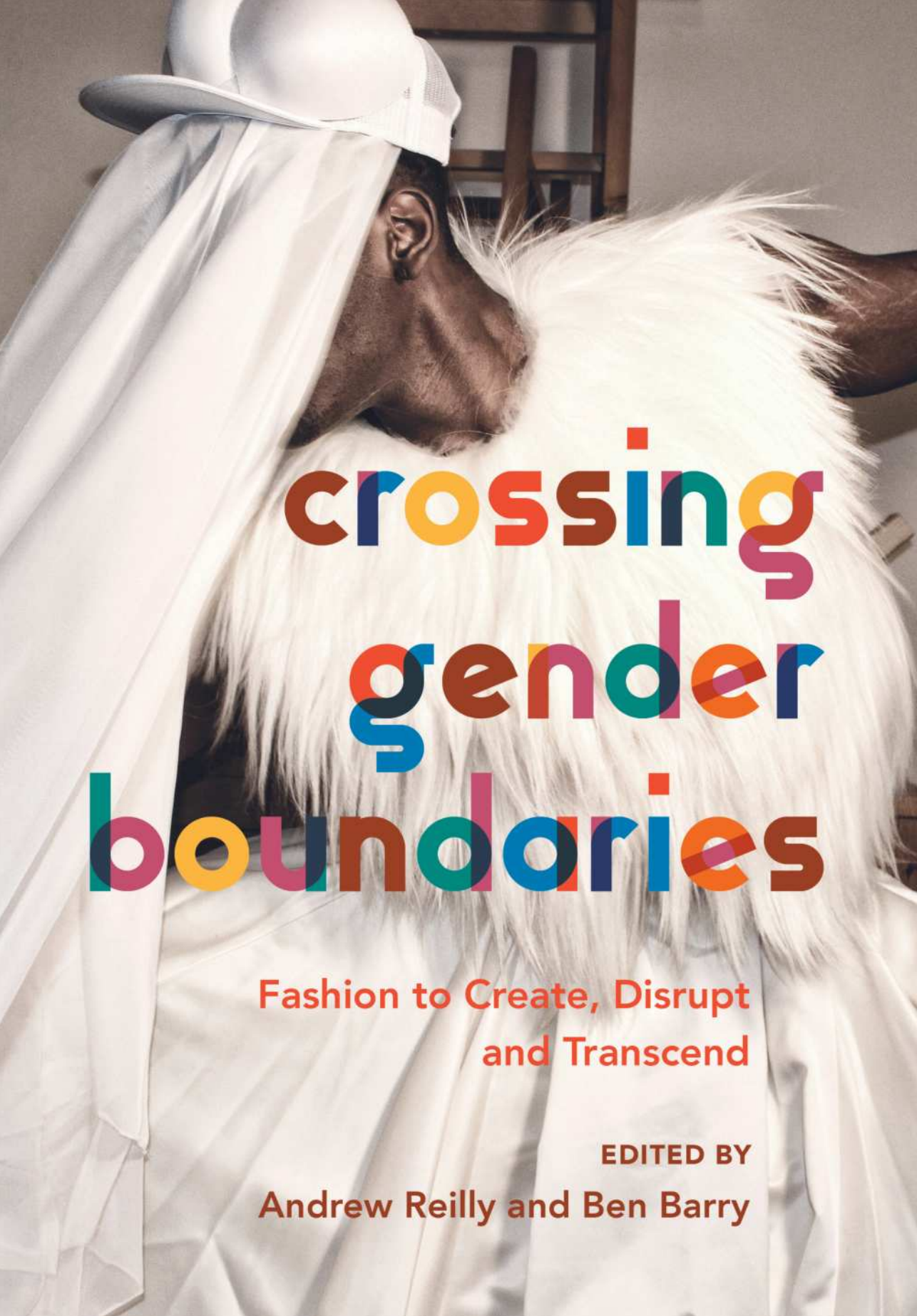

crossing gender boundaries

Fashion to Create, Disrupt and Transcend

EDITED BY

Andrew Reilly and Ben Barry

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Introduction

Gender and Dress

Sasha Fleischman, a teenager who identifies as agender (i.e. neither male nor female), was sleeping on a bus in Oakland, California when their skirt went up in flames. Another teenager on the bus had flicked a cigarette lighter at the hem of Sasha's skirt, while his friends watched and laughed. Sasha was left with second- and third-degree burns on their legs as a result of the fire (Slater 2015). This incident gained international media attention and brought to light an ongoing issue with dress and gender: violations of traditional, binary gender norms are often met with violence. Sasha's story is not unique; many people are assaulted because the clothing that they wear challenges the gender binary. In 2016, Kent Morgan, who identifies as straight and male, was attacked by men in New Zealand because he was wearing a pink shirt (Anon. 2016). Likewise, a man was kicked and hit in a Dallas airport in 2014 for wearing a pink shirt (Kirkpatrick 2014). Of course, situations like these are not new. When women began wearing pants in the late nineteenth century in North America and Europe, they were subject to harassment, assault and arrest (Cunningham 2011; Gibson 2013; Sears 2014) and more recently women in Africa have been attacked for wearing pants – a paradoxical consequence of European colonialism (Habani n.d.; Anon. 2012). The current spate of situations like these forces us to confront the ways in which gender and dress are mutually enacted, perceived and policed.

By the beginning of the twenty-first century in the West, the concept of gender was disrupting and transgressing the social and cultural boundaries that had previously bound it. Gender was being redefined and re-conceptualized beyond the western binary of male and female to include agender, non-gender, gender fluid, genderqueer, transgender and trans*.[1] Laws, policies and social customs were changed to reflect this new understanding of gender; however, there was a backlash to these changes that strove to maintain the boundaries that had regulated and defined gender as a binary concept. *Crossing Gender Boundaries* examines how these boundaries have maintained the gender dichotomy and the efforts to disrupt and transcend them by examining the link between dress and gender.

Although typically conflated in popular culture and by government institutions, sex and gender function as separate categories in western society and, as a result of colonialism, in the vast majority of the world. That said, the division between sex and gender has been challenged by academics and, at the time of writing, increasingly by society more broadly. Gender is the social and political understanding of bodies based on cultural norms, whereas sex *is assumed to be* a fleshy, corporal, biological bodily essence: people learn masculinity and femininity but they are assigned at birth as male or female. The ways in which gender is produced and perceived through a person's clothing create assumptions about their sex. Because we do not move about society naked, we are not gendering each other on the basis of genitals (what is still primarily believed to constitute a person's gender identity) but based on their clothing and appearance. *Crossing Gender Boundaries* focuses on the construction and de-construction of gender rather than sex itself but we also recognize that the two categories are mutually co-constructed and manifested through dress. Dress has been and continues to be used to categorize and identify people as men and women and to associate men with masculinity and women with femininity, although the ways that this is done has shifted across time and space (Entwistle 2015). However, we recognize that sex, like gender, is constructed by society and culture rather than fixed in biology (Fausto-Sterling 2012; Davis 2017). Sex has been socially constructed by the medical and scientific communities (Dreger 2000; Fausto-Sterling 2012). While the designation male or female is generally determined through ultrasound technology and assigned by a doctor months before birth, not all babies can easily be categorized into this binary. As many as two per cent of babies are born with genitalia or other characteristics that vary from the binary of male or female (Blackless et al. 2000). Physicians, however, decide and perform surgery to label them as male or female, such as removing their penis (Blackless et al. 2000).[2] Moreover, sex is more than genitalia and reproductive organs, and it includes a range of characteristics, including height, build and voice (Kaiser 2012). Sex is therefore far more complex and far less stable than the binary that has been constructed by western, colonial societies.

We ground *Crossing Gender Boundaries* in Judith Butler's conception of gender as a social construction. Butler's early essay (1988) and subsequent book *Gender Trouble* (1990) introduced the concept 'sex/gender' to demonstrate how sex and gender are co-constructed and how our sex/gender are produced and reproduced through the relationship between individual actions and societal norms. She argued that gender ideology frames how we understand the physical body (e.g. how physicians assign sex to children), and so for Butler, sex was gender all along. Butler theorized gender as performative, but misunderstandings of her intent and meaning resulted in her writing *Bodies That Matter* (1993) to clarify her propositions.

Butler argued that 'gender identity is a performative accomplishment compelled by social sanction and taboo' (Butler 1988: 520) and that 'gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being' (Butler 1990: 33). She argued that gender is performative: an act that constitutes itself and produces an effect. For example, each of us performs sex/gender in our actions – the way in which we dress, speak and behave – on a daily basis. These performances are repeated, and subsequently generate and maintain social norms about the ways in which men and women should dress, speak and behave that are often mistaken as natural. Butler argued that sex/gender is created within cultural and social expectations, histories and systems, and in the western world these systems are binary – male and female – and that masculinity and femininity have been attached to both, respectively. The acts that constitute sex/gender are controlled by social norms and social sanctions to restrict their transgression. So, although individuals have agency ('the possibility of contesting [their] reified status' [Butler 1988: 520]), they are bounded by greater forces and threats of reprimand or censure. Therefore, Butler argued, sex/gender is assumed to be natural when in fact it is a sociocultural product based on a series of repetitions that are imbued upon the body.

Butler was often misinterpreted in both scholarship and popular culture as stating that gender is simply a performance, and so she used the analogy of theatre to illustrate the difference between performance and performative. In theatre, actors take on a role and they understand that they are playing a role; with gender performativity, they may not realize that they are playing a role and think it is natural. So, gender is a performance that people may not realize is a performance. It is the larger sociocultural system that has ascribed femininity to women and masculinity to men. In addition, Butler (1993) argued that the binary gender system is reproduced through imitation that appears natural; however, transgressions, exaggerations and violations, such as drag, she and others noted (e.g. Friedman and Jones 2011; Horowitz 2013; Taylor 2005), can destabilize this power structure by exposing the claim that gender is a natural category, although such transgressions can be met with social sanctions and resistance. 'The drag show and stylistic impersonation of men and women via performances act as forms of male and female mimicry and parody, or camp, in order to challenge and destabilize gender practices that prioritize mainstream hegemonic masculinity' (Geczy and Karaminas 2013: 113). Drag is not the exclusive domain of gay men; cisgender[3] women, transwomen, straight men, non-binary people and gender fluid people have engaged in female drag by exaggerating feminine attributes. Singer k.d. lang, who is known for masculine presentation and dress, donned hyper-feminine dress during a PETA[4] event in the late 1990s and called herself 'Miss Chantelaine' for

a fundraiser for the animal rights organization, and transwomen Gia Gunn and Peppermint from *RuPaul's Drag Race* regularly perform in drag. Similarly, drag kings exaggerate masculine attributes in performance, although it is a more recent phenomenon compared to drag queens (Halberstam 1998). Other forms of gender transgression include Jack Halberstam's (1998) concept of female masculinity. Halberstam argued that dominant white heterosexual masculinity subordinates alternative performances and practices of masculinities, and identified three categories of female masculinity: male impersonators, drag kings and drag butches. Male impersonators seek to pass as men, drag kings perform a parody of masculinity and drag butches are masculine lesbian women who adorn masculine dress as political and social statements.

In his later work, Halberstam (2018) engaged with contemporary discussions about the trans* experience and argued that gender theory should not focus on the Eurocentric idea of male or female, but instead should encompass a variety of genders. He noted that second-wave feminism focused on the gender binary with an emphasis on womanhood, and subsequently genitalia, and therefore held no room for people who identify as trans*, as well as those who were not middle-to-upper class, white and assigned female-at-birth. Halberstam intentionally used the asterisk in the word trans* to contest any fixed classification of gender:

> The asterisk modifies the meaning of transitivity by refusing to situate transition in relation to a destination, a final form, a specific shape, or an established configuration of desire and identity. The asterisk holds off the certainty of diagnosis; it keeps at bay any sense of knowing in advance what the meaning of this or that gender-variant form may be, and perhaps most importantly, it makes trans* people the authors of their own categorizations.
>
> (2018: 4)

In this way, Halberstam reconfigured discussions of gender beyond the binary to focus on qualities other than the physical human body to understand gender and provide trans* individuals their own agency. Halberstam's use of the asterisk was not his invention, but he instead drew from online trans* community spaces in which the term began regularly appearing around 2010 (Tompkins 2014). According to blogger Sevan Bussell (2012; as cited in Tompkins 2014), '[t]he asterisk came from internet search structure. When you add an asterisk to the end of a search term, you're telling your computer to search for whatever you typed, plus any characters after'. In this way, trans* is intended to include the widest possible range of gender variation. Likewise, historian Susan Stryker described trans* as the 'movement across a socially imposed boundary away from an unchosen starting place – rather than any particular destination or mode of transition' (Stryker 2008: 1).

Trans* studies scholars and activists have therefore conceptualized trans* as a term that sees gender as an individual journey and an identity with a panorama of meanings that are only understood and defined by the person who embodies it.

Trans* feminist scholarship served to remedy some of the disconnects in gender theory by focusing on femininity and including people who identify as trans, queer, intersex and non-transpeople (Koyama 2003; Serano 2007). Emi Koyama (2003) wrote that transwomen traditionally had to 'prove' their womanhood by conforming to the gender binary and Julia Serano (2007) argued that not all femininity should be considered performative because it implies transwomen are simply performing an act. Halberstam (2018) cited Claudia Sofia Garriga-López's work on trans* feminist activism in Ecuador as evidence that trans* feminism outside the United States and Europe extends beyond gender identity recognition to liberation against patriarchal systems. Garriga-López described a trans* feminist activist group that tried to pass a bill to allow all people to list their gender and not their birth sex on their identification papers. Trans* feminist activists therefore wanted to provide everyone – regardless of whether they were trans* – with the opportunity to self-identify beyond the sex binary (in addition to protecting trans* people from the visibility that they faced when they tried to change their sex on government identification). Halberstam (2018) also argued that gender scholars should embrace new understandings of embodiment and identity that move away from bodies as divided into the categories of male and female. He cited 'the haptic', 'the articulated' and 'the somatic' as frameworks that provide 'a different language for embodiment that draws from human-animal relations, uncertain experiences of embodiment, and haphazard, profuse, and viral models of embodiment' (2018: 127). Similarly, Heath Fogg Davis argued that 'all of us would be better off in a society with dramatically fewer sex-classification policies' (2017: 17). Davis explained how sex classification binaries are used as the basis of many administrative policies and social practices – from driver's licenses and passports to sex-segregated restrooms and sports teams. These forms of sex-segregation not only force trans* and gender non-conforming people to assimilate into the binary but also create 'sex-identity discrimination' for all people, regardless of their gender identity, whose appearance contrasts observers' beliefs about how masculine and feminine people should look and how they should be sorted into sex identity categories. Rather than accommodate trans* people into existing systems of sex classification, Davis argued that society should eliminate the use of sex-classification itself because it is based on a person's genitalia and the diverse ways in which people identify and experience gender is more complex and fluid than the binary encompasses. For example, Davis explained how sex-segregated restrooms not only disadvantage women and trans* people but also men. While some transmen can urinate standing up, some cannot and, moreover

some cisgender men cannot pee standing up due to health reasons, anxiety, physical disabilities and/or age. In this way, not only are men of various gender identities discriminated against through sex-segregated restrooms but this sex-segregation does not neatly reflect any biological 'truths' about men that make them distinct from women. As such, the western binary makes unnecessary (and untrue) divisions between men and women and fails to reflect the diverse palette of embodying and understanding gender.

These issues of gender have played out in dress and its relationship with the fashion system. Fashion scholars understand dress as the totality of body modifications and supplements that we wear (Eicher and Roach 1992) and the everyday activity of clothing the body, whereas fashion is the system that designs, markets and retails clothes and shapes aesthetic ideals and ideas about them (Entwistle 2015). After all, dress is one of the most salient ways in which we express, embody and enact our own gender, as well as make assumptions about the genders of others (Entwistle 2015). For Entwistle, dress is a 'situated bodily practice' because clothing adorns the body but its gendered (and other) meanings are dependent upon and also shift across social context, time and space (2015: xi). For example, the classic example of pink- and blue-colored clothing for girls and boys, and the early symbolism of the reverse – blue for girls, pink for boys (Garber 1992) – highlights the manufactured nature of gender and subsequently of its signifiers. Originally, blue was considered dainty and pink was considered strong because it was a variation of red, but a marketing decision reversed these conceptions, indicating the arbitrary assignment of aesthetics (such as color) to clothing. While decisions such as the assignment of the colors blue and pink to boys and girls create the binary, they also provide spaces for consumers to play with their gender presentation by selecting and styling clothes in ways that question and challenge the binary. Suthrell argued that clothing allows us to individually shape and shift how we perform gender,

> Clothing is unusual in artefactual terms because it allows us to play – temporarily or permanently – with identity and self-image. It can fix us into the gendered space we occupy on a daily basis as we get dressed or […] it can function as the means by which gender is slipped on and off.
>
> (2004: 2–3)

Certain clothing styles, colors, fabrics and embellishments have been historically, culturally and socially demarcated for men versus women and respectively deemed masculine or feminine (Entwistle 2015). Entwistle (2015) argued that clothes embellish the body and add masculinity or femininity to it but notes that what is deemed masculine or feminine is a product of culture. Women have long been associated

with the production and consumption of clothing (in addition to being valued for their body and appearance) and that link has solidified the 'natural' conclusion that clothing and fashion is feminine; Entwistle observed that 'when male peacocks were criticized it was often on the grounds of "effeminacy" for showing too great an interest in fashion' (2015: 150–51). Her analysis of cross-dressing – that gender presentation through dress can be put on and removed at will – echoed Butler's (1990) notion that gender is performative and not 'natural'. Entwistle also astutely noted the ways that gender and clothing intersected with and shifted according to sexual orientation, class, profession and social context. However, despite the fluctuating meanings of gender and dress, she argued that the gender binaries remain powerfully stable,

> while women enjoy wider freedom in terms of dress today and men, since the 1980s, are able to indulge in previously 'feminine' pleasures such as fashion, contemporary society remains preoccupied with sexual difference, defining particular styles of body and dress for men and women. The boundaries of gender are tangibly still in place.
>
> (2015: 179)

Although Entwistle noted some deviations through the celebrity examples of Boy George and Jean-Paul Gaultier, she concluded that the fashion system, as well as our experiences of dressing in everyday life, is still strictly controlled by the gender binary. Yet, in the second decade of the twenty-first century, we have seen a growing consumer interest in unisex, androgynous and gender-neutral clothing and clothing styles that challenge the gender binary as well as a response from the fashion industry itself in their offerings of unisex and gender-neutral clothes.

Current Context

Social, political and legal institutions have responded to the issues surrounding changing attitudes about gender and its binary boundaries. Trans* and gender-nonconforming individuals have gained prominence in popular culture, like activist and actor Chaz Bono, athlete and reality television show star Caitlyn Jenner, actress Laverne Cox, film producers Lana and Lilly Wachowski and writers/artists Vivek Shraya and Alok Menon. Social movements like Free the Nipple and Januhairy have challenged conventional gender norms about nudity, body hair and gender presentation. Television shows like *RuPaul's Drag Race, Pose, Sense8, My House* and *Transparent* have featured contestants or characters who challenge the gender binary. On the political and legal front, some decisions

have been positive for gender identity and expression (although governments continue to conflate gender with sex) including the United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's 2012 ruling that the Civil Rights Act makes it illegal for employers to discriminate based on gender identity, the 2014 Australian High Court decision to recognize a third gender, the 2017 decision by the Canadian Parliament to add gender identity and expression to the Canadian Human Rights Act, Canada's 2017 legislation to allow people to use restroom facilities that align with their gender identity, Germany's 2018 decision to recognize third gender on birth certificates and the 2019 ruling to include a third gender and gender-neutral categories for drivers licenses and birth certificates in California and New York City, respectively. As of this writing, a spate of countries also allow third gender or gender-neutral options on passports and government identification cards, including Argentina, Bangladesh, Canada, Denmark, India, Malta, Nepal, the Netherlands, New Zealand and Pakistan. Other decisions, however, have striven to maintain the male/female binary, like President Trump's 2019 order to ban trans* people from the United States military, President Trump's efforts to reverse trans* protections under Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972, North Carolina's 'bathroom bill' where the state limited access to restrooms based on sex and the Ontario Government's proposed elimination of gender identity and expression from its high school sex education curriculum.

In response to the contemporary acknowledgment of diverse gender identities beyond the sex binary in the West, designers, merchandisers and retailers have addressed the new market and offer clothes marketed as unisex and androgynous. They have stripped gender signifiers from clothes and offer unisex or gender-neutral options in the form of overalls, T-shirts and jeans, in solid, dark colors. Others have eliminated gender designations from their clothing and offer a variety of clothes that blend, combine and juxtapose masculine and feminine elements. British retailer Selfridges removed department designations by gender and began selling genderless clothing in 2015. A representative for Selfridges remarked,

> We want to take our customers on a journey where they can shop and dress without limitations or stereotypes. A space where clothing is no longer imbued with directive gender values, enabling fashion to exist as a purer expression of the 'self'.
>
> (cited in Brekke 2015)

In New York City, The Phluid Project is gender-free retail store that opened in 2018 (Kuga 2018). Founder Rob Smith remarked that the name is 'Phluid' because 'everything is fluid in life, in this space, specifically gender'. He further explained, 'The idea of looking at gender is fluid […] "PH" is because of balance, especially

between masculine and feminine' (cited in Kuga 2018). Other fashion companies have followed with genderless or gender-blending/bending clothes: Zara, H&M, Guess, ASOS, 69 Worldwide, One DNA, Chromat, Rad Hourani, Raf Simons, Paul Smith and many more. The fact that these companies represent low to high end, streetwear to high fashion aesthetics, is evidence that this is a wide-reaching phenomenon.

Reactions have been mixed, with some media and customers enthusiastic about the idea of confronting gender stereotypes, whereas others are angry and dismayed. They have argued that genderless clothes will confuse people, or that the trend for genderless clothing is just a retail fad that is playing politics and exploiting political correctness; others have contended that unisex and genderless clothing is nothing more than menswear rebranded and is not progressive enough (i.e. genderless clothing conforms to understated masculine aesthetics rather than embracing femininity and flamboyance, and these offerings are only available for thin and non-disabled bodies; in this way, genderless clothing reinforces sexism, misogyny and ableism) (Adamczyk 2016; Allen 2017; Jones 2017; Rizzo 2016; Sciacca 2016; Thomas 2016). British retailer John Lewis & Co. announced in 2017 that their children's clothes will now be genderless to reduce gender stereotypes; singer Celine Dion launched a gender-neutral clothing line Célinununu for children in 2018. This change is supported by gender equality advocacy groups like Let Clothes Be Clothes. Let Clothes Be Clothes is comprised of parents who want to see changes in how retailers market and sell clothes. They note that current creative and business practices reinforce gender stereotypes for boys and girls:

> We want a high street that is responsible in how it designs and markets for our children. That means no more treating girls and boys as though they don't have the same needs and interests. Provide a choice of style and themes, and make that choice as wide as possible.
>
> (Let Clothes Be Clothes n.d.)

However, other people have a different opinion of this movement. Chris McGovern, in response to the change in children's clothes at John Lewis & Co., speaking on behalf of the Campaign for Real Education, remarked, '[t]here is a dangerous social phenomenon occurring of gender identity theft, which says there is no difference between boys and girls when of course there is' (Newbold 2017: n.pag.). This harmful discourse is echoed by other social conservative and alt-right groups who remain committed to the gender binary.

Today the gender binary is regularly disrupted in fashion, popular culture and everyday life. Designers are merging their men's and women's runway shows; including male models in womenswear advertising and female models in menswear advertising; removing the demarcation of men and women's sections from their

retail spaces; and increasingly starting completely non-binary lines that are devoid of any sex or gender classifications and labelling. Rappers Young Thug and Angel Haze and actors Ruby Rose, Billy Porter and Tilda Swinton are just a few of the public figures who challenge the gender binary through their dressed performances and red carpet looks. And in everyday life, people regularly upload and circulate images that challenge gender binaries through dress on social media with hashtags including #agender, #nonbinary, #genderqueer and #genderfluid. All of these efforts question gender as a binary and reveal the potential of fashion and clothing to reimagine how we understand gender in the twenty-first century. However, even in the fashion industry, gatekeepers may hesitate confronting gender stereotypes. In 2014, Canadian designer Mic. Carter (his 2014 campaign image is featured on the cover of this book) accused the organizers of Toronto Men's Fashion Week of cutting his collection from the runway schedule for being too feminine. Carter remarked, '[t]hey thought it was all extremely feminine and that it would be really embarrassing. They said they were concerned about the headlines saying that womenswear is being shown at men's fashion week' (Slaughter 2014). As a result of a public backlash from both media and consumers, the organizers of Toronto Men's Fashion Week reversed their decision and allowed Carter to show his collection.

Of course, gender is not a distinct category and people's experiences of gender are teased together with class, race, ethnicity, age, body shape, sexuality, religious affiliation and social structure. This understanding is known as intersectionality. Developed by Black feminists, it posits that people's gender identities are inflected by their various other social identities – such as race, class and body shape – which overlap through context-specific and structural privileges and oppressions and influence their everyday experiences (Crenshaw 1991; Schilt 2006; Collins and Bilge 2016). The intersections reveal different ways in which people enact and experience gender. For example, Ibrahim Kamara, a stylist from Sierra Leone living in London, in his exhibition *2026* envisioned African masculinity in the future and included men in skirts, kimonos, lacy body suits, costume jewelry, gloves, low-riding jeans and knee-high athletic socks; in other words, a combination of menswear and womenswear repurposed as a new expression of Black masculinity. Kamara's work disavows colonial gendered and racial stereotypes about Africa:

> The media covers one aspect of black masculinity and sexuality and that is typically the African American experience […]. It tends to be forgotten that black British people are different from African Americans, and African Americans are different from Africans from Africa, and Africans are different from Latin Africans. While we all share a similar story as part of the same diaspora, we are the not the same.
>
> (Kamara 2016)

Purpose and Organization of Crossing Gender Boundaries

Crossing Gender Boundaries builds on the concepts of gender through three sections – how dress can create, disrupt and transcend the gender binary – that illustrate the complex and contradictory relationship between dress and gender. These sections illuminate Butler (1990, 1993), Halberstam (2018) and Davis (2017) by revealing the diversity of gender – including a variety of masculinities and femininities, as well as cisgender, genderqueer and trans*. These sections demonstrate that the performative nature of gender is bounded by culture and social norms, but that people do hold agency in how they adorn their bodies and articulate gender through dress. *Crossing Gender Boundaries* therefore illuminates how the fashion system divides people into a sex binary of men and women and creates assumptions about their gender identities, but it also reveals that the sex classification system fails to reflect the lived realities of how people understand their gender identities – it is far more complex than any binary classification. Through well-known topics and newer concepts, *Crossing Gender Boundaries* demonstrates how Butler and Halberstam's theories come to life in the social world through the lenses of dress and fashion. While Butler and Halberstam reference dress to help explain their theories, they do not focus on it in their analysis. The chapters in this volume therefore reveal the significant role of dress and fashion in creating, destabilizing and transcending a binary gender system. Our book also adds a diversity of case studies to demonstrate Entwistle's framework of how dress constructs gender as a 'situated bodily practice'. Whereas Entwistle only discussed gender in one chapter of *The Fashioned Body*, we bring together a panorama of historical and contemporary examples in which people across races, ethnicities, social classes and other social identities actively maintain or cross gender boundaries through dress and fashion. Chapter authors utilize a variety of methods to examine gender, including phenomenology, visual and object-based analysis, surveys and interviews, and cover time periods of the sixteenth century, mid-to-late nineteenth century and the current era, and countries including Britain, Canada, Japan, Korea and the United States. The collection of chapters both highlights and honors diverse understandings and expressions of gender. Because dress is the most visible tool to validate the male/female and masculine/feminine binary, we believe it is also the perfect tool to disrupt and transform it.

Crossing Gender Boundaries also responds to the changing contemporary context of gender that, at the time of writing, celebrates diverse gender expressions through dress in popular culture and offers legal protections for people who express gender on their own terms. As the image on the cover illustrates, the meaning of dress is fluid – influenced by the unique assemblage of garments and accessories, the nuances of styling and arrangement, and the body donning the

look. The cover features an image from Canadian designer Mic. Carter's label L'uomo Strano, Italian for 'strange man'. Carter aims to challenge preconceived notions of gender and race through his collections and inspire dialogue about the ways in which fashion can create new gendered understandings and embodiments. According to Carter, '[f]ashion's ability to confront and create dialogue with our current realities, and its ability to suggest possible paths to futurity and resolution is – I believe – design's true power' (Fashion Savage 2015). Like Carter, *Crossing Gender Boundaries* exposes the ways in which dress has created cultural systems of gender and how a variety of clothing objects and media can reimagine gender altogether. Taken together, the collection of chapters in this book inspires us to question *why* clothing needs to be divided into a binary because the ways in which gender has been constructed through dress has crossed sex and gender boundaries throughout history and across spaces. These chapters not only demonstrate the damage done by classifying clothing according to a binary but also introduce the possibilities of a world in which clothing is free of categorizations, at least of the binary system.

In the first section, Creating Gender, you will find five chapters that remind us how clothing has been, and continues to be, used to create and maintain the binary gender system. The section begins with discussion of pants in Kimberly Wahl's 'Bifurcated Garments and Divided Skirts: Redrawing the Boundaries of the Sartorial Feminine in Late Victorian Culture'. Wahl details the dress reform movement in 1880s Britain and the discourse that challenged the conventional thinking that gender was inborn and immutable, and that transgressions in the form of dress were immoral. She notes different iterations in the waves of dress reform: first, 'bifurcated skirts' were seen as violating gender boundaries and Victorian sense of good taste, but later they were considered modernist and avant-garde. Alanna McKnight offers an insightful look at the use of the corset in '"Hard and Straight": The Creation of Nineteenth-Century Masculinity through Corsetry'. McKnight notes how the corset, while traditionally a feminine garment, was useful in creating a trim, masculine physique; and in addition, psychologically and symbolically speaking, wearing a corset made the man into the most-masculine object of all: the phallus. Jory M. Catalpa and Jenifer K. McGuire examine how gender is created and maintained in 'Mirror Epiphany: Transpersons' Use of Dress to Create and Sustain Their Affirmed Gender Identities'. They highlight the ritualistic nature of dressing and the performativity of clothes, as transpeople gain cis-passing privilege. They interviewed over 90 individuals who identify as trans* to learn about the 'mirror epiphany', or the moment when a transperson sees their imagined version of themselves reflected in the mirror for the first time (Serano 2007). The last chapter of this section provides a link between this section and the next section on Disrupting

Gender. Elizabeth Semmelhack reminds us that the high-heeled shoe, originally from the East, became a staple of the European masculine wardrobe in the sixteenth century in 'Withering Heights: High Heels and Hegemonic Masculinity'. Although initially men's and women' shoes were alike, gender differences began to emerge in the seventeenth century and, by the nineteenth century, the heel became the purview of women due to political factors that reconfigured men's wardrobes to exclude excess and embrace utility.

In the second section, Disrupting Gender, we offer five chapters that discuss how clothing can contest binary gender expectations. Toby Slade offers an analysis of the concept of *kawaii* ('cute', 'adorable') in 'Cute Men in Contemporary Japan'. Slade recounts the origins and significance of the aesthetic craze and how today it upends traditional Japanese gender expectations, and notes that *kawaii* is instrumental in blurring gender boundaries: 'Whereas *kawaii* laughs at attempts at seriousness and disrupts the authority of such classification in the realms of the social and of art, it also does the same to gender'. Kelly L. Reddy-Best highlights the connection between queer politics and style in 'The Politicization of Fashion in Virtual Queer Spaces: A Case Study of Saint Harridan, One of the Pioneering Queer Fashion Brands in the Twenty-First Century'. Saint Harridan designed for women, transmen and queer individuals, and challenged hegemonic ideas of beauty by offering aesthetically masculine designs and maintaining virtual spaces where consumers could comment on style and new offerings. Kelly L. Reddy-Best's work highlights the intersection between virtual spaces, cultural practices, politics, capitalism, oppression and LGBTQ+ identity. She notes, '[t]he context of these queer spaces, and their absence in mainstream media and visibility are of exceptional importance given the continuance of hate crimes and violence against LGBTQ+ communities in safe spaces'. In '"She Was Not a Girly Girl": Athletic Apparel, Female Masculinity and the Endorsement of Difference', Christina Bush critiques Nike's partnerships with professional basketball players Brittney Griner and Sheryl Swoopes, whose partnerships challenged gender notions and highlighted female masculinity. Nike's marketing campaign featured Griner in menswear, and Swoopes was the first female athlete to have a signature athletic shoe with Nike. Bush writes, 'interplay between fashion, the body and gender, as evinced by women's athletic apparel endorsements, in this case, does not necessarily disrupt gender but rearranges the terms by which it maintains its legibility'. In our chapter, we use four case studies to explore why men in everyday life are incorporating garments designed for both men and women in 'Gender More: An Intersectional Perspective on Men's Transgression of the Gender Dress Binary'. Our work introduces the concept 'gender more' as a practice of combining all gendered signifiers into one's outfit in order to expand one's gender expression. And lastly, Katie Baker Jones and Jean Parsons note a

dilemma in historic costume collections in 'In-vest-ed Meaning: Gender Ambiguity in Costume Collections'. When the Missouri Historic Costume and Textile Collection received a donation of a man's Jean Paul Gaultier vest – owned and worn by a woman – it raised questions of how to catalogue and record gender-ambiguous garments. They analyze the garment itself as well as the context of the retail environment in which it was sold and the brand. The authors note the challenges of clothing collections' gendered classification systems and the opportunities to rework the status quo.

In section three, Transcending Gender, we offer five chapters that examine unisex and genderless clothing. Rebecca Halliday's 'The Politics of the Neutral: Rad Hourani's Unisex Vision' discusses the designer's approach to clothing construction sans gender by employing a modernist sensibility to form and function. Drawing from Rad Hourani's collections, photography exhibition and runway shows, she notes, 'Hourani's oeuvre renders a forceful assertion that gender as a category must be nullified: his situation within haute couture however illuminates a historical cultural politics of gender that fashion has continually been forced to address'. Valerie Rangel muses on the classic white dress shirt in 'Shirting Identities: Negotiating Gender Identity through the Dress Shirt' and articulates the irony of unisex clothing: 'the success of unisex clothing in bridging the gender divide hinges on social gender norms that govern the individual performance of gender'. In 'Why Don't I Wear Skirts? Politics, Economy, Society and History', Jung Ha-Brookshire shares her own account of negotiating masculinity and femininity in her personal and professional lives. She identifies three stages in her life where cultural, social, economic and geo-political pressures shifted how she presented herself to align with gendered expectations for a young woman. In 'Critical Mascara: On Fabulousness, Creativity and the End of Gender,' madison moore discusses how queer and trans* people of color use the practice of fabulousness to create a space for themselves in the world on their own terms through dress. He argues that fabulousness provides 'a sense of agency and urgency to queer, gender non-binary, and transfeminine people of color'. And lastly, Hazel Clark and Leena-Maija Rossi note in 'Clothes (Un)make the (Wo)man – Ungendering Fashion (2015)?' that 2015 was a watershed year when trans* identity and clothing became part of the cultural milieu in the West. As celebrities, models, actors, athletes and role-models publically identified themselves as trans*, the fashion industry embraced trans*, genderless or unisex clothing styles. They note that gender was not being 'undone' but that rather a multiplicity of aesthetics to express gender were introduced in the form of unisex clothing, feminine styles for men, masculine styles for women and conceptual 'alternative' genderless designs.

Conclusion

This book aims to engage the reader in thinking about how dress both constricts and liberates gender expression. Through different examples, we highlight how dress and gender are products of each other. As the western concept of gender is being challenged, redefined and reformulated, it is critical to examine our assumptions and histories in order to create the future of gender. This book concentrates on gender and dress issues in westernized contexts and highlights a multiplicity of ways in which gender is created, disrupted and transcended using clothing, accessories, personal style and fashion. This volume, however, does not expand upon the ways dress is used to conform to, disrupt or transcend how gender is performed in non-westernized contexts. Many examples of gender conformity, disruption and transcendence are enacted in non-western contexts, and future researchers can expand upon the themes presented in this book in order to provide comparisons and bring attention to other cultural understandings and social experiences of gender expression, gender identity and gender presentation. We also call on more scholarship on fashion, dress and style beyond gender binaries and gender altogether; specifically, we encourage scholars to explore trans* and non-binary people and clothing as well as understandings of gender and dress that flourished in Indigenous cultures before colonization and that are being reclaimed through decolonization and resurgence. This research should centre intersectionality and the body by studying how gender and dress are inflected by embodied differences, including fat, disability and/or aging. Finally, the current fashion system not only creates ideas and ideals about gender but structures the very binary system of men/women through its design, marketing and retail of clothing. We urge researchers to engage fashion practitioners and explore how fashion can be re-designed to create and sell clothing based on systems that are not defined by gender binaries and subsequently by hierarchies and exclusion; instead, the clothes designed and marketed by fashion would, to quote Butler, 'open up the field of possibility [for gender and fashion] without dictating which kinds of possibilities ought to be realized' (Butler 1999: viii). As *Crossing Gender Boundaries* demonstrates, classifying dress into a binary does not reflect how people, regardless of their gender identity, understand and embody the diversity of gender. For it is a new system of fashion that is needed to *systemically* transcend the gender binary and support the practices of designers and people who, throughout history and across spaces, have expressed gender on their own terms. Such a system is not only possible but, after reading the chapters in this book, it has always existed as a result of the creatives and wearers who have bravely gone beyond the gender dress regime that is created and enforced by the fashion industry and society.

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NOTES

1. The use of an asterisk after the word trans* was intended to be an inclusive way to indicate that not all trans* people transition from male-to-female or female-to-male or identify within the binary. The asterisk was added to move beyond the binary and open up trans* to a diverse range of gender identities and expressions, whereas transgender was argued to be an outdated term because it upheld the binary and applied it to transmen and transwomen (Killermann 2012). Trans* has been critiqued because the term has been used to create hierarchies within transgender communities based on ethnicity and, ironically, gender identity (Nicolazzo 2017). However, Tompkins emphasizes that trans* is intended to be inclusive of both binary and non-binary gender identities: '*Trans** is … meant to include not only identities such as transgender, transsexual, trans man and trans woman that are prefixed by trans – but also identities such as genderqueer, neutrios, intersex, agender, two-spirit, cross-dressed, and gender fluid' (2014: 27, original emphasis). Tompkins suggests that the asterisk pushes the meaning of trans* beyond the trans- prefix because it 'indicates a deeper meaning than the prefix itself might suggest' and 'may act as a footnote indicator, implying a complication or suggesting further investigation' (2014: 27). Moreover, Z. Nicolazzo asserts that trans* is a valuable term to continue to use today because 'we are not "beyond the transgender-as-transition trope"' (2017: n.pag.) and society is still structured around a gender binary. We, like Tompkins and Nicolazzo, use trans* with its original intent – to indicate a multiplicity of gender identities, including those trans* people who identify within the binary as well as those who do not.
2. We also recognize that parents have a choice in this decision.
3. Terminology used to describe the identity of person whose sex-assigned-at-birth aligns with their gender identity.
4. People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals.

PART 1

Creating Gender

Bifurcated Garments and Divided Skirts: Redrawing the Boundaries of the Sartorial Feminine in Late Victorian Culture

Kimberly Wahl

After centuries of women wearing skirts in western culture, how did trousers for women rise in popularity at the dawn of the twentieth century? The modernist framing of fashion history, while acknowledging nineteenth-century dress reform and feminism as two cultural precursors, also tends to present a narrative of radical rupture at the turn of the century – positioning 'modern' fashion as both functionally and ideologically distinct from Victorian sartorial practices. This chapter traces the complexities and contingencies of this narrative, arguing that although dress reform and shifting gender roles were central in the gradual acceptance of pants as appropriate clothing for women, it was in fact artistic discourses and the framing of avant-garde 'design' in early twentieth-century print culture that would support and underpin this process in important ways.

During the 1880s in Britain, two types of dress reform for women rose in popularity: Aesthetic dress and Rational/hygienic clothing. Both were positioned as viable alternatives to mainstream fashionable dress, however Aesthetic dress, though creative and eccentric, never included the divided skirt for women, and was rarely viewed as a direct challenge to hegemonic norms of gender in Victorian fashion culture. In contrast, Rational or 'hygienic' dress, with its roots in the bloomer era, was widely perceived as ugly, 'mannish' and, in the case of 'bifurcated garments' (divided skirts), it was seen as transgressing the codes of feminine dress. Women who were early adopters of bifurcated garments were consistently ridiculed and charged with being 'unwomanly' – such was the strength of the skirt as a clear signifier of female decorum in late nineteenth-century British culture. Not until the early twentieth century would trousers be deemed appropriate female attire and in some circles, as both fashionable *and* artistic. Mythologies of modernism present a picture of radical social change, as

the crinoline, bustle and eventually corset were all shed in favor of the streamlined styles of the 1920s. In truth, however, the transition to 'modern' dress was more gradual, complicated by a range of embodied relations in the shifting politics of gender identity. In addition, rather than a revolution based on challenges to gender norms, it would be the visual discourses extending out of the art world that would play a significant role in the gradual acceptance of the 'divided skirt' as just one of many design elements that might be incorporated into a lexicon of emerging styles in the first decades of the twentieth century.

Rigid sartorial practices in nineteenth-century Victorian culture were based on an understanding of gender as an inborn trait that was both inherent and fixed (Crane 1999: 253). However, an emerging interest in dress reform began to challenge the boundaries of what was deemed appropriate dress for men and women. The most notable reforms came through the efforts of four groups: the Rational Dress Society and the closely related Rational Dress Association, the Rational Dress League and the Healthy and Artistic Dress Union (Cunningham 2003: 66). While most of these emphasized comfort and utility, looking to the future of dress as a place of experimentation and innovation, the Healthy and Artistic Dress Union maintained a largely historicist and romantic approach, advocating the simpler styles worn during the late Middle Ages and early medieval period (Wahl 2013: 14–16). Crucially, although all of these groups offered critiques of mainstream culture, the first clearly organized attempt to popularize the 'divided' skirt for women in Britain came primarily through the efforts of the Rational Dress Society during the 1880s.

With Viscountess Harberton as president (Figure 1), and E. M. King as secretary, it was generally agreed that the Rational Dress Society would make an impression in fashionable circles, raising standards of taste, comfort and artistic excellence in dress. In 1882, a journalist commented on the popularity of its inaugural exhibition: 'The overflowing attendance at the recent exhibition, where there was comparatively little to see, proves that the female mind is deeply exercised by the question, and very ready for practical hints about reform' (Anon. 1882: 338). Both Harberton and King had published articles on the need for reform in women's clothing, and were well known in design-reform circles (Cunningham 2003: 67). Particularly in the formative years of its development, the society promoted ideals of naturalism, beauty and health, and were anxious to establish new modes of Rational dress as both feminine *and* practical. In its *Gazette*, members admitted that while there was a potent charm in the novelties of each season, they ultimately condemned 'a taste which allows fashion to vibrate between extremes which are neither restrained on the one hand by regard for the natural proportions of the human form, nor on the other by reverence for the natural needs and functions of the body'. Further, the society argued that

FIGURE 1: Viscountess Harberton in a bifurcated skirt, *c.* 1890. Wilson and Taylor 1989: 58.

beauty in dress was essential and that differences of 'colour, of texture, and of material, are a source of pleasure to the eye, and if these are discarded by women as they have already been discarded by men, much that is picturesque in modern life will disappear' (Anon. 1888: 2).

