this is impacting the larger economy?

Appendix C

Interview Guide – Tailors and Seamstresses

- What is your job title?
- How long have you worked here?
- How often do you work?
- Who is your clientele?
- What do they generally want made?
 - is that changing?
- How has business changed for you over the past _ Years?
- Why do you think that is?
- How do you see these new products?
- Inlight of the fact that those items are often knock offs or from china, what does that say about authenticity?
 - Do you feel like you have a more real or authentic, *vrai* product?
- What direction do you see Moroccan fashion moving?

Appendix C

Interview Guide – Second Hand Shopkeeper (*Vrai*)

- What is your role here?
- How long have you worked here?
- How often do you work?
- Who is the average person who comes into your store? (age, nationality, economic status)
Other people?
- What items do they like the best?
- How much do they buy?
- Do they know that what they are buying is *vrai*”?
 - Do most people, do all?
- Does that matter to them, or not?
- Do the people who shop here even consider the alternative?
- What do you think is the attraction of your goods over other goods?
- Why do your customers seek out these luxury brands over other cheaper alternatives?
- Do you think this is impacting the larger economy?

Appendix D

Interview Guide - Crystal

- How old are you?
- Where are you from?
- What do you do, outside of school?
- What has enabled you to do this?
- In terms of fashion what is important to you in expressing yourself?
 - How does what you wear relate to your identity?
- How important is the authenticity of the clothes to expressing the authenticity of yourself?
- What do you want to express via your clothing?
- How do you think high couture brands operate in terms of conveying a message? And what is that you think they represent?
- Given that your ability to influence on the large scale is in part due to IG, what do you think Instagram and the internet is doing to spread imagery of fashion across traditional spheres of class?

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