Despite the society's professed commitment to beauty and femininity, the adoption of the divided skirt by some members was perceived by people outside reform circles as both masculine *and* inappropriate. Viscountess Harberton faced ridicule and was attacked by critics in the press for her 'unfeminine' conduct and appearance: in 1898, she was denied entry to the coffee room of the Hautboy Hotel, despite being a member of the Cyclists' Touring Club that had an agreement guaranteeing hospitality at the hotel. The very public court case that followed was won by the owner of the Hautboy Hotel, who argued that outlandish or inappropriate dress would harm her business and reputation. However, in the pages of the *Viscountess Cyclist*, and more broadly in the reform literature, sympathies were clearly with Viscountess Harberton who was said to have 'won the argument' (Wilson and Taylor 1989: 57). Thus, while

Rational forms of dress eventually gained some support for women wearing trousers in the form of cycling costumes, the practice was continuously regulated with regard to context, fit and purpose, with only certain environments deemed suitable for the violation of accepted feminine dress practices. Further, while Rational dress and early models of Aesthetic dress shared some values, at the close of the nineteenth century there were growing tensions among the various dress reform factions. Ultimately, the terms of femininity were contested, fought over and redefined through a process of sartorial critique and change, focusing on the firmly entrenched and hegemonic signifier of the 'skirt' itself as an unchangeable and normative indicator of the female gender in Victorian culture.

One of the earliest arguments put forth by Rational dress reformers was that trousers for women increased functionality and mobility. Commenting on a gown exhibited by the Rational Dress Society in 1882, a critic noted '[i]ts chief feature is the divided skirt, which, its advocates say, does away with the inconveniences attached to heavy drapery and to dresses which prevent the leg from moving freely' (Anon. 1882: 338). Reformers argued that trousers were more conducive to many of the daily tasks regularly performed by both men and women, such as walking and climbing stairs. Viscountess Harberton herself argued that while men walked by 'putting one leg forward and then bringing the other up past it […] what was entirely right for men could not logically be called inconvenient, unsuitable and frightful for women' (Anon. 1883: 85). Reformers also noted that trousers provided sartorial freedom and autonomy for women. This argument seemed particularly cogent as the width, shape and weight of skirts shifted radically according to the fashions of the day (in particular the rise and fall of the bustle between the 1870s and the 1890s). Even into the Edwardian era, the tulip or flared silhouette of the fashionable gown meant skirts were particularly heavy and voluminous as they billowed out around the ankles. In the 1888 first issue of the *Rational Dress Society's Gazette*, the society promoted individual taste and the consideration of 'health, comfort, and beauty' but ultimately condemned the 'constant changes of fashion that cannot be recommended on any of these grounds' (cited in Kortsch 2009: 78–79). As late as the 1910s, however, reformers were still having to justify trousers as suitable attire for women. As one writer for the *Dress Review* noted:

> On woman lies the greater responsibility, as health as well as dress should engage her serious attention and her clothes need reform the most urgently. It is not clothes but fashion which is at fault. Masculine attire may be ugly, but it is more comfortable and convenient than women's dress and much less injurious to health.
>
> (Matthews 1904: 98)

The rise of physical culture in the closing years of the nineteenth century represented a significant cultural shift: as cycling, calisthenics and gymnastics rose in popularity, there was intense interest in the concept of the 'divided' skirt as a garment that would facilitate the free movement of the limbs. Organizations devoted to promoting health through dress often exhibited suitable clothing for physical exercise at special exhibitions and even occasionally sold Rational clothing for sport/exercise on site (Kortsch 2009: 78–79). Despite this increased interest, trousers tended to be utilized in selective locales, often far from public view, in the context of mountaineering, hiking and bicycling (Cunningham 2003: 204–05). Significantly then, the wearing of trousers, even within dress reform circles, was a practice that was both spatially and ideologically contained. Further, it continued to be viewed as distinct in some way from everyday dress, which was subject to the accepted standards and symbolic signifiers of femininity (such as the wearing of skirts). A brief perusal of primary source material confirms that the skirt was a garment that was not only bound by the codes of gender but was subject to the implications and expectations of class as well. In 1883, a writer for *The Artist* conceded that while certain young or working-class women might 'pursue their labours better had they some other dress than the long skirt', Viscountess Harberton's promotion of the divided skirt for all was dismissed:

> The present long skirt is the distinctive feature of the gentler sex, and any new dress to be a success must not be fitted for one class only, but it must be universal. That the costume of the divided skirt, however made, is not likely to become universal, we can safely assert.
>
> (Anon. 1883: 85)

Strangely, despite the cultural pressure to keep women 'in skirts', the 1880s and 1890s also saw the rising popularity of an 'alternative' style for women – caps, ties and other typically 'masculine' details, such as simple tailored shapes and somber colors, began to be included in certain dress styles for women. Diana Crane has argued that the adoption of surface 'masculine' details in the otherwise 'feminine' attire of the nineteenth century constituted a symbolic but not structural challenge to gender norms of the Victorian period. Positioning these gestures as a form of 'non-verbal' resistance, Crane points out that the wearing of ties, tailor-made jackets and other 'masculine' accessories such as hats/caps with traditional skirts/dresses was a non-confrontational and non-verbal approach to critiquing the gendered norms of Victorian culture. She notes that 'symbolic inversion performs an important role, affecting people both consciously and unconsciously, and having a high degree of visibility'. More importantly, she argues that it was these early 'masculine' details worn with skirts that ultimately paved the way

for more systemic changes in the cut and structure of accepted feminine clothing (Crane 1999: 263). Crane's insights reveal that in the late nineteenth century, the use of minor male signifiers was accepted as part of the coded display of innovation and reform for women's clothing based on occupation or position, but structural changes to the gendered nature of everyday dress were considered too great a risk and not accepted by the majority.

Beyond the sartorial norms of physical culture, and the spatial practices that bound them to specific locations, the performance of gender through Victorian dress was understood more broadly as a site for the embodied display of morality. Eschewing the codes of femininity by appropriating 'male dress' (such as trousers) was regarded as a marginalized and widely contested practice – and even vulgar and immoral by the most conservative critics. As Gayle Fischer has pointed out, women who wore trousers in everyday settings were viewed as constituting a 'threat to the "natural" order' likely to produce 'near-hysterical reactions'. Ultimately such women were seen as immodestly dressed, signifying 'self-indulgence, disorder, and wastefulness' (Fischer 2001: 24). In 1881, the Dress Defence Association (DDA) objected to what they perceived as extreme or 'immoral' clothing practices, regardless of whether they extended from fashionable or reform circles. In theory, many fashion critics were open to moderate versions of dress reform, provided they were conservative in nature. Not surprisingly, while the DDA claimed to be supportive of artistic, aesthetic and athletic reforms, they were opposed to any form of dress they felt was extreme or eccentric, and in particular to the 'divided skirt'. In addition, while the DDA was a small and relatively unknown group, they represented the moral majority of the period, as their professed allegiance to domestic harmony and male authority makes clear:

> It is no part of the D.D.A. to cause domestic divisions even on so peculiarly feminine a subject as dress, and therefore on all occasions the male representatives are earnestly requested to add their names when a Viscountess of the family joins the association.
>
> (Armstrong 1881: 281)

Only a small group of women actually wore the fullest extent of 'Rational dress' (including knickerbockers) for bicycling in Britain. Rational dress for cycling was more popular in France and Germany and surviving British examples are rare (Wilson and Taylor 1989: 57). Even when bifurcated garments were tolerated for physical exercise, they were criticized by cultural pundits as unfeminine and 'ugly'. For example, in *Littell's Living Age* published in 1883, G. Armytage asserted that the female sex was 'being asked to accept ugliness for the questionable privilege of being the more able to practice athletic sports' (cited in Cunningham 2003: 67).

Negative perceptions of Viscountess Harberton herself were often at the root of these reactions, particularly since Harberton often wore bifurcated garments for everyday dress, and more spectacularly, for public events specifically devoted to dress reform and education. In 1887, at an organizational meeting for the Rational Dress Society at Westminster Town Hall, Viscountess Harberton was described in the press as wearing 'Turkish trousers of the finest black satin' with a 'black velvet jacket trimmed with jet *passementerie,* caught together at the waist with a buckle over a full waistcoat of white satin and lace'. More importantly, the critic noted that her outfit 'happened to suit her, although the riding whip, which she cracked to emphasize her points as she spoke, gave her a somewhat mannish appearance' (cited in Gattey 1967: 170).

Indeed, the donning of 'male' garments for everyday dress was so vilified in the Victorian period that large sectors of the early modern women's movement distanced themselves from any form of dress considered 'unfeminine' or 'eccentric'. In fact, most suffragists dressed exclusively in fashionable 'feminine' clothing in order to recruit new members, as well as to garner social validation, and even support from the public (Rolley 1990: 56, 60–61). This avoidance of 'outlandish' dress for female activists in the early twentieth century finds its roots in the hegemonic codes of late Victorian sartorial culture. Closely regulated, taxonomically complex and baffling in its ritualistic rigor, 'fashion' for the middle- and upper-class women of Britain was a system of exclusions, inclusions and nuanced signifiers, all indicating specific kinds of dress for designated settings, locations and tasks. By the turn of the twentieth century, fashionable, well-connected women had to wear a 'bewildering array of clothes in order to be dressed a la mode for every occasion – visiting, travelling, walking, boating and shooting [...] gowns for races, garden parties, reception, dinners and balls' (Mendes 1984: 80). Yet this intricacy and complexity was also naturalized; among the middle and upper classes, 'appropriate' dress was viewed as the external marking of an internalized value system wherein gender was understood as something fixed, permanent and inviolable.

Strangely, while Rational forms of dress featuring bifurcated garments for cycling gradually gained a limited acceptance on the basis of their functionality, proponents of 'Artistic' styles in relation to the Aesthetic movement of the 1880s continued to face derision, and were occasionally accused of being unfeminine or 'mannish' (Wahl 2013: 161). Given that 'divided skirts' were rarely adopted by female aesthetes who, instead, chose to stick with historically inspired gowns that respected the 'natural' curves of the female body, their public ridicule on the basis of gender was puzzling. It does, however, underscore how powerful the encoded rules of feminine dress actually were. In 1904, a fashion critic writing for the *Dress Review* strove to explain the continued and persistent rejection of dress reforms by the vast majority of fashionable dressers:

> Critics […] object to the Art Gowns on the ground of sloppiness, inappropriateness to anything save lounging, and general want of style […] as long as it is artistic to be sloppy, the well-cut fashionable garment will win the day. A Woman likes to look like a woman and not like a sack or a flapping scarecrow.
>
> (Hugill 1904: 145–46)

By the close of the nineteenth century, artistic forms of dress were progressively linked with notions of immorality and gender fluidity, for both men and women. Advocates of an artistic lifestyle were accused of having an unhealthy attachment to the art world and its material expressions. Impacting interior design, fashion and even literary culture, aestheticism was characterized by conservative critics as 'obsessive' in its pursuit of the 'beautiful' in daily life. By the 1890s there was a distinct break between 'Rational' and 'artistic' forms of dress, with many dress reformers rejecting aestheticism on the basis of its contested status with regard to health and morality. And, as moderate approaches to dress reform were increasingly accepted, tailor-made costumes suitable for walking or cycling became the focus of the more conservative branches of the dress reform movement (Anon. 1898: 2). In this context, the link between dress reform and artistic discourses proved tendentious, lending an unsavory and suspect air to the alteration and adulteration of what was seen as proper 'feminine' dress.

As Peter Wollen has pointed out, however, it was the arts and crafts movement that provided the turning point for the convergence of art and fashion at the turn of the century, with the roles of painter and couturier being compared and conflated (1998: 9). While nineteenth-century artistic modes of fashion and reform proved to be a contested terrain, the rise of modernism would have a transformative effect on their imbricated relations. To an unacknowledged degree, the inversion of nineteenth-century artistic discourses in the evolution and transformation of fashionable clothing is central to an understanding of how and when trousers became acceptable everyday dress for women. At the beginning of the twentieth century, in line with the avant-garde rhetoric and resulting discourses of abstraction and experimentation in the decorative arts, dress reform based on artistic principles began to gain ground. Consequently, innovation in fashion was increasingly linked with the rise of the modern fashion designer. In influential European art movements such as the Vienna Secession, cubism, Futurism, Orphism and constructivism, collaborations between artists and designers led to radical concepts proposed and illustrated for set and costume design for theatre and dance. In turn, the world of high fashion incorporated new models of production where the 'fashion designer' was positioned as an 'artist' with creative vision. In this context, makers and wearers of clothing looked to the art world for both inspiration and guidance in outlining novel and provocative ideas.

Further complicating the appearance of a radical divide between nineteenth-century artistic dress and the avant-garde designs of early twentieth- century fashion is the persistence of several cultural constructs derived from a preoccupation with the 'classical' and the 'exotic' in western fashion (Mackrell 2005: 116–21). Classicism and Orientalism are often polarized in the histories of the fine and decorative arts – nodes upon which the dichotomies of modernism are founded. Yet in fashion these polarities are superimposed and conflated, mutually encoded to produce concepts of innovation and change. This allows composite forms in fashion to be framed in terms of the 'new' whilst drawing on age-old historical and sartorial concepts and traditions. As fashionable images became progressively streamlined and 'designed' in the context of early twentieth-century art deco, so too did images of the female body become more graphic, geometric and angular, often portrayed as a solid unit in a single columnar silhouette, or as a series of interlocking geometric shapes (Mackrell 1997: 160–61). This challenged traditional methods in fashion illustration where gender was codified through a series of readable shapes, forms or even tropes emphasizing the signifiers of femininity within Victorian culture: a small pronounced waist, full bust and trailing or decorated skirts.

At first glance, experimentation in avant-garde fashion design suggests freedom from the tyranny of the wasp-waisted manipulations of the Victorian corset, and indeed Paul Poiret, Madeleine Vionnet and Viscountess Duff Gordon under the name Lucile were all designers who claimed to have liberated women from the corset (Steele 2001: 146–47). However, what was often unacknowledged was the fact that for decades proceeding this shift in thinking, radical dress reformers and key artists had already banished the corset and had proposed important sartorial experiments in the pages of publications circulated in artistic and dress reform circles in the 1880s and 1890s. Perhaps not seen by the majority of the fashion consuming public, they existed, and had a cultural impact nonetheless. Furthermore, the shifting outlines of mainstream fashion illustration may have suggested a less rigorous application of the principles of corsetry, but the truth was somewhat murkier, with women employing a broad range of restrictive undergarments to conform to the correct 'silhouette' of the slim and streamlined modern body. In their introduction to the anthology *Cultures of Femininity in Modern Fashion*, Ilya Parkins and Elizabeth Sheehan argue that fashion complicates constructions of femininity under the terms of modernism. They point out that an analysis of fashion in the early modern period offers a way to bridge the gap between the material and symbolic expressions of modernity and the complex roles that women negotiated as modern subjects (2011: 7–11). Caroline Evans too, in her book *The Mechanical Smile*, examines important aspects of how the female body was standardized under modernism through fashion itself, and how this impacted the

birth of the modeling industry. Crucially, however, she also explores embodied aspects of gesture, motion and time that both complicate and challenge standard readings of this period (2013: 1–9).

Indeed, one of the dominant assumptions under modernism is that it 'rescued' women from the antiquated trappings of femininity in Victorian culture: the corset, the cage crinoline and the bustle. The donning of trousers might be viewed as the culmination of this tendency. Among the earliest of designers who proposed the 'harem skirt' or 'jupe culotte' as a form of fashionable attire were Drecoll and Bechoff-David (Fischer 2001: 175) (Figure 2). Paul Poiret is certainly the most popular designer to exploit a range of 'revolutionary' sartorial gestures, 'freeing' women from the constraints of Edwardian dress. However, in practice and in

FIGURE 2: Jupe-culottes by Margaine-Lacroix and Drecoll. *Les Modes*, 1911.

everyday life, the corset, like the skirt, was not banished with the rise of avant-garde design in the early twentieth century, it simply changed shape and incorporated new, more flexible materials in order to conform to the 'novel' outlines of the body demanded by modernist design (Steele 2001: 148). While some scholars, such as Valerie Steele, have argued that the corset was a relatively benign facet of Victorian women's bid for sexual expression and thus emblematic of their cultural agency, other scholars have presented an alternate view, most notably Leigh Summers, who in her analysis of the visual culture of the nineteenth century presented an image of the corseted woman as one of fragmentation and violence, symptomatic of a certain level of misogyny at the heart of Victorian society (2001: 207). What does seem clear, however, is that the corset persisted well into the early twentieth century. Even in its pronounced absence, or in the use of modified, alternative forms of foundational undergarments, efforts to present the female body in line with current fashionable or artistic ideals reveals a cultural anxiety and indeed fascination with the parameters and forms of the female body throughout the birth and rise of modernism. Perhaps more importantly, while the visual signifiers of abstraction, classicism, historicism and exoticism informed narratives of change and liberation, in practice the material implications of dressing the modern body involved a much slower process of change. This was also true of trousers, which, despite having a visible presence in the artistic literature addressing fashion and modernism, were still worn by a relatively small group of women in the first decades of the twentieth century.

It is also important to remember that many of the more radical designs proposed by 'vanguard' designers such as Paul Poiret were frequently criticized in the press, and only adopted by a small inner enclave of fashion innovators and artistic consumers. For example, for Poiret's famous 'Arabian Nights' theme party in 1911, guests were expected to come in exotic outfits and if not, be willing to don one of Poiret's designs supposedly based on authentic Persian sources (Troy 2003: 103–04). In the design of his harem-style pants, variously called 'jupe-culottes' or 'jupe-sultanes', likely based on Léon Bakst's designs for the Ballet Russes, Poiret himself attempted to manage the potential for public ridicule by indicating that such garments were not really intended for street-wear but for suitably artistic settings presumably in a private home or specially designed architectural space (Troy 2003: 126). Thus, contrary to dominant narratives of 'modern' fashion as a development that radically altered everyday dress for men and women, a close analysis of the gap between how fashion was pictured in visual culture and how it was worn in practice reveals a much more gradual evolution in thinking with regard to the gendered nature of clothing. Particularly at the turn of the century, complex relations exist between the legacy of artistic dress reform and emerging art discourses in avant-garde design circles. While the modes of each period share

key formal features (empire-line silhouettes, 'natural' waists and the expressed values of comfort and mobility), the visual framing and ideological position of each are often counterpoised in the literatures of modernism.

Finally, both in its original context of 'Rational' dress reform and in its later manifestations as avant-garde innovation and exploration, the wearing of trousers by women between the 1880s and 1910s represents a marginalized practice that was contained and constrained by both cultural and spatial factors. As I have argued, however, important distinctions may be made between earlier forms of 'bifurcated skirts' and their later emergence in the context of avant-garde design. In the late nineteenth century, trousers for women were both functional and political, transgressing gender boundaries and challenging Victorian notions of proper feminine attire. In the later context, although trousers continued to be viewed as primarily a masculine category of clothing, their representation through the lens of modernism may have elevated them to the peripheral and playful realm of the art world. Designated as cultural 'play' rather than societal 'challenge', their artistic status allowed them to exist at a critical distance from the politics and gender relations of everyday life – thus laying the groundwork for a broader cultural appeal and acceptance in the decades to follow.

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‘Hard and Straight’: The Creation of Nineteenth-Century Masculinity through Corsetry

Alanna McKnight

Introduction

Corsets are garments that are now seen as quintessentially feminine; however, through the nineteenth century men also wore corsets to not only form their bodies but to also form a masculine ideal. Social changes in nineteenth-century Europe and America introduced new ideas and rhetoric that threatened to overturn the power dynamic between men and women and created a social climate wherein certain male relationships were outlawed. Among these changes were blurred lines between public and private spheres where women became more visible members of public life, as well as the development of theories about sexuality that included the scientific taxonomy and criminalization of homosexuality. This chapter will explore these societal changes through a historical analysis of the use of corsets to construct a white, European, masculine ideal. Beginning with an exploration of contemporary attitudes toward male corsets, this chapter traces their use in fashion, sports, fetish and military, and the influence of women’s wear and women entering the workforce on men’s dress. Following this, the evolution of masculinity is examined through the changes in the public sphere, arguing that men were expected to look polished while in public, but not effeminate. The public expectation affected consumer culture and advertisements, including how stores for men were decorated, and the kinds of language used in advertising, both of which were intended to create an aura of masculine power. Finally, this chapter explores the possible psychological and cultural reasons that men chose to wear corsets during a time when appearing effeminate was not only frowned upon, but also a criminal offense.

While it may now seem counterintuitive that a garment that is coded as feminine held the power to construct masculinity, particularly during a period when appearing as an 'invert'[1] resulted being persecuted by the law, the motivations for men to wear corsets were both physical and psychological. Corsets gave the illusion of an ideal masculine physique, by holding the stomach in and pushing the chest out. For men who did not possess the physique of a soldier or sportsman, wearing a corset allayed the fear of appearing effeminate. Corsets were advertised to men using specific language, stating that the manliest men of the period employed them in their masculine pursuits. Because women entered the public sphere, working, shopping and generally being more visible, some men felt as though they were being symbolically castrated by women's presence. By wearing corsets, they subconsciously turned themselves into a phallus, as a means of demonstrating their virility and power. This is demonstrated in the words used in advertising, such as 'hard' and 'erect'. The corset held the body in a rigid position enabling men to perform the physicality of masculinity.

Masculine? Of 'Corset' Is!

The history of men wearing supportive garments is a long one, which included representations of men in ancient Sumerian statues, the Roman cuirass, the medieval kirtl or the stiff jerkin of sixteenth-century Europe, all of which exemplify that restrictive garments have not solely been relegated to women's bodies. In the nineteenth century, men were also no stranger to garments that sculpted the body. According to Valerie Steele in *Corsets: A Cultural History* (2001), men in stays were not overly common in the early nineteenth century; however, their presence was pervasive enough that many men who wore them were caricatured in the media, branded as dandies and effeminate, including George, the Prince Regent and his companion Beau Brummell (Steele 2001: 38). This changed by the 1830s and through the 1840s, when men's dress featured long, slender trousers, and jackets with full skirts, slim waists and full-sleeve heads (Figure 1). In order to create this silhouette men often cinched their waists with corsets and padded their hips and chests. This style was in direct contrast to what women wore: dresses that did not convey the shapes of the body with waistlines above the natural waist. As the century progressed, women's dress focused more on accentuating their shape, with crinolines, bustles and other padding to exaggerate hips and posteriors, as well as the ubiquitous corset.

FIGURE 1: 'Women and a Man Standing Outdoors, United States, 1842'. *Graham's Lady's and Gentlemen's Magazine*, 1842.

Through the mid-nineteenth century, as men's wear became generally less restrictive they no longer needed foundation garments for shape; however, some men wore corsets citing medical reasons and as support for their backs during sport, rather than for fashion (Steele 2001: 39). Men's corsets re-emerged as a fashion item in the last twenty years of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth as a fashionable underpinning, rather than a medical device. David Kunzle, in *Fashion and Fetishism* (1982) briefly discusses men wearing corsets during these years, specifically European military men, which he contextualizes through satirical comics. He posits that their adoption into public sartorial habits was directly influenced by the masculinity of military men (Kunzle 1982: 148), much the way elements of military uniforms are seen in fashion today through camouflage and khaki. Kunzle's text, along with WB Lord's *The Corset and The Crinoline* (1868 [2007]), suggest that it was largely German military who initially adopted corsets for fashion. Lord suggests that Englishmen adopted corsets after visiting the continent (Lord 1868 [2007]: 163).

The reintroduction of men's corsets into fashion, therefore, was directly influenced by a desire to emulate the gallantry of soldiers on the continent.

Women's dress also affected men's corsets in the late nineteenth century when women's wear became more tailored and suit-like, as they entered the white-collar workforce in larger numbers than before. Their dress included items like shirt-waists and tailored jackets, and though they were still very feminine they were certainly informed by menswear. It was such a noticeable change that the satirical periodical *Punch* featured an article about male tight-lacing as a natural reaction to women dressing in a more masculine way, positing that women dressed so much like men that the only natural order was for men to dress like women (Shannon 2004: 623). Satirical cartoons also depicted images of corpulent men being laced in by hard-working valets, sometimes employing the aid of mechanical devices to help cinch in their waists (Steele 2001: 38). One cartoon from 1904 titled *The Man and Woman of Tomorrow* shows a man and woman walking arm in arm (Steele 2001: 60). The woman is dressed in a loose-fitting suit, complete with stiff collar, tie and bowler hat, and carrying an umbrella, while the man walks with an extremely accentuated waist, and a suit that resembles the Bloomer costume, while walking a small dog, a clear reversal of gender norms of the time. In the background is a gentleman's corset shop. This exemplifies the fears of both masculinized women's dress and the emasculation of men through this masculinization of women's dress, but also perpetuates a fear of societal role reversal.

Though Kunzle suggests that the population of men wearing corsets was not great, and that the military was the last bastion of male corsetry (1982: 149), other sources suggest otherwise. Brent Shannon's article 'Refashioning men' (2004) cites sources from 1884 and 1894 that state that many fashionable men wore corsets. In 1903, *Fashion* magazine went on the offensive to remove connotations of dandyism with the corset, and the term 'belt' was used in lieu of 'corset', in an attempt to emphasize an association with an active, physical lifestyle (Shannon 2004: 623). Couturier Charles Worth was even interviewed for this article in *Fashion*, wherein he stated that his business has shown him that 'in reality, they are chiefly sought after by the most athletic and soldierly of men, who are desirous of keeping their figures in order, so that they may continue in the pursuit of their various sports without looking clumsy or unfit' (Shannon 2004: 623). Sources are unclear about how many men actually wore corsets; some suggest that the advertising over-exaggerated the numbers, and others suggest that it was a large portion of the male population. Either way, there were enough men who wore corsets that in 1899, Thorstein Veblen included them in his book *Theory of the Leisure Class*, albeit as criticism rather than praise. He referred to men wearing corsets as crossing the theoretical line between men's and women's fashion and possessing a 'blind zeal for faultlessly reputable attire'

that causes them to wear clothing meant to 'vex the mortal frame' (Veblen 1899 [1994]: 112). It was not just fashionable men who wore corsets, however. Some men wore corsets out of sensual pleasure, rather than for the purposes of fashion. As today, fetishists enjoyed the binding sensation and disciplinary nature of tight lacing, and indeed accounts of this were featured in contemporary pornographic images and stories (Steele 2001: 99). These played with the nineteenth-century idea of what it was to be a man. Regardless of whether it was for sport, fashion or fetish, the presence of male corsets in advertising and journalism indicates that they were indeed an article of interest.

Changes in Masculinity

There were many shifts in the semiotics of masculinity during the nineteenth century. The closing decades were fraught between middle-class morality, the increasingly blurred line between public and private, and the rise of consumer culture. This period included a constant struggle between the masculine public sphere and the feminine private sphere. As women entered the public for the purposes of employment and enjoyment, new gender roles were defined. Shopping was an acceptable pastime for middle-class women, as it was considered their nature to look nice, and they were responsible for their household economics. However, it was less acceptable for men to shop, as it was considered feminine to acquire and display clothing (Breward 1999: 1). The feminine nature of displaying fashion created a conflict for men as they were expected to be in public and thus they could not appear unfashionable or disheveled without fear of judgment. Likewise, men were expected to maintain a certain amount of control over their homes, even though this was viewed as a feminine sphere. Christopher Breward refers to this constant struggle as requiring a 'double awareness [...] the myriad ways in which representations of all kinds informed the formation of gender identities' (Breward 1999: 16). While trying to find balance between fashionable and masculine, public and private, the nineteenth-century man was also constantly reminded through the media of the quintessential man: the soldier and explorer. It was a time of empire, when men travelled to far-flung regions of the earth, 'civilizing' the world in the name of the Queen and country, and where men like Roosevelt expounded their masculine pursuits of hunting and travel (Kasson 2002: 11). This world of colonial domination was largely homosocial, built on male companionship and bachelorship (Garton 2002: 41). In her book *Imperial Leather*, Anne McClintock discusses the idea of colonialism and the 'mimic man' at length, that is the natives of a colonized land being forced and expected to mimic the colonizers (1995: 62). Through altering their bodies by

external means, men 'at home' were in turn able to mimic the men in the colonies who were presented in books and news stories as strong and robust. Since the strength of empire rested on masculine power (McClintock 1995: 354) even if the figurehead of said empire was a woman, it was imperative that men appear strong and healthy.

These complicated aspects of the middle-class man's life in the nineteenth century were 'an unstable equilibrium, so that the governing terms of nineteenth century manhood became contradiction, conflict, anxiety' (Sussman 1995: 14). It is this anxiety that leads to a performance of masculinity. Even through the act of shopping, masculinities were performative. Shops understood that it was difficult to lure men into these previously feminine temples, so the men's sections of department stores, and even tailoring establishments, were decorated with masculine charm. This interior design was intended to make men feel as though they were shopping in their men's clubs (again, another homosocial environment), with dark wood, leather seating and brass fixtures. The layout of shops often ensured that men did not wander through women's sections to procure their sartorial needs (Breward 1999: 114). The shops were set like theatre stages, the customers like actors being fitted for their costumes, and their roles were as the modern men of the city.

One of the greatest complications of nineteenth-century masculinity was the scientific taxonomy of sexuality, specifically the 'creation' of homosexuality. Carl Westphal is cited as creating the problematic medical classification of homosexuality as people experiencing 'contrary sexual sensations', as an inversion of the masculine and feminine within a person (Foucault 1978: 43). In 1885, the Labouchere amendment was passed in England, a law that made unspecified gross indecency between men subject to harsh criminal punishment (Gleeson 2007: 337). This law changed the way that men interacted with each other in public, as the fear of 'gross indecency' was so strong. Prior to this, men walked arm-in-arm through parks, out of platonic friendship, and the yet social order of men still remained largely homosocial. The idea of 'pure' male friendships, the spiritual beauty of the exercised male body, Christian ideology of celibacy and denial and imperial paternalism all 'became embedded in official definition of British manliness' (Breward 1995: 176). In 1896, eugenicist Havelock Ellis wrote a work on 'sexual inversion', which was another problematic historical and psychological analysis of homosexuality (Koven 2004: 72). These are only a few of the legal and medical classifications that occurred, complicating how men presented themselves in public through dress as well as behavior.

The nineteenth century had many homosocial environments, and relationships between men were not uncommon, at work, schools, clubs, workspaces, the military etc. It is because of this, and the burgeoning homophobia, that

men were often forced into marriages to justify their male relationships, and as a means of performing middle-class morality. By the 1890s, the presence of homosexuality was visible, often because of a refusal to relinquish the homosocial bonding of schools or clubs, which created tension against the masculine grooming that also occurred in these locales (Dellamora 1990: 106). These relationships were used as a scapegoat for the shifting of gender roles within the home and the agitation of women in the public sphere. Middle-class morality was such a driving force behind homophobia that when Oscar Wilde went on trial in 1895, the fact that he eschewed middle-class morality by adopting the life of an aesthete, rather than his homosexuality alone, contributed to the charges of 'gross indecency'. His trial was a spectacle for an all-male audience, including lawyers who attended all-male colleges, and male prostitutes (Dellamora 1990: 210).

Advertising Perfection

With the fear of the label of homosexuality, and the shifts in consumer culture leaning toward the feminine, advertisements for male corsets required specific language to convince men that wearing them was, in fact, masculine. The rise in capitalist production in the late nineteenth century led to the mass publication of advertisements as a means of encouraging consumption. Advertisements appeared in newspapers, magazines, catalogues and advertising cards. They used strategic language to sell corsets, which did not suggest that it might improve one's figure, as that would imply feminine vanity. Corsets were sold to men using 'language that played upon late-nineteenth-century concerns regarding physical activity, manly stamina, and sexual virility' (Shannon 2004: 624).

Two advertisements from couturier Charles Worth, one from 1880 and one from 1905, exemplify this use of langue. The former informs gentlemen that they have added 'every class of corset, surgical, spinal, for corpulency, and riding' (Shannon 2004: 623). The latter beseeches 'Officers and Gentlemen' to 'command' the fitter at the Worth shop and refers to them as both 'belts' and 'corsets' (Shannon 2004: 623). In both images (Figure 2), the mustachioed men stand with their chests puffed out, their muscular arms at rest behind their backs. The shapes of the corsets in the advertisements are not unlike those worn by women, with a front busk closure, and boning casings placed to create the optimal shape at the waist, and flatness of the stomach, in spite of the claim otherwise. They even include gussets at the chest which on a woman's corset accommodates the breasts, which on a men's corset was meant to accommodate the broad, muscular chest.

FIGURE 2: Worth Corset Advertisement. *Punch*, 4 January 1905: v.

The aforementioned article in *Fashion* also called upon 'soldiers and good sportsmen' and refers to them as 'hard and straight' thanks to their 'belt' (Shannon 2004: 623). It even went so far as to call upon the colonial desire in men by stating that 'when hunting in some of the wilder parts of the world, where the going was of the roughest, a good flexible supporting belt was of wonderful assistance in the preservation of one's staying powers' (Shannon 2004: 624).

Corsets were not simply for men in the far-flung parts of empire, or English sportsmen, or German soldiers (as Kunzle posited). In 1903 an advertisement, originally printed in New York, was published in the *Toronto Star*, singing the praises of the male corset. The headline stated that 'health and ease (are) much aided by them' (Anon. 1903: 2). It reassured the reader that 'men's corsets are not aimed to give men any ridiculous shape or to make them appear *effeminate*' and even described a 'well built' man who wore one (1903: 2, emphasis added). It states that the 'striking, erect figure of the European soldier can, in great measure, be attributed to the wearing of a corset' (1903: 2). The article ensures that 'instead of being round-shouldered, flat-chested, and with prominently protruding stomach, the corset wearer will possess the form of a real man' (1903: 2).

Advertisements of the nineteenth century, like those of today, targeted their audience with barbs aimed at one's idea of the self; that 'people should attend to their body image in an instrumental manner, as status and social acceptability depend on how a person looks' (Featherstone 2010: 195). This suggests that how someone is viewed is based on their physical self; that one's true character will shine through their outer appearance. As Mike Featherstone notes, consumer culture has created a system in which people who have 'become fat, or let their appearance go (are) not only slothful but have a flawed self' (Featherstone 2010: 195). Using images and words related to 'real' men also employs the advertising technique of fantasy. What all of these advertisements have in common are the references to gentlemen, sportsmen and soldiers (the ideal masculinities), flattening the stomach and broadening the chest (either through images or words) and hyper-phallic words such as 'hard' and 'erect'.

Performing Masculinity

It seems strange that men wore a garment that had such feminine connotations during a time when they were constantly in fear of having their masculinity called into question, and when the ideal image of a man was the soldier or explorer. The reasons why men adopted the corset for their own masculine ends may have several explanations. Susan Bordo, in *The Male Body*, suggests that we currently 'live in a culture that encourages men to think about themselves as their penises, a culture that conflates male sexuality with something we call potency and that gives men little encouragement to explore the rest of their bodies' (Bordo 1999: 36). Certainly, the corset could be an extension of this idea. A word that is often used with regards to male corsets is 'erect', in that corsets hold the body erect and rigid. Through wearing corsets men were subconsciously turning their entire bodies into phalluses, a creation of male subjectivity through their own sexual repression and fear of symbolic castration.

Nineteenth-century manhood also required self-control (Garton 2002: 43), and wearing corsets acted as a means of employing outside forces to control the body. In her article about the exteriorization of heterosexual male corporeality, Annie Potts explores both Freud and Lacan to describe what she refers to as the 'penis-self', and the perceived superiority of the exteriority of the phallus (Potts 2001: 148), which again holds connotations of public versus private. Wearing a corset, then, became a subconscious display of man's own masculinity, demonstrating through their whole body that they had not been symbolically castrated.

Early twentieth-century psychoanalyst Johannes Flugel took a different and less phallic approach to exploring the mind than Freud and Lacan. As a naturist

and dress reformer, he was fascinated with the reasons why people wore certain types of clothing, and more importantly, why some people felt comfortable in loose clothes, while others were more comfortable in restrictive clothing. In 1929 he completed a survey about how people prefer to dress. The results of this survey led to a spectrum of preferences; on one end was the closet naturists for whom clothing was wholly exterior to their being, who preferred loose fitting clothing; on the other end was the 'supported' type, who 'feel strengthened, more efficient and more competent in virtue of his clothes' (Flugel 1930 [1969]: 147). These latter respondents valued the feeling of support, while the former felt stiff clothing represented authoritarian body politics. Due to the amount of dress reform propaganda that existed in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it can be difficult to imagine that not everyone was against clothing that is described as restrictive. Flugel's interpretation of body and dress can be understood through what Mike Featherstone calls 'body schema' (Featherstone 2010: 194), which relates to the felt body, rather than body image. This suggests that wearing corsets has less to do with one's concern for their appearance, and more to do with synesthesia and the sensing of the body.

Where psychoanalytic theory indicated that corseted men were performing the role of phallus, inscribing their virility on the body through dress, Judith Butler's ideas of gender and performativity are a natural continuation of these theories. She notes that signifiers of gender are an exterior inscription of the inner workings of the soul, are fabrications, fantasies made public through the surface of the body, which create an illusion of gender through the 'obligatory frame of reproductive heterosexuality' (Butler 1999: 173). Gender therefore can neither be true nor false but does require a performance that is repeated. This is the reestablishment of already socially established meanings. Butler uses drag performances to demonstrate this idea, where one end of a gender binary impersonates the other. In the case of nineteenth-century men wearing corsets, they were impersonating the idea of masculinity that they wanted to achieve. They were shaping their bodies, just as women did with corsets to create the hyper feminine, in order to create the ideal masculine form.

Performance may then lead to spectacle. Where men may have been performing masculinity through corsetry, Baudrillard suggests that they were enacting the fact of fashion, wherein the hidden body is feminine, and through this manner becomes 'less the exclusive property of one sex' (Baudrillard 1979 [2004]: 97). This implies that it does not matter which gender was wearing a corset, it is all reductive to desexualization, that the body becomes a mannequin, stiff and sexless. He states that through fashion, nothing is sexed, but everything is sexualized (Baudrillard 1979 [2004]: 97).

Conclusion

The history of men's fashion has included many examples of restrictive garments. This chapter could have just as easily been about the construction of the phallic body in the homosocial environment of the Roman military through leather corsets. Or, instead of focusing on corsets, this chapter may have examined the role of neckwear (collars and ties) through the nineteenth century, as they were equally rigid, albeit more on display and far more conspicuous than corsets. The significance lies within the specific garment and the time period combined. The politics of masculinity in the late nineteenth century created a situation where it was unimaginable that men used a garment that had such feminine connotations to reaffirm their own gender. Yet men across Europe and North America laced themselves in to create a hard and erect body to perform masculinity in public, a realm over which they felt they were rapidly losing control. It also seems counter-intuitive in a society bent on persecuting any man who may appear homosexual or who may practice transvestism that wearing a corset was the ideal means of constructing masculinity. It almost appears like a double-bluff wherein one needed to be a real man in order to wear a corset. And indeed, the advertisements confirm this idea, through the images and language used, and by appealing to men to dress as soldiers and sportsmen. Wearing a corset was a means of counteracting all the ways that society was perceived as castrating men, by allowing them to create a full-body phallus, a means of displaying their virility.

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NOTE

1. 'Sexual inversion' was a term used by early sexologists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century to describe homosexuality.

Mirror Epiphany: Transpersons' Use of Dress to Create and Sustain Their Affirmed Gender Identities

Jory M. Catalpa and Jenifer K. McGuire

Introduction

A 'mirror epiphany' is described as the first encounter with one's self-imagine reflected in the reality and materiality of the external world (Serano 2007). As young people, transgender, nonbinary, agender, genderqueer, gender-fluid and gender nonconforming individuals are often forced into gendered clothing that is consistent with their assigned sex at birth, which may feel inauthentic and uncomfortable (Rahilly 2015). Alternatively, transgender individuals[1] may dress differently from the sex they were assigned at birth, which often elicits ridicule and verbal and physical punishment (Grossman et al. 2005). Synthesizing Butler's ([1990] 2006) theory of gender performance and Serano's (2007) intrinsic inclination framework, researchers explored how transgender individuals create and sustain gender identity through repetitive acts of dressing in ways that are congruent with a personal image of gender emanating from within.

Butler ([1990] 2006) argued that, rather than thinking of gender as a natural extension of our bodies and interior selves, gender represented a performance or parody of dominant gender assumptions. However, gender expression is not merely an imitation of social gender norms, it is also a dialogue of recognizable symbols co-constructed during social interaction. Dress[2] is a fundamental aspect of embodied communication and the social construction of meaning and gender identity (Bugg 2013; Eicher and Roach-Higgins 1992). Dress produces and reproduces gender norms and is segregated by the types of bodies it will adorn. Individual agency to construct gender identity through gender expression necessitates navigating social norms, critiques, transformations and biological imperatives.

Serano's (2007) intrinsic inclination model explains how human sexual and gender variation considers the biological, social and performative underpinnings of sexual and gender variations. According to Serano (2007), there are multiple dimensions of gender inclinations that represent an affinity toward variable subconscious sexes, gender expressions and sexual orientations. Subconscious sex, gender expression and sexual orientation represent separate gender inclinations that are determined independently of one another. Subconscious sex represents an internal sense of being a gender, gender expression is an external presentation of that gender and sexual orientation represents an identity label that considers one's internal sense of being a gender and a defined attraction to the gender expression of others (Serano 2007). Gender inclinations are assumed intrinsic traits to personhood because they occur on a deep, subconscious level, and endure despite social forces and conscious attempts to purge or eradicate them. This framework assumes that there are aspects of gender that are not purely social and that there are social consequences to not performing gender properly.

The construct of a subconscious sex assumes that a 'true self' precedes socialization efforts toward a gender presentation that aligns with assigned sexes at birth. The subconscious sex intersects with the conscious mind's processing of the physical attributes of one's body, their biology. Serano (2007) holds that the intersection between conscious and subconscious sex is commonly referred to as gender identity. The conscious mind is aware of the ways in which the social world functions, interacts with and relates to the physicality of one's body. Dress allows transpersons to shape their bodies and communicate externally and socially the self-image that exists in the mind's eye. Serano has called this first encounter with the reality and materiality of an 'authentic self' a 'mirror epiphany'. She described an inexplicable and inescapable urge to wrap lacey curtains around her body like a dress. Seeing herself in the mirror, she said, 'made absolute perfect sense' (Serano 2007: 78). Despite the adversities associated with dress, clothing and body modification also provides transgender individuals with tools to construct the gender that emanates from within and grants transpersons the power to communicate how they imagine themselves.

Dress and Power

Dress gives transpersons the power to tell their stories authentically and the ability to abandon imposed narratives about the correct way to present gender identity. Dress codes vary across cultures and represent visual communication that often precedes verbal communication. In western culture, sociocultural rules about dress modifications and accoutrements visually declare for

and attest to the ideology and categories of persons' gender roles (Eicher and Roach-Higgins 1992; Geczy and Karaminas 2013). Dress is culturally situated and elicits responses across various spatial, relational, sensory and temporal contexts (Bugg 2013).

Guy and Banim (2000) suggest that women's dress is structurally positioned where hierarchical elements of dress underpin women's clothing use to communicate identity through the presentation of self. Within patriarchal society, women's dress is marked and constrained by the male gaze (Tannen 2004). Women's dress is marked by nonverbal communication that alters the base meaning of dress because the hierarchical position of women gives dress a structurally located meaning (Guy and Banim 2000; Tannen 2004). At the same time, Guy and Banim (2000) contend that dress shows selfhood and represents sites of pleasure, gratification, resistance and subversion. Similarly, for transgender individuals, dress can represent a dialectic between constraint to express selfhood within the structural hierarchy of gendered dress and the ability to use dress to enact agency, resilience and authenticity.

Early in life, dress can symbolize to transpersons their limitations in the ability to self-actualize. Conversely, scholars have found that body modifications and appearance changes for transpersons represent sites for resilience and reclaiming the body (McGuire and Chrisler 2016), as well as identity communication that elicits self and social acceptance (McGuire et al. 2016). In a study on body art among transpersons, McGuire and Chrisler (2016) found that transpersons' tattoos marked their body with meaning related to transition status, social relationships and personal identity. Body art and body modifications represented transpersons' ownership and control over their own body. In another study, McGuire et al. (2016) found that transpersons reported body satisfaction and self-acceptance after they began to transition via dress and medical transition. Social transition with dress and body modifications allowed transgender individuals to see their authentic selves reflected, either in the mirror or throughout social interactions.

Previous scholarship has illustrated that dress is a gendered form of nonverbal communication (Bugg 2013; Eicher and Roach-Higgins 1992; Freitas et al. 1997; Geczy and Karaminas 2013). While dress has structural limits and restrictions, the wearer of dress has the capacity to make dress their own, determine their identity and group membership and construct and control their body. Transpersons use and mimic the tools and symbols of dress to ensure they are read and affirmed as a certain gender. Transpersons' individual agency is also limited by the social forces of hetero and cisnormativity, which delegitimate transbodies and queer genders. This chapter explores how transpersons overcome structural oppression to create, sustain and affirm their gender identity using dress.

Researchers were interested in understanding how transpersons discussed creating and maintaining their gender identity across development. Based on review of current literature and theory, we sought to uncover the ways in which transpersons employed clothing and body modification to externally construct their internal image of themselves. Furthermore, we were curious how a diverse group of transgender individuals sustained their authentic self-representation across personal development and varied social contexts. The following empirical work showcases how dress is a vehicle to experience, embody and enact gender identity and the multitude of ways in which dress can destabilize and displace the construct of gender.

Methods

Narratives about dress came from 90 transgender-identified individuals aged 15–26 (M = 22.56; SD = 2.9), between May 2010 and April 2013. Participants were recruited from eight cities in the United States, as well as Canada and Ireland. Just over half of the sample reported they were assigned female at birth, 57.8%. Participants generated 24 unique labels for their current gender identity and 24 unique labels for their sexual orientations. While there was considerable variation, gender identities fell within the following spectrums: transfeminine (37%), transmasculine (31%) and nonbinary or genderqueer (32%). Similarly, sexual orientation status was reported with six spectrum categories: mostly heterosexual (22.2%), gay or lesbian (18.8%), bisexual (6.6%), queer (32.2%), pansexual or fluid sexuality (16.6%) and asexual (3.6%).

Researchers intentionally recruited a robust ethnically and economically diverse sample. In the United States, 48% of participants identified as white, 15% Latinx, 12% Black, 8% Indigenous Native, 5% Asian or Pacific Islander and 4% biracial. 11% identified as white Irish and 4.5% white Canadian. Among participants, 21% had some or were still attending high-school, 18% had a high-school diploma, 36% had some or were still attending college and 24% had a college degree.

Participants were recruited from sexual and gender minority community centers and via online listserv distribution in collaboration with the community centers and a study website. Researchers traveled to target cities for 3 to 8 days to conduct in-person interviews. At least two interviewers were present and interviews occurred in private rooms at the youth center or at alternative locations, such as local coffee shops, libraries and in participants' homes. Participants were paid 20 US dollars or 15 euros as compensation for their time.

Data Analysis

A team of student research assistants listened to and transcribed the interview voice recordings verbatim. The interview covered fourteen topics relevant to transpersons' lived experiences. Interview questions related to the topic of dress and gender identity development were in the gender identity development and body image sections of the interview. Researchers analyzed data via a multistage content analysis. First, all references to dress and gender identity were located within all the transcripts. Only looking at references to dress, researchers then coded any reference to creating or maintaining gender identity with the use of clothing or style of dress. Through an iterative process of coding and discussion, researchers established reliability in the coding scheme and refined placement of participants' quotes into the appropriately defined conceptual category.

Findings

Analyses revealed that dress was a powerful tool to create and sustain affirmed gender identity by bringing the subconscious sex into material reality. Participants' narratives revealed that dress brought an internalized sense of gender into co-construction with social norms, ideals and expectations surrounding dress. Researchers coded participants' descriptions of dress in relation to their gender identity into two overarching conceptual categories about the ways in which dress created ($n = 62$) and sustained ($n = 63$) trans participants' affirmed gender identity.

Dress and the Construction of Gender Identity

Participants described their initial experiences with affirming dress as one of the first critical exposures to gender possibilities ($n = 27$). Emma told interviewers, 'I used to cross dress in hiding […] I knew in the back of my mind something was up. But, I had no way of understanding it' (white, 24, female and genderqueer). Analyses revealed that dress served as a tool for identity exploration ($n = 32$). Participants described marking themselves with dress, an evolution of their personal style in relation to gender transition, and the symbols of clothing in various social contexts. Lastly, participants described using dress as a vehicle to communicate their subconscious sex that brought their internalized sense of gender identity into the social world ($n = 20$).

First critical exposure ($n = 27$). Participants described the safety of dressing in gender-affirming ways in private as a pivotal first step to bring their subconscious sex into public. One participant said she 'wandered around the house while

everyone was gone'. She said, 'it was fun and terrifying at the same time' (Casey, white, 24, transfemale). After describing her first experiences playing dress-up with her aunt and friend, Jamie describes continuing to dress femininely in private. She said, 'I would stare at myself in the mirror and I would try to have a feminine smile and I would just smile and look at myself in the mirror […] I just love that I was looking beyond the eyes, looking at myself' (white, 21, female). Another person told interviewers that their experiences with the mirror changed because they had 'different hair, different clothes and a different presence' (Adrian, 20, genderqueer). Casey, Jamie and Adrian all described dress as one of the first ways that they could feel an internalized sense of self reflected to them. Therefore, dress represented one of the first critical exposures to creating transgender participants' affirmed gender identity.

Tool of exploration (*n* = 32). Dress also helped participants explore their gender identity. Tia explained, 'in the beginning it was all about pretty dresses, be a girl!' (Pacific Islander, 25, female). After observing ciswomen's variable style of dress, Tia concluded that 'there is no specific way of dressing like a woman'. Other participants described how clothing helped them explore beyond the gender binary to construct genderqueer and gender fluid possibilities. Alex declared, 'I have recently reclaimed the color pink. For a while, I refused to wear it and I hated it' (white, 16, BRRL). Alex went on to describe how pink served as a tool for social recognition. Ze said, 'I definitely feel like if I am wearing certain clothes, it is easier for other people, like me […] genderqueer kids, to recognize me. Then, we give each other a nod or something'. Narratives showed that participants explored gender identity expression related to various social spaces and cultural contexts, revealing that social meanings associated with dress varied.

Vehicle to communicate (*n* = 20). Another integral aspect of creating gender identity through dress was the act of properly communicating the internalized sense of self externally and generating the correct social meanings that the wearer was trying to portray. Margaret said, 'as far as gender expression, I suppose clothing is one of the most important parts because it is something I can do to change the way I'm pursued or make certain gender statements' (white, 26, transfeminine). Keith explained, 'when I get read as male, I feel a lot more comfortable […]. If my girlfriend says something like "your chest is kind of showing today", I'll immediately find a sweatshirt. It can be 100 degrees out and I'll find a sweatshirt' (white, 21, transmasculine/genderqueer). The social meanings of dress may prevent or grant transpersons access in certain social situations.

Nev described feeling trapped by the social meaning of dress. She told interviewers,

> I hate the fact that I have to dress a certain way because it's expected for work. There was this thing recently, a formal dinner. I would have had to wear a formal suit jacket and I didn't go. That was a pretty big decision in my career.
> (white/Irish, 25, female)

While Nev chose not to attend an event because the required dress would undermine her gender identity, she also discussed how dress granted her access to women's spaces. She said, 'I think the clothes, the way you can express yourself with clothes and nail polish and hand movements […] I love that. Being more expressive, more emotional. You have groups of women together and there's this sisterhood'. Participants' narratives consistently revealed that dress was a vehicle to communicate their internalized sense of gender identity and to achieve membership in social groups through the symbols and meanings associated with dress.

Analyses revealed that trans participants' experiences with dress directly influenced the external realization of their subconscious sex. Adrian, Jamie and Casey's narratives highlighted first exposures to seeing their internal self externally in the mirror. Dress served as a way of first creating gender identity for the self. Participants described dressing and practicing mannerisms in the mirror and beginning to see their 'true selves' for the first time. Narratives also showed that dress served as a tool for exploration. Many participants described how the messages they received about the gender of clothing did not align with their own experiences of clothing and gender. Tia explained that gender identity was a way of existing in the world, not necessarily a gendered style of dress. Alex spoke of creating new gender meanings for clothing by bringing pink into the lexicon of genderqueer identity. Finally, participants described creating their gender identity in co-construction with the social world by using dominant social symbols associated with dress to access social group membership. Keith noted the comfort and self-esteem associated with society 'reading' the correct messages associated with male dress. Nev's narrative revealed how dress grants access to social spaces and groups and how that group membership contributes to the creation and sustainment of gender identity.

Dress and the Maintenance of Gender Identity

Participants' narratives showed that dress was an important aspect of the everyday maintenance of their affirmed gender identities (n = 38). Emma told interviewers that she maintained gender identity authenticity by 'playing up [her] femininity without doing it in a drag way, but actually learning how to present [herself] in the same way that women [her] age present themselves' (white, 24, female

and genderqueer). Emma's emphasis on presentation was reflected in multiple participants' descriptions of using dress to shape, accentuate and hide certain attributes of the body (n = 20). Narratives revealed repetitive stylized acts of daily dress rituals that prepared transgender participants to engage with the world confidently (n = 22). For example, multiple transmasculine participants described the physical discomfort of wearing a binder, every day, alongside the confidence and self-esteem associated with the way a binder shaped the body to appear masculine. Participants' descriptions highlighted the performativity of dress to undo, do and redo gender identity overtime.

Shape the gendered body (n = 20). When asked how clothing is related to body image and genderqueer expression, Maya replied,

> I think clothing is really important to me and I feel I do have to dress in very specific ways. I guess everybody does. But gender wise, I feel, I really have to think about what I'm going to wear and the size and fit of things. Hiding certain body parts and accentuating others.
>
> (white, 22, genderqueer)

Emphasis on the size and fit of clothing for the explicit purposes of hiding, shaping or accentuating bodily features was consistent across narratives. Tanya's remarks mirrored Maya's,

> I've actually changed out my entire wardrobe. Before, I only wore sweatpants and baggy shirts because, I believe, that subconsciously I was embarrassed about my personal appearance. My body structures. So, I hid it under over-sized clothing. Now, all that's been replaced with more fitting stuff.
>
> (white, 19, genderqueer)

Some participants described hiding gendered body characteristics like chest, hips, torso and shoulders under clothing. Others described accentuating areas of the body, such as using a belt to pull the waist in and provide the look of a curvier hip.

Across the trans spectrum participants noted using clothing to shape the body. For example, Trip and Mirror both described 'stuffing a bra' for the first time and seeing their bodies the way they had imagined. 'Depending on the clothes you wear, that can change the shape of your body and all sorts of things', Clark Kent remarked (white/Irish, 23, male). Even when participants were wearing gendered clothing consistent with their assigned sex at birth, they nevertheless described the power of clothing to shape their affirmed gender identity. Layla told interviewers,

> I was wearing boy clothes and they started coming in tighter […]. That is when I figured out that I had a little shape and the boys on the block would be like 'you gotta big butt, whoop-de-whoop!' Those were the days.
>
> (African American, 24, genderless)

Analyses showed that participants maintained gender identity through the service of dress to shape their bodies in ways that reflected and communicated their subconscious sexes. The ability to shape bodies with clothing was a moving and shifting target across time and context. Participants' description about the power of dress to shape uncovered the repetition and rituals that transpersons must engage in to maintain gender identity authenticity.

Repetition and ritual ($n = 22$). Participants' self-concept, self-esteem, sociability, gender identity and dress were all in fluctuation throughout the processes of transition. Dylan remarked,

> I have good days and bad days. Certain clothes that I used to wear don't fit anymore. I put on a shirt and I see it's accentuating parts of me I don't like. It's hard for me to want to go out and party. I'm always like, 'is everyone paying as much attention to my chest as I am?' That makes me a little socially awkward.
>
> (Native American, 21, transmasculine/genderqueer)

Dylan revealed the hyperawareness and ritualistic wondering about dress and their bodies that some transpersons experience.

Henry provided reasoning behind the hyperawareness of others' perceptions stating, 'the way I decide to dress in any particular day affects the way everyone looks at me […] Getting dressed in the morning is a big part of my ritual' (white, 16, genderqueer). Nikki told interviewers she 'strain[ed] for more girly things' (African American, 22, transfeminine). Todd described the strain to find clothes that fit his body frame, stating that poorly fitting clothing was 'definitely something that negatively affect[ed] [his] body image' (white, 23, transguy). Each participant could describe their own way of exploiting dress to expose and stabilize gender identity authenticity.

For example, Elliot elucidated on the repetition and ritual of dress:

> It takes me a very long time to get dressed in the morning, which is funny because I wear the same thing every day […] I think it's really about presentation, being sort of consistent, and consistent decisions. There isn't a rule book to fall back on for that.
>
> (white, 24, masculine-genderqueer)

Transgender and genderqueer participants highlighted their conscious efforts to define and stabilize a gender aesthetic that felt authentic, which, sometimes, meant borrowing from and reconfiguring dominant dress norms. However, Bear shared an interesting story about the limits and lingering restrictions of dress and gender fluidity. They start to describe clothing, 'I'm kind of afraid to wear feminine clothes now'. Bear explained how coming out as genderqueer meant that they had to 'embrace a masculine presentation' (white, 19, transweird). According to Bear, Elliot's ritual was justifiable because inconsistency can create a lack of recognition that Bear described as a 'loss of credibility in some people's eyes'.

Performativity. Shaneses' narrative exposed most obviously the tightrope dance of transpersons to perform, undo, do and redo gender identity through dress. Shanese described how social meanings for dress and body modifications varied across cultural contexts and gender identity, she begins:

> I have an African American friend and she is trans. She is overly feminine, so a lot of African American men and women get her Truth. They know what she is because Black women are not overly feminine […]. When you are trans, I believe you need to be a little more mellow. That's why it worked out for me. Because I wasn't overly feminine. I was just, 'Hey! It is what it is'.
>
> (African American, 22, female)

Like Bear's analysis, Shanese proposed that the inconsistency between her trans friend's overt femininity compared to cis Black women's lack of over-performance of femininity exposed the truth that her friend was a transwoman. Shanese bragged that her ability to effortlessly *do* Black femininity worked out in her favor.

Gender identity and expression construction and maintenance were not as effortless for other transgender participants who articulated dress as a way of performing, reproducing or redoing gender norms. Finnegan emphasized that because their body, voice and frame were feminine they 'definitely restricted what [they] wore' to 'maintain a neutral ground […] in the constant battle to be read' (white, 26, gender fluid). Allen determined that 'not passing [was] more of a danger'. He explained, 'the ability to play with gender as a male starts to become a lot more physically dangerous' (24, male). Finnegan heavily recreated masculinity through dress to counterbalance their implicit femininity, while Allen argued that completely replicating masculine gender norms through dress was a form of survival. Repeat performance of dominant gender norms served as a useful way to communicate gender identity consistently over time and to connect with others who understood and approved of normative gender presentation.

Conversely, other participants discussed their ability and delight to play with, resist and undo gender via dress. Michelle told interviewers that 'clothes have

no sex, no gender, no gender identity. It's how they're worn that is how they're perceived' (African American, 18, female). Michelle's perspective highlighted the freedom that transpersons can experience with dress to intentionally shape an authentic material presence. Some narratives exhibited the fluidity and capacity of dress to change and adapt with participants across gender transition, into different sociocultural contexts and over time. Victoria asserted, 'using clothes, you can totally look like a dude one day and a girl the next. Really powerful!' (white, 22, transfemale). Tia said, 'dress reflects how I feel […]. At the end of the day what you wear is self-expression'. Tia and Victoria's statements move dress beyond creating and sustaining a specific gender identity to revealing power, feeling and an essence of self-expression.

Analyses uncovered the ways in which transgender individuals utilize dress to perform and communicate gender identity in multiple social contexts and throughout development. The fluidity of dress allowed participants to self-actualize over and over as they explored and established personal gender identities and expressions. Multiple participants noted the importance of dress to maintain their sense of self and to constantly be read and affirmed in their self-image. Analyses showed that participants' performance of gender varied. Shanese and others placed preference on enacting cisgender privilege through mirroring and eliciting recognition of the casual and taken-for-granted aspects of cisgender dress. While Shanese described a lack of performing, Nikki described straining for girly things and Allen and Elliot remarked about the dangers of transgressing fixed gender norms, suggesting the importance of repetition and consistency in dress. Finally, narratives showed the participants discussed rejecting, undoing, resisting and playing with gender via the malleable nature of dress.

Conclusion

Participant's stories about dress reiterated the mirror epiphany described by Serano (2007). Dress helped transpersons make a conscious connection between how they imagined themselves and the material reality of their physical presence. Participants described dress as a way of abandoning imposed narratives about gender identity and expression and the ability to articulate an authentic sense of self. Dress represented the first critical exposure to gender expression possibilities and introduced transpersons into an embodied experience that 'felt right'. Some participants attempted to mirror dominant dress and fashions to elicit the recognition of cultural dress symbols. Others choose to resist the implicit dichotomized symbols of gendered dress by reclaiming colors, styles, patterns, textures and shapes.

Many participants warned about the boundary of social recognition and suggested that to cross the boundary meant serious punishment. Societal-mediated survival represents conformity or the resources garnered from the appropriate application and recognition of social symbols (i.e. doing sex and gender properly) (Butler [1990] 2006). Shanese exposed that cispeople can read transpersons' truth because potential over-performance of gender expression is read on a drag spectrum, where gender is a performance rather than a given. Conversely, Allen spoke to the transmasculine experience and toxic masculinity for which he described a threat to his life for a departure from over-performing masculinity. The more passable Allen became, the more dangerous it was for him to play with or underperform gender.

Despite the lingering limitations, restrictions and boundaries of dress, transpersons' narratives also revealed their agency to destabilize the gender of dress. Participants spoke of bravery to 'just put clothes on and go for it'. They described creating new meanings for colors and for makeup, breaking down the barriers of staunch masculinity and finding a space where guy's dress was not 'so boring' or where women's dress was not 'so sexualized'. Dress allowed transpersons to create their own narrative and self-determine their own embodied experience. Dress sets the stage for an escape from one's assigned sex at birth toward the liberation of loving, accepting and affirming oneself.

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NOTES

1. Authors use the terms 'transpersons' or 'transgender individuals' to denote any individual of transgender experience, which represents a broad heterogenous group of people with varying experiences of incongruence between an internal image of self and their assigned sex at birth (Bockting 2014; Catalpa and McGuire 2018; Diamond et al. 2011).
2. Authors define dress as a comprehensive term of both direct body modifications and supplements added to the body, which are imbued with social meanings understood by wearers and viewers (Eicher and Roach-Higgins 1992).

Withering Heights: High Heels and Hegemonic Masculinity

Elizabeth Semmelhack

> *The other beauties belong to women; the beauty of stature is the only beauty of men.*
>
> — Michel de Montaigne

The high heel, long a prominent signifier of femininity in the West, has come to be a normative, naturalized and often mandated part of women's attire and performance of gender. This essentializing of the heel ignores the use of heels as *non-transgressive* accessories of men's fashion in the West to proclaim male privilege. It also ignores how men's rejection of the heel has been central to expressions of hegemonic masculinity (see Figure 1). In order to more fully understand and critique the complex roles that heels have played in the construction of gender in the West, it is imperative to establish a more accurate understanding of the history of their use in fashion.

The heel was neither a European invention nor was it originally worn by women (Semmelhack 2008). The earliest clear evidence for heels found so far by the author dates to tenth-century Persia where men wore heeled footwear in tandem with the stirrup for horseback riding (Semmelhack 2015: 12). Over the centuries, the use of heels spread across western Asia and by the sixteenth century, Persians, Ottomans, Poles, Hungarians and Mughals all wore heeled footwear (Semmelhack 2015: 11–14). Western Europeans were aware of heels long before their adoption into the western wardrobe as seen in European paintings and prints that depict western Asian men wearing heels (Semmelhack 2015: 14). Furthermore, there is evidence that some examples of heeled footwear had made it into European hands through trade and travel (Semmelhack 2015: 17). Yet despite this longstanding awareness of heeled footwear in the 'East' as well as the established tradition in the West of adopting and adapting fashion from the 'East', it was not until the turn of the seventeenth century that heels suddenly became a feature of western European dress.

FIGURE 1: This pair of well-worn boots feature a significant heel. Their wearer had once been a cowboy and continued to dress like a cowboy long after becoming a farmer. American, 1940. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division (Photo: Russell Lee) (LC-USF33-012733-M2).

The reasons for this new western European interest in heels were linked to profound cultural and economic shifts set in motion by a number of factors at the end of the sixteenth century (Semmelhack 2015: 18–25). These included expanded seafaring trade, the destabilization of European textile markets, increased threats from the Ottoman Empire and the rise of Persia under Shāh ʻAbbās I (r. 1588–1629) (Semmelhack 2015: 18). Trade relations with Persia had been established by England and then Holland in the middle of the sixteenth century (Matthee 2009: 138) and Shāh ʻAbbās I sought to strengthen these ties, as well as to secure political alliances with other European countries, in order to counter the increasing power of the Ottoman Empire. His impressive heel-wearing cavalry – one of the largest in the world – captured the European imagination, perhaps explaining the sudden debut of the heel in western men's fashion at this time (Semmelhack 2008: 14). Certainly, the earliest incarnations of the western European heel closely mirror western Asian examples (Semmelhack 2015: 24–25).

Despite the abrupt appearance of the heel in European men's dress, contemporary mentions of this new fashion are frustratingly scant; however, the abundance of images of men in heels from the opening years of the seventeenth century provide clear evidence for the prominence of the heel in upper-class men's fashion. The earliest depictions come from northern Europe where trading relations with Persia were strongest; many of these images depict men in heels on horseback and wearing heeled riding boots in keeping with western Asian models. These depictions were followed by images of men in distinctly *non*-equestrian attire, suggesting that heels were quickly being more broadly integrated into upper-class men's fashion. By the 1610s women's fashion was incorporating elements of men's attire and as part of this trend, the heel along with plumed hats, tobacco pipes and weaponry were used to add a masculine edginess to women's dress (Semmelhack 2015: 29; see Ribeiro 2006: 177).

For the rest of the seventeenth century, although European men and women both wore heeled footwear, the types of heels they wore began to be differentiated. Slowly, over the century, heels made of wood and covered with leather came to be associated with formal dress and domestic spaces, ultimately coming to be viewed as effeminate, a stigma that remains to this day (Semmelhack 2015: 32). In addition, this type of heel in women's fashion became increasingly narrow and attenuated in design, another distinction with long-lasting impact (Semmelhack 2015: 32). In contrast, heels made of stacked leather were predominantly worn by men (Semmelhack 2015: 32) and came to be connected to 'manly action', an association that would likewise continue to resonate in men's fashion well beyond the seventeenth century (Semmelhack 2015: 32–36). Even today, men's footwear featuring any type of heel, from cowboy boots to men's business shoes, are almost invariably made of, or made to look like, stacked leather.

As the gendered meanings of heels began to solidify in relation to their construction during the seventeenth century, one of the most remarkable periods in the history of men in high heels occurred when the French king Louis XIV (r. 1638–1715) transformed the upper-class fashion of wearing red heels into a signifier of male political privilege (Semmelhack 2015: 38). Substantial, blocky heels either painted red or covered in red leather became an established part of court dress in France, and although the political status associated with red heels was limited to France, the country's significant influence on European fashion gave red heels cachet for men beyond its borders. In England, for example, red heels first represented Continental sophistication and having gone on the Grand Tour. However, as the political and cultural tensions between England and France grew in intensity with the onset of the Second Hundred Years War, English distrust of the French was increasingly expressed through their derision of red heels for men (Semmelhack 2015: 36–38).

Even in the eighteenth century this association continued. Alexander Pope used both red heels and heels over the apparently acceptable height of one-inch-and-a-half as a means of shaming those who thought they were better than their peers in his satirical list of club rules for men published in *The Guardian* in 1713:

> If any Member shall take Advantage from the Fulness or Length of his Wig, or any part of his Dress, or the immoderate Extent of his Hat, or otherwise, to seem larger or higher than he is, *it is ordered*, he shall wear Red Heels to his Shoes, and a Red Feather in his Hat, which may apparently mark and set Bounds to the Extremities of his small Dimension, that all People may readily find him out between his Hat and his Shoes […]. IV. If any Member, in direct Contradiction to the Fundamental Laws of the Society, shall wear the Heels of his shoes exceeding one inch and half, it shall be interpreted as an open Renunciation of Littleness and the Criminal shall instantly be expell'd. Note. The Form to be used in expelling a Member shall be in the Words; Go from among us, and be tall if you can!
>
> (Pope [1713] 1886: 524)

Pope's use of heels as a means of illustrating male vanity had more to do with society in general than simple fashion. The idea that any man would dare consider himself higher than others reflected Enlightenment thinking and its arguments that all *men* were created equal and that education not privilege of birth should factor in who ruled.

Despite these radical ideals of equality, privilege of birth retained its primacy, although now it was the broader and more inclusive privilege of being born male rather than female (Semmelhack, 2008: 25). Rationality, the newly identified pan-masculine quality, needed to be clothed in garments that reflected this new ideal. Men's fashion began to move toward a kind of democratic sameness and was contrasted to the 'frivolous' fashion, which now came to be defined as an exclusively feminine interest (see Kuchta 2002). High heels worn by men suddenly seemed 'unnatural' and even 'ungodly', and men who continued to wear heels risked being labeled old-fashioned, or worse, vain and effeminate, especially once heels were left to women to wear across Europe and colonial North America in the middle of the eighteenth century (Semmelhack 2015: 38).

For the rest of the eighteenth century, high, narrow, wooden heels covered in textile or leather were expressly 'feminine' and over the subsequent decades they accumulated a complicated and complex set of enduring meanings connected to changing ideas around essentialized femininity, most specifically those having to do with female desirability (Semmelhack 2008: 21–26). By the end of the century, high heels had become so central to women's attire that they had come to be seen as part of the female 'arsenal' of seduction and were increasingly connected to

ideas of sexual manipulation (Semmelhack 2008: 27–30). In the lead up to the French Revolution, concerns about women's purported use of fashion to exert nefarious control over men began to increase (e.g. see Disraeli 1794). By the turn of the century, the taint of aristocratic degeneracy and maleficence caused high heels to fall out of women's fashion throughout the western world, leaving flat-soled shoes to dominate women's fashion for the next fifty years (Semmelhack 2008: 27–30).

In contrast, the heel in men's fashion saw a short-lived revival in the early nineteenth century when pantaloons came into vogue. Just as the heel was abandoned in women's dress because of its aristocratic associations, breeches were likewise abandoned in men's dress. They were replaced with new tight-fitting knit pantaloons designed to be worn taut, a look that was achieved by a strap attached to the hem that could be slipped under the foot (Semmelhack 2015: 45). At first, the legs of pantaloons were worn tucked inside boots but eventually some men began to wear them over their boots with the pantaloon strap slipped under the sole (Semmelhack 2015: 45). Some period depictions show men wearing their pantaloons with low-heeled footwear but more often men are shown in footwear with heels high enough to keep the pantaloon strap from slipping off the back of the boot. While natural male height remained an important tool for demarcating gender difference, the fleeting fashion for pantaloons provided men with an excuse to wear slightly height-augmenting footwear. Nevertheless, given the heel's longstanding associations with male foppishness and feminine deceit, it soon passed out of favor in western men's fashion as well (Semmelhack 2015: 45). The one place where heels for men had any currency in the nineteenth century was on the boots worn by cowboys out in the American West. Westward expansion following the American Civil War and the country's profound reverence for the ideal of masculine self-sufficiency eventually transformed the frontier cowboy into an icon of 'American Values' whose high-heeled boots and swagger spoke to ideas of rugged masculinity and individualism.

The first boots worn by cowboys were simply conventional military boots pressed into civilian service, but as the century progressed purpose-made cowboy boots became notable for their high heels (Semmelhack 2015: 46–56). Despite increasing attention paid to the height of cowboy boot heels, some commentators even teasing that they were 'French heels', the cowboy was being transformed into a national signifier of unfettered freedom and self-reliance and his heels were deemed to be in keeping with his earned right to peacock. Yet, despite the popularization of the hypermasculine image of the cowboy in dime novels, rodeos and eventually film, heels for men in other contexts became increasingly stigmatized (Semmelhack 2015: 46–56).

At the end of the nineteenth century Darwinian concepts of 'survival of the fittest' permeated 'scientific' inquiry. Some 'scientists' began to measure and compare human bodies to determine everything from supposed propensity for criminality to 'evidence' of gender and racial inferiority. Anthropometry, as it was called, was 'a branch of anthropology […] used as one means of classifying men into different racial groups or of investigating the probable affinities of one group to another' (Adams 1893: 237). Height in particular was used as a measurement of superiority when comparing men. A table created for this purpose by the Anthropometric Committee of the British Association in 1883 listed male height by racial classification. Aside from the exceptionally tall men found in Samoa and Tahiti, the English professional class was identified as the tallest (Adams 1893: 238). Unsurprisingly, anthropometrics was also used by critics of Women's Suffrage to assert the 'natural' superiority of men over women. As these metrics were being used to condone the brutality of colonial expansion, to delegitimize female enfranchisement, as well as to determine superiority among men, the importance of natural height for men made the wearing of heels by men highly problematic. The principal problem was that if they were worn as a means of increasing height artificially, they were seen as highlighting rather than correcting the wearer's failure to meet the ideal of 'natural' masculine stature.

The trend to connect racial superiority to male height only increased in the twentieth century. Paul Popenoe, author of *Applied Eugenics*, warned in 1918 that immigrants to the United States brought with them 'diminutive stature, a depreciation of morality, an increase in gross fecundity, and a considerable lowering of the level of average natural ability' (Popenoe 1920: 301). Two years later, Knight Dunlap promoted the idea that male height was central to male attractiveness, asserting that women's

> preference for stature undoubtedly harks back to more primitive times when it was above all important that man should be a fighter and hunter in order to secure food for his wife and children, and protect them against wild beasts and against the designs of other males.
>
> (Dunlap 1920: 22)

Given the opinion that 'high heels look effeminate and grotesque on a man' according to the 1939 book *Short Stature and Height Increase*, the only option short men had to meet gendered standards of height was to wear shoes that effected 'considerable elevation of the feet from the ground while presenting an external appearance no different from that of an ordinary shoe' (Gerling 1939: 148) – in other words, hidden 'lifts' that were discreet inserts worn inside shoes to offer a modest boost to height without the stigma associated with heels (Semmelhack 2015: 60–61).

Connections between male height and male superiority continued to be made during the Second World War. An early Nazi eugenics program, *Lebensborn*, sought to breed 'Aryans' with 'desirable' characteristics including tall stature in order to create a 'master race'. Nazi ideas of racial 'purity', in part informed by anthropometrics, were central to an odious ideology that was used to legitimize and justify their genocidal projects (Bartrop and Dickerman 2017: 394). Ideas of male height and superiority were not limited to the Nazis, stature was a prominent feature in both Axis and Allied propaganda. Many countries depicted their soldiers as tall and their enemies as short, or conversely, enemies were represented as implausibly oversized in order to convey the enormity of their threat (Semmelhack 2015: 60). Even women represented in home-front propaganda were overwhelmingly depicted as naturally tall and sturdy, shod in practical low-heeled footwear doing 'men's work' such as riveting aeroplanes together or making munitions (Semmelhack 2008: 44–46). The 'pin-ups' that decorated fighter planes and soldier barracks, however, were depicted as desirably diminutive and the high heels they wore would be central to redefining idealized femininity in the postwar period (Semmelhack 2008: 48).

After the war, fashion in both Europe and the United States was part of the larger cultural agenda to promote gender difference and reestablish 'traditional' gender roles. The male ideal was the tall broad-shouldered businessman in low-heeled business shoes, while the female ideal focused on cinched waists and high heels, the highest heel being the thin stiletto invented in the early 1950s (Semmelhack 2012: 12–20). This postwar gender binary expressed through dress was widely promoted in popular culture, overtly through aspirational representations, but also through parodies in the form of purposefully inept comic performances of drag by men in 'women's clothing', which sought to burlesque femininity and highlight the 'unnaturalness' of men attempting to appear feminine. Television comedian Milton Berle's famous character Aunt Mildred epitomized this type of performance, which included his apparent 'inability' to walk in heels successfully. Likewise, the 1959 film *Some Like it Hot* depicted Tony Curtis and Jack Lemmon in women's dress to comedic effect. *Variety Magazine* maintained that it was

> the funniest picture in recent memory. Revolves around the age-old theme of men masquerading as women […] [the] shot of Curtis and Lemmon walking down the station platform dressed as girls, swinging their hips with the anxious look of one who has yet to learn how to walk on high heels, brings the house down.
>
> (Anon. 1959: 6)

The absurdity of seeing men in heels and other articles of women's dress reinforced and naturalized gender binaries so recently threatened by women's competence in traditionally male occupations during the war.

By the 1960s many people were interested in challenging the rigid representations of gender, including proponents of the 'Peacock Revolution', as it was termed at the time, who encouraged men to be more adventurous in their attire and to reclaim their 'natural' male privilege of display. Indeed, this call for greater ornament and colorfulness in men's dress, and the concomitant encouragement to consume fashion, was not an attempt to disrupt the gender binary but rather was an attempt to reorient the binary along more 'natural' lines. The Peacock Revolution suggested that the decorative male followed the natural order of things and that men should reclaim their biological right to be the more ornamented of the sexes as exemplified in nature by peacocks and lions (e.g. see Taylor 1969: 62). Because this was supposed to be a 'reclamation' of a distinctly male prerogative, the fashions that were advocated were expressly inspired by the male dress of other periods and other cultures. The Peacock Revolution did not incorporate aspects of 'feminine' attire, nor did it promote forms of non-gendered dress (Semmelhack 2015: 68). The higher heels adopted by some men at this time typically came from footwear explicitly coded as male, for example, John Lennon had the heels on his Beatle boots replaced with the higher heels of male Spanish flamenco dancer's footwear (Semmelhack 2015: 68).

By the early 1970s fashion began promoting heels of unprecedented heights for men as a means of expressing 'masculinity and confidence' (Sloane 1972: F9). Although there was some resistance to the idea of men in heels among traditionalists, they and the fashion-forward men who chose to wear heels were reassured through advertisements and other media that the high heels being offered to men were *not* inspired by women's footwear. It was made clear that the thick sturdy heels on men's footwear referenced men's heels of the past, such as those worn in the court of Louis XIV, and were in no way influenced by the narrow 'feminine' heel (see Figure 2).

At the time, some conjectured that advances in women's rights were responsible for the trend for heeled footwear in men's fashion (Carter 1972: W4). Arguably, the 'battle of the sexes' did play a significant role as not only did the high heels in men's fashion reference the footwear worn by dominant men from the past, they were also positioned in the popular media as being worn by a range of hypermasculinized and hypersexualized men. Extremely racist Blaxploitation characters, specifically 'pimps', were represented in film and on television as men who flaunted their command over women, in part, through their flamboyant fashion, including high-heeled footwear (Semmelhack 2015: 72). Similarly, glam rock musicians also expressed hypermasculinity through foppish dress and high heels. Although the heterosexuality of some artists such as David Bowie and Elton John was called into question, a majority of male rock stars were positioned as heteronormative and heterosexual through the pointed publicity of their

FIGURE 2: In the early 1970s, the most popular form of footwear remained traditional lace-ups, although these were updated by the addition of high heels and platform soles. American, early 1970s. Collection of the Bata Shoe Museum (Photo: Ron Wood © Bata Shoe Museum) (S96.0066).

sexual exploits and throngs of female fans (Semmelhack 2015: 72). Even disco culture, which in its early years was a gender-nonconformist space, quickly became co-opted by mainstream culture, and the heels men wore as part of disco fashion became associated with the kind of macho heteronormativity embodied by John Travolta's character Tony Manero in the 1977 disco film *Saturday Night Fever* (Semmelhack 2015: 72). As Mark Siegel has written, these types of performances are an aspect of what anthropologists call the rite of intensification, which 'functions to restore social equilibrium where the patterns and laws of social interaction are changing' (Siegel 1980: 305).

The cultural tensions created by the Women's Liberation movement only increased in the 1980s with the expansion of women's participation in the public realm, especially in the workplace. In response, men's fashion abandoned the hypermasculine high heel and promoted a return to the traditional business brogues for the workplace. Sneakers and their association with hypermasculine athletes began to be the preferred choice for leisure (Semmelhack 2015: 58). The exception, once again, was the high-heeled cowboy boot that enjoyed a resurgence in

the United States as part of the revival of 'conservative values' as embodied by the actor-turned-rancher-turned president, Ronald Reagan (Semmelhack 2015: 76).

In the 1980s, as in the past, there was a reaffirmation of the gender binary through female impersonation in entertainment and media, notably the popular early 1980s television show *Bosom Buddies*. It featured two young, male advertising executives whose female boss exploited them and frequently took credit for their work. The protagonists were also underpaid and had found low-cost living arrangements in a women's-only apartment building pointedly named the 'Susan B. Anthony'. In order to exploit this opportunity, the men disguised themselves as women and, to the amusement of the audience, they were frequently shown in flouncy dresses and high heels to comedic effect.

Despite the wide range of fears over women's advancement imagined in the media, in reality women were far more frequently the subject of discrimination, exploitation and harassment in the workplace. In 1983 a case brought before the Wisconsin Court of Appeal argued that height-bias was a prominent feature in employment discrimination for both men and women, suggesting that discrimination toward women in the workplace should perhaps be considered through the lens of heightism rather than sexism, pointing out that short men were as poorly paid as women. In response women were advised to wear high heels (but curiously not platforms) as a supposed way to combat heightism, yet shorter men remained discouraged from wearing heels of notable height as heels for men remained unacceptable due to their association with femininity. For men seeking to increase their height, the only option was to use lifts, but even those needed to be worn with great discretion as any whiff of vanity or indication that artificial means might have been used to increase stature was harshly criticized. Leading up to the 1988 presidential election, US Democratic presidential candidate Michael Dukakis, who stood 'only' five-foot-eight inches to his opponent's six-foot-two inches, was mocked by Republicans with taunts such as 'beware of Greeks wearing lifts' (Safire 1988: 227). Whether or not Dukakis actually wore lifts, his height and the possibility of him wearing lifts led to widespread ridicule. Dukakis' loss to Republican nominee George H. Bush reinforced the conceit that natural height was a critical aspect of the masculine image.

Research into height in relation to success continued into the early 2000s. Despite the fact that many researchers were asking nuanced questions in these studies (see Persico et al. 2004; Case and Paxson 2006), the popular media simplified the message. The 2004 article 'Standing tall pays off' in the American Psychological Association journal *Monitor on Psychology* stated:

> When it comes to height, every inch counts – in fact, in the workplace, each inch above average may be worth $789 more per year, according to a study in

> the *Journal of Applied Psychology* (Vol. 89, No. 3) […]. The study also found that shorter men are slightly more likely to encounter height bias in the workplace than are shorter women.
>
> (Dittman 2004: 14)

Astonishingly, the explanation given for this discrimination echoed eugenic claims from earlier in the century. The article continues, '[t]his phenomenon might have evolutionary origins […] physical stature and prowess may be less important today, but those evolutionary appraisals may still be with us' (Dittman 2004: 14).

By the early 2000s, the reasons given for women to wear high heels in the workplace became more clearly articulated. Although women continued to be encouraged to wear high heels as a means of gaining height equity with men, high heels were also advocated as a means of increasing women's 'erotic capital'. Not only were ideas about height equity a holdover from nineteenth-century anthropometric concepts, the notion that women's most direct means to power was through the exploitation of their supposed 'erotic capital' was a recapitulation of the centuries-old ideas about heteronormative female sexual attractiveness and the manipulative way in which women supposedly use their 'capital'. To make these connections even more explicit, high-heel design began to expressly reference the footwear associated with sex work, such as the trend for shoes with exceptionally high heels, often paired with high platforms under the sole. These high heels, often called 'stripper heels', promoted the cultural idea that power for women was achievable through the heteronormative sexual manipulation of men. In the 2000s women's 'power heels' problematized women's advancements in the workplace, they linked women to the stigmatized roles of sex worker and seductress. Strangely enough, the majority of men seemed unconcerned by the fact that they were not extended access to this purported means to power (Semmelhack 2008: 58–66).

For men of short stature, however, the links between natural height and success left them frustrated by the dearth of options opened to them – a lament repeatedly revealed in the comments sections of the Internet websites focused on men's fashion (Semmelhack 2015: 79). The female-coded, hypersexualized, thin high heel was clearly off-limits to men if they chose to move easily through mainstream society, but, in addition, even 'masculine' heels inspired from the past were considered suspect. Indeed, all attempts to increase male height were derided. The treatment in the media of the 'vertically challenged' actor Tom Cruise illustrated the challenges facing shorter men, as Cruise was constantly the focus of criticism for attempting to artificially increase his height by means of lifts and heels deemed slightly too high. The 2016 US Republican presidential candidate Marco Rubio was likewise denigrated for appearing to wear boots with stacked leather heels no more than two inches in height. While the majority of criticism leveled against Rubio

in relation to his footwear mocked him because of his height, snide remarks were also made about him 'acting feminine' by wearing any sort of heel at all (Blakely 2016: 7). This type of mockery has also been leveled against a number of male celebrities seen in public wearing block heels, including Lenny Kravitz and Kanye West (see Littlejohn 2015).

Despite the persistent negativity in the early 2000s toward men wearing heels, a number of designers began offering footwear with pronounced heels for men in the 2010s. Christian Louboutin, known for designing some of the highest and most sought after 'power heels' for women, briefly introduced high heels for men in 2015. Unisex fashion designer Rad Hourani also made a point of offering unisex high-heeled footwear for a short time. The heels offered by these designers, and the majority of the heels worn by men who dared to wear them publicly, however, once again referenced sturdy men's heels from the past rather than the more slender heels associated with women's fashion. A *Vogue* article from 2017 advocating for the trend wryly defended Rubio's heeled boots by linking them directly to the heels worn by aristocratic men in the past, '[h]is Florsheim-brand boots had even been christened with the loaded style name "Duke." Rich, right? But you have to hand it to him, and the others. It takes a self-assured, kingly attitude to confidently clack against the grain' (Satenstein 2017).

In spite of these negative assessments of men in heels, some men started to wear slender high heels in non-gender-conforming ways that caused them to be celebrated rather than mocked in the mainstream media for their choice of footwear. French choreographer Yanis Marshall and his dancers Arnaud Boursain and Mehdi Mamine became an Internet sensation in 2014 for dancing in stilettos, and a number of musicians including Lady Gaga and Taylor Swift released music videos featuring men wearing narrow heels. Additionally, men interested in wearing traditionally female-coded heels in non-ironic ways have taken to social media to share images of themselves wearing high thin stilettos. The Instagram account menheels, for example, features numerous postings of men in heels and describes its page as being 'for any kind of person who is not afraid of self-expression'. This self-expression, however, cannot be understood outside of the heel's association with femininity, which explains in part why so often men who choose to wear narrow high heels are described as 'brave'.

In 2017, *Gay Times* reported that King's College graduate Tim Clifton-Wright wore red stilettos to his graduation 'for the same reason I wore them to Pride, a combination of being comfortable in who I am and a need for increased LGBT visibility in a complacent society'. The article goes on to say, '[h]is bold and defiant act of individuality earned him booming cheers from his fellow graduates and family members' (Connolly 2017). Eddie Izzard, an actor known for wearing female-coded clothing at times and who has described himself as an 'action transvestite', has said,

'you have to be "tough" in order to step out in women's clothing' (Chan 2017). The use of male-coded terms such as 'brave' and 'bold' asserts the fundamental masculinity of the wearers while also complicating attempts to blur gender binaries.

The idea of being 'tough enough' to wear women's heels is also coded into the numerous men-in-heels 'challenges' that have become popular recently. The international charity Walk a Mile in Her Shoes that seeks to end gender violence challenges men to sport bright red heels and either walk or race in them as part of the charity's fundraising and awareness activities, in part to challenge their own 'toughness' and in part to highlight how hard it is 'to be a woman'. While these events are done with the best of intentions, the name of the charity makes it clear that high heels are 'her shoes' and problematically reinforces the idea that the high heel broadly symbolizes the female experience. The amusement generated by the men who stumble and trip during these challenges also reinforces the gender binary through the longstanding trope that heels are not 'natural' to 'normal' men. The fact that these men wear the high heels in contrast to their otherwise gender-conforming dress is also central to the 'humor' perceived in the events that drives both participation and media attention.

The long history of the heel in western fashion illustrates how it has been used in the construction of male and female gender through its embrace and its rejection. If heels, in all their forms, are ever to be worn in gender neutral ways, it may not be enough to divorce female-coded heels from the pejorative signification that results from their association with the 'feminine'. Instead gender itself would have to be rejected as a tool of differentiation used to create profound inequality within the prevailing systems of power.

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PART 2

Disrupting Gender

Cute Men in Contemporary Japan

Toby Slade

One of my first experiences of living in Japan was noticing how very different it was to be a man – to dress the part. Japanese men seemed to have a freedom to be decorative, as though they had skipped Flügel's (1930) 'Great Masculine Renunciation' and its prohibition on sartorial expressions of male vanity. But more than socially sanctioned male display there was another aesthetic at work, that of cuteness, which men also seemed free to use in their clothing and styling choices. Maturity never seemed to be a dress imperative; men could use this cuteness unreservedly. In Japanese, *kawaii* means cute or adorable, and it is probably the most commonly used word in the country: ubiquitous and affirming. Donald Richie noted, 'one cannot, in Japan, escape from the cartoon, the comic book-atmosphere, the cute' (2003: 53). And it would seem to remain anecdotally true today that the cute is still everywhere in Japan. To many it would appear to be an aesthetic preference that has always existed in Japanese popular culture; yet, this chapter will trace the beginnings of the modern manifestation of the aesthetic of *kawaii* in Japan to the early 1970s, a period immediately following significant political and social unrest. Though some aspects can be traced back, especially its prevalence in manga and anime, this is certainly the period when it fully entered fashion and self-styling. While the development of *kawaii* and its political meaning from the late 1960s has been extensively studied (Kinsella 1995), particularly with regard to women, and the postwar reconceptualization of masculinity also has been extensively studied (McLelland 2000), this chapter aims to explore how this aesthetic of *kawaii* contributed to these new forms of masculinity and how the internal logics of the aesthetic itself have changed with time.

While in English the word 'cute' came from a shortening of the word 'acute' in the eighteenth century and originally meant clever and shrewd, in a self-seeking or superficial way, it came to lose its negative connotations, coming to mean simply attractive in a pretty or endearing way. In Japanese *kawaii* originally came from a phrase, '*kawahayushi*', meaning a flushed face and implying embarrassment, and

changed in meaning to mean able to be loved, or adorable or cute (Maeda 2005). In both languages, the idea originated as something negative, either an ulterior motive or embarrassment, but came to mean something positive. Being *kawaii* now, like being cute, is an implicitly auspicious and good thing. Kurita Nobuyoshi, has even gone so far as to say *kawaii* is now a 'magic term' that 'encompasses everything that is acceptable and desirable in Japan', and is Japan's 'answer to the West' (Kageyama 2006).

Whether it provides an 'acceptable alternative' to contemporary, foreign norms of beauty and attraction or perhaps some larger aesthetic opposition, representing alternate means of constructing a distinct cultural identity based in social relationships of mutual dependence rather than individualism, *kawaii* is a phenomenon that is deeply connected to the sociohistorical and the geopolitical. While *kawaii* originally became popular in fashion and self-styling as a political statement of rebellion, it has developed a self-sustaining logic of its own. It has shed much of its rebellious role, increasingly becoming an aesthetic disconnected from its original purpose.

Crucially, *kawaii* also has the role of blurring the authority of gender binaries. Although it is sometimes read as feminine, this is a mistake as in its embrace of the non-serious and the childish it actively disrupts gendered clothing norms. In so doing it often assumes an ironic attitude showing how any norm is socially constructed anyway. Men can wear cute clothes too. Playing with the spectrum of maturity is a way of gently ridiculing the preconceptions of dress and the associated gendered rules of self-presentation. Fashion stands somewhere between the worlds of high art and popular culture, often claiming a central role in both. *Kawaii* fashion is able to destabilize the distinctions of high and low, holding up a mirror to social and cultural structures that claim the space of maturity and seriousness by being deliberately neither. *Kawaii* is a central element of Japanese popular culture, providing not just a contemporary look but also a set of behavioral norms and expectations; acutely disrupting masculinity's claimed social position as the gender that is mature, serious and exclusively useful.

More Disney than Disney

Animation manifested a cute aesthetic long before it was seen in fashion. The reciprocal influence of animated cuteness began in the culture shock of American popular culture experienced during and after the Allied occupation (1945–52). Tezuka Osamu, considered one of the integral pioneers of Japanese manga and anime, had recognized the appeal of the large eyes and other cute elements of Disney's *Snow White* (1937) and *Bambi* (1942) and began to adopt these features into his own

work (Gravett 2004: 26–28). He incorporated the cute aesthetic into *Astro Boy* (*Tetsuwan atomu*) as early as 1952. In his manga and anime, he sought to be cuter than Disney, via bigger eyes and the innocent earnestness of young characters. Tezuka was also responding to the trauma of the Second World War, and drew his exaggerations of Disney with the conscious purpose of trying to erase the caricatures of evil and cunning Japanese with small eyes in American war propaganda (Gravett 2004: 26–28). In this there was a desire for cultural renewal, with the symbol of the child and their pure, uncompromised ethical judgment intended to bring about an exorcism of the false morality that had led to war. Like the Dadaists after the First World War, the child was seen as a necessary symbol of cultural atonement. In making protagonists cute, Tezuka was distancing them from the serious, useful and mature aesthetic of action-focused masculinity that had led to fascist absolutism. In so doing he was also beginning to erode the sartorial dialectic of decorative and ornamental femininity and form-following-function masculinity, if only in animated form.

Tezuka's adoption of a *kawaii* aesthetic is clear and well documented by his own admission. And manga and animation themselves provide a clear place to point to as a starting point of the popularity of all things *kawaii* because of the exaggeration that drawn images allow. The popularity of manga and anime in Japan might also provide a possible line of causality for the popularity of *kawaii* in other areas, including fashion. Yet the inclusion of *kawaii* features into drawn artwork and popular cultural products such as manga and anime is one thing, the desire to be *kawaii* oneself and to include it in choices regarding one's own fashion and self-styling is another. It involved a change in the young people's sense of self and in their attitudes toward adulthood and social hierarchies. In Japan, as in many places in the world, these social norms, often based on age and gender, were radically questioned in the late 1960s.

'Youthquake' and 'Cutequake'

In 1960s London, *Vogue* editor-in-chief Diana Vreeland noted that fashion was radically changing in unprecedented ways. For the first time in the history of fashion, a generation was not looking up to fashion leaders, such as the aristocracy, movie stars or great designers, but were instead looking down to the street. Teenagers, like The Beatles (1960–70) and The Rolling Stones (1962– present), were dominating the music scene, and this was also changing fashion. Miniskirts, jumpsuits, loud colors and skinny boyish models were all the rage. Vreeland called this musical, cultural and fashion movement 'Youthquake', and the *Vogue* of her tenure promoted this spirited youth movement, booking models like Twiggy,

Veruschka and Jean Shrimpton and featuring designers like Mary Quant and Betsey Johnson and the pop art of Andy Warhol (Vreeland 1965: 112). The first post–Second World War generation sought to not imitate older peoples' fashion styles but to define themselves against their parents' clothing. This was the first reversal in fashion where top-down (or trickle-down) influence flows were replaced by street-up (or bubble-up) influence flows, with designers, and then the upper-classes, imitating the styles of the street (Polhemus 1994: 8–12). The postwar desire for participatory democracy and the potential of resistance, both in the form of protest, and in the symbolic form of clothing was everywhere. It was a result of the horrors of war and nuclear terror, along with the rise of popular music and the revolutionary aspiration of 1960s social movements. Fashion and history are not always tied closely together, but at key moments, such as this, they are tied very tightly.

The youth of Japan in the 1960s experienced many of these same feelings. The Tokyo Olympics of 1964 had signaled the Japanese economic recovery from the war, but with wealth and successful reconstruction came large tensions in society, especially between a younger generation keen to embrace the rebellious spirit and an older generation desperate to protect the society they had sacrificed so much to rebuild. The student unrest at the end of the 1960s and beginning of the 1970s, sometimes known as the Zenkyōtō Era (All-Campus Joint Struggle League Era), revolved in its specifics around the relationship between the university and the state (Takazawa 1996: 70–71), but this can also be viewed as a proxy for generational resistance to patriarchal, hierarchical social structure in general. In 1968, Japan was a nation where protest and resistance were generally seen, at least on university campuses, as a legitimate, effective and even cool way to affect social change, challenge the acquiescence to the United States, replace hierarchical structures with more democratic ones and resist the dominating logic of materialist, capitalist culture. The notion of struggle was central to the way student activism sought to redefine the character of Japan's democracy (McCormack 1971: 37–52). A distinguishing feature of the student agenda was an attitude of antipathy toward the existing institutions and ideas that governed Japanese society. There was also a corresponding belief in individual and collective agency outside of existing institutions. Maturity, agency, active participation in democracy and resisting authority were part of youth identity throughout this period.

Yet, despite the enormity of the university struggle and its potential political importance, it was unable to define itself effectively. It collapsed by the early 1970s, as had similar movements in Paris in 1968. These student movements, although huge in scale and well supported by young people generally, were unable to translate action into tangible social change. Partly, it was the victory of the allure of materialist culture into which the Japanese economy and culture

was rushing. The symbolic space of the state, over which established and new groups were fighting, was being abandoned as the logic of business and capital, and the dreams of advertising and materialism, replaced the nation as dominant in the public imagination. The rise of diverting popular culture provides an 'opium of the people' argument for the collapse of the student movement as well. Popular culture – music, manga, television, films and fashions – was becoming more appealing than a vaguely promised revolution.

It is in this sense of the failure of action, the inevitability of social and economic structures and surrender to materialism and popular culture that the modern form of the Japanese aesthetic of *kawaii* emerged. It emerged, however, not as an acquiescence to the sociocultural mainstream but as an ironic form of disassociation and resistance. The pleasure that derives from being and observing *kawaii* is not just the pleasure of desirability or of being deferred to or played up to in a normally gender-based power relationship but an ironic pleasure of knowing expression, similar to kitsch and camp, that undermines the seriousness of the dominant cultural values. *Kawaii* hides a political assertion of independence by pretending to be completely non-political. Self-styling and fashion use this perceived lack of political meaning to actually make potent political symbolism.

The period that followed the failed student riots has been referred to in some discourses as the 'disillusioned calm' (*shirake*). There was an overwhelming sense that rebellion had failed, but it was also a period of experimentation with alternate strategies for social change and new approaches to existing power structures (Kinsella 1995: 225). This is also the moment when *kawaii* starts to become an increasingly important factor in Japanese fashion and culture. The emergence of *kawaii* in this period has important sociopolitical meanings and can be understood at first as a rebellious pleasure and the original *kawaii* fashion as an ironic mode of expression. Where Britain had had a 'Youthquake', Japan was about to have a 'Cutequake'.

One of the first places this could be observed was not in boutiques or on the streets but in the handwriting of female secondary school students. In the early 1970s, teenage girls began to use rounded handwriting with exaggerated circular letters that included little drawings like hearts and smiles, part of a growing trend for '*gyaru moji*', or girl writing. This *kawaii* handwriting began among students and became a spontaneous, underground trend, predating the technical means to produce round letters in manga (Yamane 1990). Sharon Kinsella (1995) has shown how this tiny graphological rebellion, which she has deemed the first form of *kawaii* culture, constituted an attempt by youth to establish their own language and express their own emotional needs outside the cultural establishment that placed the Japanese language as unassailable and highly serious (Kinsella 1995). Japanese youth, denied a legitimate voice in the Japanese state after the failure

of the student riots, sought to establish a new means of expression in a social strategy that deliberately ignored mainstream values. Instead of conforming, or openly rebelling, some young people acted in a childish, cute way to undermine adult authority.

Like the British 'Youthquake', the *kawaii* handwriting craze of 1970s Japan was a manifestation of young people seeking their own language and ability to express themselves outside of a hierarchical system that was stubbornly resistant to change. The written Japanese language was a perfect target, as it was taught as something to be venerated and considered extremely serious (Kinsella 1995). The growth of the *kawaii* aesthetic was an expression of the loss of legitimacy of that seriousness. *Kawaii* handwriting, influenced by the romanization of the Japanese language, gave schoolchildren an awareness of the arbitrary nature of their previously unassailable language, culture and social structure.

Fashion was also a perfect target for this type of ironic rebellion. Fashion that could be interpreted as childish or innocent was taken up ironically by the no-longer-childish and the no-longer-innocent. In these fashions, *kawaii* is not the absence of adulthood but an ironic comment on it and its undesirability. Starting with the popularity of the fashion brand Pink House, founded in 1973 by former-revolutionary students from Waseda University, various fashion designers used *kawaii* styling. Other brands formed around this period included Milk, started in 1970 by Okawa Hitomi, which also made frilly, layered, Lolita-style clothes, and Shirley Temple, started in 1974 by Yanagikawa Rei. The *kawaii* styles these brands sold were broadly popular, in both the more extreme styles of designers' boutiques themselves and in their subtler influences on non-designer clothing. Their popularity can perhaps be attributed to consumers being predisposed to their rebellious and ironic undertones. Mainstream commercial interests also quickly recognized the changing mood and accompanying aesthetic; Sanrio was one of the first and most famous to do so. Established in 1960 and originally a silk printing and then sandal making company, Sanrio shifted focus to design cute characters and merchandise after noticing that sales jumped whenever something cute was added to a sandal design (Belson and Bremner 2004). Sanrio launched the quintessentially cute character, Hello Kitty, in 1974.

The essential difference between these examples and the *kawaii* aesthetic seen in the 1950s manga and anime of Tezuka is that, by the 1970s, consumers and creators did not simply want to enjoy seeing *kawaii* things, but instead they wanted to be *kawaii* themselves. *Kawaii* entered fashion and self-styling as a desirable look and state of being. It was no longer reserved for a period of childhood but was extended and adopted as an aesthetic disconnected from the original referent of childhood itself. This marked a fundamental change in how *kawaii* was considered by Japan. It transformed from a recognized look of childhood to an aesthetic that

can be used socially and politically. Young people by the 1970s were demanding distinct forms of expression and finding ways to rebel against social orders that they saw as outdated. But while the British 'Youthquake' was demanding that young people be considered independent and mature, the Japanese 'Cutequake' ironically rejected maturity entirely.

An Alternate Social Strategy

Using *kawaii* is a social strategy, beyond its biological purpose; impelling adults to care for children has both positive and sinister aspects. *Kawaii* can be easily used by those initially being rebelled against, too. Brian McVeigh (2000) has argued that *kawaii* fashion, particularly in school uniforms and their deliberate alteration by their wearers, constitutes a form of resistance against the dominant, productive, official ideology of uniformity. '[For] the powerful bureaucratizing forces of statism and corporate culture, *kawaii* represents a form of resistance associated with women, children, leisure and self-expression' (McVeigh 2000: 135–36). However, McVeigh also notes this resistance was very quickly co-opted by the corporate and bureaucratic institutions it opposed, as evidenced by *kawaii* advertising campaigns and *kawaii* police mascots and logos. In addition, Kinsella (2002) argues that school uniforms, particularly girls' uniforms, constitute a key anti-symbol of rebellion and sexuality, and the fact that the iconic sailor uniforms come directly from Japanese imperial ambitions and military reforms makes their use as a *kawaii* symbol especially potent and political.

As an alternate social strategy, *kawaii* self-styling is a kind of rebellion or refusal to cooperate not only with established social values but also, to some extent, with reality itself. It deliberately denies reality but is all the more powerful for doing so. Just as the aesthetic of cool deliberately ignores mainstream tastes and assumes a calm composure that appears not to care about mainstream values, so, too, *kawaii* as a social strategy does not directly enter into or challenge mainstream cultural and aesthetic values but establishes its own values and aesthetics by ignoring them (Pountain and Robins 2000). It does not seek to be sexy, serious or maturely beautiful or handsome but instead establishes the desirability of paedomorphism, the silly and the adorably dysfunctional. It is a 'demure rebellion' (Kinsella 1995) unlike more aggressive, direct and sexually charged fashions of British youth rebellion; *kawaii* emphasizes immaturity and lack of agency, acting pre-sexual and vulnerable, even while being neither.

Both Pink House and the Milk boutique in Harajuku have laid claim to the origins of *kawaii* in fashion (Kawamura 2012: 67–71). Pink House launched its Lolita theme in 1979 and is now a purely Lolita-themed brand. With both these

brands, *kawaii* performs a political function of undermining current ideologies of gender and power. The later appearance of variations such as Gothic Lolita juxtaposes the immaturity of romantic childhood with gothic symbols, creating the appealing contrast of life and death together in the same aesthetic. This fulfills the political and social needs of *kawaii* neatly, being both desirable, somewhat helpless, while also rebellious, laughing at death, and challenging the seriousness of the mainstream.

With these brands as style leaders and following Sanrio's success, Valarie Steele (2010: 46) notes that there was soon an explosion of *kawaii* clothes, white or pastel in color and with puffy sleeves and ribbons, and accessories, including white tights and frilly ankle socks. The fashion magazine *An-An* proclaimed in 1975: 'On dates we only want feeling, but our clothes are like old ladies! It is time to express who you really are' (cited in Kinsella 1995: 229). The implication being a true identity had been somehow repressed, and this real identity was the antithesis of conventional female fashion. The fashion magazine *CUTiE* was launched in 1986 with the subtitle 'For independent girls', again implying that *kawaii* was not just a look but had a political function too: of making its adopter emancipated. *Kawaii* in *CUTiE* was portrayed as something daring and rebellious, and the magazine published many photographs of young people wearing their own fashions on streets and in clubs (Godoy 2007).

Cute Boys

While cute fashions were marketed to girls as a means to independence and as an escape from the oppressive norms of maturity and expected beauty they also became fashionable for boys and men (the self-definition of boyhood or manhood being key to challenging norms of maturity and hierarchical expectation). *Kawaii,* as a means of expression and resistance, was just as daring and rebellious for boys. One place this can clearly be seen was in the Japanese music industry, exemplified by Johnny and Associates, a production house that specializes in boy groups. The look that the president, Johnny Kitagawa, favors is a youthful, cute, baby-faced group of boys styled in bright, cute fashions. The influence of this one production house is profound, holding in 2011 the world record for number-one singles at 232 and number-one groups at 35 (*Guinness Book of World Records* 2016). The way music and fashion complimented each other and commodified rebellion was the same as elsewhere, but the look for male pop groups, *kawaii*, was unique to Japan.

Darling-Wolf (2003) has argued that the particularly popular Johnny's singer and actor, Kimura Takuya, a member of the group SMAP and known affectionately by the abbreviated, cute, styling of his name, Kimutaku, was exemplary of

the alternative constructions of masculinity that popular music both expressed and created. Kimura is physically attractive but also cooks, cares for children, expresses his feelings and stands up for himself. Kimura's clothes are thoughtful and various, often with long hair and androgynous styling, so he is far from the norm that to care too much about appearance is contrary to masculinity. He is presented as the antithesis of the dominant stereotype of ideal masculinity: the emotionless, distant, overworked, unimaginative, sexist and invariably gray-suited salaryman. His breakout advertising campaign for the lipstick maker Kanebo featured him with shoulder-length hair getting his lips smeared with lipstick. He was *kawaii* because he foregrounded his vulnerability: the lipstick advertisement alluded to a childish image of a boy playing with makeup unaware of its gender-marking role. An adult actor playing this role makes the unknowing deliberate and conforms to the *kawaii* strategy of refusing to take seriously the prohibition against masculine expressions of self-beautification and vanity. Popular culture often contributes to hegemonic cultural constructions of masculinity, but as is the case here it can also offer contradictory currents in particular contexts.

Pop-group 'idols' (*aidoru*), like Kimura, were young manufactured stars made famous not particularly because of exceptional talent or beauty but rather because they are *kawaii*, an appeal that lay partly in their cheerfully exposed vulnerability. Early examples of idols and idol groups include Momoe Yamaguchi (debut 1973), Pink Lady (debut 1976) and Onyanko Club (debut 1985). For male groups, Four Leaves (debut 1967), Masahiko Kondo (debut 1980) and most famously Kimura's SMAP (debut 1991) brought *kawaii* aesthetics and clothing styles to the male mainstream. Television helped to create this new type of star, as a medium that demanded simply a pleasant-looking brightness that could always be switched on. Idols filled this role perfectly. And their principal currency, both male and female, was *kawaii*. They were required to make the audience want to take care of them, support and nurture their careers rather than be in awe of their sublime beauty or spectacular talents. Movie stardom was about always remaining a mystery, never looking at the camera, but, on television, idols became popular through over-supply and cheerful familiarity – always needing your support on a quiz, game show or poorly rehearsed musical number.

A key cultural difference of Japanese society is the degree to which public and private lives are expected to be separated. Shyness, modesty and embarrassment are prized masculine characteristics. McVeigh argues that 'shyness can be understood as the fear of inadvertently disgracing oneself by not playing one's role in a society where conformity to culturally sanctioned norms is highly valued' (2014: 59). Thus, idols played a role in undermining this social bashfulness as they were presented on television as cheerful and confident and also in that their clothing

was allowed to express their personalities. The sartorial expression of this socially expected modesty was most certainly the gray suits of the salaryman. The male idol very much set about challenging this conformist masculinity.

It has conversely been argued that the aesthetics of *kawaii* did not enter mainstream male fashion purely by choice (Sugata 2015). Rather than an attraction to the freedom of sartorial expression of male idols, it was the burgeoning independence of women that most impacted male self-fashioning. As women gained more social independence, previously desirable characteristics in men – financial stability, bravery and chivalry – diminished in importance to kindness, sensitivity and appearance, and men had to make reactionary adjustments to the demands of these environmental factors. Darling-Wolf (2003) confirmed some of these trends but was able to show that effeminate qualities in men were actually seen as bravery, as they were able to go against social norms. Paradoxically, the new masculinity was not to be masculine.

There is a point where the social utility of any look declines and where fashion starts to lose its original meanings and becomes less focused on its original purpose. *Kawaii* in fashion gradually started to take on a logic of its own and became an aesthetic without a singular meaning and usage. Part of this was the co-option of *kawaii* into commercial advertising and by the state (e.g. the use of cute characters by the police and other institutions discussed above), diluting the challenge it originally made against these structures. Part of this, too, is the inevitable logic of fashion itself, constantly reworking the past without regard for any particular political agenda, in a perpetual desire for novelty.

Through a gradual institutionalization *kawaii*, the rebellious ironic expression, introduced into fashion in the 1970s, has become aesthetized, its meaning expanding outward until it was so broad and all-encompassing so as to include everything. This echoes Kurita's idea that *kawaii* has simply become a magical term that includes everything positive and acceptable (discussed in Kageyama 2006). But perhaps the absence of meaning was part of the meaning of *kawaii* all along. As Hasegawa pointed out, there is an element of *kawaii* that is resisting final definition and mature identity. Even Hello Kitty has no mouth, making her expression deliberately incomplete and ambiguous. Takashi Murakami in his Superflat manifesto, titled *Sūpā furatto = Super flat,* also spoke of 'the shallow emptiness of Japanese consumer culture' in a way both celebratory and critical (Murakami 2000). Sugiyama (2006) also concurs with this expansion of meaning to the point of meaninglessness, arguing that the current usage of *kawaii* is rooted in Japan's consensus-valuing culture. The word '*kawaii*' is now spoken as a form of group bonding, and it has become so broad in meaning that no one can dispute it and thus cause disagreements.

Disrupting Gender Aesthetics

Whereas *kawaii* laughs at attempts at seriousness and disrupts the authority of such a classification in the realms of the social and of art, it also does the same to gender. In much the same way as Susan Sontag (1978) defines 'camp' as an artifice and frivolity that plays upon naïve middle-class pretentiousness, *kawaii* can also be seen in fashion as an ironic attitude that acts as an explicit defense of clearly marginalized forms: gay culture in the case of camp, and youth, particularly female, but not exclusively, in the case of *kawaii*. Both aesthetics depend on the hypocrisy of the dominant culture and show how norms are socially constructed. And both are in the form of a big joke: acutely analyzing norms and presenting them humorously to confront society with its own preconceptions.

In the 1990s postmodern and poststructural academic disruptions, third-wave feminist ideas and raised mainstream awareness of gay culture all began to erode the notion of fixed and binary gender aesthetics. The playful androgyny of celebrities like David Bowie, Grace Jones, Michael Jackson, Boy George and Madonna continually demonstrated the fluid nature of sartorial gender symbols. So too in Japan, *kawaii* aesthetics played a similar role of challenging the heteronormative order. Kimura was just one example of a top idol with long hair and a very neotenic, baby-faced look. This disrupts gender aesthetics not via a swapping of symbols or a knowing confusion, but via positioning the subject as pre-sexual, immature and in a sort of protean innocence. The growing preference for *kawaii* in male self-styling rather than a more traditional masculinity destabilizes the naturalized categories of masculine and feminine and the symbols of gender distinction become more playful and less determining. *Kawaii* is thus a central subversive force, not always formally acknowledged and not easily beaten back because of its seeming silliness, yet integral to the conception of gender in Japanese fashion. *Kawaii* situates desirability at an immature point before gender is fully fixed, conceiving of it as a process of becoming and thus something much more interesting than an immovable binary established before birth.

The aesthetic of *kawaii* is a knowing absence of maturity, as it has to understand what the construct of maturity involves in order to renounce it. In this way *kawaii* constitutes not just the lack of maturity but an ironic expression of maturity's undesirability. It knowingly uses silliness, play and irony to establish an alternative to rigid, perhaps fossilized, mainstream culture and sociopolitical establishment that no longer seems to hold any appeal for Japanese youth. *Kawaii* fashion does continue to serve this rebellious function, although it now also constitutes the cultural mainstream and has proliferated in forms and meanings far beyond its origins. It has become an aesthetic, too, that exists separately from its rebellious initial function. But this is always part of the mechanics of

fashion. Clothing fashions always exceed their original instrumentality (Carter 2013), and *kawaii* fashions now assume a vast space in Japan's cultural imagination. Yet the pleasure to be found in *kawaii* fashion remains the same: a knowing, reflexive pleasure of undermining and ignoring the seriousness of hierarchical Japanese maturity.

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The Politicization of Fashion in Virtual Queer Spaces: A Case Study of Saint Harridan, One of the Pioneering Queer Fashion Brands in the Twenty-First Century

Kelly L. Reddy-Best

Evidence dating back to the early twentieth century highlights that women in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ+) community have marked the boundary between themselves and the outside world with negotiations in gender and gender expression that challenge the acceptable societal norms of the way women should be or become in the world in regard to their 'situated bodily practices' (Entwistle 2000: 329; Steele 2013). There have been numerous aesthetics and styles that LGBTQ+ women have embodied, marking these women with a gay aesthetic (Geczy and Karaminas 2013). When viewed from a subcultural theory perspective (Hebdige 1979), these numerous aesthetics deploy separation from the dominant group through material artifacts and assemblages of style. Tulloch considered the significance of these assemblages and theorized through the framework she termed 'style-fashion-dress', a 'term that constitutes a system of concepts that signifies the multitude of meanings and frameworks that are always "whole-and-part" of dress studies' (2010: 275). This notion of the 'whole-and-part' is important when thinking through current embodied practices of LGBTQ+ women in regard to the long history of oppression and discrimination that has plagued members of the LGBTQ+ community. This chapter examines the connection of the 'whole-and-part' by exploring the intersections of dress, bodies, styles and virtual spaces within the fashion system, while considering the overall histories of oppression and stigma that the LGBTQ+ community has faced over time. This chapter examines, in-depth, one part of the fashion system, Saint Harridan, a pioneering fashion brand founded in Oakland, California that operated from 2012 to

2016 and catered to the LGBTQ+ community, specifically masculine-of-center or masculine-leaning women and transmen.

The long fight in the United States to end oppression and discrimination in the LGBTQ+ community began with the American Gay Rights Movement in the early twentieth century, as gay rights organizations formed. The movement toward gaining civil and human rights for the LGBTQ+ community took a major leap in 1969 when riots occurred at the Stonewall Inn, a popular gay club in the Greenwich Village neighborhood of New York City (Carter 2004; Staggenborg 2011). During a routine raid of Stonewall, gay men, lesbians and transgender individuals fought back against the police, and their resistance escalated into brutal riots that lasted for about six days. The riots led to the formation of the Gay Liberation Front, which focused on 'homosexual issues for the immediate future' (Carter 2004: 219). These and other activist groups in later years sought to pass ordinances to make discrimination based on sexual orientation illegal and to legalize same-sex marriage, among other political agendas. Years later in 2004, Massachusetts was the first state to legalize same-sex marriage, and 37 states followed before the US Supreme Court passed the law granting the right for same-sex marriage in all 50 states on 26 June 2015 (Pew Research Center 2015). While these advances toward gaining civil rights in the early twenty-first century were occurring throughout the United States, numerous designers and entrepreneurs developed clothing brands centered on activism to cater to the gender-nonconforming members of the LGBTQ+ community. One of the early companies in the United States to openly target the LGBTQ+ community, Saint Harridan, began producing apparel and accessories that could be worn during these new same-sex or same-gender weddings, as well as in other everyday spaces, catering to a market largely overlooked by the mainstream fashion system.[1]

In this chapter, I question how fashion served as a form of political engagement by conducting a case study analysis of this openly queer-focused apparel company, created alongside the legalization of same-sex marriage. The research draws from primary sources, including news articles and reports related to the company, and analysis of images and content posted on YouTube, blogs and social media, including Facebook and Instagram. I also had personal communications with Mary Going, the founder of Saint Harridan, about the history of the brand, and she checked the history portion of the manuscript for accuracy. To begin, I explore the historical development of Saint Harridan to provide the company's context, and then I analyze and interpret their cultural spaces, focusing primarily on virtual spaces, given that these are often critical points for creating and embracing community, as well as the construction and negotiation of identity for historically oppressed groups (Fox and Ralston 2016). Additionally, virtual spaces are

sites of much cultural capital (Bourdieu 1984), where ideas, knowledge and skills are shared by community members on a non-traditional learning platform. This is particularly true for historically underrepresented groups, making analysis of these spaces important. Using a case study approach to analyze and document the in-depth history of brands such as Saint Harridan contributes to the ongoing understanding of retail history and innovation in the twenty-first century in relation to the LGBTQ+ community's interrelationship with embodied experiences of fashioning the body. Exploring this topic also adds much-needed literature to fashion history about LGBTQ+ entrepreneurs and their impact on fashion and their communities.

A Brief History of Saint Harridan

Saint Harridan's product assortment included casual clothing, custom suits and related business-casual garments and accessories, such as the 'queer-it-up-a-notch bow tie' (see Figures 1 and 2) (Saint Harridan 2016d). Because the majority of apparel companies target those who are heterosexual and gender-conforming, Going explained that Saint Harridan's goal 'has always been to provide masculine clothing to women and trans men' (personal communication).

FIGURE 1: Models wearing Saint Harridan's suit and suit coordinates. The center model has on the 'queer it up a notch' bow tie. Photo courtesy of Miki Vargas Photography 2016.

FIGURE 2: Models wearing some of Saint Harridan's casual options. Photo courtesy of Miki Vargas Photography 2015.

Going said that the made-to-order suits have a 'sleek masculine cut' that was 're-engineered for women and transmen' (Saint Harridan 2016a: para. 1). For example, one of the vests was designed with eight buttons down the center front to prevent gaping for someone with a larger bust (Going 2012). These custom suits were originally retailing between $695 and $840 (Huber 2013), but later the prices went up, and the same suits sold for $1,198. The suits were made in the United States, in union factories in both Massachusetts and North Carolina, which Going personally visited to ensure worker safety; she related, on the company website, that 'if we are going to rise, we must all rise together', which highlights her commitment to social justice in all aspects of her company (Saint Harridan 2016d).

The idea for the company began in 2008, when the state of California granted equal marriage rights (Saint Harridan 2016a). Going explained:

> My partner Martha and I had been madly in love for ten years and were excited to make it legal. Except I had nothing to wear! I tried shopping for men's suits. Of course, nothing fit and the customer service was humiliating. In the end I had a custom suit made. It cost more than our rent, but I'll tell you: it felt great. Really great. I honestly felt stronger when I put on that suit. And more confident. I even felt taller. I was 41 years old and it was the first time I felt like

> I had dressed from my own closet. It was too fantastic to keep to myself. That's why I started Saint Harridan. I want [my customers] to feel this good.
>
> (Saint Harridan 2016a)

Going frequently shared her personal stories about wanting to appear more masculine in various media outlets, and how the desire for a masculine aesthetic in her own appearance influenced her to start a business that catered to women and transmen with similar experiences. In a Facebook post from when Saint Harridan was in its early stages, Going wrote about her early desire to appear more masculine:

> On the first day of 4th grade I wore cut-off jeans, a tee shirt with my name printed on the back, and red high-top Converse sneakers. I thought to myself, 'I'm going to show them what I'm made of'. I loved that outfit, and I loved that feeling. Saint Harridan is about that feeling.
>
> (Saint Harridan 2012a)

In early 2016, Going created a YouTube video to submit to the Out Entrepreneur video contest, where 'out' LGBTQA+ entrepreneurs shared their business stories. In the video, she scrolled through pictures from her childhood to describe the evolution of her style since first grade, when her mom insisted that she wear a dress, to age 14, when she had a great love for football socks, to age 19, when she left her legs unshaved, and then to her 30s, when she refused to take any job that required pantyhose. The video concludes with the acquisition of a custom-made suit for her wedding, which she explains made her feel very well dressed and ignited her desire to start Saint Harridan (Going 2016).

Prior to starting Saint Harridan, Going earned a master's degree in business administration from Mills College and went on to found, lead and sell two businesses (Main Street Launch 2016). While Going had a solid understanding of business management, her initial knowledge of the fashion industry and garment construction was nearly non-existent. As a result, she chose to partner with Preppy Baba, aka Sheree Ross, a twenty-year fashion industry veteran who runs a fashion blog for masculine-of-center women, to learn more about apparel design, construction and manufacturing (Ross n.d.).

To launch Saint Harridan, Going did not approach venture capitalists or angel investors, but instead she looked to those with similar experiences to hers. In December 2012, around the height of the crowdfunding craze for the entrepreneur ecosystem, she launched a Kickstarter campaign to back her start-up business (Going 2012). She reached out to her future customers, whom she described as saints. LGBTQ+ community members often utilize a wide swathe of language to

identify themselves; whereas some may prefer the terms 'stud', 'butch' or 'boi', others might simply prefer 'woman' or 'man'. Additionally, the language is often fluid and can shift and change as individuals move through different stages of identity development and as politics and ideologies change over time. Rather than choosing exclusionary language, Going chose the term 'saint', which means 'founder, sponsor or patron of a movement' (Saint Harridan 2016e: para. 4). She explained that her customers all represent saints – that is, leaders undermining the gender binary (Saint Harridan 2016e).

Going had some initial setbacks in production when the chosen manufacturer was reluctant to produce men's suits with some women's fit devices shaping around the breasts and buttocks, causing her delay in the first production run of the suits, which were expected to be delivered in late March 2013. However, Going and her team quickly found another manufacturer to work with, and the first suits were produced and delivered later that year, in August 2013 (Saint Harridan 2016a).

After her first production run, Going launched pop-up shops and held her first event in the city center of Oakland, California, in 2013 (Saint Harridan 2013). She then took the company on a pop-up shop tour of fifteen different cities across the United States, where customers could see sample products and could get measured and fit by Going before placing an order (Guthmann 2015). To choose the pop-up shop cities, Going held several online contests for models, in which community members posted pictures of themselves dressed with a Saint Harridan-related aesthetic on social media; she then travelled to the cities that garnered the most interest (Kate 2012). Going engaged in other public relations events as well, such as having her line in one of the early queer-focused fashion shows at the Brooklyn Museum in 2014, titled '(un)Heeled: Fashion show for the unconventionally masculine'. Numerous other queer fashion brands also showed their lines in this show such as Bindle & Keep and Sharpe Suiting (Nichols 2014).

Then, in September 2015, Going opened a small brick-and-mortar store in downtown Oakland that faced the Frank H. Ogawa Plaza, the site of many political resistance movements during the Civil Rights era and, more recently, protests and rallies for the Black Lives Matter movement (Anthony and Wang 2014). The physical location of the storefront was fitting because it was a place with high foot traffic in addition to its historic connection with politics, which Going's company also embraced in its mission. In the company's storefront, employees offered fit and measurement sessions in addition to selling ready-to-wear and sample products (Bay Area News Group 2016; Guthmann 2015).

In its last years, Saint Harridan continued to operate under the crowdfunding model, the method they used to gain initial funding. They encouraged customers to send ideas for future products via social media, email or other communication

avenues. Products were then promoted via social media for crowdfunding, and if they gained enough interest and financial support, the company would send the product into production and finally ship it to the customers (Saint Harridan 2016g). In early 2016, Going reported that she was looking for financial investors to fund a new ready-to-wear line (Bay Area News Group 2016). While the company began with suits, Going explained that 'the vast majority of our business is now focused on ready-to-wear casual(ish) clothing. We still sell suits, but not as the primary focus'. She continued to explain that 'selling clothes that are affordable and can be shipped anywhere accomplishes that mission better than custom suiting – even though custom suiting continues to be the iconic' (personal communication).

On 16 December 2016, Saint Harridan officially closed. In the final farewell, the company wrote,

> We hope that our contribution will lend itself to the next wave of the un-doing of the gender binary and the dismantling of the narrow boxes into which we have previously been crammed. We have been so very proud to reflect and serve this community. Collectively, we have all contributed to this revolutionary momentum.
>
> We have had the privilege to hear your stories and share your life's milestones: weddings, job interviews, college tours, proms, high school graduations and even burials. You showed up looking like you felt, dressed in a way that lent power to your voice and actions. We heard your stories of taking risks and reaching higher because you felt more and more like yourself when you dressed the part. Thank you for allowing us to be a part of your journey.
>
> The energy that fueled Saint Harridan isn't going away. It existed before us, and will exist after us. A clothing company is art. It reflects and validates what you already know. Clothing does not make you. Hold on to that. You are perfect just the way you are.
>
> (Saint Harridan 2018)

These parting words highlight how Going built the company with social change at the core of the mission, seeking to disrupt cultural symbols, values and ways of knowing in regard to gender and gender expression for LGBTQ+ women. While the company had loyal customers and continuous sales, Going reported that it eventually closed due to lack of capital investment. Going explained, '[m]ost clothing manufacturing companies like Wildfang and Betabrand start with $1.5m to $6m. We started with $12,000, raised another $200K in investment, and borrowed $250' (Bell 2016). Going was a trailblazer in the queer fashion movement, but unfortunately, lack of funding eventually contributed to Saint Harridan's demise.

Next, I analyze Saint Harridan further by critically examining its virtual spaces during its years of operation and explore how these spaces were a site for discussion and challenge of notions related to gender, gender norms, hegemonic ideologies and politics.

Disrupting Hegemonic Ideologies of Beauty and Gender

Going identifies as a masculine-of-center woman and related to having difficulties finding clothes in the past and among current ready-to-wear offerings. In response, she brought politics into fashion and challenged hegemonic ideologies about beauty and gender in the United States by centering her design philosophy on disrupting social and gender norms.[2] Political engagement was evident in her online virtual spaces, which were her prominent means of communication with and advertising to her customers. A number of scholars have chronicled products and virtual spaces that disrupt feminine and cultural ideals of beauty. For example, Connell (2013: 213) analyzed Fa(t)shion February, a virtual space for women of size to produce, disseminate and consume fashions that 'privilege fat bodies and experiences'. Participants in these spaces disrupted the systems of privilege and inequality when viewing fashion as a site of cultural production (Connell 2013: 212). Chittenden (2010) analyzed online fashion blogging communities and posited that these virtual spaces could create a sense of community for marginalized individuals. Pham found that fashion blogs made by Asian Americans disrupted hierarchies of beauty because they 'provide[d] images and discourses of Asian women and Asian femininity that markedly differ[ed] from most of the cyber, digital, electronic and literary images that continue to be produced and circulated in the circuits of capitalism, culture, and commodities' (2011: 14). Chittenden (2010), Connell (2013) and Pham's (2011) research highlights the notion that virtual fashion worlds provide a venue to assess fashion as a form of political engagement for marginalized cultures and communities. Through online communities, individuals who were once fashion outsiders were and are now able to participate in the production and dissemination of fashion discourses surrounding different marginalized subject positions. This is also evident in a 2007 issue of *Harper's Bazaar,* in which Robin Givhan, a Pulitzer Prize-winning fashion writer, said,

> the rise of the fashion blogger was inevitable. Fashion has evolved from an autocratic business dominated by omnipotent designers into a democratic one in which everyone has access to stylish clothes […]. The average person, too often estranged from fashion, is taking ownership of it.
>
> (Givhan 2007: para. 3 and 5)

Givhan highlights the democratization of fashion through these virtual spaces, which Going attempted to capitalize on to gain business visibility while reconstructing imagery for gender-nonconforming individuals who found themselves marginalized in both the physical and virtual spaces created by the mainstream fashion system as a whole.

Virtual Spaces of Saint Harridan

When analyzing the virtual communication spaces of Saint Harridan, three themes emerged: (1) the design process was used to rethink gender, beauty and fashion through a co-design or co-create model; (2) the discussions of, and interaction with, gender and identity politics allow for shifting ideologies and representations of gendered bodies; and (3) amidst discussions of shifting ideologies surrounding gender, beauty and fashion were signs of solidarity with other groups experiencing oppression in different spaces.

The analysis of these interactive spaces shifts the unit of analysis from fashion as a group of cultural artifacts to fashion as 'styled bodies', drawing primarily on Entwistle's definition of fashion as a 'situated bodily practice' (2000: 235). Styles and imagery created, produced and perpetuated by Saint Harridan rely heavily upon embodied practices, or the ways bodies and our experiences with bodies shape the mind. Foucault (1977) argued that bodies and bodily practices are obedient or docile, meaning they are passive objects over which agents enact power. Entwistle (2000) furthers this notion, arguing that Foucault fails to consider agency and embodiment in his work. Entwistle asks how bodies are 'lived, experienced and embodied by individuals' (2000: 330). How, then, does Saint Harridan disentangle and reject notions of the ways bodies are 'acted on by power/knowledge' or the prevailing heteronormative ideologies that reproduce knowledge in a cyclical and ongoing process (Entwistle 2000: 329)? How is Entwistle's idea that 'our body is not just the place from which we come to experience the world; it is through our bodies that we come to see and be in the world' enacted in Saint Harridan's virtual spaces, a site for creating the link between identity, the body and dress (2000: 334)? Entwistle explains that while our identities are uncertain, dress can act as a glue connecting the social world, our mind, our identities and our bodies. I ask this: how, then, does the history of Saint Harridan and its virtual spaces engage in politicizing fashion and fashion bodies within the context of the fashion system? While all of these previously mentioned questions are worthy of in-depth study, the last is the basis for my remaining analysis.

Politics of Gender, Beauty and Fashion in the Co-Design or Co-Create Model

Virtual spaces created and maintained by Saint Harridan were important places where intersections of gender, sexuality, politics and capitalism were problematized and negotiated. When Green and Kaiser examined bodily practices at the Burning Man festival, they interpreted the word 'space' with flexibility to include 'social space (the festival), physical space (the desert [in Nevada where it took place]), cognitive space (ways of thinking and knowing) and bodily space (embodiment, the near environment, the body in clothes)' (2011: 6). They posited that the festival was a 'transformative space' where a 're-thinking' of 'public experimentation' or 'performative questioning' took place as men questioned hegemonic masculinity by experimenting with, and drawing from, multiple gendered styles (Green and Kaiser 2011: 7). These intersecting and overlapping spaces – in particular the cognitive and social spaces seen on Facebook for Saint Harridan – act in a similar way, or as 'transformative spaces' for women in the LGBTQ+ community (Green and Kaiser 2011: 7). Saint Harridan allowed and encouraged questioning, rethinking and experimentation with new bodily practices, and facilitated direct participation with customers about product development decisions on their social media by what Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) describe as co-creation or co-design. This is evident in a significant number of Facebook posts by both Going and her customers, such as this post from 12 May 2012, when Going first founded Saint Harridan. She wrote: 'Have you ever had a perfect pair of dress pants? What made them great? What was the cut? The Material? [*sic*] The color? Pockets? Pleats or not?'. One customer responded by saying,

> I've yet to have the perfect pair of dress pants, but I imagine that if the style and cut were created in a way that wasn't super genderized, but more androgynous, that would be refreshing! It seems that the more formal clothes gets [sic], the more that each article commits itself to either being quite masculine or feminine. I like nicer clothing that's still able to flirt [with] both sides [of the gender spectrum] while looking good doing it and keeping seeing eyes guessing. Is that possible?
>
> (Saint Harridan 2012a)

In a later Facebook post, Going began product development for an outerwear jacket, soliciting opinions about fit and construction details (Saint Harridan 2015). The prototype sketch she uploaded featured a masculine-appearing woman in a boxy-silhouette coat, and some of the comments on the post

highlighted the need to consider breasts for this type of masculine style. Ash Boeger wrote: 'Make the torso long enough to make up for the space taken up by a medium to large breast size' (Saint Harridan 2015). Lastly, Going uploaded a sneak-peek picture of the fabrics for the button-down shirts that were in the production stage. In response to this post, customers highlighted which fabrics they liked best, and one customer encouraged Going to consider masculine women's sometimes so-called counterparts, femmes, in the design development process by saying, 'I wish one day you'd make matching femme accessories. They'd be an awesome way to facilitate some kind of dating game' (Saint Harridan 2016f).

This open dialogue about dress, gender, the body and fashion in the LGBTQ+ friendly space allows for shifting ideologies in the cognitive spaces to be negotiated, produced, expressed and circulated in a public social space (Green and Kaiser 2011). It is evident from these posts that Going built her company and gained new customers through a mentality of equality as central to the dialogue and design process within these virtual spaces. When examining the garments offered at Saint Harridan, silhouettes may not appear exceptionally unique; however, subtle construction details that catered to bodies with the curves of someone who was assigned female at birth, alongside expressions of shifting gender ideologies all helped Saint Harridan gain new customers as women and transmen experimented with new styles and bodily practices for formal occasions, such as weddings.

Shifting Ideologies and Representations of Gendered Bodies

In the public discussions and online visibility of Saint Harridan, politics around gender were central in developing concepts for initial business plans and continued to play out in the company's everyday media. In their virtual spaces, participants disseminated and consumed imagery and discourse surrounding what it means to be queer and gender-nonconforming, often conversations and images absent in mainstream venues. Participants frequently shared images of themselves in their purchases and described how they felt comfortable in their new clothes, which did not restrict their gender expression but facilitated their expression of sexuality. Images submitted to Saint Harridan often featured the wearers in powerful positions in which their legs were spread, shoulders square and hands on the hips while wearing their new suits or Saint Harridan products. Some people who did not yet have access to Saint Harridan's products wrote to Going and explained their excitement at seeing this type of aesthetic available. Going posted one of the emails she received on Facebook:

> It sucks to sit in a dressing room and cry because you feel like you will never be able to outwardly look how you feel on the inside. And then I came across your website. And my heart is so filled with joy, words can't even begin to describe it. This company seems to be what I've been searching for for years. A place where a 5'3, size 6 lesbian can dress how she feels without looking like a five year old who rummaged through her father's closet. A place where I can finally find the look that will make me feel like a stud. Thank you for working so hard on this. I'm looking forward to it more than you can imagine.
>
> (Saint Harridan 2012b)

This purposeful and powerful disruption of mainstream fashion is evident in Going's comment on 30 April 2014: 'Sometimes the very act of dressing requires courage and convocation. At Saint Harridan, we want to make clothes that support this form of self-expression, this form of personal dignity, personal reverence, and yes this form of activism' (Saint Harridan 2016e: para. 3). Going's mention of activism reminds us that Foucault's (1977) analysis of the body as a docile and passive object upon which power or knowledge is enacted is entangled with experiences of gender-nonconforming individuals. Going worked to remind her customers that, through their dress and the context of their bodies in the world, they could take control of their own embodiment, experiences and practices.

At the same time as Saint Harridan, Tomboy Tailors, another queer-focused fashion brand (mentioned in footnote 1), emerged and then closed; this brand produced similar masculine-style imagery in their media and advertising. They participated in the American Equality Contest and Fashion Show, presented by Runway Couturier in San Francisco on 24 July 2013, which was another example of engagement with politics; the equality-themed show presented gender-nonconforming looks (SpotlightOn999 2013). The runway event was recorded and visible on YouTube, featuring founder Zel Anders and five other models walking with wide-legged, broad-shouldered stances, the opposite of what is most often seen in traditional fashion shows featuring women. Three of the models had short, masculine haircuts, while others mixed in elements of traditional femininity via longer hairstyles, dangly earrings and scoop neck shells under their Tomboy Tailor suits. In these arenas, both Saint Harridan and Tomboy Tailors were reconstructing and circulating new representations of femininity and masculinity, disrupting these hegemonic ideologies and refusing duality of gender. Tomboy Tailors highlighted that, while Saint Harridan was at the forefront of these new bodily practices in the twenty-first century, practices that rejected Foucault's (1977) notion that bodies are docile and simply acted upon were only one part of the fashion system, as a few other brands (e.g., Tomboy Tailors) also centered their mission and design philosophy on similar ideas.

Signs of Solidarity

While gender and sexuality are central to the dialogue about and reproduction of gendered imagery, Saint Harridan also engaged in struggles surrounding race, as a form of solidarity with other marginalized groups. They participated in a fashion show titled '(un)Heeled: Fashion show for the unconventionally masculine', held at the Brooklyn Museum in December of 2014, which was put on by DapperQ, the premier queer style blog and website in the United States, which focuses on masculine-presenting women and transgender individuals. In the fashion show, saints marched the runways holding signs reading 'Black Lives Matter', drawing much of the attention away from the garments and styled bodies and onto the high-contrast signs seen in numerous protests that year due to the significant number of deaths of unarmed Black people at the hands of police officers (see Figure 3). Saint Harridan's models were later blogged about on Tumblr, with posts such as 'Kay for #Saint Harridan in Brooklyn, standing in solidarity with #blacklivesmatter. It cannot be said enough. All of our lives should be full of dignity and safe from violence, so we must make visible these inequalities which shorten or endanger the lives of some'.

FIGURE 3: Saint Harridan model on runway at '(un)Heeled: Fashion show for the unconventionally masculine', held at the Brooklyn Museum in December 2014. Photo courtesy of Maro Hagopian 2014.

Histories of oppression of the LGBTQ+ community unite them with others (i.e. people of color, people with disabilities, overweight individuals) experiencing similar discrimination. Of these two visible signs of activism, disruptions of gender and gender expression in bodily practices and protest-like signs, one makes a statement in a subtler fashion (bodily practices), while the other (the sign) makes a quite literal statement, such as 'Black Lives Matter'. Katz (2013) wrote about the importance of activism in queer fashion post-Stonewall, when members of the community began wearing slogan T-shirts to assert their identity, pride and solidarity. T-shirts, signs and buttons were the ways in which people asserted their activism. Going's activism reflects these early slogan T-shirts and situates their design within a system in which bodies are first acted upon by the heterosexist fashion system but then reinvigorated with agency, in this case overt agency with literal signs of activism in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement.

Conclusion

When comparing the spaces created by Going with Chittenden (2010), Pham (2011) and Connell (2013)'s work, I concur that virtual spaces highlight the ways in which cultural practices, politics and capitalism intersect for members of the LGBTQ+ community with shared experiences of oppression. Without any background in apparel design, production or manufacture, Mary Going built her brand as a small part of the larger fashion system, based on social justice values, and pushed boundaries surrounding femininity and masculinity in the twenty-first century, allowing for shifting ideologies in cognitive, social, geographical and bodily spaces (Green and Kaiser 2011). The context of these queer spaces and their absence in mainstream media are of exceptional importance, given the continued hate crimes and violence against LGBTQ+ communities in safe spaces, such as the recent mass shooting in the gay nightclub Pulse in Orlando, Florida, where 49 LGBTQ+ people were killed (Domonoske et al. 2016). Going's brand, including the physical garments, the virtual spaces and her own lived experiences as a masculine-of-center woman demonstrate the strong connection between identity, the body and dress; she perpetuated political dialogue through her fashion brand during the move to legalize same-sex or same-gender marriage as one part of the larger, mostly heterosexual fashion system.

Analysis of Saint Harridan creates scholarly visibility of marginalized and/or underrepresented groups within mainstream fashion and documents changes related to retail, LGBTQ+ rights and social movements, which are arguably as important as, if not more important than, the mainstream designers and brands most frequently written about in fashion history. Understanding the experiences of historically marginalized communities contributes to normalizing

LGBTQ+ experiences and aesthetic self-expressions and helps work toward increasing cultural competence and empathy.

During my study and observation of Saint Harridan, several other brands developed and continue to operate across the United States. It would also be of interest and great importance to analyze the history, development and spaces created by these companies, such as DapperBoi, HauteButch, Butch Basix, Wildfang, TomboyX, Nik Kacy Footwear, Butchbaby & Co, Bindle & Keep and many more, to understand how their stories compare to that of Saint Harridan and also to give them representation in the history of dress as politics shift in the unpredictable and somewhat turbulent political climate of the twenty-first century.

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NOTES

1. Other queer-focused fashion brands certainly existed before Saint Harridan, such as Dykes in the City based in Ithaca, NY, which was open from 2004 to 2011, although they sold mostly T-shirts and logo-printed accessories such as trucker hats (Green 2018). Another company in the United States, Tomboy Tailors, also started and ended around the same time as Saint Harridan, and similarly sold suits and suit accessories for LGBTQA+ weddings. In the United Kingdom, the Butch Clothing Company, which was founded in the early 2000s, also closely aligned with the clothing that Saint Harridan offered – suits and accessories for masculine gay women (The Butch Clothing Company 2019). A comprehensive history of queer fashion brands has not yet been written, but my preliminary research for an oral history project on queer fashion brands leads me to believe that Saint Harridan is one of the earliest companies in the United States to sell suits and suit accessories to queer women who actively utilized virtual spaces to discuss politics and the disruption of gender norms.
2. It should be noted that this notion of disrupting hegemonic ideologies around gender norms through fashion is not new. For example, fashion designers Rudi Gernrich and Yohji Yamamoto also centered many of their designs and much of their design process on these ideas in the mid- and late twentieth century, respectively.

‘She Was Not a Girly Girl’: Athletic Apparel, Female Masculinity and the Endorsement of Difference

Christina Bush

In 1995 Sheryl Swoopes became the first female athlete to have a signature shoe with Nike: the Air Swoopes. In a 2012 retrospective on 20 years of Nike basketball the shoe’s designer, Marni Gerber, recalls that much of the motivation for the shoe’s design was informed by Swoopes’ own personality and self-comportment as ‘not a girly girl’ (Nike News 2012). Seventeen years later, Nike made headlines with its endorsement of Women’s National Basketball Association (WNBA) player Brittney Griner – the first openly gay athlete to have an endorsement deal with the company. While the deal was culturally significant, in that it ostensibly evinced and contributed to a growing culture of acceptance and inclusion around issues of gendered and sexual difference within professional sports, it was also notable for its specific terms, as it was reported that Griner would be allowed to model men’s apparel.

In this chapter, I draw upon Brittney Griner’s endorsement to model men’s apparel and Sheryl Swoopes’ signature shoe deal with Nike as case studies to highlight how female masculinity is central to the articulation and representation of women’s athletic apparel. I begin with a brief discussion of how gender is not merely represented, but indeed, fashioned through modalities like adornment and dress. I then turn to women’s athletics, and particularly professional women’s basketball in the United States, as a site that has and continues to arouse anxiety with regard to women’s gender performance. I go on, through an offering and explication of the concept of ‘mannish’, to consider a racially located form of gender subversion – Black female masculinity. Finally, I turn to the respective endorsement deals of Griner and Swoopes to highlight how they are exemplars of the ways that gender is subverted and substantiated through the complex and often contradictory terms of sports apparel endorsements.

Fashioning Gender

Although the body is perhaps the most readily recognized repository for gender, other objects, including clothing, both enable bodily performances of, and index, gender. As Entwistle claims, clothes often carry a 'baggage of associations with either "masculinity" or "femininity"' (2015: 179). For example, typically masculine and male fashions such as suits, when adopted by women, still maintain their gendered charge and are nominalized as menswear, androgynous or 'borrowed from the boys'; terms that underscore the recalcitrance of existing logics of gender, even as it is being subverted or troubled (Entwistle 2015: 179). This highlights how dress is not an accessory to, but rather a co-laborer with, the body in the process of making gender legible.

This emphasis on the making of gender is important. Susan Kaiser, taking up Anne Fausto Sterling's concept of 'soft assemblages' or the idea that gender is not 'hardwired', notes that

> viewing gender as a soft assemblage, rather than a fixed essence, opens up the idea of the plural ways of doing gender, especially when exploring transnational understanding and intersectional analyses of gender interplay with sexuality, race, ethnicity, religion, social class, national identity, age/generation, and other subject positions.
>
> (2012: 124–25)

In her influential text *Gender Trouble*, Butler offers the notion of gender performativity, or the idea that gender can be understood as a 'stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being' (1989: 33). The language of performance, stylization and production is particularly resonant within the space of sports, and women's athletics in particular. Consider, for example, how within sports, one's athletic performance is highly linked to and even predicated on one's dress (performance wear). Bodily performances that are central to professional sports become vexed sites of gender display. Indeed, situating this discussion of gender and dress within the broader context of women's sports as an already fraught space of gender performance serves to further illuminate the complexities that arise with the interplay between gender, sports and dress.

Women's Sports and the Contested Terrain of Gender

The 1979 passage of Title IX, which banned sex-based discrimination in any federally funded program, including athletics, was a watershed moment in US sports

history. Title IX fomented a vast and rapid upsurge in women's participation in athletics at all levels (Messner 1988). In many ways, the success of Title IX and its effectiveness in addressing disparities between women's and men's sports also served to highlight how women's participation in sports has been, and continues to be, a site of ambivalence around prevailing ideas of gender norms for its female participants.

This ambivalence is due, in part, to the ways in which athletics (in the United States) has traditionally been constructed as an overwhelmingly masculine space, where men's homosocial interactions through competition and comradery affirmed their manhood. As Cahn outlines, prevailing notions held during the early twentieth century about the 'maleness' of sport – those which 'derived from a gender ideology which labeled aggression, physicality, competitive spirit, and athletic skill as masculine attributes necessary for achieving true manliness' – suggest that it would serve to undermine women's femininity (Cahn 1993: 344). While in the contemporary moment the idea that sports would serve to physically de-feminize women participants would likely be dismissed as a fringe perspective, the ideological undercurrents and anxiety surrounding many women athletes as outside of conventional forms of feminine gender performance persists.

Acting Mannish: Performing Female Masculinity

At the outset of *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens*, Alice Walker outlines her now famous definition of the term 'womanist'. In keeping with both the content as well as aesthetic conventions of definitions, Walker proposes four primary meanings of the term 'womanist'. The first identifies womanism as a derivative of the word 'womanish', about which Walker writes '"womanish" i.e. like a woman. Usually referring to outrageous, audacious, courageous, or *willful* behavior. Wanting to know more and in greater depth than is considered "good" for one. Interested in grown-up doings. Acting grown up. Being grown up' (Walker 2004: xi, original emphasis). 'Womanish', then, is an intersectional term that has productive theoretical implications, as it serves to trouble dominant notions of acceptable gender comportment. Furthermore, the close relationship between the 'acting' and 'being' grown-up of womanish behavior echoes the terms of performance, which concerns itself with the doing as opposed to the being of (in this case) identity. In this regard, womanish is a useful concept for thinking about gender performances that are articulated in racial terms.

While young women are often more commonly admonished for 'acting grown', young men might instead (or in addition) be identified and reprimanded (in Black vernacular parlance) for being 'mannish'. A dictionary definition of mannish might simply outline the term as derivative of a man or that which means 'of or relating to men'.

However, within a certain cultural context, particularly African American, 'mannish' is a term often levied at young men who are seen as acting untoward or sexually forward, or concerning themselves with things, particularly sexual ones, that are seen as age-inappropriate or unsuitable for a child. This acting beyond the dictates and knowledge of childhood/adolescence, of acting in ways associated with men – while simultaneously not being read as occupying all of the bodily, social and cultural space identified with men that mannishness marks, offers an interesting point of entry through which to think about the theoretical implications of Black female masculinity.[1, 2]

To be 'mannish' is to both transgress and instantiate dominantly outlined dictates around gender – to at once be recognized and misrecognized as masculine. When 'mannish' female-bodied people, particularly Black people, are ridiculed or castigated for being so it is because they ostensibly mark a failure and/or refusal with regards to gender – and in so doing potentially reveal the many (il)logics of gender, sexuality and race that fail to neatly and naturally cohere for all (Black) masculine people. Moreover, as Noble outlines in their engagement with Eve Sedgwick's axioms of gender, female masculinity is often, though not always, rooted in same-sex desire (Noble 2004). The frequent readied designation of female masculine people as sexually queer often becomes a shorthand deployed to apprehend their gendered difference, and highlights both a persistent homophobia as well as the difficulty to name female masculinity despite its ubiquity within public cultural

FIGURE 1: Image of Brittney Griner from *Brittney Griner: Lifesize*.

life in the United States. Professional sports, and the WNBA in particular, is one of the most visible sites of gender nonconformity, specifically female masculinity, within popular culture. WNBA star Brittney Griner serves as an exemplar of this particular racialized gender alterity – a difference that is both implicated in and implicates everything from her incredible athletic talent and striking physique, to her sartorial choices.

Brittney Griner, Basketball and the Endorsement of Difference

In a 2013 interview with *ESPN Magazine* Brittney Griner, discussing her experience with clothing throughout her life, stated

> When I'm in a dress, it's like, 'What am I doing in this?' I feel trapped, like I'm in shackles and handcuffs and a straitjacket. So, I was just like, F— it, I'm going to wear what I want. I caught hell for it, but it felt so good being myself.
> (Fagan 2013)

While her sartorial choices might seem like an incidental part of the larger story of Griner's emergence as a figure who changed the WNBA, and perhaps sport more generally, in many ways it is Griner's fashioned body that is the primary source and site of her cultural significance. As the preceding quote evinces, while clothes can and do serve the function of mere play for some wearers, for others the stakes are much higher, with dress serving as a critical mode through which 'individuals learn to live in their bodies and feel at home in them' (Entwistle 2015: 7). For others, Griner's emergence highlights the ways in which an already brewing undercurrent of public forms of female masculinity (and perhaps more specifically Black female-bodied masculinity) undeniably assumes a public stage – one that becomes further public through her endorsement deal with Nike. Griner's deal with Nike represented not only an affirmation of an individual's personal performance of self, but also a public endorsement of gender subversion cosigned by one of the most recognized and prominent producers of athletic apparel (and perhaps clothing brands) in the world.

To understand Griner's trailblazing apparel deal, and the storied career and cultural iconicity that fomented it, it is imperative to first understand her unique personal and athletic trajectory. During her high school career at Chester W. Nimitz High School (in Houston, Texas), Griner took her team to a state championship, and set both a single game (25) and single season record for blocks.[3] Griner's impressive high school campaign would lead her to Baylor University, an institution whose reputation as a women's basketball mecca is

only matched by its reputation as a conservative institution. During her career at Baylor, Griner, who by that time had attained much more comfort around her sexuality and gender presentation, was forced to submerge parts of her identity. Griner, recalling her time at Baylor, remarked that 'When I was at Baylor, I wasn't fully happy because I couldn't be all the way out' (Fagan 2013). Despite (or perhaps because of) the ways in which the environment at Baylor was personally stifling, Griner's play on the court managed to cement her position as what Val Ackerman, founding president of the WNBA, called 'a once-in-a-generation type of player' (Gleeson 2013).

In 2013, the Phoenix Mercury selected Griner as the number one overall pick of the WNBA Draft. Griner was selected as Rookie of the Year in her first season. In 2014 Griner would go on to take her team to a WNBA Championship. The only thing that seemed to compete with Griner's cultural iconicity as a once-in-a-lifetime athlete was an increasingly controversy-ridden personal life, which peaked with the highly public marriage to (and then annulment after only 28 days with) fellow WNBA player Glory Johnson (who was also pregnant via in vitro fertilization with the couple's twins at the time). The marriage and annulment came only a few weeks after a very public domestic dispute between the couple.[4] While ostensibly this type of controversy would mar Griner's image, for better or worse the controversy served to catapult Griner further into the popular discourse and fuel her celebrity. Griner, then, represented a hybrid of what Stevens et al. describe as the 'sports hero' and the 'celebrity athlete' (2003). According to the authors 'sports heroes' are those who 'were recognized by the virtue of their accomplishments' while the 'celebrity athlete' is defined by their 'image being known' (Stevens et al. 2003: 103). Griner's emergence as a cultural icon, then, is a unique combination of athletic dominance and a staunch individuality that is both mediated and exemplified through her presentation of self.

Griner's signature loc'd hair, and long sinewy physique (she is 6'8" with a reported wingspan of 7'4") adorned by a myriad of tattoos, along with her sartorial choices, are the most notable markers of her presentation. In an interview, Griner, reflecting on her journey toward self-discovery, including the tumultuous years of her adolescence and the ways that clothing has served as both an inhibitor and facilitator of a certain degree of self-assuredness and comfort in her identity, states, 'I used to do the whole baggy, hard-core, I'm-a-boy look. Then I went through a preppy phase. Now I have the athletic, bow-tie look. I found my style' (Fagan 2013). Griner's comments about her own style evolution are resonant with gender itself, as they both reflect and inform the ways that gender functions as not only fluid, but also iterative – or as that which is articulated and rearticulated over the course of time. As the aforementioned comments evince, Griner's choices served as an important psychic emollient for the young star's

self-esteem. They also resonated with and aided in the ushering in of a shifting cultural moment around public queerness. Nike understood Griner's significance, and ostensibly, profit potentialities, when in 2013, the company signed her to an endorsement deal.

Very little was released about the terms of Griner's endorsement deal, other than Griner's own assertion that 'it's big-time, let's just say that', and that she would be remunerated US $15,000 (Fagan 2013). While the monetary sum of the deal seems modest compared to the multi-million dollar endorsements that are often offered to high-profile male counterparts, the potential cultural impact of the Nike/Griner partnership is tremendous (Amick 2015). It is this non-monetary value upon which Nike was counting. As Nike spokesperson Brian Strong stated, 'it's safe to say we jumped at the opportunity to work with her because she breaks the mold' (Fagan 2013). While Strong's assertion that Griner 'breaks the mold' is vague, the subtext seems to be around Griner's gender presentation insofar as part of the deal is that Griner is to model men's clothing. The ways that Griner's endorsement marks a significant moment within sports apparel, with its explicit willingness to engage gender play and even more androgynous presentation of gender, is something that has been a part of high fashion for years, but seems more novel among athletes and athletic apparel.

However, even the most cursory engagement with US professional basketball reveals that it is particularly ripe for, and indeed already pushing, the boundaries of gender in terms of fashion. In the men's game, fashion and clothing have gotten far more attention in the past few years with certain game events, such as the highly-staged draft day, press conferences and awards ceremonies. What players are wearing garners just as much popular cultural attention as their actual athletic performance. Even so, there do seem to be some disparities between the men's and women's games with respect to the role of sartorial practice and its relationship to gender. Complex codes of stylization have become increasingly associated with men's sports, which include the highly publicized style choices of players like Dwyane Wade, Russell Westbrook and Paul George, and changing mores around player dress due to both the league's emphasis on player dress code, and (perhaps relatedly) the rise of what has been termed 'geek chic' among NBA players. Wesley Morris, who has written about both the shifting style trends within both the men's and women's sports, has argued that the nerd aesthetic that many NBA players adopted a few years ago can be understood as a type of 'drag in which ballers are liberated to pretend to be someone else' (Morris 2011).

Morris' comments are notable for a number of reasons. NBA players occupy arguably one of the most fecund and popular cultural sites of representations of Black masculinity (next to hip-hop, which the author also cites as both informing and adopting similar stylistic trends), so their style both reflects and informs larger

cultural trends around the latter's fashioning. Furthermore, Morris' argument that for many NBA players the adoption of nerd style as drag, however, unintentionally and problematically reinscribes a jock/scholar divide that has particularly nefarious implications for the construction of Black masculinity as anti-intellectual and brutish. Nonetheless, it is important to acknowledge the interplay between dress, identity and play that right inform Morris' designation of nerd style as drag.

While play and performance are overwhelmingly understood as part of the ways in which these men's engagement with fashion are read and received, the implications of self-presentation for women's basketball players are markedly different. For example, Morris in another article, writing on Griner, remarks that her draft-day donning of orange fingernails in combination with a white tuxedo 'defused her look' and

> delivered Griner's masculinity from drag, from performance, from posing into nature. They told you she's not playing or pretending with these clothes. She's just being. In 10 years, the suits and shirts won't change, they'll just be made of nicer fabrics and fit better.
>
> (Morris 2013)

Interestingly, it seems that it is the performance of femininity for Griner (similar to the performances of nerdom by NBA players), which in this case is marked by orange fingernails, that signals artifice. Griner's exemplifies Halberstam's (1998) contestation of the idea that 'female masculinities are the rejected scraps of dominant masculinity in order that male masculinity appear the real thing' and illustrates that indeed, 'masculinity has been produced by and across male and female bodies' (1998: 1). Furthermore, Griner reveals that dress is paramount to the conveyance and reception of her identity. As Mignon Moore (2006) asserts in her work on Black lesbians and dress, African American lesbians' presentation, specifically around clothing choice, conveys important meanings with regard to identity for the wearer.

It is perhaps the seeming naturalness or authenticity of these masculine gender performances among Griner and other women athletes that lend themselves to their ability to garner sports apparel deals. However, unlike other female athlete endorsements that may attempt to reconcile how female athletes often trouble notions of femininity, Griner's deal, which stipulates that she is free to model men's clothes, seems to embrace the masculinity that is already scripted onto her persona and body. Effective athletic apparel endorsements are predicated on the ability of the athlete to transmit certain 'truths' about the products assistance of bodily performances. Griner's endorsement deal, then, reveals how sports apparel indexes

codes of gender that already persist within the dominant society in ways that, paradoxically, trouble and instantiate masculinity. Although Griner's endorsement was incontestably groundbreaking, in many ways it resembled a famous endorsement that preceded it – that of women's basketball icon Sheryl Swoopes.

She Was Not a Girly Girl: Sheryl Swoopes' Signature Shoe and the Discourse and Design of Female Masculinity

Sheryl Swoopes' 1995 endorsement of her very own signature sneaker, the Nike Air Swoopes remains, arguably, the most significant endorsement for a female athlete. While the endorsement was unprecedented for women's sports, the Swoopes' signature shoe deal is also significant for the ways in which, both discursively, and materially, it highlighted how women's basketball apparel endorsements are predicated on both eschewing and promoting notions of female masculinity.

Episode 5 of ESPN's documentary series *Nine for IX*, *Swoopes*, highlights the meteoric rise of Swoopes growing up as the youngest (and only girl) of three siblings in the rural town of Brownfield, Texas to become the most successful female basketball player of all time. In one segment of the documentary, famed Nike founder Phil Knight, reflecting back on the brand's relationship to Swoopes, states, 'I think looking back it was Sheryl Swoopes and the Nike endorsement deal were a significant step on the road to women's basketball, you know, becoming a much bigger part of American Culture' (Storm 2013). Moreover, Knight continues that it was not only her athletic talents but also her persona that made her marketable stating Swoopes was 'a very attractive woman, she has a great smile, a tremendous flair for the game. Her persona, her name, it all went together and the Air Swoopes made perfect sense, didn't it?' (Storm 2013). Knight's characterization of Swoopes is important to note, as he is clear to cite conventional markers of her feminine appeal located in her physical attractiveness when commenting on her athletic prowess. In her sneaker deal this ostensible gesture towards Swoopes' gender alterity alluded to by Knight became much more explicit as, in both discourse and design logic, female masculinity is invoked.

The Nike Air Swoopes model, like most signature shoes, went through a number of iterations over Sheryl Swoopes' career. The first model, however, is that which is most iconic, if only for the fact that it inaugurated a new moment within the history of women's sneakers, women's sports and sneaker culture more broadly. Marni Gerber, designer of the Nike Air Swoopes sneaker, reportedly designed the shoe to reflect Swoopes' own personality, which Gerber described as 'not a girly girl' (Nike News 2012).

In order to convey this, the Air Swoopes was made to intentionally diverge from the predominant aesthetics and functional conventions of women's sneakers.

The Air Swoopes, which was originally released in red, white and blue (presumably a nod to the 1996 Olympics) as well as a more muted mostly black colorway, disrupted the 'shrink and pink' mentality of the sneaker industry's broader approach to women's sneakers at the time. 'Shrink and pink' refers to the ways in which women's sneakers were often made legible as such by merely marking them with particular set of gendered aesthetic codes such as the color pink and smaller sizes to connote femininity, something that the sneaker, as an object that has come to connote masculinity, resists. (Miner 2009). As Dylan Miner asserts in his work on the multiple cultural significations of athletic shoes 'sneakers have come to exemplify the heterodox application and multi-dimensional creation of masculine identity' (Miner 2009: 103). Miner's claim suggests that not only, as Halberstam states is masculinity produced 'by and across male and female bodies' but perhaps non-corporeal ones – or object, as well (Halberstam 1998: 1). In this case, then, the gendered import of the object suggests that Swoopes' deal, albeit in much different terms than Griner's, was also an endorsement of, if not *men's*, perhaps, *masculine* apparel. In the case of the Air Swoopes, the gendered charge of the object is further codified through the gendered logics of design embedded into the materiality of the shoe. Consider, for example, Nike's description of the Air Swoopes as a shoe that

> merged great traction with agility, a rugged black Durabuck, a distinctive midfoot stability strap that cradled the foot, a contrasting color blocking strategy for maximum visibility and Nike Air in the heel and forefoot. The result was an uncompromising blend of support, performance and style.
>
> (Nike News 2012)

It is clear that both the aesthetic and performance attributes of the shoe are central to its revisionist project.

First, the shoe's explicit divergence from the 'shrink and pink' mentality highlights how femininity and function are often constructed as incongruent while simultaneously incorporating both femininity and *function*. While there is nothing about the specific functional and performance attributes of the shoe that necessarily, in and of themselves, suggests that the sneakers are in any way a material manifestation of racial or gender identity, the marketing of Swoopes, her ascribed/described personality traits, and the gendered import of the cultural arena in which she performed – sports, specifically basketball – all work in concert to racialize and gender her shoes.

It is clear that Nike both inadvertently and actively relied upon and constructed this narrative of female masculinity around Swoopes and the Air Swoopes, towards the end of appealing to a market that is both imagined as, and is in actuality, overwhelming male. Consider the claims from the retrospective that

> Once the new league tipped off, males desperately hunted for the Nike Air Swoopes in a bigger size – a glorious moment of role reversal. [As the Swoopes series evolved, implementing Zoom and Tuned Air along the way,] gender became irrelevant in the desire for these shoes.
>
> (Nike News 2012)

This putative disruption of gender norms, or 'role reversal', was hinged upon a re-instantiation of masculinity via Swoopes and the ways that her mediated self became scripted into the material form of the sneaker. Therefore, the assertion that men's covetousness of the sneaker revealed how gender was now irrelevant is misleading, as in actuality it instantiates the importance of gender. Both the marketing and the consumer fervor around the Nike Air Swoopes seemed to be fomented by a persistent and strident adherence to notions of masculinity. It seems that the Air Swoopes then, more accurately, reveals how even in the marketing of a sneaker specifically designed for women, the subtext and indeed the object still maintains its attachments to masculinity. In this regard, the Air Swoopes does not complicate existing codes (even as perhaps Swoopes herself does) of gender so much as to articulate it with a difference; serving as evidence of how masculinity can look different, but still often requires the same codes to be legible.

Conclusion

Examining the apparel endorsement deals of two of professional women's basketball's most iconic players – Brittney Griner and Sheryl Swoopes – contributes to and complicates notions about gender, fashion and the body that recognize that the corpus does not solely determine, but actually co-labors with objects like clothing in fashioning gender. Furthermore, the designation of athletic apparel as 'performance wear' or 'performance gear' explicitly highlights how these garments' facilitation of the bodily exertion that is quintessential to athletic endeavors directly relates to performances of identity categories like gender. Examining female masculinity, then, as a specific type of gendered identity in relationship to fashion might serve to highlight the complex and often confounding ways in which fashion serves to (re)construct gender and aid in the (il)legibility of identity.

Moreover, it is important to note that this interplay between fashion, the body and gender, as evinced by women's athletic apparel endorsements discussed here, does not necessarily disrupt gender, so much as rearrange the terms by which it usually maintains its legibility.

Finally, while this chapter assuredly has limitations, its analysis of the athletic apparel endorsement deals of Britney Griner and Sheryl Swoopes reveals that even as fashion studies is becoming increasingly amenable to more pluralistic masculinities, there remain those like Black female masculinity that are still marginalized within the literature. This engagement with sports, apparel and Black female masculinity, then, both contributes to and reveals the possibilities for a more intentioned analysis and nuanced engagement with the unique terms by which a diverse range of masculinities are fashioned.

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NOTES

1. Concerns with Black female masculinity and mannishness are part of the author's broader research agenda on issues of race, gender, sexuality and both the limits and possibilities of embodiment.
2. For more on female masculinity, see J. Halberstam's *Female Masculinity* (1998).
3. According to the Nba.com glossary 'a block occurs when an offensive player attempts a shot and the defensive player tips the ball, blocking their chance to score'.
4. According to reports, both women were arrested for disorderly conduct and assault. http://bleacherreport.com/articles/2479888-brittney-griner-glory-johnson-the-wnba-and-domestic-violence-in-lgbt-community.

Gender More: An Intersectional Perspective on Men's Transgression of the Gender Dress Binary

Ben Barry and Andrew Reilly

Androgyny is a combination of masculine and feminine characteristics. Although androgyny has been a central component of postmodern self-presentation styles (Morgado 1996), Morgado (2014) argues that the post-postmodern era has introduced a different take on androgyny. Post-postmodernism is a school of thought that highlights and critiques cultural and social changes in art, media, technology and popular culture in the early twenty-first century. While postmodernism focused on irony, questioning of tradition, and rejection of authority, these conditions are being replaced by post-postmodernism. The new conditions of post-postmodernism include resistance to globalization and standardization (Bourriaud 2009), hyper-consumption (Lipovetsky [1987] 1994, 2005), digital technology alongside human autonomy (Samuels 2008), and the erasure of defined cultural categories, including sex and gender – the focus of this chapter (Eschelman 2008).

Androgyny during postmodernity focused on blending masculinity and femininity to create a gender-ambiguous aesthetic, whereas the new iteration of androgyny during post-postmodernity highlights conventionally masculine and feminine signifiers to create a juxtaposition of gender presentation. Eschelman (2008) argued that 'performatism', or the elimination of distinctive cultural categories such as sex and gender, is evident in the post-postmodern era. Morgado (2014) expanded upon this idea and identified François Nars' portraits of Marc Jacobs and Gregg Asher as examples of androgyny in the post-postmodern era. The portrait of Marc Jacobs featured a shirtless Jacobs with a muscular, masculine body and facial hair alongside feminine components of painted nails, lipstick and makeup. Gregg Asher's aesthetic presentation included wearing women's clothing, shoes and jewelry on a narrow masculine body and with facial hair. Morgado wrote, 'these dramatic looks are not the androgynous blending of categories identified with postmodernism; rather, the

new looks combine masculine visual markers such as facial hair with very feminine appearance signs such as make-up, skirts and heels' (2014: 324). This new approach to androgyny has also manifested on contemporary menswear runways. McCauley Bowstead (2018) illustrated how collections of menswear designers in the second decade of the twenty-first century juxtapose silhouettes, cuts and materials traditionally associated with women's fashion and menswear and, subsequently, with femininity and masculinity into single garments.

In this chapter, we locate this trend in androgynous dressing among men and illustrate how they assemble outfits in everyday life that combine conventionally masculine and feminine elements. Drawing from one participant, we coin a term for the current form of androgyny, 'gender more', because it represents the diverse ways that men juxtapose clothing styles associated with femininity and masculinity into a single look. We extend research that has explored contemporary androgyny through men's fashion from celebrity figures and runway collections (McCauley Bowstead 2018; Morgado 2014) to men's everyday dress practices. This chapter also builds on Barry and Martin's (2016) analysis of contemporary gay's men mixing of gender dress signifiers by describing the boundaries of the practice and expanding it beyond gay men.

The data for this chapter were collected as part of a larger research project on the men's fashion practices, which was conducted by the first author. The project used an arts-informed qualitative methodology to explore how men across a diversity of social identities use fashion to construct their gendered identities. In total, 50 men across a range of ages, sexualities, body types, races, classes and clothing styles and who lived in Toronto, Canada participated in the project. These men were recruited through a snowball sample because it provided access to a diverse spectrum of participants across social identities. Recruitment requests were sent to community and professional groups as well as to the first author's contacts. The request encouraged men from a range of social identities and who wore a range of clothing styles to participate, but it also stated that they did not need to have an interest in fashion. Participants first took part in wardrobe interviews. They were asked to provide a tour of their wardrobes and discuss the uses, meanings and histories of each garment (Woodward 2007). Participants were then invited to take part in a photoshoot and fashion show during which they wore key outfits that they discussed during their interviews. These artistic methods showcased how participants embody their clothing (Barry 2017). For this chapter, we selected four men from the larger sample because each combined conventionally feminine and masculine dress codes into single outfits and each represented different social identities. Focusing on only four men allows us to deeply engage with their dress decisions. However, these men represent a larger phenomenon in men's dressing because 15 participants in the larger project – over

one quarter of the sample – combined conventionally feminine and masculine clothes into a single look.

Bringing together extreme masculine and feminine sartorial elements into single outfits is not a new phenomenon for men. Some radical gay men who were part of the Gay Liberation Front during the 1970s embraced a style known as 'genderfuck' in which they combined hyper-masculine and hyper-feminine appearance signifiers to expose fixed notions of sex and gender as artificial. For example, they often wore heavy makeup and donned sequined dresses while also revealing genital bulges and growing out facial hair (Cole 2013). Our participants also combined radical gender appearance markers, similar to 'genderfuck', but we argue that this subcultural aesthetic in the 1970s was prefiguring a style that has become more common during the early twenty-first century among young men. Moreover, the 'gender fuck' aesthetic was primarily enacted to protest the artificial nature of gender in Britain and the United States (Cole 2013). We find that 'gender more' is enacted by men in Canada of diverse ethnicities, races, and sexualities in their everyday lives. Originating from Black feminist scholarship, the framework of intersectionality explains that people's gender identities are co-constituted by their various other social identities (e.g. race, class, sexuality) and these diverse social identities interact to influence their everyday experiences (Collins and Bilge 2016; Crenshaw 1991).

Drawing on intersectionality, we argue that the multiplicity of identity categories inhabited by our participants influenced their desire to transgress gender boundaries through their self-presentation and selection of extreme gender dress signifiers. Moreover, the four participants in this chapter, as well as the others in the larger study who assembled feminine and masculine styles, represented a range of races, sexualities and classes, but they were all under 35-years-old (the larger study included men between the ages of 18 and 76). Since the Youthquake of the 1960s, young people had active roles in fashion innovation and early adoption of new trends. Our conclusion suggests reasons for young men's leading role in the androgynous trend during post-postmodernity. The following wardrobe interviews uncover the motivations and dress practices of these men.

Andre

Andre is a 30-year-old, Black gay elementary school teacher who has always been interested in rejecting gender dress divisions. His parents enrolled him in a Catholic high school where he was required to wear a uniform that reflected white, middle-class, heterosexual masculine aesthetics: a blazer, button-down shirt and tie. While his parents wanted him to embody this form of respectability politics[1] to offset discrimination, Andre would scour thrift stores for plastic beads and

flashy jewelry that he would wear over his button-down shirts to challenge the school's gendered dress codes. However, after graduation, he had more freedom to experiment with clothing. Initially, his style consisted of clothes that stripped away masculine and feminine signifiers, but he eventually developed an approach to fashion that magnified these gendered dress codes: 'When I started thinking up the gender-less wardrobe, it felt very stripped down, very bleak […] But if you're empowered enough to take on both sets of codes, then you have more, and so the idea of the gender-more was something that I was really excited about taking on'. According to Andre, Black and queer people are often told by mainstream society that they are 'too much' because their embodiments disrupt white, middle-class, heterosexual ways of being – having been and continuing to be constructed as pathological, dangerous and out-of-control (Claire 2017). Rather than quietly assimilate women and men's gender codes and conform to these racist and homophobic world views, Andre has embraced being 'too much' through outfits that brought together bold masculine and feminine gender signifiers.

The clothing that Andre selected represent the intersection of his diverse social identities. Andre noted that hip-hop music has influenced subcultural dress practices of Black communities through baggy and oversized garments. He drew from this Black style but made them his own: 'I get inspired by oversized hip-hop T-shirts and really wide jeans. I wrap them and reinterpret them'. For example, he rolled up the sleeves of a baggy top to showcase his arms and tied the bottom into a knot to expose his stomach. Andre therefore drew on Black styles, but he altered them to reveal body parts that were conventionally exposed in both men and women's dress. His outfits also combined Black and queer references. He paired a Harlem Globetrotters basketball jersey with maroon faux-fur, sequined mesh pants. Through this outfit, Andre expressed specific notions of gender that are connected to Black and queer communities. His top represented a sport that is stereotypically associated with Black male culture, whereas his bottoms expressed the fabulousness of queer nightlife.[2] Moreover, Andre's working-class status influenced his clothing; he purchased clothes at thrift stores and participated in clothing swaps where he acquired women's pieces that fit snug on his 6-foot-5-inch tall, toned body. However, he viewed ill-fitting women's clothing as opportunities to create new gendered silhouettes because these pieces highlighted unexpected parts of his body. In this way, Andre juxtaposed gender signifiers because he engaged in the feminine style of revealing his figure but exposed his normative man's body.

Andre's identities as a Black, gay elementary teacher informed the motivation behind his 'gender more' dressing. He explained that his dress practice follows the histories of Black and gay communities who have turned to appearance to challenge their oppression and reimagine a world in which they want to live. As a teacher, Andre believes that his clothing encourages students to consider gender

diversity: 'my outfits aren't only a form of self-discovery, but they give the kids a space to explore their identity and gender'. He feels a responsibility to use his style as a starting point for talking about gender with students by actively questioning preconceived assumptions. However, Andre's gender nonconforming presentation has not always been met with fanfare from his colleagues. His principal has pulled him aside on several occasions because she thought his outfits were 'unprofessional' for the classroom. While Andre explains that his principal is always 'really sensitive' about how she handles the conversations, it nonetheless caused him to give his work outfits a double take – 'I've got to check what I wear'.

Andre's style illustrates the juxtaposition of hyper-masculine and hyper-feminine styles that characterize androgyny in post-postmodernity. He assembles clothing items conventionally associated with men and women and styles associated with masculinities and femininities into single looks. When worn on his man's body, these combinations remove watertight distinctions of sex and gender – a key tenant of postmodernity – and instead amplify the fluidity of these categories. Andre selects clothing that represent tropes of his Black and queer identities, but he subverts and reimagines these tropes by styling the pieces together. His clothes not only combine masculine and feminine signifiers but those that are specific to his race and sexuality.

Clinton

While Clinton previously took a passive approach to his clothing choices, today he regularly wears skirts to express himself. Some of his skirts are long and flowy, whereas others are short and fitted. Clinton's white, middle-class Christian upbringing taught him that men should be stoic and strong, and that they did not devote time to their clothing choices. While he had always felt stifled by these narrow masculine standards, he was anxious about challenging them because he did not want his family and friends to question his masculinity and sexuality. However, the 28-year-old was inspired to experiment with his clothing and wear skirts after a breakup with his girlfriend: 'After the breakup, I was like, I'm going to throw out the majority of my clothes and get clothes that show who I am and what my spirit is'. According to Clinton, he was pretending to fulfill the archetype of a man in his relationship that was not true to his vulnerable and expressive self. One of the first pieces that he bought was a skirt. Clinton recalled the first time he wore the skirt because he felt an instant connection with it: 'It felt right like when you have sun burn, you don't know how much it hurts until you put aloe vera cream on and you're, like, my God, that feels good. That's how the skirt felt on me'. The new chapter in his life gave him the confidence to disrupt the masculine norms in which he had been raised.

Clinton's identity as a straight man influenced how he wore skirts. Since Clinton was not socialized to wear skirts or to play with clothes, he did not have the knowledge of styling them: 'Do I tuck the skirt in? Do I wear a belt with it? … Is it going to look weird if I wear these dress shoes?' He created his own set of dress codes that mix stereotypical gender signifiers because he had to learn how to style skirts for himself. For example, Figure 1 depicts an image of Clinton from his photoshoot in his long, red skirt that he styled with a white top, sport socks and tennis shoes. Another favorite combination is his green pencil skirt, a man's button-down shirt, vest, tie and oxford shoes. Although his position as a man helped him create new ways to style skirts, his position as a straight man limited where he wears them. For example, Clinton is anxious about wearing skirts on dates because he is unsure how women will respond: 'I'm going on a date with this girl … If I wear this skirt, it's showing that I have a lot of femininity … Is she going to be turned off by that? Is she going to want to come home with me?' Clinton defied gender norms but these constructs continue to shape his dress choices as a straight man on the dating scene.

FIGURE 1: Clinton pairs a women's skirt with men's tennis shoes, sport socks and a linen shirt.

Clinton's body shape and class status also influenced his juxtaposition of masculine and feminine dress signifiers. His 6-foot-two-inch broad, yet lean physique fits a size 16 in women's clothing. Although this skirt size is more difficult to find in stores, Clinton feels especially excited when he finds skirts that fit him because these garments emphasize his body in new ways: 'It gives me hips that I don't have … I guess it gave me an interesting shape that I never really saw before in me'. During the interview, Clinton tried on a flowing skirt and skipped about the room. Giving himself a spin, he said, 'when I wear that skirt, this is how I walk … I have more fun and I want to play with the skirt. I want to make it move and I give a little twirl just to make it go'. In a skirt, Clinton feels liberated from masculine gender norms and free to express his femininity. As a working-class, part-time message therapist and amateur actor, he purchases his skirts at second-hand stores. This range of skirt styles in these stores have allowed him to experiment with various shapes and cuts because the styles are not limited by current fashion trends.

Like Andre, Clinton's style represents androgyny in postmodernity because he mixes conventional men and women's clothes together and, as such, erases sex and gender binaries that are constructed through dress. Moreover, women's skirts compel Clinton to move his man's body in feminine ways that further erase embodied distinctions between men and women and masculinity and femininity. Clinton's androgynous style draws from white, heteronormative ideas about gender – button-down shirts, ties and skirts – and therefore from his white and straight identities. While whiteness and straightness are dominant and thus taken-for-granted identities, Clinton's juxtaposition of masculinity and femininity through their ubiquitous gender markers makes visible how white heteronormativity construct gender binaries through dress.

Alex

Alex has always used clothing to reimage ideas of gender. Before he transitioned, the white, 29-year-old identified as a woman and wore baggy black T-shirts and jeans. These clothes helped him identify with feminist politics and as out lesbian: 'I was dressing very intentionally in a very classic butch dyke way … You wear black T-shirt and jeans. There's a history to this outfit'. But after his top surgery, people started to associate baggy, black clothes on his 6-foot-one-inch, white, fat, tattooed body with dominant, straight masculinity. Alex, however, did not want to be associated with this idea of masculinity because he believes that it promotes inequality and violence: 'If I just wear a plain black T-shirt, then I am also aligning myself with a group of humans that I don't necessarily want to be aligned with'.

Alex decided to change his style. He now wears outfits that combine masculine and feminine signifiers to avoid associations with either side of gender binary and instead present a fluid form of gender.

Alex's fat and trans identity informs how he materializes gender through clothing. His closet is filled with shirts with ironic phrases that challenge the gender binary when worn on his fat, transman's body. He often hacks-off portions of these shirts to reveal body parts that are associated with men, yet exposed by women's dress. For example, Alex bought a Hooter's restaurant-branded sweatshirt at a second-hand store. The restaurant is known for the explicit sexualization of its female serving staff who wear revealing uniforms.[3] The shirt has the Hooter's logo on the front and it was home-dyed pink. Alex was attracted to the top because the Hooter's logo across his chest represented a subversive message: 'I chopped my boobs off two years ago, so I feel like it's a little bit more fun to wear this now than it would have been before'. He also turned the top into a crop top to further challenge gender norms: 'I am the least likely person to wear this … I am not a sexy woman; I don't have a tiny stomach'. By wearing Hooter's over his flat chest, Alex unsettles the naturalness of sex on which the brand and the word Hooter's are based. He also questions gender binaries because he juxtaposes the design of his crop top, which is associated with women and femininity, with the exposure of his hairy fat, man's stomach.

Alex's wardrobe references his queer sexual identity while also disrupting categories of sex, gender and sexuality. Alex has many campy, sexually explicit T-shirts that refer to gay sex. One T-shirt had the expression 'skull fuck' on the front (i.e. the act of grabbing someone's skull, holding it still and thrusting one's penis in their mouth). A second T-shirt is emblazed with the expression 'top from the bottom' (i.e. during anal sex in gay culture, the person penetrating is known as the 'top' and the person being penetrated is known as the 'bottom'). The word 'top' is in giant font whereas 'bottom' is in very small font. When viewers look at the T-shirt, they initially only see 'top'. Alex explains, 'There comes a lot of assumptions because of how I look, about how I am going to flirtatiously and/or sexually interact with people. People look at me and are like: you look like an uber top'. His shirts challenge people's rush to categorize him into a specific archetype of masculinity based on dominance. By wearing T-shirts that reference gay sex, Alex also challenges the category of a gay man as having a penis and being sexually attracted to men because he does not have a penis nor is he attracted to men.

Alex wears women's pants because the cut and fabrics feel more comfortable on his fat body. As he explained, 'I'm a grown person who hated women's clothing forever and recently have been like: it's not the worst; it has a lot of stretch to it'. His most recent purchase was a pair of women's shorts. In addition to fitting his

body, these shorts express feminine dress codes by highlighting his hips and butt. When paired with his jackets, these outfits juxtapose masculine tough leather and army textiles with feminine body-conscious fits.

Alex's clothing choices are also influenced by his working-class status. He wears men's jackets in black leather or camouflage print and navy coveralls, archetypes of working-class masculinity (Matthews et al. 2013). Like his Hooter's top, Alex 'chopped [the coveralls] up' and turned the bottom into shorts and the top into short sleeves. He wears the coveralls over campy T-shirts, opening the zipper from the neck-to-the-crotch to reveal the shirt's graphics. He enjoys the association of his second-hand coveralls with working-class masculinity because it represents his limited budget as an emerging photographer. His working-class position therefore shapes both his clothing purchases and the aesthetics that he feels represent his masculine dress items. Moreover, the toughness signaled by these pieces make him feel protected as he walks around the city because he often faces harassment and violence as a transman who visibly challenges sex and gender binaries: 'They feel like armour; there've been a couple of nights where I've been followed home when I've been wearing them, and I've been like: if you try and hit me right now, this jacket was made to make me survive getting hit'.

Alex's androgynous aesthetic does not primarily draw on stereotypically gendered garments, in contrast to Andre and Clinton, but it is mostly assembled through more genderless items (i.e., T-shirts). However, his garments mix conventional masculinity and femininity through the interplay between their graphic messages and cuts on Alex's trans, queer and fat body. Alex's style and dress practice highlights different aspects of post-postmodernism. His style aligns with the erasure of cultural categories of sex, gender and sexuality, while his hacking and re-designing of garments is evident of resisting standardization and commodification. At first glance, Alex occupies a position of privilege as a white, large man. However, he undermines this status by wearing clothes that are influenced by and call out his queerness and transness. He illustrates how bodies that occupy privilege (or appear to do so) use 'gender more' in ways that disrupt their assumed embodied power by revealing that sex, gender and sexuality are unstable and undefinable.

Felix

Felix is a 25-year-old, gay student who was born in the Philippines. Although European and American colonization introduced strict gender norms into Pilipino culture, Felix's immediate family has supported him to connect with Pilipino culture's historical understanding of gender. According to Felix, traditional Pilipino culture included a third gender that identified as both masculine and feminine. He has always

felt that this understanding of gender was 'the most natural' for him. When Felix moved to Canada as a teenager, he began to actively wear women's styles, such as high heels and tunics, because these items felt 'second nature' on his body. Felix regularly combines subdued masculine colors with feminine cuts and shiny details, such as a charcoal sweatshirt dress with metallic accents. Although he explained that his 'wardrobe is now almost exclusively [comprised of] women's wear', he does not feel his style is not totally masculine or feminine: 'My clothing will always have an element of gender fluidity, like me'. Unlike the other participants, Felix does not intentionally wish to challenge gender norms; he makes clothing choices in an effort to be true to himself: 'I've always felt very strongly that if I live my life the way I want to, that's a political statement in itself. Because the choices I make, regardless of how other people view them … they're going to deviate from the traditional'.

Felix explained that his body shape, which he says is 'too big for most off-the-rack clothes', influences his clothing choices. His wardrobe primarily consists of pieces that are cut in draped, women's styles: 'I get the fit that I prefer better in women's than I do in men's'. Figure 2 depicts an image of Felix from the fashion show wearing women's loose black pants, a structured jacket and wedge heels. His look juxtaposes conventional masculine and feminine signifiers: the dark color, clunky shoes and structured jacket represent masculinity, while the cascading, silky fabric, high heels and accessories (i.e. ribbon tied around his jacket) express femininity. Felix receives financial support from his family while he completes school. His class position allows him to wear 'elevated labels', such as Comme des Garçons and Issey Miyake, which he finds have billowy silhouettes and luxurious fabrics that 'best fit and flatter' his body.

While Felix feels comfortable and confident in his clothing, his style makes it difficult to be accepted in gay culture. He explained that subcultural gay parties and media celebrate men who dress in feminine styles, but that this support does not extend to mainstream gay dating scenes: 'There's no way to navigate apps like Grindr if you don't belong to the norm … You have to appear and dress cisgendered to be successful'. As a gay male who enjoys using feminine accessories such as handbags and heavy jewelry, Felix feels that his disruption of men's gender dress norms alienates him from straight societal norms as well as from the mainstream gay community because both value men with traditionally masculine appearances. While wearing women's clothing disassociates Felix from men's gender norms, wearing these clothing on a fat body exasperates his disruption of normative masculinity because fat is associated with femininity.[4] Felix also faces challenges when visiting his extended family who do not hold the same inclusive views about gender as his parents: 'If I'm going to visit my uncle […] I'm not going to go in full regalia. I'm going to dress down'. Felix is therefore mindful of how his sexual and ethnic communities constrain his ability to mix masculine and feminine styles.

FIGURE 2: Felix combines masculine clunky shoes and a structured jacket with feminine high heels, fabrics and embellishments.

Unlike the other participants, Felix's clothing is primarily designed for women. However, he illustrates androgyny in the post-postmodern period because his individual clothing pieces and the way in which he styles them together juxtapose colors, silhouettes and embellishments that represent conventional and distinct masculine and feminine dress markers. Felix also explodes categories of woman and man by wearing outfits comprised completely of women's wear on his man's body, without any intention to cross-dress or perform drag. Felix's Pilipino heritage exposed him to the normalcy of gender fluidity that influences his style, while his class privilege enables him to buy clothes from brands that reflect his aesthetic and fit his body.

Conclusion

These four men highlight a stylistic change in their interpretation of androgyny, and we draw from Andre to refer to this current dress aesthetic as 'gender more'. Postmodern androgyny was exemplified by combining masculine and feminine elements to create a unified, blended gendered look (Morgado 1996) and seemed to represent appearance modes that were neither entirely masculine or feminine, but somewhere in-between. The new androgynous style of combining elements that obviously signify masculinity and femininity represents an aspect of post-post-modernism (Morgado 2014), specifically Eschelman's (2008) performatism, or the erasure of cultural categories. Perhaps rather than attempting to visually communicate the equality of genders, this new form of androgyny is intended to highlight the complexity of gender identity and the diversity of masculine and feminine facets. We find that 'gender more' not only celebrates archetypal masculine and feminine signifiers but it specifically draws from the intersection between gender and the range of other social identities to express the multiplicity of meanings and manifestations of gender itself. Rather than holding a universal understanding of gender, participants' dress motivations and aesthetics were located in the complex web of the intersectional identities that co-constituted their embodiments and experiences. In this way, 'more' does not only refer to combining both hyper-masculine and hyper-feminine dress codes into a single outfit, but to combining *more* expressions of hyper-masculinities and hyper-femininities, as influenced by the wearer's diverse social identities.

While participants represented a variety of social identities, their commonality was age – all under 35 – indicating that the current trend in androgyny is located among the millennial generation. This may be due to the zeitgeist during their formative years in which the construction and deconstruction of gender binaries were regularly discussed. For example, mainstream reality television shows celebrate men who wear feminine styles, such as Jonathan Van Ness on the reboot of *Queer Eye* and the casts of *RuPaul's Drag Race*. The social media platform Instagram has also become a widespread media source for the generation of participants in this chapter to share and view images of men's diverse dress styles that unsettle gender norms, including the use of popular hashtags (i.e., #meninskirts and #meninheels) that identify posts of men who combine masculine and feminine dress codes. In Canada, where the participants reside, trans rights and thus the construction and deconstruction of gender binaries have been centered in media and politics, with an amendment to the Canadian Human Rights Act that added gender identity and gender expression to the list of prohibited grounds of discrimination in 2018. The fact that participants selected items that specifically reflected classic masculinity (e.g. leather, sports jersey) and femininity (e.g. high-heel shoes, a skirt)

in an effort to create their personal aesthetic demonstrates that they understand how gender is created through clothing and how they can transgress its norms.

Despite participants' confident disruption of gender dress norms, they were cautious about how context-specific oppressions limited their ability to express themselves and participate in everyday life. As a result of their outfits, Andre was reprimanded at work, Alex experienced street harassment and Clinton and Felix faced discrimination on the dating scene. Participants had male privilege in patriarchal western society, yet they forwent this status by embracing femininity – in addition to masculinity – through their clothing. Kimmel argues that the central tenet of hegemonic masculinity is the renunciation of femininity: 'Whatever the variations by race, class, age, ethnicity, or sexual orientation, being a man means not being like women. This notion of anti-femininity lies at the heart of contemporary and historical conceptions of manhood' (2005: 31). As such, off the runways and red carpets, 'gender more' remains a brave and defiant embodied act of political resistance because narrow gender dress binaries continue to regulate everyday life. For post-postmodernism to significantly impact society, cultural changes need to move beyond popular culture and subcultures to empower all people in daily life.

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NOTES

1. Originally coined and most commonly used in reference to African American communities, respectability politics are attempts by marginalized groups to demonstrate that their social values are compatible with those of white mainstream (White 2001).
2. Fabulousness describes the ways in which queer, trans and other marginalized people create extravagant and eccentric looks that defy gender norms in everyday contexts, including at queer dance halls and clubs (moore 2018).
3. Although Hooter's employs a diversity of serving staff, their uniform consists of crop tops and short shorts while the brand's advertising features young, thin, white women with large breasts and substantial cleavage (Rasmusson 2011).
4. According to Whitesel's research on fat gay men, 'fat feminizes male bodies, threatening masculinity and departing for the archetype of the disciplined hard body' (2014: 44). Fat also makes men's genitals appear smaller and causes men to develop breasts and hips (Whitesel 2014).

In-vest-ed Meaning: Gender Ambiguity in Costume Collections

Katie Baker Jones and Jean Parsons

'Men and men, women and women, and occasionally even women and men, walked arm in arm in twos and threes. Their clothes were interchangeable […]' (Rourke 1992). In this description of an early 1990s Jean Paul Gaultier show, fashion editor Mary Rourke captured the spirit of a new wave of androgyny on the runway and in the fashion press. Fashion plays a critical role in gender stereotypes. In addition, considerations of gender are essential for dress historians. For the fashion historian and museum curator, scenes such as the one described by Rourke present an interesting dilemma: what role does or should gender play in the preservation of fashion as material culture? This chapter explores the gendered nature of objects through a material culture analysis of a Jean Paul Gaultier (1952–) 'Homme' vest housed in the Missouri Historic Costume and Textile Collection located at the University of Missouri. Of central concern is how an object is gendered at each stage of its 'life' at an organizational level – from production and retailing to consumption and ultimately to preservation in a collection or museum.

This particular vest was selected as an exploration of gender ambiguity in costume collections for four distinct reasons: (1) the garment's label connected it with a designer known for pushing the limits on cultural categories, including gender; (2) the garment was produced and purchased in a historical period when gender expression was more mutable; (3) there was a dissonance between the gender of the original purchaser and the gender category of the garment in the collection; and (4) the retail store in which it was sold potentially complicated the gendering of the garment via their merchandizing and promotional approaches.

Exploring the fashionable dress of the past has the potential to reveal new perspectives on social roles – like gender – that may not have been verbalized. Henry Glassie (1999) promoted material culture studies as a mechanism to access a wider population than traditionally available through the meta-narratives produced by those in positions of power. Sophie Woodward stated 'as material culture, clothing

is not seen as simply reflecting given aspects of the self but, through its particular material propensities, is co-constitutive of facets such as identity, sexuality and social role' (Woodward 2005: 21). Fashion offers an opportunity to examine how known values were embodied and embedded in the cultural products of a society. However, though the objects studied are consumer goods, they do not fully reveal the actions of consumers (Campbell 1996). Material culture grants access to the values and beliefs of a culture but does not necessarily reveal how those values and beliefs were appropriated, altered and performed by individual actors utilizing the object. Thus, this study focuses on the institutional forces – designers/brands, journalism, retail establishments and museums – shaping or imparting meaning to an object.

The body is not the only site for creating and maintaining a gendered object. Objects progress through several levels of meaning making, from production to consumption, before they arrive in a museum collection. Each level imparts new, complex associations shaping the object's relevance not only to the individual consumer but to the culture in which it was produced. In a given moment, one level may be given primacy over another. For example, some museums, like the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, prefer to give primacy to designer aesthetic and technical skill represented by objects while other museums, like the Henry Ford Museum, use fashion objects to tell stories of everyday life (Jacobs 2016). In either instance, meaning imparted by activities like retail and promotion may be downplayed or entirely disregarded. In the museum setting, objects may become divorced from individual experience and move into a realm of social meaning beyond any one individual's experience. In this view, an object is a manifestation of social ideologies and constructions at a given time. However, all of the meaning-making levels must be incorporated into the object's preservation in order to understand this manifestation. This chapter explores how fashion objects become 'gendered' and the discursive practices (i.e. words, images and associations) that lead to gendering, from designer presentation to museum preservation.

The material culture analysis models developed by E. McClung Fleming (1974) and Jules Prown (1982) were utilized, starting first with an examination of the object and then building outward toward the connection of the object to the social context in which it was created. Primary documents such as fashion magazines and newspapers from the period offered context and insight into the broader ideologies of the time. This research explored the complications that arise when dress objects do not conform readily to dichotomous gender categories and the potential implications (and opportunities) for dress collections. The goal of this analysis was to explore how discursive practices used at multiple institutional levels – namely the designer, the retail establishment and the museum – result in an object on which many social actors impart meaning. The vest was explored as a manifestation of challenged gender norms in western high fashion. It is assumed here that the role of objects in this particular ideological process has implications for museums and the preservation of material culture.

An Ambiguous Garment

The vest came into the collection as part of a large donation in 2000 by the original owner, a woman from Chicago. Little information about the donated garments was recorded at the time. The vest is a black, halterneck style with a low-cut back augmented with silver braids, clasps and buckle details. Multiple labels are affixed to the object including a designer label, a fiber content label and a retail store paper hangtag. The designer label, which is sewn to the inner left front panel, reads 'Jean Paul Gautier Homme, 52, Dry Cleanse Only, Made in Italy'. The main fabric utilized in the front of the vest is a 70 per cent rayon/30 per cent linen blend. The fiber content label is also found in the inner left front panel. The third label is affixed with a plastic tab inserted in the lining. It is made from a heavy cardstock and is printed on two sides. One side reads 'ULTIMO'. The other side displays barcode information as well as a large number '2' and a sale price of 640 US dollars. It was the 'Homme' on the designer label that led to questions regarding the gendering of this object.

While the front of the vest is traditional in terms of recognizable men's vest elements, and relatively somber, the back reveals a different aesthetic altogether (Figure 1). The silver detail on the back of the vest is a complex tangle of leather (or faux leather) braids and bands. The braids attach to the vest via a working buckle and clasp system. The shape of the vest front emphasizes a wide upper torso and a narrow waist. If worn without a shirt underneath, the shoulder blades and small of the back would be emphasized from behind.

FIGURE 1: Jean Paul Gaultier vest (front and back view), *c.* 1992–93. Missouri Historic Costume and Textile Collection, University of Missouri, 2000.2.346. Courtesy of Jean Parsons.

Based on the 'Homme' label, this garment was intended for a man. It was housed in the collection with other men's vests and garments. It is a size 52, which conforms to the conventions of standard suit sizing for men in France. The waist measurement is 39 inches, although there are some indications that it may have been altered. However, the paper store hangtag reads size two. Though two is a size used in women's clothing, it is unclear whether this label was intended to offer a women's equivalent. Indeed, the existence of a store hangtag further complicates the material culture analysis. Was the vest worn by the donor? Was it worn with the tag (which is placed inside so it could be hidden) with a thought that it might be returned? Was it purchased for someone else, but not ultimately gifted? The context in which the object was sold offers a potential clue into the disparities.

An Object in Context

The ideologies and gendered experiences of designer fashion do not necessarily find a corollary in mainstream, everyday life. While one avenue for exploring the gendering of dress is to study accepted dress practices of the mainstream population, the explicit approach of focusing on both designer and retail store for the Gaultier vest made an examination of a high-fashion context more appropriate for this analysis. Based on the donor record, the vest was likely produced in either 1992 or 1993. This time frame also fits with the Jean Paul Gaultier aesthetic of this period. At this time, there were several contextual factors potentially influencing its androgynous design.

Twentieth-century fashion history is littered with periods of women adopting masculine dress. In the 1920s and 1930s, Coco Chanel and Marlene Dietrich were early adopters. Yves Saint Laurent's masculine pant suits have remained central to the brand's design aesthetic ever since their introduction in the late 1960s. Late 1970s and 1980s pop icons such as Grace Jones, Prince, Sinead O'Connor, David Bowie and Boy George cultivated personas based on their androgynous features. Whether artistically or politically motivated, these designers and performers challenged gender-based dress norms including hairstyling, use of cosmetics, garment silhouettes and accessories.

Androgyny was a topic of high interest to the field of psychology beginning in the 1970s and early 1980s. Scales were developed to help researchers better understand particular 'traits' as either 'masculine' or 'feminine'. A study conducted in the 1980s found a positive correlation between men and women who identified with masculine traits and higher rates of self-esteem for those individuals (Lundy and Rosenberg 1987). This reinforced what had been found across multiple disciplines

and cultural analyses: the social construction of gender in the West had resulted in a hierarchy of the sexes that was being re-produced even at the psychological level. There were certainly material consequences for this hierarchy. The masculinization of women's dress in the 1980s is largely attributed to the movement of women into positions of power in the traditionally masculine domains of business and politics (Hollander 1994).

Self-identity could be constructed from a wider array of possibilities in the 1990s as gender norms were present but not necessarily limiting. The mutability of gender was reflected in popular culture through sketches on *Saturday Night Live* in which people were flummoxed by a gender ambiguous character named Pat played by Julia Sweeney (Snook 1992). The sketch not only challenged the use of physical appearance as a gender marker but also revealed social anxieties that arose when those markers were ambiguous.

The connections between gender and sexuality were also in flux. As Anne Hollander wrote of the time, 'the look of male sexual potency in the postmodern world is able to float free of those austere visions of masculinity, solidified in the nineteenth century, that discredit any richness of fantasy in dress by calling it feminine' (1994: 183). That men were also participating in fashion as a means to downplay gender divides marked this period as particularly notable. Most of the previous challenges to gender norms through dress had been solely pursued by and encouraged for women, with the exception of the 1960s and 1970s youth movements. However, male participation was not necessarily found outside the confines of fashion circles and countercultures.

A review of the fashion press in the early 1990s including *Vogue* and *Women's Wear Daily* (*WWD*) revealed that editors were promoting another wave of androgyny. In the high-fashion annals, styles mirrored the androgyny in subcultural youth movements of the grunge and punk music scenes (Poneman 1992). An article in *WWD* detailed the influence of the punk movement in the fall collections of French designers, Jean Paul Gaultier included (Lender 1993). Articles presented androgyny in dress as an opportunity to express both power and new sexual roles (Howell 1992; Betts 1993). Women could 'dress up' in garments with masculine elements such as uniforms. A tagline for an article discussing uniforms as a point of inspiration for designers read, 'with women borrowing dress codes from soldiers, sailors, and even policemen', the author John Helipern 'wonder[ed] whether to salute – or surrender' (Helipern 1992: 86). Female models in *Vogue* and on the fashion runways were hired for their 'gamine' looks (Anon. 1993) while designers like Gaultier hired male models to wear their womenswear creations (Waxman 1992). Within this historical and cultural context, any high-fashion garment had the potential for gender fluidity. That Gaultier was a key participant within this context further marks the vest as an object with layered meaning.

Jean Paul Gaultier and Gender

When authors introduce Jean Paul Gaultier they inevitably use the moniker *enfant terrible*. The title was earned through his *bricolage* approach to fashion – combining *haute couture*, street fashion and flea market finds – and his refusal to take fashion, or himself, too seriously (Chenoune 1996). His eccentricities were expressed through not only the garments he produced but also his presentation. The entertainment value of his fashion shows was high. However, some argued his emphasis on theatricality blinded journalists and buyers to the garments' ability to translate from runway to retail. Armand Haida, a notable high-fashion retailer in Paris, stated in the early 1990s, 'Gaultier is doing only theatrical collections for the *défilé*, which are good for a moment, but try to sell this. Nobody wants to buy it […] It is a joke' (Agins 1999: 38).

Gaultier never tired of thumbing his nose at the staid institution of haute couture, though his talent for tailoring and innovative use of fabrics resulted in comparisons to other fashion greats like Yves Saint Laurent. Gaultier regularly played with gender stereotypes and sexuality, bringing glamour to menswear and expert tailoring to womenswear. Colin McDowell stated, 'Gaultier is generally known for his attempt to put men in skirts. He has tried to show that it is only sexual stereotypes which assume that men lose their masculinity if they are wearing skirts rather than trousers' (McDowell 2000: 66). From the hyper-feminine garments he created for Madonna – including the infamous 'cone bra' ensemble for her Blond Ambition tour in 1990 – to his gender-neutralizing, expertly tailored suits, Gaultier regularly used gender and sexuality stereotypes as inspiration. Gaultier stated, 'the line between masculinity and femininity can be a very troubled frontier' (McDowell 2000: 47). Indeed, one columnist referred to his 1992 runway designs as 'femenswear' (Snead 1992). However, Gaultier also asserted that he was not 'interested in men trying to look like women' (McDowell 2000: 14). Gaultier's fashion shows offered further evidence of a designer wishing to push the boundaries of gender norms. Though it was customary in the early 1990s for the men's and women's lines to be shown separately, Gaultier presented his together (Waxman 1992). While Gaultier's intention is muddled by his own accounts – positioned somewhere between experimental aesthetics and social commentary – the interpretation of his gender play by the press and biographers grounded Gaultier's creations in contemporary gender ambiguity.

A review of extant Jean Paul Gaultier garments from the early 1990s housed in institutions such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and the Museum at FIT allowed for additional exploration of the material results of

Gaultier's gender ideologies. The 1990s were particularly a time when Gaultier blurred the gender line across his collections. In spring 1994 Gaultier demonstrated his mastery of tailoring through men's eighteenth-century *justacorps* fashioned for women. Unlike the tailored garments, his line of knits promoted gender ambiguity, in that they were not ascribed a gendered label. In 1996, Gaultier produced a traditional tailored suit jacket with a photograph of a man's bare torso superimposed on the fabric. This garment was produced for both the 'Homme' and 'Femme' lines resulting in both genders being cloaked by the masculine 'hard-body' ideal. Furthermore, he subjected the male body to the same commodification as the female body when he launched his gender-specific perfumes in bottles shaped like headless torsos.

A search for Gaultier designs from the early 1990s similar to the vest in question led to discovery of a near-identical object on the digital retailing website, Etsy. The Etsy vest was of the same design but in a different colorway: a tan, pinstriped front with brown leather braids. The original owner's description of the vest included a note regarding the way she styled and wore the garment: 'i wore this with high waisted trousers, a la madonna's "express yourself" video [*sic*]' (chelseastarr 2016). Though the post also noted the 'Homme' designer label on the vest and mentioned its size (S/42), it was photographed on a female dress form.

The legacy of Gaultier as a designer that challenged gender norms of western society has been solidified with two different exhibitions. In 2003, Gaultier sponsored an exhibit at the Victoria and Albert in London and the Metropolitan Museum in New York titled *Bravehearts: Men in Skirts* (Bolton 2003). The recent retrospective, traveling exhibition, *The Fashion World of Jean Paul Gaultier: From Sidewalk to Catwalk* (Loriot 2011), continued the discourse. The promotional video for the exhibition intercuts Gaultier addressing the audience with images of masked, gender ambiguous dancers donning fashions from Gaultier's oeuvre (Sednaoui 2013). Additionally, the cover of the exhibition catalog merges a photograph of Gaultier with a Miles Aldridge photograph of Gaultier's 'Virgin' from his Spring 2007 couture collection (Loriot 2011).

From the design to the presentation, Gaultier infused the objects he created with more than aesthetic value. Gaultier was understood through his fashion show presentation and designed objects as a challenger to the status quo. Traditional definitions of gender norms and beauty were subverted via Gaultier's design process, his fashion show presentations, the press' reception and interpretation of these presentations, and the museum's construction of the designer's historical impact. However, between the fashion show and the museum retrospective, Gaultier's objects passed through another important institution of meaning construction: the retailer.

Ultimo

The vest was purchased at the famed Ultimo store on Oak Street in Chicago as evidenced by the store hangtag. Though there has yet to be a comprehensive analysis of Ultimo, the news stories collected for this research convey a respected and influential store in the fashion industry. What began as a high-end men's clothing store blossomed into a fashion destination also for the adventurous and elite women of the city under the careful curation of the original owner's wife, Joan Weinstein (Jensen 2009) (Figure 2).

The boutique opened its doors just as the ready-to-wear phenomenon was challenging the dominance of haute couture. *WWD* regularly reported throughout the early 1970s on Ultimo's presence at the RTW shows in Europe (A National Survey 1972, 1976). Quotes from Weinstein suggest a store that was trendy, responsive to the wants and needs of its customers, and willing to take risks on

FIGURE 2: Joan Weinstein, owner of Ultimo, pictured inside her store. Photographer: Rich Hein, *Chicago Sun-Times*, 13 August 1985.

relatively unknown brands. For example, when assessing Galliano's collection in his showroom in 1997, she stated, 'I think that the little school girl's things are adorable, […] and probably really hard to sell' (cited in Donnally 1997), illustrating a measured balance between aesthetic appeal and salability.

Weinstein was credited with bringing in and successfully marketing European designers to the United States, such as Sonia Rykiel, Giorgio Armani, Jil Sander and Jean Muir (Waldstein 1987). Armani further complimented Weinstein's business acumen when she was trusted to open a franchised storefront in Chicago (Waldstein 1987). A profile published in *Chicago* magazine in 1988 painted a picture of Ultimo as elite, carefully curated, with discerning (male and female) customers and exceptional service. 'One key to the Ultimo look is the notion that clothing is meant to be adapted to a particular body and spirit. Or to put it another way, Ultimo attempts to create style, as opposed to pushing fashion' (Shapiro 1988). For Ultimo's twentieth-anniversary party in 1989, the invitation suggested the following attire: 'wet t-shirt or black tie or high drag or high chic or nothing or whatever' (Buck 1989). An attending reporter confirmed this gamut was covered.

Ultimo was a place both men and women could go to construct an ideal self. Or, at the very least, a self that suited them for the time being. Deborah Leslie argued that retail employees are not unlike fashion journalists, in that they 'offer the customer a map for making sense of the clothes', helping them toward decision-making (2002: 68). Thus, retail discourse would also serve as an additional point of connection between objects for sale in the store and larger social/fashion trends, such as gender fluidity. Lynne Pettinger (2005) contended that retail workers add value to the shopping environment through their embodiment of the retail brand. Furthermore, the environment in which products are sold – from the décor to the organization of products – reflect and reinforce society's gender conceptions (Pettinger 2005). Ultimo, as a high-fashion destination aimed at the more adventurous, luxury fashion consumer, would require sales associates and an atmosphere that embody the adventurous fashion aesthetic.

Journalistic accounts of Ultimo indicate Weinstein also challenged dress norms through the fashion shows she directed. Her 1992 charity show for Mount Sinai Hospital was described not only as 'wild and wonderful' but also as leaving some in the audience 'in shock' or 'confused' (Buck 1992). It included a bare-chested male model in 'bondage accoutrements' and a final wedding scene with a bride, groom and baby all in black leather. (Un)gendering in this environment would be one way to embody the 'adventurous' element of the retailer's identity. Though this research was unable to confirm the logic behind the size numbering system at Ultimo, one explanation may reside in the theory of the store as an open avenue

for identity creation. Future research on the boutique retail environment and its role in reproducing cultural norms and behaviors may help enhance understanding of the social role these spaces serve in the meaning production process.

Gender in Dress Collections

As demonstrated through this object analysis, gender is a relatively mutable identity marker and multiple institutions play a role in its constitution. For some objects, this includes historic fashion collections. Though classification practices vary from collection to collection, it is not uncommon for objects to be sorted, classified and stored along gender lines. The search terms utilized in electronic databases – men's versus women's or blouse versus shirt – implicitly and explicitly (re)produce gender norms. Even mannequins selected for museum display contribute to this discourse. Furthermore, the segmentation of the genders is customary in historic costume literature. Many seminal texts present dress history through gendered narratives, the dress of men and women presented separately (Tortora and Marcketti 2015; Hill 2011).

The gendering of objects does not stop once objects move into the realm of museum artifact (Pearce 1992: 59). Manuals on collection management appear to take gender for granted when organizing collections for storage. Naomi Tarrant advised dress collectors to 'note which sex the item is made for' when conducting the initial inventory of a collection (1983: 71). While this type of organization does not explicitly negate more robust documentation of a gender ambiguous garment within the records, it does little to challenge preconceived gender assumptions or consider the other levels at which the garment may have been gendered. However, newer texts, like *The Dress Detective* (Mida and Kim 2015), encourage researchers to reflect on gender biases when engaging in fashion object analysis.

One major challenge for museums is the inherent loss of body/object interaction that occurs. As Mida (2015) discussed, the disconnect between body and object in museum settings is a problem with limited answers, particularly when considering display. The practice of using live models for historic dress has been roundly rejected by professionals in the field. However, on a static form, dress does not fulfill its full potential as an object of communication. Adding the element of gender further complicates the issue. How should the vest discussed herein be displayed to best represent its dynamic history? The answer may lie with technology. Animated displays (Loriot 2011) and other technological innovations are reinventing the way curators communicate with patrons. Nonconforming gendered objects would undoubtedly tell a better story when on display if gender mutability was factored into these technologies.

Much like exploring vernacular and high-fashion dress next to one another, downplaying divisions between genders has the potential to reveal assumptions relating to those categories. From re-evaluating the default classification of objects as 'male'/'female' in collection databases to considering alternative ways to display and highlight gender-complicated objects, museum curators have a multitude of options to challenge existing practices that do not necessarily embrace the full spectrum of meaning making that went into an object before it was accessioned into a collection. The choices made by collection managers and exhibit curators are also discursive practices that impact meaning preservation and construction for the objects in their care.

The Gaultier vest examined here demonstrates that many discursive practices contribute to the gendering of a garment beyond the body on which it was worn. From the designer who sends male and female models down the runway in near identical styles, to the store that promotes a more fluid approach to gender dressing, to the consumer who purchases the garment, to the collection manager who catalogs and displays it, each stage imbues the object with more complex gender associations. Understanding the materiality of gender contributes to the growing literature on how this culturally significant concept was constituted in fashionable dress. The core focus of this research, however, is to draw attention to the complications of viewing gender as a dichotomy when collecting and organizing dress for museum and study collections. Since gender is mutable and this mutability is frequently expressed through dress, dress classifications need to incorporate mutability to ensure the entire story of an object is more likely to be preserved. Doing so allows for objects to be more dynamic when used to tell the story of embodied culture.

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PART 3

Transcending Gender

The Politics of the Neutral: Rad Hourani's Unisex Vision

Rebecca Halliday

Born in Jordan in 1982, Rad Hourani immigrated with his parents to Montréal, Canada when he was 16. Without a formal education in fashion, he started work as a model scout at the age of 19, and, at 23, moved to Paris to work as a stylist. In 2007, at 25, Hourani launched a unisex ready-to-wear line, entitled Rad Hourani; he later released a lower-priced 'diffusion line', RAD by Rad Hourani, produced in Montréal (Sark 2014). Hourani started his fashion line because he could not locate the clothing styles that he preferred in the menswear or womenswear markets (Euse 2015; Hourani 2015). In 2013, Didier Grumbach, then president of France's La Chambre Syndicale de La Haute Couture, invited Hourani to present at Couture Fashion Week. Hourani became the first Canadian to be offered the title of *couturier*, and the first couturier to present a collection conceptualized, showcased and marketed as *unisex*. Hourani sells his couture pieces to a clientele of art collectors in addition to elite fashion consumers (Hourani 2013a). He further practices as a photographer, filmmaker and visual artist – work that has aided in the formation of a total oeuvre in the service of his unisex vision. In addition to runway shows, Hourani has presented collections as fashion films and museum exhibitions in Paris, New York, Montréal and Toronto. Hourani holds permanent studios in the Marais district of Paris, in a space that held Paris' first cinema (Hourani 2011), and in the Old Port of Montréal, where he showcases his work and that of his contemporaries (Grulovic 2014). In Montreal, he has presented the exhibitions *Seamless – 5 Years of Unisex* (2013) at the Phi Centre and *Neutrality Exhibition* (2015) at the Arsenal Contemporary Art Centre; *Seamless – 5 Years of Unisex* was marked with the publication of a retrospective book and has since toured.

This chapter considers Hourani's unisex collections and their presentation in concert with his photographic work. I contend here that, despite the innovativeness of a unisex couture collection, Hourani's practice nonetheless harnesses

the modernist principles and ideals of haute couture – a historical precedent that creates a productive tension with his forward aims. From its earliest incarnations in mid-1800s Paris, haute couture has been oriented toward a female consumer (see Evans 2013).[1] While couturiers such as Jean Paul Gaultier have pushed the boundaries of gender and queerness, none before Hourani have crafted unisex garments (for a comparison, see Figure 1). Hourani intends for his clothes to be adaptable to a spectrum of bodies, invoking couture's foundations in made-to-measure construction: indeed, he offers private fittings to preferred customers. Further, his intersections with the fine art world recall the professional crossovers of 1900s couturiers such as Paul Poiret (see Troy 2004). While Hourani finds in unisex a release from societal constraints, his aesthetic remains strikingly uniform – one component of a modernist ethos of repetition and streamlined forms whose semiotics perpetuate fashion's preference toward lean bodies. Nonetheless, his artistic work undercuts linearity and replication just as it invokes it, indicating

FIGURE 1: Hourani's work (left) featured in the exhibition *Politics of Fashion | Fashion of Politics* at Toronto's Design Exchange, juxtaposed with pieces from Gaultier. © Rebecca Halliday, 2015.

subtle turns toward individualization. While Hourani's marketing indicates a postmodern or even post-structuralist frame of reference, he can be considered a successor to a roster of designers that have incorporated the tropes of modernity to negotiate cultural anxieties (see Evans 2003). This chapter demonstrates how Hourani is beholden to but nonetheless manipulates couture's industrial aesthetics in order to posit non-identitarian forms of self-fashioning.

I first situate Hourani's collections within twentieth- and twenty-first-century unisex dress and fashion, and contextualize his work within that of his contemporaries. I then read a selection of Hourani's photograph exhibitions and a (filmed) couture presentation in terms of their experimentation with a historical, modernist aesthetic. Hourani's website (Radhourani.com), which houses photographic and video archives of his work, illustrates that his collections and exhibitions are visually consistent across seasons. For reasons of scope, however, I focus the analysis on exhibitions and presentations that are most representative of Hourani's oeuvre and vision; that offer useful comparisons with the work of Hourani's peers; and that can be said to contemporize the work of the first couturiers.

Unisex Fashion

Hourani's interpretation of unisex is novel as his pieces fit male and female musculatures; nonetheless, it confronts the problematic of whether the negation of difference liberates or oppresses the individual. Hourani's conceptualization of unisex declares – with echoes of Judith Butler (1990) – that gender is a performative construct, predicated on but distinct from sex difference. Hourani elucidates *unisex* as a transcendence of intersectional categories: 'Unisex is about freeing your self of any kind of limitations, gender, age, race, religion, borders, and time' (Sark 2014; see also Beker 2015; Pourhashemi 2015). He further articulates fashion and embodiment in terms such as *neutral*, *genderless* or *asexual*, which indicate that gender should be eliminated as a mode of classification (Anon. 2009b; Greenberg 2013: 2).[2] Hourani's work can be situated within scholastic definitions of unisex as 'dress that disguises gender distinctions' (Arnold 2001: 118).[3] Rebecca Arnold cautions that unisex as a historical concept functions as a political salve: 'Unisex presents a masquerade of equality for all [and] has [thus] been a recurring utopian dream. […] [T]he fragmentation of traditional lines of status and power has led to periods when solace has been sought through this denial of difference' (2001: 118). Unisex promotes an impossible ideal of sameness that 'can only ever be a disguise, a veil to conceal diversity as something troubling, rather than a positive' (Arnold 2001: 121). Scholars and critics concur that people that appear most attractive

in unisex clothes possess bodies that read as *androgynous* – tall and streamlined, without noticeable curves. Unisex indeed *emphasizes* the physique: 'the sexy contrast between the wearer and the clothes, which actually call[s] attention to the male or female body' (Paoletti 2015: 120). Jo B. Paoletti (2015) chronicles the rise of unisex in the 1960s and 1970s as an expression of cultural resistance following the postwar era. Unisex clothing lines marketed to middle-class consumers oriented toward more masculine cuts for males and females (Paoletti 2015: 6; see also Arnold 2001: 121). Arnold traces unisex dress to alternative movements: the 1960s hippie counterculture and 1980s and 1990s rave subculture (2001: 119–21).

Unisex infiltrated *fashion* in the late-1960s via the 'Space Age' designs of Pierre Cardin, André Courrèges, Paco Rabanne and Rudi Gernreich, inventor of the monokini (Arnold 2001: 121; Chrisman-Campbell 2015; Paoletti 2015). Arnold also locates unisex within a 1990s recession-era turn toward casual wear and anti-consumerism emblematized in the inclusive brand Calvin Klein (2001: 119–21). In the latest decade, Ruth La Ferla (2015a) identifies 'the great gender blur', in which fashion has undertaken the 'deliberate erosion on the runways of a once rigid demarcation between conventionally feminine and masculine clothes': a shift furthered in the casting of androgynous and transgender models (Chew-Bose 2014; La Ferla 2015b; Mellery-Pratt 2015; Meltzer 2015). Critics have observed a return to a specifically *unisex* fashion and credited Hourani as a leader of this movement due to his uber-defined aesthetic and the fact that he works within the sphere of couture (Chrisman-Campbell 2015; Cochrane 2014). The 2015 installment of Pitti Immagine Uomo, the men's fashion showcase in Florence, featured Open, a forum for unisex fashion (Moroz 2015). Fashion companies promote a unisex ideal via a neutral and even futuristic appearance that integrates more feminine cuts: a look that scholar Nick Rees-Roberts describes as 'gender ambiguity (channeled through the expression of male femininity)' (2015: 36). Rees-Roberts names Hourani as one of Raf Simons' 'avant garde' contemporaries in the formation of 'a unisex aesthetic seeking to transcend gender categories' (2015: 36). In North America, several streetwear brands have incorporated pieces such as tunics into menswear collections, while a host of 'gender free' or 'gender neutral' brands have entered the market (La Ferla 2015b; Nirui 2015). Hourani's unisex oeuvre can be located within and as a forebear to this movement; however, his couture collections remain in a separate price and conceptual echelon.

Hourani realizes his unisex ethos through an aesthetic craft that scrutinizes bodies in terms of their structural forms. Prior to his first collection's release, he studied human anatomy to ensure that his pieces could fit both male and female bodies. However, he also maintains a practice that 'treat[s] clothes like architecture, emphasizing tailoring rather than trend' (Grulovic 2014). Hourani's pieces are fitted or oversized, with little variance – meant to enhance the wearer's

form or to efface it. Collections are founded on structured blazers and coats, often with pointed shoulders, that form a vertical line (see Grulovic 2014): such pieces appear minimalist but utilize complicated tailoring, hidden and/or visible ties and *trompe l'oeil* effects that permit wearers to transform or adapt them to their individual shape (see Friede 2013: A3). Hourani combines leather and PVC with wools and other luxurious materials, manifesting new possibilities in the manipulation of thicker, gnarled textures. His lesser-priced lines also include structured and jersey tunics, tapered trousers, shorts and leggings, all of which can be worn in multiple combinations. Hourani has launched limited-edition accessories, including a mesh tote bag, unisex platform shoes and a pair of futuristic sunglasses. His earliest collections were meditations on black (Anon. 2009a), though he has incorporated solid turquoises, purples and khakis in later seasons, and in 2016 released Unisex Red Collection, consisting of open-front wool coats

FIGURE 2: Fall 2016 Rad Hourani pop-up store, Toronto. © Rebecca Halliday, 2016.

and twisted tunic dresses, photographed on East Asian models (Hourani 2016). Hourani does not work with printed fabrics but has screen-printed shapes, phrases and photographed faces onto oversized T-shirts, and has released an opulent sequined coat with black lapels and ties – foregrounding texture, material, light and shadow. The stores and exhibitions utilize male and female dress forms to demonstrate how pieces can be worn on different bodies (see Figure 2). Hourani's brand reflects his 'razor-sharp personal aesthetic' (Anon. 2009a): with his slight physique and delicate, angular features, he is its chief ambassador. The brand transcends fashion seasons and positions pieces as timeless artifacts (Amed 2008). Nonetheless, Hourani's consistent repetition of cuts, fabrics and (solid) colors has constituted a point of contention from fashion critics that prefer to witness more overt evolution across collections (see Singer 2011, 2012).

Modern Contemporaries

Hourani denies direct inspiration from high fashion and labels himself a creator and multimedia artist rather than a designer; he asserts his practice as much in terms of its negation as its definition (see Anon. 2009b). Hourani's clothes have been labeled 'science-fiction' and 'futuristic', like those of Gareth Pugh (Cochrane 2014; Schneier 2011). Critics have also noted echoes of Rick Owens' gothic aesthetic (Mistry 2010; Schneier 2010), and Owens has featured black tunics and fitted trousers in his menswear collections (La Ferla 2015b). Numerous similarities exist between Hourani's practice and that of Maison Martin Margiela, first in his use of *trompe l'oeil* to experiment with structure. Hourani's models wear neutral-featured masks intended to erase their identities but which are modeled after Hourani's own face (Cochrane 2014; Friede 2013: A3). Hourani also numbers his collections, a tactic that emblematizes the industrial facets of couture but increases pieces' value to fashion and art collectors (Evans 2013: 14–16).[4] Hourani's jackets further recall Helmut Lang, whose combination of 'cool, urban silhouettes' with 'advanced, technological fabrics' offered inspiration to 'other designers, eager to find a new vision of the modern' in the 1990s (Arnold cited in Rees-Roberts 2015: 14). Hourani's pieces' transformable nature invokes Hussein Chalayan's late-1990s collections that expressed cultural trauma and displacement (see Evans 2003). The above comparisons illustrate that Hourani's vision is rooted in a history of adherence and response to the commercial processes and aesthetic ethos of the industrial modern era, and its focus on the female form.

Modern(ist) Aesthetics of Couture

Rad Hourani's collections, photograph exhibitions and presentations must be interpreted within modern and modernist meditations on movement and repetition, as well as the semiotics of couture production and its preoccupation with female bodies. Caroline Evans (2013) chronicles the visual and thematic connections between early-1900s couture presentations, modernist aesthetics and the technological characteristics of industrial modernity. Central to industrial modernity was a scientific interest in human and animal movement and its measurement with the use of novel motion-capture technologies – particularly in the photograph series of Eadweard Muybridge that break down the walk into a sequence of poses (Evans 2013: 21–24). Evans juxtaposes the serial, assembly-line repetition invoked in the mannequin parade (the prior name for the fashion show) with its reflections in art, print advertisements, theatre, dance (the chorus line), sporting events and visual media: all demonstrative of a societal ambivalence toward repetition as characteristic of rapid innovation and mass production (2013: 17, 42–49, 130).

Striking similarities exist between Hourani's (2012a) *Unisex Collection #6* photograph exhibition, featuring the androgynous British model Erin O'Connor, and an earlier set of five photographs of O'Connor taken by Marcus Tomlinson for Hussein Chalayan's 1999–2000 *Echoform* collection (see Evans 2003: 58–59). Tomlinson's muted color photographs capture O'Connor from the torso up in a series of sleeveless denim tunics with a collar on one side – she stares at the camera with a neutral expression. Evans reads the collection as a meditation on time and loss: 'Each [tunic] had a section omitted, as if only partly remembered' (2003: 57). However, the photographs are ordered so as to create a *trompe l'oeil* of phases in the addition of (false) pockets that forces the viewer to scrutinize each minute alteration. Hourani's *Unisex Collection #6* photographs are rendered in black and white, and the shots are often head-to-toe, frontal and profile. While the garments do not transform, O'Connor enacts subtle movements that alter the silhouette and reveal a seam or lapel, illustrating three-dimensional texture. Repetition and movement are achieved in the juxtaposition of photographs with almost indiscernible shifts in poses. In one section of four photographs, O'Connor is shot in profile wearing a white, above-the-knee coat and black cut-out boots: one foot placed in front of the other. In the last two photographs, her foot and then her leg are cut out of the frame, as if the parts should appear in the adjacent photographs but never do. Hourani invokes the motions of the walk (see Evans 2013: 21), but discreetly interrupts all sense of fluid movement or repetition. In other series, photographs are flipped upside down to create a mirrored effect that is undermined, as O'Connor's head tilt is

different in each shot. In one shot, O'Connor's frontal pose is identical to that in the *Echoform* set, but the photograph appears upside down, hinting that Hourani chose to (literally) invert Tomlinson's work.

Hourani's prototypical unisex physique reflects the 'rationalization of the body' popularized in 1910s and 1920s discourses of fitness that utilized machinist rhetoric (Evans 2013: 29, 211–12). While the modern era permitted experimentation in gender presentation through dress (Evans 2013: 212–15), fashion embraced a politics of the linear female form, promoted in Coco Chanel's leisurewear and 1926 little black dress, compared to the Ford Model T (Evans 2013: 131), and in Jean Patou's fascination with the athletic American mannequin (Evans 2013: 125). Women's 'streamlined, modernist' bodies reflected the era's industrial aesthetics and could be found depicted in the realms of 'work, leisure and art' (Evans 2013: 115). The fashion model operated as the 'reified female body' that 'fused organic and mechanical elements' (Evans 2013: 137). As both idealized object and laborer, she reflected modernity's simultaneous cultural celebration of and anxieties toward female sexualization and industrial mechanization (Evans 2013: 137). For his exhibitions and presentations, Hourani casts female models with long torsos and small breasts, and male models with lean but muscular bodies. Hourani claims that customers of all shapes and sizes can wear his pieces (Mell 2011: 306; White Sidell 2013). Still, his models bear the tall, thin frame preferred in editorial fashion.[5]

Unisex Anatomy – Exit (Hourani 2012b) captures ten multiracial models in a series of black-and-white, nude snapshots that focus on limbs, torsos and sections of bodies, or produce an animated effect through sequences of (almost) full bodies in subtle poses, rendered in shadow and profile. Like *Unisex Collection #6* (Hourani 2012a), the repetition is superficial but inexact. The exhibition statement claims that the total effect becomes the point: 'all the parts of the canvas become unified while deconstructed pieces […] create a new type of harmony' (Madrid 2012). Hourani interrupts spectators' reading of the models' faces by splicing photographs and placing an image of one half of the face beside an image of the second half, taken from a closer perspective, or by juxtaposing two half-photographs of the same face with different expressions: an 'incision to separate the faces and bodies that are [already] immaculately symmetrical' (Madrid 2012). In other sections, bodies are cut out of one frame but continue in the next, creating a 'pictorial dissection' (Madrid 2012). Here, Hourani reinforces a cultural privileging of physical symmetry even as his photographs undermine and manipulate it.

The effect of gender effacement is achieved through the selection of models with the lithe physique that high fashion prefers. The photographs instill a distinct sense of sameness in bodies, even as men's musculature and women's curves are often

discernible; faces too are androgynous, and long hair (on female models) is slicked back. Female models' small breasts are objectified in frontal photographs but made to disappear using shadow and turns of the body. The statement acknowledges that '[Hourani] uses flawless filiform and athletic bodies for their evanescent qualities. […] [T]heir anatomical resemblance and majestic attributes allow us to see the divisions of gender and race as a mere illusion' (Madrid 2012). To appear as 'genderless', these bodies must be in peak physical condition – Hourani's 'quintessential body' is therefore tall and lean (Madrid 2012). The exhibition credits its fashion with dictating 'the codes of the contemporary ideal of anatomy […] the elongated bodies that appear on runway shows and on editorials' (Madrid 2012) – it is these codes on which Hourani chooses to ruminate. The exhibition's repetition, and the medical terminologies used in its statement, perpetuates reification: the fact that these bodies are cut up, spliced and replicated renders them scientific specimens, examinable in the name of commerce because of their precise lack of individual identities.[6] Hourani's unisex aesthetic, which seeks to recombine 'individuality and universality' (Madrid 2012), becomes here a totalizing construction – an unattainable rather than a transcendent state.

In his filmed presentation for *Unisex Haute Couture Collection #11*, Hourani (2013b) uses adjacent doors to replicate male and female bodies across a horizontal visual plane: this aesthetics of repetition is further reminiscent of the earliest modern couture presentations. Modern-era mannequins walked into presentation spaces en masse, creating a serial replication of like bodies; fashion houses often used mirrors to create further visual replication (Evans 2013: 159–60). The audience for *Unisex Haute Couture Collection #11* is positioned at the end of a courtyard, facing an architectural stone structure with seven entrances framed by white, metal gratings with slats. The second, fourth, fifth and seventh entrances are open, while the first, third and sixth are closed, revealing wooden doors protected by windowed doors with multiple panels. A four-step staircase spans the façade. The film's black-and-white, widescreen opening shot depicts the façade, from the bottom of the staircase, at a slight angle. As the first model appears from the second door, a wide frontal shot is superimposed on the first shot, while a third, smaller shot – rendered in color and from a closer perspective – is then superimposed onto the former. This pattern of capturing multiple perspectives, and layering different-sized frames, sometimes to the right and left of the screen, continues throughout the film's 4:48 duration. Hourani alternates between black-and-white and color shots, which contrast the sepia of the stone with the vibrant green expanse of the lawn. While the numerous cuts and inset screens impose a sense of verticality, as do the doors and the sheer height of the models, the horizontal plane is maintained through the continued placement of the widescreen shot underneath, and sporadic cuts to one shot that fills the screen.

The models walk, with their hands in their pockets, in a continuous parade from the entrances, to the center of the staircase, to the foot of the lawn, and over to the opposite entrances. Evans asserts that the action (or moment of inaction) of the pose rendered the female model a 'modernist abstraction', an embodied state that commodified the female form but let the model exhibit a non-human detachment (2013: 243). The elimination of the pose is appropriate to Hourani's unisex aesthetic, as neither male nor female model can be fixed as such. At the start of the finale, a model enters from the second entrance, wearing a white mask of Hourani's face: she walks to the center, descends the staircase and stands still and neutral. Two models, also in masks, enter from either side and stand on the upper steps. A fourth model appears from the left and stands above the preceding models, forming a diamond shape; two more models then flank him, creating a chevron pattern. The first and fourth models wear white tunics with black shorts and/or leggings and thigh-high boots, while the second, third, fifth and sixth models wear black tunics and shorts with white thigh-high boots. The six models march onto the lawn, as the rest of the models, wearing black tunics and black leather boots, exit the structure from alternating doors. The models parade to the front of the lawn, turn and walk back up to the façade – half exit via the second door, and half via the fourth. Female models' hair is tied back, while male models' hair is slicked. That all of the models wear the masks instills a profound moment of the uncanny, akin to that which the citizens of the industrial modern period experienced through aesthetics of doubling (Evans 2013: 17–20). That it is the couturier's face replicated renders the effect eerier as Hourani has imposed himself as a total creator onto the entire *mise-en-scène*: it is his perspective that the models must peer through, and his embodied façade positioned as the unisex palimpsest.

Conclusion

To read Rad Hourani's work in terms of its imbrication with the embodied cultural politics of the industrial modern period illuminates the tactics that Hourani uses to disseminate his unisex vision, and complicates utopian notions of unisex as the erasure of difference. Hourani's ascension into the membership of couturiers has offered his collections press and market exposure, even as the clientele that can afford his couture pieces remains limited. His continual refinement of his vision across creative and artistic media ensures that his work remains in the public consciousness in both fashion and art circles. Hourani's vision has contributed to fashion's current unisex movement and facilitated a forum for established and upcoming brands to experiment with fashion for male and female consumers, bringing 'more attention to the idea of what unisex means, and what it could mean' (Sherman 2014).

There remains much work to be done to create a market for unisex that is sustainable over seasons and that pushes or erases the boundaries of gender construction and alters dominant, heteronormative social attitudes (see Sherman 2014). Hourani's oeuvre renders a forceful assertion that gender as a category must be nullified: his situation within haute couture, however, illuminates a historical cultural politics of gender that fashion has continually been forced to address. The successes and problematics of Hourani's meditations reveal that shifts in public consciousness occur in both epochal, cataclysmic moments and minute transformations. Critics posit that Hourani's vision is perhaps too rigid to constitute a mode of or mechanism for liberation: 'his fealty to the […] narrow silhouette makes it difficult to read pleasure into his clothes' (Singer 2011). Furthermore, although each garment is adaptable to all bodies, the manner in which unisex pieces are worn can call attention to these bodies as sexed or mask those shapes entirely – an effacement of the physical form that occludes individual identities and intersectional positionalities. However, the functional nature of Hourani's garments is founded on complex and sometimes indiscernible alterations. His photograph exhibitions too break with cultural boundaries – and often the literal boundaries of frames – in subtle executions. To contextualize Hourani's artistic and commercial work within the history of haute couture and modernism reinforces that his innovations rest not perhaps in the removal of gender categories but rather in how his work manipulates historical and scientific examinations of the human form, provoking brief interruptions and fractures that open new potential avenues for calculated experimentation.

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NOTES

1. Hourani (2015) traces his fashion aspirations to his childhood experience of attending his mother's fittings at a dressmaker in Jordan.
2. Companies' and critics' inconsistent and promiscuous use of terms to describe unisex and androgynous fashion makes it difficult to characterize movements.
3. Paoletti traces the term *unisex* to the mid-1960s and operationalizes it as 'styles intentionally designed to blur or cross gender lines' (2015: 8). I adhere to Arnold's (2001) phrasing as she articulates a more nuanced distinction between unisex and *androgynous* fashion, which aims to 'unite male and female, masculine and feminine' and conceal rather than erase gender binaries (2001: 122). Hourani distances himself from associations to androgynous aesthetics.
4. On the conceptual practice of Maison Martin Margiela, see Evans (1998) and Gill (1998).
5. Hourani informs *Interview* that he wants to dress the actress Tilda Swinton, who 'embodies so many of the Hourani hallmarks – androgyny, severity, a hard intelligence' (Anon. 2009b). He combs his models' hair back to make them resemble Swinton (Anon. 2009b).
6. White Sidell (2013) describes Hourani's coats as 'almost clinical-type' in appearance, reflecting the notion of the designer as anatomist.

Shirting Identities: Negotiating Gender Identity through the Dress Shirt

Valerie Rangel

> *The white dress shirt isn't Muhammad Ali, it's Arthur Mercante, boxing's legendary third man. It's not Mick Jagger, it's the guy working the soundboard on the Stones tour. It's not Neil Armstrong, it's mission control. This is not an argument for its lack of importance but for an elevation of our awareness.*
>
> (Stein 2015)

Introduction

The past few decades have witnessed a rise in unisex clothing styles driven in part by increasing social and political conversations about gender, sexual diversity and greater acceptance of individuals who do not identify with traditional gender stereotypes. Despite the abundance of research on gender studies and clothing, little attention has been paid to the nature of unisex clothing and its significance in contributing toward the construction of gender ideologies. This chapter analyzes the dress shirt as an example of the unisex fashion trend, to explore the way in which it expresses multiple gender identities and to assess its potential to challenge the gender divide. Although much of the previous writing on the dress shirt (Flusser 1985, 1996; Roetzel 2004; Shep and Cariou 1999) has focused on its stylistic and structural aspects, this chapter attempts to examine the shirt through a gender lens with the aim of understanding its critical role in framing physical bodies and gendered identities. In doing so, this chapter argues that although the dress shirt attempts to embody a genderless aesthetic, its meaning is contingent on the wearer's enactment of gender. An individual's expression of gender is so deeply influenced by social and cultural norms that

there is a visceral resistance to breaking gender stereotypes, thereby ensuring compliance with normative gender roles.

The first section of this chapter furnishes a brief historical overview of the dress shirt, an analysis of how it came to be gendered as masculine and the new meanings that it acquired when appropriated by women. The purpose of this historical account is to understand how the style of the dress shirt was manipulated to maintain and reinforce the gender binary. The second section then examines how social gender norms together with media representations of the dress shirt prompt individuals to manipulate these styles to frame their bodies in keeping with socially prescribed gender ideals. This chapter then concludes by analyzing the effort and the impact made by artists and designers in their attempts to transcend gender ideologies.

Constructing Masculinity

The antecedents of the modern dress shirt can be traced back to the voluminous *camicia* of the medieval period. Made of white linen, the *camicia* functioned primarily as an inner garment and was nearly invisible from public eye except through the lacings of the outer garments. Although the cut of the *camicia* was somewhat similar for men and women, over the ages, it became shorter and more fitted for men in keeping with the shorter jacket lengths and gradually came to be referred to as the 'shirt' (Tortora and Eubank 2005). It was not until the introduction of the three-piece suit in the late eighteenth century that the design and construction of the shirt rose to prominence, marking a departure in its status from 'innerwear' to 'outerwear'. The austere and masculinized look of the three-piece suit arose partly as a reaction against the excessive and outlandish styling of macaroni costume and growing unease over the possibility of male homosexuality and homophobia (Breward 1995: 139; McDowell 1997: 45). This new silhouette with its strictly tailored lines and emphasis on somber colors was designed to not only assert masculine decorum and moral values (Breward 1995; Davis 1992), but was equally crucial in symbolizing gender difference (Shannon 2006: 25). According to Anne Hollander, the suit style put emphasis on the difference between the sexes by reinforcing the notion that 'men's clothes are honest, comfortable and utilitarian, whereas women's clothes are difficult, deceptive and foolish' (Hollander 1994: 64). As the three-piece suit came to function as a critical marker of gender, emphasis was also placed on the fit and fabrication of the shirt as an important means of asserting and demonstrating redefined notions of masculinity.

This emphasis intensified during the nineteenth century, due in large part to the efforts of English dandy George 'Beau' Brummel who elevated the importance of the dress shirt by associating it with masculine ideals of responsibility and respectability. Brummell pioneered the trend for high-quality white linen shirts with crisply starched collars and neck cloths, thereby creating a new visual aesthetic that served as an outward projection of a gentleman's rank and character. Historian Ian Kelly describes how Brummell's obsession with clean white shirts devoid of decoration or excessive body perfumes was so great, that his shirts were dried in the clean country air so as to reflect 'the cleanliness of the body beneath it' (Kelly 2006: 95). Historians (Chenoune 1993; Roetzel 2004; Turbin 2001) have noted that the pure white color of the shirt collar and cuffs was also suggestive of a man's affluence since it showed that he could launder his shirts frequently and maintain a higher level of cleanliness unlike his lower-class counterparts. High-starched shirt collars were equally crucial in exhibiting male superiority and dominance by accentuating the upward slope of the head and the gaze of the eyes. At the same time, this preoccupation with the shirt gradually came to be considered as unmasculine, representing 'both class and gender transgressions' (Shannon 2006: 26), and prompted men in the Victorian period to break away from the exaggerated style of the dandies for fear of being stigmatized as effeminate. In an effort at transitioning away from the dandy style, there was a step towards a minimalist look with emphasis on simplicity, practicality and comfort.

With early twentieth-century advancements in manufacturing and mass production, shirts came to feature short sleeves, patch pockets, detachable collars and cuffs that made it easier and much more affordable for the lower classes to convey an appearance of refinement and cleanliness without having to incur the high cost and labor of cleaning the shirts (Chenoune 1993; Roetzel 2004: 50; Turbin 2001). These stylistic changes were widely accepted as they did little to disrupt traditional gender boundaries. However, there were certain styles that were viewed as unmasculine and many men seemed reluctant to adopt them. For instance, the trend of soft loose collars, popularized by soldiers returning home from the First World War, was criticized for giving men a slouchy appearance and was negatively cast as a sign of moral decline and paralleled with 'feminine weakness' (Turbin 2001: 103–04). Similar attempts by the Men's Dress Reform Party (1930, London) at advocating open-neck, roomy shirts, soft collars and lightweight fabrics for men were ridiculed as being effeminate and were viewed as a threat to destabilize the masculine position in society (Bourke 1996; Burman 1995; Chenoune 1993).

Over the course of the twentieth century, as dress codes relaxed and numerous variations of the shirt were introduced, the basic form of the shirt remained essentially unchanged and any extreme deviations were limited. For men, the

dress shirt represented the embodiment of masculine ideals and any attempt to radically alter it was perceived as a threat to masculinity and was met with sharp criticism.

Appropriating the Masculine Dress Shirt

As the dress shirt came to establish a new visual representation of masculinity, it also had a significant impact in contributing towards the development of the late nineteenth-century women's shirtwaist style. Closely modeled on the lines of men's shirts, the shirtwaist for women was constructed out of lightweight fabrics and comprised of a yoke, pleated or ruffled front, collar, cuffs and full bishop sleeves. The shirtwaists were paired with long, full, tailored skirts and there was often a tendency to accessorize these blouses with floppy bow ties that mimicked men's neckties. At a time when women's participation in sports and outdoor activities was on the rise, the shirtwaist style was met with favor by feminists, dress reformers and health activists who endorsed it for providing women with greater comfort and freedom of movement. The shirtwaist blouse was an especially popular choice for women in the workforce as the conservative cut and functionality conveyed an image of practicality, respectability and professionalism. Several members of the public, however, viewed the appropriation of the masculine shirt as an attempt at challenging the gender system and attempted to discredit women by ridiculing these styles and presenting women as 'unfeminine freaks' (Crane 1999: 262).

Cultural historians (Crane 1999; Fischer 2001; Hillman 2013) have argued that dress reformers of the time did not adopt masculine clothing with the aim of seizing male privileges and rights, but rather, to 'destroy fashion's hold, open up economic opportunities for women, and improve female health' (Fischer 2001: 17). Nonetheless, public pressure and anxiety about maintaining the gender binary put pressure on women to ensure that the styling of the shirtwaist projected ideals of femininity. To this extent, careful efforts were made to modify the masculine appearance of the shirt by focusing attention on the cut, color, fabric and embellishments so as to obliterate any signs of masculinity and to evoke an image that lived up to the Victorian ideals of virtue, submissiveness, modesty and feminine grace. For instance, masculine-inspired shirtwaist blouses worn by nurses were designed to emphasize their '"genteel behavior", modesty and restraint and moreover their subservience to the male doctors' (Bates 2011: 172). Masculine-inspired uniforms for women in the military service during the First World War were similarly tailored to accentuate the female form and ensure that their bodies were in keeping with the normalized construction of femininity. Thus, even as women embraced the

masculine shirt as a means of validating their power and authority, modifications in terms of fabric, color and ornamentation caused it to lose much of its gendered significance, making it nearly indistinguishable from their regular attire.

Among the numerous variations of the dress shirt, there were consistent design features that served to set shirts for women apart from men. One of the key differentiations was in the fit and front buttoning. In contrast to the loose, unfitted style of men's shirts, women's shirts were closely tailored to the body to emphasize their curvaceousness and often featured short sleeves or sleeveless styles that were designed to draw the eye to the exposed arms and the bust. Shirts for women were also fastened right-over-left while those for men were fastened left-over-right. Researchers (Lester and Oerke 2004: 481) have speculated that the right-over-left fastening provided women ease in unbuttoning their blouses when nursing babies and made it easier for maids to assist the ladies in dressing. In contrast, the left-over-right positioning for men's shirts enabled them to draw their weapons with their right hand without interfering with the opening of their shirts.

The use of breast pockets on men's shirts was another key feature that was often absent from women's shirts. In his study of men's clothing, Christopher Breward (2001) notes that nineteenth-century pockets played a crucial role in communicating the gender of the wearer – signifying worldliness and ownership for men while conversely emphasizing domesticity and fertility for women. Barbara Burman has similarly theorized that since pockets were historically always constructed within the inner linings of men's garments as opposed to being constructed as a separate article of clothing for women, it allowed men a certain intimacy with their bodies, and this visible sign of control and confidence over their bodies was symbolic of their power and command over the social world (Burman 2003: 90).

These structural and stylistic differences in the dress shirt became less pronounced over the course of the twentieth century, with men's shirts resembling the bright colors and patterns of women's clothes and conversely women's shirts incorporating the breast pocket and the somber, minimalist styling of menswear. Although these changes in design made it easy to blur the boundary between masculine and feminine clothing, women were conscious in ensuring that they did not stray too far from the feminine ideal as any efforts to adopt masculine clothing were derided (Steele 1989) and resulted in women looking 'falsified or too willfully unappetizing' (Hollander 1994: 123). Rules governing the adherence to prescribed gender codes were not limited to women. Men faced an equal, if not greater amount of pressure to reconcile their identities in keeping with socially prescribed gender roles. Thus, despite the potential of the dress shirt to project multiple gendered identities, it continued to be employed to define and divide men and women and to ensure that their bodies were framed in keeping with normative gender expectations.

Social Constructions of Gender in the Media

The deliberate effort on the part of men and women in using the shirt to rearticulate rather than subvert gender codes suggests that individual choice plays a key role in the formation of their gender identity. However, since these individual choices are produced out of social and political gender ideologies and are socially mandated, it can be argued that they are anything but individual and reflect a form of self-policing. Fashion scholars (Crawley et al. 2008; Davis 1992; Entwistle 2015) have observed that individuals are pressured by society from an early age onward to internalize socially prescribed gender norms and to enact gender in keeping with social expectations of masculinity and femininity for fear of social condemnation and ridicule. As Holly Devor points out, '[p]ersons who find themselves unable to conform satisfactorily to their assigned gender role may become socially stigmatized for such failure' (Devor 1989: 61). This explains the reluctance on the part of individuals to engage with unisex clothing styles in challenging the gender binary. Their willing adoption of the dress shirt and its inherent gender specific codes can be understood as a fear of destabilizing social conventions and the anxiety of social exclusion.

The extent to which gender stereotypes surrounding the dress shirt are embedded in our society can largely be attributed to the media and advertising industry. This was especially evident in the early twentieth-century advertising campaigns for Arrow shirts that used the image of the dress shirt to construct and disseminate patriarchal ideas of masculinity (Jobling 2014). The Arrow advertisements featured immaculately dressed, good-looking men who exuded an aura of self-confidence, power and sex appeal and were a means of imbuing Arrow shirts with masculine ideals of power, control and sexual desirability. One such example showing the irresistible pull of the Arrow shirt was a 1949 advertisement that portrayed a handsomely dressed man being dragged by a sultry cave woman while the tag line proclaimed 'A man hasn't a chance in an Arrow White Shirt' (Arrow Shirts 1949). Advertisements also commonly featured women in subordinate and subservient roles as a means of highlighting their passive, submissive and inferior position to men. This patriarchal visual rhetoric was prominent in several advertisements including a 1949 Van Heusen advertisement that showed a woman serving her husband breakfast in bed while the tag line proclaimed 'show her it's a man's world'. Some Van Heusen shirt advertisements even went as far as to exhort men to be 'daring' and 'audacious' in asserting their power and dominance over women by taking liberties with kissing, playfully spanking and even dragging women by the hair in the spirit of caveman courtship (Van Heusen 1949a, 1949b).

Not surprisingly, advertisements geared towards women made little effort to negate these gender hierarchies. Advertisements promoting shirt blouses for women presented these styles as a way for women to attract and seduce men. This was fully expressed by taglines that positioned the shirt-style blouses as ideal 'for catching beaus' and having potential to aim 'right at his heart' (New Era 1957; Suncraft 1954). Advertisements targeted at women also frequently placed emphasis on the easy care and maintenance of the shirt as a means of explicitly linking women to the domestic realm and reinforcing their natural role as housewife, nurturing mother and caregiver.

Although preoccupation with maintaining patriarchal gender roles continued to remain at the heart of twentieth-century advertising, some advertisers attempted to transcend the gender boundary by constructing an assertive and confident image of femininity that was different from the socially sanctioned norm. This is brilliantly exemplified in a Van Heusen campaign featuring two opposing images of model Jane Shrimpton as 'Lady Van Heusen' (1964). In the first image (Figure 1),

FIGURE 1: 'From the famous shirtmaker for men', Lady Van Heusen *c.*1964. Photo by William Helburn. Image courtesy of PVH Corp.

Shrimpton is shown wearing a traditional striped button-front dress shirt with a high collar, French cuffs and right-over-left front buttoning that distinctly genders the shirt as female. Her beauty is downplayed and traits of feminine frivolousness are renounced as the headband, whistle, scholarly glasses and book in hand serve to frame her as a serious and intellectually assertive woman. Shrimpton's erect posture and self-possessed gaze furthermore reiterates her power over the viewer and in doing so evokes the expression of masculinity. In contrast, her role is reversed in the second, more sexually charged image (Figure 2) where she is featured wearing a partially unbuttoned shirt that displays more skin at the neck and reveals a hint of cleavage. Although the shirt in the second image appears remarkably similar to the first image, the breast pocket, baggy fit and left-over-right buttoning code it as masculine. At the same time, all figurative connotations of masculinity are eliminated as Shrimpton's tousled up hair, cleavage and sultry expression with her slightly open mouth function as seductive symbols that make her the spectacle of male desire and invites the viewer to gaze at her body.

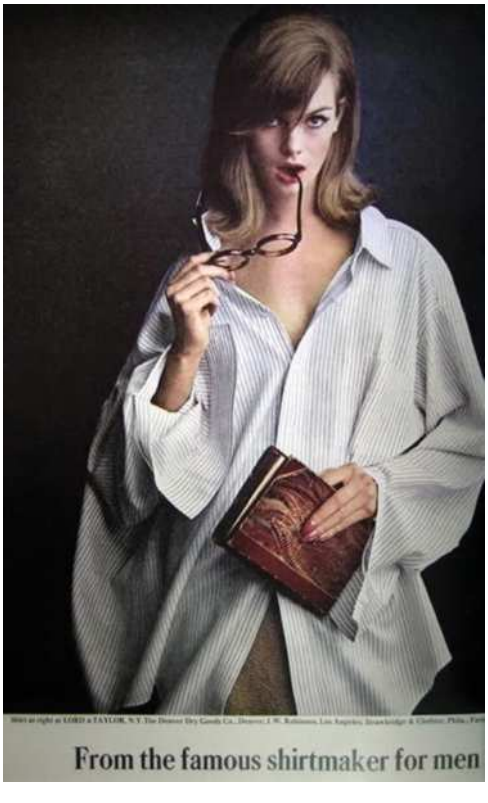

FIGURE 2: 'From the famous shirtmaker for men', Lady Van Heusen *c.*1964. Photo by William Helburn. Image courtesy of PVH Corp.

The stark contrast between these two images suggests that the shirt alone cannot be considered as an absolute indicator of gender. This is because despite the inherent gender codes in clothing, it has the potential to elicit varied gendered meanings when put on a body or in different social situations. In drawing on Roland Barthes' semiotic theory, sociologist Fred Davis (1992) points out that the meaning of clothing is always context dependent and although the *signifiers* may be the same, the *signified* is different. In other words, although the shirt is gender coded, its meaning is contingent upon how an individual might manipulate it to declare their gender as either masculine or feminine. This modification of physical appearance and mannerisms echoes Judith Butler's concept of gender as a cultural performance that is constructed through 'the repeated stylization of the body' (Butler 1990: 45) and suggests that identities are not fixed but fluid. In other words, despite wearing a shirt associated with masculinity, by ascribing to the performance of femininity, women can potentially destabilize fixed ideas of masculinity associated with the dress shirt.

Not surprisingly, the masculine shirt carries greater sexual connotations when worn by women and makes 'femininity more obvious' (Rubinstein 2001: 142). For example, in a 1986 television advertisement for Van Heusen shirts, several women are portrayed wearing nothing more than an oversize male shirt as a means of conveying sensuality and making the dress shirt more appealing and marketable to men (Edwards 1997: 80–81). As the women talk about their affection for Van Heusen shirts, the camera pans out to reveal their exposed legs, offering viewers a provocative glimpse of their bodies and positioning them as objects of consumption. The gender hierarchy is further reinforced with the closing slogan 'Van Heusen – for a man to wear and a woman to borrow' (Van Heusen 1986).

The image of a scantily clad woman in a man's shirt is common not only in fashion spreads and television commercials, but also in mainstream cinema where it is used as a narrative technique to convey a woman's intimate relationship and sexual submissiveness to the male owner of the dress shirt. According to Rubinstein, wearing an oversize masculine shirt serves to mark women as 'small and vulnerable, waifish. The softness of the look makes her seem to be wearing her father's or big brother's hand-me-downs. She is lost and in need of male protection; some men want to hold and comfort her' (Rubinstein 2001: 154). While some feminist scholars have critiqued the sexual objectification of women's bodies and their subordination to men, there are others (Hillman 2013) who argue that women today are in control of their self-image and in choosing to draw attention to their body demonstrate personal power and confidence in their sexuality. The recent trend of thigh-length shirtdresses is an example that demonstrates the extent to which women manipulate the masculine dress shirt to assert their femininity rather than choosing to project masculinity.

The dilemma with the dress shirt is not that it fails to enable individuals to transcend gender, but rather, its androgyny enables individuals to wear it in ways that are in keeping with normative constructions of masculinity or femininity. Gender expectations for men and women are so deeply entrenched in our culture that despite the fluidity of the dress shirt, individuals are hesitant to use it as a catalyst to step outside the socially sanctioned gender roles. To what extent then can artists and designers be counted on to address and challenge conventional gender ideologies?

Redefining Gender Boundaries

The dress shirt has long been used by artists as a powerful visual tool to address issues of beauty, body image, identity and gender in society. For instance, Finnish artist Kaarina Kaikkonen's work centers on large-scale installations of second-hand shirts that are arranged in rows and suspended in interior and public spaces. Although the shirts in Kaikkonen's installations conjure up the image of a human form, in their current state they function as objects from which all indications of race, class, rank or gender have been eliminated. At the same time these shirts, as empty shells, still bear traces of the wearer and in this respect, invite the spectator to reflect on the complex social practices through which they are imbued with gendered meaning. Artist Colin Smith is similarly one of the many contemporary artists who use the imagery of the dress shirt to draw attention to issues of gender identity. In Smith's painting of the *White Shirt*, a white unbuttoned shirt floats freely in space signifying the absence of a human body. Although the rendering of the shirt makes it hard to read as either masculine or feminine, its hollowed-out shape prompts the viewer to contemplate on the gender identity of the wearer and the relevance of clothing to ascertain gender identity.

In contrast to conceptual artists like Kaikkonen and Smith who use the representation of the shirt as a vehicle to foster dialogue about gender, the fashion industry's response has been to create unisex shirt styles and to use androgynous looking models as a way of advocating for gender equality. Yet some critics maintain that these efforts are a far cry from breaking down the gender binary and appear to be no more than a strategy geared at tapping into a broader market. There is also criticism that these unisex shirts are often dominated by styling that is distinctively masculine and constitute an attempt at masculinizing women's clothing. Historians (Davis 1992; Kidwell and Steele 1989; Paoletti and Kidwell 1989; Wilson 2003) have observed that throughout the history of fashion, clothing has served to define and reinforce gender difference and although designers may play with gender roles, western society demands that they stay within the normative boundaries of gender.

Conclusion

The dress shirt has always been a part of mainstream fashion and although changes in style, cut and color make it easy to blur the boundary between masculine and feminine clothing, its ability to bridge the gender divide hinges on the self-identity of the individual and their enactment of gender. This complex interplay between gender identity and social norms challenges us to consider how we might approach future studies of unisex garments and explore alternative clothing solutions to addressing the gender divide.

This chapter has attempted to highlight the role played by unisex clothing in negotiating and challenging traditional frameworks of gender. It argues that although unisex clothing allows individuals to temporarily or permanently play with their self-image and provides a degree of fluidity in crossing between gender roles, it does not necessarily do away with societal pressures and preconceptions that compel individuals to align themselves with conventional gender roles. While this study has brought the intense societal pressures and gender norms governing unisex clothing to light, it could also be expanded to:

a. Explore a wide range of unisex garments to develop additional insights into the impact they have on the gender binary.
b. Examine how unisex clothing can be used to express alternative gender identities that go beyond the binary categorization of masculinity and femininity.
c. Create a collaborative platform for open dialogue on gender neutral clothing to develop new frameworks for analysis.

Addressing these crucial areas will help to bring about new perspectives on gender identity and clothing and enhance efforts aimed at breaking down gender stereotypes.

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Why Don't I Wear Skirts? Politics, Economy, Society and History

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I often surprise people when I tell them that I do not own skirts or dresses. I am 5 foot 2 inches tall, and one of the few Asian females in a medium-sized city in the United States. My hair is slightly longer than that of military personnel on the day of my haircut. My closet is filled with pant suits in mostly black, navy and gray colors. Although I started adding orange and red colors to my jacket selections recently, they merely serve as accent items. My favorite shopping items are jeans and T-shirts. I know exactly what is 'so me'. My appearance often creates new conversations with people whom I do not know. Some people tell me that my appearance communicates my confidence or physical health. Others, especially my mother who currently lives in South Korea (hereafter Korea), ask, 'why don't you dress like others [typical middle-aged professional women]?' My answer to that question is, 'it's complicated'.

My answer is complicated because the political, economic and social contexts in which I grew up tremendously affected my appearance management behavior. Growing up in a small, rural town in Korea that was transitioning from a traditional agricultural-based economy to a modern industrialized one, I was dressed rather than dressing myself. So much was decided for me rather than by me. Throughout these periods, I complied with, fought against and struggled with social norms, and these experiences led to my appearance today.

As the owner of my own lived experience, I have written this chapter as if it is an autobiography. This type of phenomenological approach describes humans' lived experience and helps discover how they interact and create new meanings through experience from the first-person point of view (van Manen 1997). Throughout this chapter, the political, economic and social environments in which I lived are discussed. In addition, theories of conformity and nonconformity informed the discussion about why I do not wear skirts. This chapter first discusses the theories

of conformity and nonconformity. My own dress behavior and political, economic and social contexts in Korea during the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s are then discussed, followed by a conclusion.

Conformity and Nonconformity

Conformity refers to behavioral changes that one may make as a result of psychological pressures from a group or society of individuals (Kiesler and Kiesler 1969). Among those pressures, Deutsch and Gerard (1955) drew a distinction between normative and informative influences. They suggested that normative influence affects an individual's desire to unify with their peers and satisfy their expectations. Meanwhile, informative influence creates a desire to behave in a socially accepted manner by accepting others' useful guidance or information. To these influences, individuals would respond with compliance, identification and internalization (Aronson 1988). Compliance takes place when one wants to pursue rewards or avoid punishments. Identification happens when one wants to resemble the influencer to gain respect or favor. Internalization occurs when one wants to be right and avoid challenges to one's belief. Nonconformity is the opposite concept of conformity, which includes independence and rebellion (McDavid and Harari 1968). Independence refers to indifference to normative expectations of peers, and rebellion is an attitude in direct disagreement with social norms, or an action contrary to the social script.

When reflecting on my own dress behavior in my first three decades, I believe that my appearance management was a continuous process of conforming and nonconforming to external pressures. These pressures were coming from much larger environments than where I lived. These pressures were intimately related to the politics, economic conditions and social/cultural transitions that Korea faced to become a modern society, after emancipation from Japan in 1945 and the devastation of the Korean War (1950–53).

1970s: Beginning of Rebellion

I was born in 1972, about 20 years after the Korean War. Between the Japanese annexation of Korea and the war between South and North Korea, the country was devastated by physical destruction and political/social distrust. Efforts to rebuild the country were made, but there had not been significant progress by the time I was born. In the 1970s, Chung-Hee Park was the president of Korea. He became the president in 1963 via a military coup d'état (Vogel and Kim 2011). He was

eventually assassinated in 1979 by his own security service staff member, and by then, I was eight years old (Koreans count one year that we live in our mother's womb). During this era, President Park campaigned for one core mission – *bukuk kangbyoung*. It literally means 'rich nation, strong army' (Ma 2014: 115).

Under this mission, Park pushed through multiple five-year economic development plans with the goal to improve economic conditions while maintaining a strong military base to fight against communism. The key slogan of this mission was: with one hand we defend, with the other hand we build. Let's work while fighting (Ma 2014: 115). Under these plans, Korea focused on economic development, and sending soldiers to Vietnam was one of the key ways to achieve this goal (Ma 2014). Korea first sent military troops to Vietnam in support of the United States in 1965, and this effort lasted until 1973 (Ma 2014). The motto of a Korean troop named Chungryong (Blue Dragon) clearly reflects Korea's approach to economic development in the 1970s: the more you sweat during the peace time, the less likely you will bleed during the war time (Ma 2014). A strong supporter of this philosophy even argued that this motto must become a life lesson for all Koreans and all Koreans must full-heartedly welcome the returning Korean soldiers from Vietnam (Anon. 1971). As a result, Korea saw an annual average economic growth rate of 10 per cent during the 1970s (Bank of Korea 2016).

Within this national context, as an elementary school student in the late 1970s, I was directly involved in the 'rich nation, strong army' initiative. One of them was the Saemaul (New Village) Movement. The New Village Movement suggested that Korean people must live with diligence, self-help and cooperation to be both economically and militarily strong (Vogel and Kim 2011). Children were taught to wake up early in the morning, help the family and offer services to the community to create the New Villages. The posters of the New Village Movement were displayed everywhere from classrooms to public advertisement space. Exemplary cases of New Villages were broadcast on television and in movie theaters. These messages were intended to give hope and confidence to the poverty-stricken people in Korea (Moon 2002).

Ideal gender roles within the society were also established. For both economic development and military strength, men were portrayed as the political and social leaders, and women were regarded as *hyunmoyangcheo*, which can be translated into 'a wise mother and good wife' (Kwon 2008). That is, young Korean men were asked to take charge of politics and society, while young Korean women were encouraged to be the leaders of family and consumption. Any behavior against this ideal gender role was deemed to be deviant and anti-productive (Kwon 2008). Particularly, overconsumption and sexually-enticing dress behavior of young Korean women became the main concerns of mainstream Korean society (Kwon 2008).

FIGURE 1: Myself with my extended family in the mid-1970s in Korea. I stand alone, away from the rest of the group. This is the time when my yearning for my life to be different from other girls started to develop. Photo by my mother, Son-Nam Hyun.

Figure 1 shows me when I was 4 or 5 years old surrounded by my extended family in the mid-1970s. My mother was a quintessential conformist, and what others would think of her was a very important factor for her dress behavior. Dress behavior researchers explain this type of behavior as conformity in dress. That is, one's appearance management behavior is exhibited by their desire to conform to social influences. Therefore, conformity in dress shows a collective dress behavior and communicates the appearance standards in a certain society at a given period (Piamphongsant and Mandhachitara 2008). With conformity in her mind, my mother was in charge of selecting appropriate clothing for me

during this time as any 'wise mother' would do. She was also 'a good mother' who taught me about what is, or is not, considered appropriate clothing to wear. In another words, she ensured that my dress behavior conformed to social expectations so that she and I could further facilitate interactions with other social members in a socially appropriate manner (Jasper and Roach-Higgins 1988). My mother could be said to have normative influences on my dress conformity because her teaching of my dress behavior reflected her desire to be consistent with her peers and satisfy their expectations (Deutsch and Gerard 1955).

Mostly, I was a good follower. However, one thing I remember clearly is that I did not like to wear anything in red or pink colors. I preferred green and blue colors, which were considered boys' colors at that time, and that always challenged my mother to find acceptable outfits for me. Perhaps, this was the beginning of my nonconformity in dress behavior, seeking my own individuality and even deviance. Kaiser (1985) explained that individuals seeking individuality wear clothing according to their preferences with little influence from, or regard for, social norms. Therefore, such individuals may produce unique dress behavior. Even at this early age, I was already wanting to wear what I like, clothing in blue and green colors, rather than what others would like me to wear. However, my desire was mostly trumped by my mother's desire to conform.

In Figure 1, I am standing on the right side, separately from the rest of the group. My older aunt is holding one of my uncles, who is one year younger than I am. The younger aunt standing on the left side was an elementary school student wearing a school uniform. My other uncle, who is two years older than me, is standing in the back. All three young children have similar hairstyles. Although I am wearing a jumper skirt (I believe it was dark blue), both my uncle's and my clothing look similar – just a girl's version of a boy's outfit. I believe the jumper skirt was the comprised option between my mother and myself because, in my mind, it was less 'girly' for me. This was the period when my yearning for my life to be different from other girls started to develop.

1980s: Deviance and Identification

The 1980s was a chaotic era in my life and the country. The liberalization of school uniforms in the early 1980s was one of the major political and social events that directly affected my dress behavior. Since the Japanese occupation of Korea (1910–45), the entire population of middle- and high-school students in Korea had been required to wear school uniforms. No matter which school you went to

or where you lived, the girls' uniform had a white jacket and a black skirt with specific length requirements per the student's height. The boys' uniform had a black jacket and a pair of black pants. Hairstyles were also regulated in terms of the shape and length.

Activism for school uniform liberalization sprung up in the late 1970s and the early 1980s. One of the leaders of this movement argued that school uniforms must be abolished to clean out the vestiges of Japanese imperialism and to pursue students' individual personalities (Kim 1980). In fact, the author argued that liberalizing the school uniform would be a rather patriotic act because Koreans had gotten used to following the orders of Japanese imperialism, and the school uniform was one of the Japanese influences that was still affecting Korean society in a major way (Kim 1980). Students welcomed this new voice; by 1982, school uniforms had been partially phased out, and by 1983, the entire school system in Korea had abolished the school uniform policy (Anon. 1983)

Although school uniform liberalization was motivated by the will to be free from Japanese influence, this created unexpected social consequences with which many were concerned. In the 1980s, Korea became a key exporter of various consumer products, such as apparel, appliances and automobiles, and Koreans also welcomed products from the United States and other developed countries (Yoon 2005). Korean youths were able to indulge in the world's fashion trends and were influenced by movies, music and sports mostly from the United States (Song 2008). Concerns were raised as a news editorial pointed out that western movies were changing Koreans' psychology, attitude and behavior, especially those of the teenagers. Most of these movies were from America, and Korean people were now becoming more like Americans (Anon. 1980). Coupled with the western influence, some argued that the increase in juvenile delinquency and inappropriate social behavior was due to school uniform liberalization. In fact, Koreans were concerned that an astonishing degree of luxury consumption was found amongst teenagers since the school uniform liberalization. Girls and boys were now meeting quite often (they had to go to separate middle and high schools and they were not supposed to meet directly), and these students frequented dance halls and bars from which they were banned (Choi 1984). Due to this pushback, revival of the school uniform was proposed in 1985 by the Korean Educational Ministry, and this new law allowed principals to decide whether their schools should re-enact the school uniform or not (Anon. 1985).

Throughout the debates on school uniform liberalization, I struggled with my own dress behavior. The source of pressure to conform shifted from my mother to the government. The school uniform had a long skirt that made me look short,

and the white jacket seemed too tight in my chest area. I could never seem to get my hair straight to comply with the required hairstyle. I had two other aunts who were in high school at that time, and they complained about their school uniform all the time. Rather, I liked my uncle's high-school uniform. It looked powerful, authoritative and confident to me. A pant suit in black, if well-ironed, made him look sophisticated and even intelligent, especially with a fresh haircut. (By the way, the work of ironing belonged to my aunts, so my uncle never had to iron his uniforms himself.)

In 1984 when I became a middle-school student, I did not have to wear a uniform due to school uniform liberalization. I was also lucky to attend a high school whose principal did not enforce school uniforms. I was able to wear pants and shorts, which was not encouraged by my friends, teachers or family. In fact, even after abolition of school uniforms, most female students still wore clothing that looked similar to school uniforms and such clothing was in style. Throughout my school years, I was considered one of those 'girls who look like boys', and many thought such girls were 'abnormal, inappropriate and improper' in the society (Woo et al. 2011). Indeed, I was a deviant dresser. In fact, my dress behavior lacked consent from my own society and differed from the dominant dress codes, and therefore, I was often perceived and referred to as a rebel (Joseph 1986). This disapproval from others concerned my mother (Joseph 1986). However, she agreed not to push to change my dress behavior as long as I keep up the good academic records.

Not all of my dress behavior was deviant. In fact, the desire to look like boys came from my aspirations to earn respect from society. Looking back, I believe I wanted to be and look like one of my uncles who looked so promising and successful in the boys' uniform. This belief can be explained by two different theories. First, Aronson (1988) referred to this type of belief and behavior as identification response. That is, I was expressing my desire via my dress behavior, with an attempt to resemble the influencer to gain respect and favor. The influencer in my case was my uncle in a high-school uniform ironed by one of my aunts, who performed domestic duties for him.

Second, my desire to look like my uncle can also be explained by Carr's (1998) assessment on tomboys' deviant behavior. That is, as the tomboys did, I might have accepted the message that femininity is less socially rewarded than masculinity, and therefore, I might not have wanted to conform to traditional femininity. I might have wanted to look like a boy for better respect and greater favor within my community; that is, by wearing pants, I might have been expressing my desire to do things that my uncles were able to do. My mother and aunts were not able to dream of doing such things, including getting higher education and having careers later in life.

1990s: Struggle with and Freedom from Social Influence

By the early 1990s, Korea had become one of the major players in the global economy. The average annual gross domestic product's growth rate between 1990 and 1995 was 8.7 per cent, and the total exports reached US$ 125 billion in 1995 (Bank of Korea 2016). It became one of the largest exporters of electrical and electronics instruments in the world and also a major importer of luxury automobiles and luxury brands (Yoon 2005). Newly acquired wealth created a unique sub-subculture among the Gangnam generation (Gangnam refers to a district within Seoul, the capital of Korea; today, it is known for its high level of living standards, conspicuous consumption and exclusive lifestyle). 'Gangnam Style', a 2012 song and music video by Korean pop singer Psy, portrays a parody of the overly lavish lifestyle of the Gangnam district. In fact, in Gangnam, everyone, from kindergarten kids to college students, believes money can enable them to do everything that they want (Anon. 1992).

This overconsumption trend in Korea during the 1990s is well documented. A 1996 news article described the phenomenon: 'Without a famous foreign brand clothing, one may not fit into the society; when a neighbor buys one, then everyone has to have one; if any ones sees the way Koreans dress today, Korea would be the richest country in the world' (Song et al. 1996). In fact, Korea's import of luxury products from France, including Louis Vuitton and Christian Dior, grew by 75 per cent from 1995 to 1996, while sales of mid-tier and mass-market fashion brands grew only 30 per cent (Song et al. 1996).

Gender roles also changed. In a 1990 article describing a new vision for women in the twenty-first century, the author suggested that there is a need for new terms for married women, such as 'full-time working married women' and 'part-time working married women' (You 1990), because of their changed roles. By 1993, women accounted for over 40 per cent of the workforce, and, out of those, 62 per cent were married (Kim 1994). Soonhyung Lee, a professor at Seoul National University, predicted that increased power of wives over their husbands at home in this new century would allow both husbands and wives to work without any negative impressions on full-time working married women (Kim 1994). In this light, one Korean cosmetic brand came up with a new brand campaign called 'Pro [a professional woman] is beautiful' (Ohn 1994). This was a paradigm-shaking message to Koreans at that time because most married women were assumed to stay in the home.

During this time, I attended the Seoul National University (SNU), which is known to be the most elite institution in the country. SNU symbolized the success of one's past and the future, and it was considered an ultimate goal

for any student to get accepted. For that, SNU students had special privilege. Many parents, especially in the Gangnam district, who wanted the best for their children, paid significant amounts of money for SNU students to tutor their children. In fact, students in good-name universities easily made money to purchase luxury cars or clothing, while students in less-than-ideal universities could not, creating a huge gap in lifestyle and income between college student populations (Seo 1990).

I was one of those college students attending a good-name university. I had several lucrative opportunities to earn easy money, mostly from Gangnam. I spent two hours per visit, twice a week, with one client. I earned US$ 400–500 per month from each client and, usually, with two clients, I earned US$ 800–1,000 per month. This was a tremendous amount of money in the early 1990s. Money was easily earned, so it was also easily spent. Many of my college mates spent US$ 1,000 for a European or American luxury brand suit or a dress. They wore them for classes, social events and dates. We were told that what we did in college and how we looked in our twenties directly impacted our careers, marriages, social identities and even our future lives.

With this new and easily earned money, I was fully able to control what I wore. Initially, I tried to fit into, or be compliant to, this modern era of Korean society – brand name suits, expensive shoes, full makeup and long hair that cost US$ 200 or US$ 300 per styling. The majority of female college students were eager to fulfill a norm to meet social expectations and this type of dress behavior was supposed to ensure successful future lives (Kiesler and Kiesler 1969). I too wanted to be part of that norm. Yet, I recall that I did not enjoy shopping or going to hair salons. I often felt that I had to compromise my choices between my desire to be different and the societal influences. Most of the time, I felt like I was in someone else's outfit or appearance. Reflecting back, I struggled between the social desire to conform and my internal desire to be independent (Kaiser 1985; Kiesler and Kiesler 1969). I was not yet able to internalize my own dress behavior because I was still heavily influenced by external pressures.

Figure 2 illustrates my attempt to be that 'pro' (a beautiful, young, professional woman who maintains femininity in the male-dominant workplace) in Korea in the early 1990s. Long hair, expensive hairstyle, glasses that I thought made me look like an intelligent professional and an US$ 1,000 wool coat from a big-name design house in Korea. This photo was taken so one of my friends could use it for matchmaking. This was my best attempt to be who I needed to be, although my coat and outfit were still in dark green.

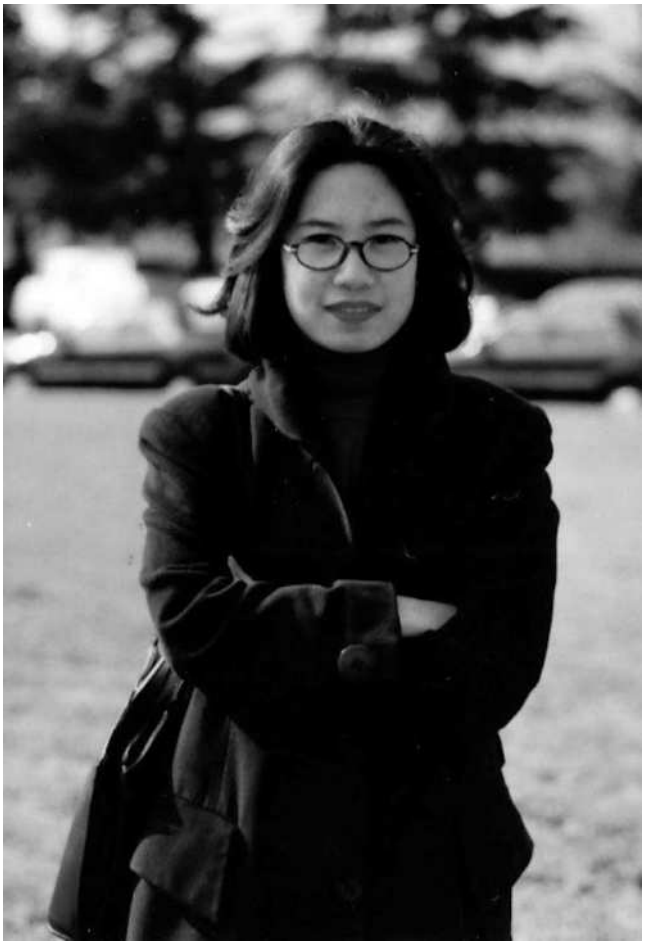

FIGURE 2: Myself in 1993 when I was a college student. This was my best attempt to be the 'beautiful professional woman' that I needed to be. I had longer hair and a dark green wool long coat. Photo by Sangah Han, a friend of mine.

However, this conforming dress behavior was completely disrupted when I moved to New York City in 1996. Instantly, overnight, I was exposed to completely different trends, society and environments. I looked very different from people in the streets. I could no longer find the ideal images as to how I should look or dress. Suddenly, I had to find my own way to dress myself to fit into this new world. Furthermore, ever since I started working full time, I traveled all over the world. I no longer needed to look certain ways. Everyone was so different. I already looked different. There was nothing to which I needed to conform. I felt totally free.

Throughout this experience, I gradually realized that I am a utilitarian dresser at heart. I just simply liked multifunctional, easy-care clothing. I preferred dark-colored clothes because they gave me more utility than light-colored clothing. For me, pants were easier to wear everywhere, and to every occasion, than dresses or skirts. I had less need to be concerned with where I was if I was wearing pants because they offer more functionality than skirts do. I liked a short hairstyle because it required little care. Heels were just not conducive for long walks in the streets of New York City. After all, most of my dress choices were based on functions and utility, rather than others' perceptions. This is why I do not wear skirts and why I look the way I look today.

Conclusion

Looking back, I had three distinctive periods of my own dress behavior. First, my desire to be different from other girls and the negotiation between my mother, the normative influencer, and myself started during the 1970s. Second, my dress behavior significantly changed with my strong identification toward the boys' school-uniform look during the 1980s. Then, I gave my best attempt to be socially desirable during the early 1990s, and all of these simply evaporated when I moved to New York City in the late 1990s. My life shows a journey of one's appearance management history in a highly socially conscious society with complicated geopolitical and economic pressures during the late twentieth century in Korea. Specifically, the journey of my life shows how an individual was able to manage and respond to the heavy weights of social norms that were rapidly changing at a very fast rate of modernization. Through compliance, identification, independence and rebellion, my dress history provides a close look at how I was able to internalize my own dress behavior during my early years. So, yes. The answer to the reason why I do not wear skirts *is* complicated, and this chapter describes how an individual was able to navigate, grow and find her own path from her lived experiences.

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Critical Mascara: On Fabulousness, Creativity and the End of Gender[1]

madison moore

A colorful ad on the London Underground encourages commuters waiting at Holborn station to 'Book Yourself Fabulous'. Rooted in a sense of self-care, the campaign is for Treatwell, an all-in-one Internet-based service that facilitates our beauty needs with a single click. With the touch of a mouse you can book yourself for a spa appointment, a pedicure, a massage and even hair removal. I was drawn to these ads because of the way they brightly and boldly use the word 'fabulous'. In popular culture, 'fabulous' is a word almost always used to describe a great sense of style. But what this 'Book Yourself Fabulous' ad implies is that no one is actually ever 'fabulous' enough, and that if we only spent more money on ourselves, and on our beauty practices, and most importantly if we used Treatwell, we could sigh in relief and be 'fabulous' at last. This conception of 'fabulousness' highlights an endless commercial drive, one fuelled by a notion that we are never as good as we could be and that we never look as good as we could, leading us to products aimed to make us better.

But I'm interested in a different story of fabulousness, one shaped not by consumption or narratives of self-improvement but rather more about style as a form of risk, a creative violence and a queer world-making practice that uses effervescent style to give a sense of agency and urgency to queer, gender non-binary and transfeminine people of color. I'm less interested in articulating what fabulousness 'is' – a feather boa, a shaved eyebrow, a coat – and more focused on what it *does* and the ways it facilitates other possibilities of emergence. At the end of the day, fabulousness shows how art and beauty are created in states of duress. It articulates a resiliency to and a terrorizing of norms and other marginalizing forces, and it does all of this through style and fashion.

This chapter is excerpted from my new book *Fabulous: The Rise of the Beautiful Eccentric*. When I first set out to write a book about fabulousness, I was less interested in thinking about Hollywood stars, glamour or even the fashion and

celebrity cultural industries and more focused on the techniques that marginalized bodies, who are fundamentally the center of performance, fashion and creativity, use to reimagine meaning for themselves in spaces where they are not supposed to exist. These are the kinds of spaces that were never created with non-white bodies in mind, where a violent whiteness is celebrated, upheld and sought after. It is without question that marginalized bodies live in a state of emergency every day, a state of duress that feels more harmful in the current global spread of right-wing extremism. Rather than pathologize this emergency situation, and instead of focusing only on the negative, in thinking about 'fabulousness' I was looking for ways to think about how states of emergency can lead to joy, creativity and innovation in ways that moments of surplus, privilege and access cannot. Indeed, the kinds of stories of fabulousness I'm interested in don't start with the movers and shakers of the fashion and beauty industry or the other glamour worlds precisely because these are spaces that place a premium on whiteness.

With fabulousness, I'm interested in the club kid who doesn't have much money but who *does* have three hours, a tube of saran wrap, some glitter and a box of light bulbs. I'm interested in the weirdos, the aesthetic fugitives, who are looking for an escape hatch away from the harmful norms of 'masculinity', 'gender' and how bodies are supposed to present themselves in the world. That means I'm less concerned with the trust-fund kid who can easily purchase the latest designer fashions, and I'm even less concerned with celebrities who we know have access to designer friends or elite PR firms who can source red-hot looks on loan. The kind of fabulousness I'm writing about, and which I believe is a powerful queer aesthetic category, is the kind that highlights how great style emerges from risk. Fabulousness is as simple as imagining who can go get a sandwich at lunchtime: certain types of bodies can circulate without being noticed and can make it from point A to point B, or from the office to the sandwich shop and back safely. Then there are other bodies who, because of the way they are dressed or because of their gender presentation, do not have the luxury of safety. Fabulousness, I believe, dually exposes the luxury of safety and the risk of being 'sickening'.

A central aspect of fabulousness is what I'll call critical mascara, a term I learned from Pepper Pepper, a Portland, Oregon-based art house drag queen who runs a party called Critical Mascara, a yearly drag ball that is always the highlight of the Time-Based Art Festival at the Portland Institute for Contemporary Art. If fabulousness is about how art and beauty are created in states of duress, then *critical mascara* is the end product of fabulousness. It is *critical* because it uses fashion, creativity and the body to revise and reshape prescribed gender roles, even if only temporarily, one outfit at a time. Fabulousness is critical because it exposes norms, as in, would it be unusual for a professor to teach in a red sequin gown? If so, why? Indeed, fabulousness is critical because it critiques both white supremacy

and the patriarchy – it abstracts and does away with them all together. As Dick Hebdige has written, style is always significant because of the way it challenges 'the myth of consensus' (Hebdige 1988: 18). When style challenges hegemony the challenge is issued 'obliquely, in style' and done so in a way to 'offend the silent majority' (Hebdige 1988: 17–18). Building on Hebdige here, fabulousness as-criticality exposes those myths of consensus even if it doesn't completely change the script once and for all. What's helpful in the way fabulousness *exposes* the lie of norms is that it reminds us of the constructed nature of social interactions and of social appearance. But even beyond that, fabulousness also alleviates the boredom we are forced to deal with under capitalism, a system that turns us into a blob of bland, conforming subjects.

Mascara, on the other hand, like glitter, is a tool of fabulousness, a single brush stroke that can be used to facilitate how we emerge every day.

I want us to bring Pepper's term *critical mascara* into the way we think about style, identity and queer aesthetics. Critical mascara is about style as theory – not simply academic theory that's useful to only those with a doctorate degree, but a kind of theory that's immediate, happening right now, in real time. Critical mascara offers more than simply utopian aspiration, which is what fashion is all about anyway. Critical mascara comes with risk, and the point I'd like to stress the most about fabulousness is that it is precisely at the intersections where creativity and risk meet. Creativity and risk underscore and highlight the political stakes of fabulousness as an embodied queer aesthetic practice. Style and fashion are always political choices. Knowing you could get in trouble for what you wear and doing it anyway, this is the dangerous act of fabulousness as a type of critical mascara. Critical/mascara – an adjective and a noun that, taken together as a theoretical concept, spell out the particular urgencies of fabulousness. The 'critical' in 'critical mascara' highlights a skepticism of body or gender norms, and it is about a demonstrated commitment to using art, media, performance and the body to destabilize, antagonize and terrorize those norms. 'Mascara', on the other hand, is a tool of fabulousness, one of many – but I'd like to position it here as a metaphor about how style is used to expand and exaggerate. The 'critical' in 'critical mascara' means an undoing; the 'mascara' is about the pleasure of style.

And so it goes: with strokes of critical mascara, it's possible to be critical and look great, too.

In June 2017 Travis Alabanza, a performance artist who embraces fabulousness as a critical practice of survival in everyday life, launched #trannycommutes, a series of social media hashtags meant to capture moments of transphobic violence they face on the streets of London. The posts come with a photo of what they were wearing in the moment of harassment, the idea being that they are not the only

trans person who experiences this type of violence, and in the end turning to social media to empower others to speak up publically about their own harassment. Here's one example:

> #TrannyCommutes #1: a group of teenage girls were just taking a picture of me on the tube whilst laughing so I looked directly into the camera and started hysterically crying / laughing until they were so weirded out that they stopped and apologised.

What stands out about this particular post is the way Travis steered a dehumanizing situation into their own hands, flipping a script that posits that queer and marginalized people are to be helplessly laughed and pointed at without any retaliation. Here, Travis retaliates in a way that turns a moment of violence into a moment of agency. In another Instagram post Travis shares a selfie that was contextualized by the kinds of hate they received while simply walking down the street, getting in trouble for being themselves:

> As soon as I walked outside yesterday I was harassed. I say this not for any reason other than to say it […] I was harassed every single day since the last time I posted. Either verbally, with unanimous stares, or by the violent ways in which gender policing harasses trans bodies every single day […] I did what so many trans femmes do – and go inside quickly to a bathroom and change. I put on some trousers. Took off my makeup. And walked out. Still shaken, Sad, Smaller…but in my eyes, safer.

Travis describes how a new friend, the artist Yunique Yunique, encouraged them to get back into the look while they took photos, smiled, laughed and ate pizza. The point was to keep body fascism, policing and surveillance from ruining a great outfit. When you are brown, queer and marginalized, fabulousness is not simply about being beautiful and opulent but about seizing visual and physical space on your own terms as an act of resistance, right now and in real time, even if that visibility is risky business. If no one gives you the space you need to thrive, make your own. If you can't see yourself represented in traditional media sources, do your own pictures, an idea the art historian Krista Thompson calls 'the right to be seen' (Thompson 2015: 10).

Travis' work shows that fabulousness puts the body on the cutting edge of identity, and this is why it is a meaningful aesthetic. It is a way of working (*snap!*) the self, despite the odds, and for maximum emotional impact. Anthropologist Martin Manalansan IV, in new research on 'fabulosity', tells the story of a group of queer undocumented immigrants in Queens, New York, who he calls 'the Queer 6',

and how they use fabulousness in a process of 'ethical self-making' (Manalansan 2013). In his own words, 'fabulosity is creating and realizing a self through and despite an existence on the fringes of low pay, drudgery of public transportation, and inhabiting dingy apartments. It is about storymaking and narration, the act of narrating selves in these forms of contingency' (Manalansan 2013). The most important thing about fabulousness, I find, is that it is a special kind of embodied creative genius largely expressed by people who do not fit in, who are not in the majority, who are not cis-gendered, white, male and straight. It is no wonder that the people most inclined to do fabulous performance almost always emerge from marginalized backgrounds – they are poor, gay, lesbian or trans, outcast, of color – and splash on glitter and sequins to parade themselves in the club, on the street and in photographs. Echoing Manalansan's theory of fashion as ethical self-making, performances of urban fabulousness look forward to every new chance to use fashion and performance to say that they are not their marginalization. Fabulousness, as the fashion theorist Carol Tulloch might say, offers an agency that shows how selves are created through a range of craft-making practices that are applied directly to the body (Tulloch 2010: 276).

One common misconception about fabulousness is that it is just about men channeling femininity. That's because in a post-RuPaul's *Drag Race* moment, if we can call it that, men in drag are more visible than ever. But thinking that fabulousness is only men doing femininity obscures the glorious weirdness, the eccentricity, the futurism and even the wild nature of a fabulous aesthetic. Non-binary drag queens like the London-based artist Victoria Sin and Portland-based Faun Dae show that interrogations of femininity are not only practiced by men. More to the point, instead of strictly adhering to or circulating hard-edged notions of 'male' or 'female' I'm convinced that fabulousness wants us to get past gender, to abstract it, to end it altogether. Fabulousness offers a flight from toxic masculinity, a journey that is less about upholding or adhering to any gender norms and more about ending gender through what I'll call 'creative strangeness'.

At its heart, creative strangeness is simple: it is a style that surprises because it makes fashion out of things that are not made for fashion, or it merges things together in totally unexpected, unusual but impactful ways. You're supposed to burn wood, not wear it. Your hair should be brown, not teal with black roots. Purple eyebrows? Wow! A creatively strange look changes how we think about identity altogether. It doesn't make sense because being creatively strange means taking something from one context and suddenly giving it a fashion meaning. Creative strangeness, a fashion aesthetic/event you'll find everywhere from club kids and other eccentrics to vogue balls and high-fashion editorials, is about confusion, neither this nor that, and its strangeness has to do with how it messes up the way we think things are supposed to be. Creative strangeness is disorienting,

not unlike the way the artist T. L. Cowan thinks through glitter as a resistant, disorienting quality. The whole point of glitter, she writes in the *GLITTERfesto*, 'is to transform public space into a funhouse mirror room full of tiny disco balls' (Cowan 2012: 18). Glitter disorients, creates a kaleidoscope and spins rapidly. Creative strangeness disorients and puts us on the cutting edge of identity – the cutting edge of something that is already unstable.

Fabulousness is a philosophy of creativity and it has many things in common with the gay sensibility of camp, in particular its commitment to style, extravagance and creativity. But there is a major difference. As Susan Sontag famously wrote, 'camp is a certain mode of aestheticism. It is one way of seeing the world as an aesthetic phenomenon. That way, the way of Camp, is not in terms of beauty, but in terms of the degree of artifice, of stylization' (Sontag 1964). Even Jack Babuscio, in an article reclaiming the gayness of camp that he felt Sontag purposefully omitted from her essay, shows how camp is 'a view of art; a view of life; and a practical tendency in things or persons' (Babuscio 2004: 120). The difference is that fabulousness is never there just for the sake of being fabulous. It is not just art for art's sake, nor is it style over content. When you are brown, queer and eccentric in appearance, fabulousness *is* the political content. Fabulousness is art created in states of duress, and this *is* its political edge. When you are brown, queer or an outcast – already a moving target – fabulousness *is* the politic (Sontag 1964).

This kind of spectacular style is not necessarily about parading financial status or posturing a heightened social position. The implications of 'fabulousness' as a type of creative outlet become clear when looking at the origins of the word 'fabulous'. The etymology of the term is 'fabulosus', which is Latin for fable. One definition of fabulous is listed as 'of a person (or anything personified): Fond of relating fables or legends, given to fabling' (*OED Online* 2000). Another defines fabulous as 'such as is met with only in fable; beyond the usual range of fact; astonishing, incredible' (*OED Online* 2000). By 1546 the English dramatist John Bale had already used the term 'fabulouse' in *The Acts of Englysh Votaryes* (*OED Online* 2000), and in Shakespeare's play *Henry VI*, a bit of news was described as 'fabulous and false' (*OED Online* 2019). Today, scholars like Tavia Nyong'o have developed concepts of 'fabulation' as a way to capture 'the not yet, the people who are missing' (Nyong'o 2014: 76). What is notable is that all these uses of the word are related to stories, to make-believe and fables, and this shows how fabulousness is about using fashion to tell a one-of-a-kind narrative.

Fabulousness is mythical because it lives way beyond the expanse of what we think is believable, of what the mind has been prepared to process. 'Fabulousness', the *OED* says, is 'the quality or state of being fabulous […] proneness to fiction or invention' (*OED Online* 2019). What this means is that fabulousness is already on the outskirts of normalcy and social custom because of the

way it is already exaggerated beyond belief. This is ultimately what I find most compelling about the origins of the term 'fabulous': it is about how people craft intricate selves in contemporary everyday life. Not unlike tall tales themselves, the beautiful eccentrics use their bodies and imaginations to tell stories and to create their own myths. Fabulousness radiates an otherworldly, nonconforming, alien and mythical self that startles and captivates us aesthetically because it stretches what we think is possible.

The stakes of great style are that at the same time that brown, queer and trans bodies express, feel good about and expand themselves through fabulousness and self-styling, that joy is subject to surveillance, torture and ridicule by homonormative, heteronormative, misogynist and patriarchal systems every single day, from the workplace to our living rooms and from the dating app to the sidewalk. It isn't about looking amazing or utopian aspiration. Fabulousness is always a unique set of aesthetic properties engaged by people who take the risk of making a spectacle of themselves – to stretch out and expand – when it would be much easier, though no less toxic, to be normative. If these fabulous renegades played by the rules and fit in then they wouldn't have to worry about being harassed or feeling safe on the sidewalks. At the end of the day, the question fabulousness asks all of us is when can we have a world where it will be safe to just be me, where I don't have to be depressed because my body doesn't fit in with norms and ideals that never had me in mind in the first place?

For marginalized people, fabulousness is an articulation of self in everyday life. It's what Tulloch sees as 'style narratives', personal style moments that 'expound an autobiography of oneself through the clothing choices an individual makes' (Tulloch 2010: 276). When I asked RoRo Morales, a New York-born, Portland-based chef, fashion designer and former NYC club kid, to describe to me the first time he felt fabulous, he told me that he has always felt fabulous:

> I've always been *fabulous*. I work looks *everywhere*. I won't walk out of the house unless I'm in *something*. When I was 13 and 12 and 11 I would wear fishnets to high school. I didn't give a fuck. I just never thought it was strange. My family just embraced me as I was. So the fabulous part I feel has always been there. I have pictures of myself at 12 and 13, full face of make-up, fishnet stockings, six-inch high heels, and I'm going to *school*.
>
> (Morales 2014)

For RoRo, there was never a question that he would be anything but fabulous. Why should he act in a way that masks how he really feels? As a queer Puerto

Rican boy who grew up in Queens, New York, fabulousness was an aesthetic quality, even an aesthetic imperative, he felt inside from a fairly young age. But it was also a method of survival. Instead of conforming to masculine gender ideals during the day and sneaking into fishnets and a face full of makeup in secret, RoRo one-upped his already marginal social position and used fabulousness as way to ethically claim back his personhood. Fabulousness was an affirmation of self and a flight from social conformity.

Ultimately, fabulousness is a theory of style as utopia, a separate space where we get to play with ideas, creativity and expression to create a whole new world, a stylish one at that, in the here and now. 'It is my belief', Muñoz writes beautifully in *Cruising Utopia*, 'that minoritarian subjects are cast as hopeless in a world without utopia' (Muñoz 2009: 97). The pressures and anxieties, the violence and the depression of living while brown, of feeling constantly illegible within systems of normativity and white supremacy, even in queer spaces, creates a situation where brown people use art and performance to build an alternative, utopian possibility right here, right now. For Muñoz, utopia is a stage and it offers a separate way of being that is always in process, never fully finished. His point is not so much that utopian dreams are watershed moments that will make life perfect at last, but that for marginalized people utopian visions offer up a should be and a could be instead of the more forced, monolithic vision of what is and will always be (Muñoz 2009: 99). Fabulous people imagine new versions of the world and approaches to their bodies, and carry those with them in the everyday.

Not everyone is fabulous all the time. It's hard work and it's exhausting mentally, physically and creatively. Some days you choose being safe over your favorite wig or eyeliner, and other days you can't deal with the social harassment. That's why I like to think of fabulousness as a kind of escape hatch – a way to call a temporary time out on the exhausting norms, systems and structures that oppress us all every single day. Those of us who invest in fabulousness do so while also thinking about safety, how we circulate and how to stay sane in a world that says we should not exist. Attempting to blend in and suppress yourself all in the name of safety does more harm than good. These are the political stakes of fabulousness, and that's also why it's an escape hatch, even if a temporary one. It allows us the freedom to imagine a whole new world, one where our bodies are at the center and where we are loved for who we are. In this fabulous new world, we celebrate aesthetic genius without worrying about safety – a world where weirdos and aesthetic fugitives have a seat at the table.

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NOTE

1. This chapter is excerpted from madison moore (2018), *Fabulous: The Rise of the Beautiful Eccentric*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Clothes (Un)Make the (Wo)Man – Ungendering Fashion (2015)?

Hazel Clark and Leena-Maija Rossi

Acknowledged by many as the year that the term 'transgender' fully entered American mainstream consciousness, 2015 marked a distinct cultural watershed. Models, media stars and activists were coming out with their transgender identities (Griggs 2015). At the same time, and without coincidence, the world of fashion took up the issue. Transgender models such as Lea T walked the runways, and Andreja Pejic was featured in the May issue of *Vogue*. Designers and brands also openly revealed a new gender consciousness, or even strove beyond gender dichotomy. Kimberly Chrisman-Campbell (2015) crystallized the moment by writing for *The Atlantic*: 'Indeed, unisex everything appears to be back with a vengeance'.

Yet this was not merely the 1960s unisex revisited. The phenomenon encompassed, but also moved beyond, avant-gardist designers and high-fashion brands, and in the United States extended further than the 'fashion center' of New York City (Chrisman-Campbell 2015; Leach 2015). It came to the British high street when in March 2015, Selfridges in London opened its agender department consisting of three floors (Selfridges 2015; Tsjeng 2015). Zara followed suit exactly one year later (Sharkey 2016). The *New York Times Style Magazine* published fashion spreads on gender-blending menswear, representing androgynous Black models (*New York Times* 2015). According to *Harper's Bazaar,* among eighteen 'fashion moments' of 2015 were: Caitlyn Jenner appearing on the cover of the July issue of *Vanity Fair*, photographed by Annie Leibovitz; Kanye West's two-gender ambiguous *Yeezy* collections; Rick Owens' Spring 2016 collection, featuring models strapped together walking the runway, redolent of performances by Leigh Bowery; but also some distinctly binary-gendered examples. Therefore, we can ask whether, in the third millennium, fashion can serve to make and unmake genders, and in what way this making and possible unmaking of genders affects the way sexuality is performed (Bain 2017).

Gender and Sexuality, from Being to Doing

For the less fashion informed or interested, the transformation of former Olympic athlete, and Kardashian father and step-father, Bruce Jenner to Caitlyn Jenner highlighted gender transitioning more widely. Laverne Cox, the trans actress who became a celebrity for her role in the Netflix series *Orange Is the New Black* (2013– present) (Carveth 2015) and had been nominated in 2014 for a Primetime Emmy Award as the first openly transgender person, was in 2015 named as one of the 'Pioneers' on *TIME* magazine's list of the '100 most influential people' (*TIME* 2015). These examples, among others, identify the mid-2010s as marking a 'paradigm shift' connected to changes in conceptualizing gender, and corporeally living and *doing* gender (Butler 1990; Lloyd 2007; Zimmerman and West 1987) within, but also beyond, American society. This, in turn, was reflected in contemporary fashion. In order to contemplate on and investigate this phenomenon, it is necessary to consider how fashion does, or does not, contribute to the representation, and moreover the *making* of genders, and participate in the production of gender systems. To do so, we ask in this chapter whether what was being highlighted in 2015, in the United States in particular, produced a wider 'ungendering' of fashion, or how much it actually reflected and supported the proliferation and fluidity of gender identification. Was this a sign of a more significant fashion shift, or simply another passing 'fashion moment'?

Gender, both as a concept and as lived reality, has indeed been changing rapidly in the West since the mid-twentieth century. While 'second-wave' feminism struggled for women's rights and against patriarchy in the 1960s and 1970s, it did so within a binary gender system, or rather still conceptualized gender through biological sexes. The 'third wave' of feminism was more geared toward a recognition of differences among and within women (Bowden and Mummery 2009), and in pointing out that gender is largely a cultural and social construction, constricted and regulated, but also enabled and produced by discursive practices and corporeal reiterations (Butler 1990). One of the canonical figures of contemporary feminist theory, Judith Butler crystallized this account of gender as performative, thus emphasizing the role of repeated gendered practices. Intersectional feminism, having its roots in the 1960s and 1970s galvanization of women of color and lesbians (Collins and Bilge 2016), further emphasized the hierarchies between women, constructed by such axes of difference as sexuality, race, class, age, bodily abilities and religious backgrounds, to name a few. Also, the critical studies of sexuality went through a sea change, as queer studies was launched as an academic field in the early 1990s (de Lauretis 1991; White 2007: 1; Hall 2003). Queer studies further complicated the previously assumed simple account of the connection

between gender and sexuality, which had normatively naturalized heterosexuality (Sedgwick 2008; Hall 2003). In the 2000s, even the mainstream discourses began to encompass the plurality of genders and sexualities, and brought familiarity to such terms as 'non-binary' or 'nonconforming' gender, as well as cis-gender, and to antinormative sexualities (see, e.g. Kern and Malone 2015; Bennett 2016).

But even though gender pluralism and sexual anti-normativity have gained a momentum, there is strong evidence that indicates that we are *not* living through a process of 'undoing' gender (Butler 2004) and sexuality. On the contrary, gender and sexuality seem to form just as much of a battlefield as ever, which makes them highly political issues. The Obama administration in the United States took a stand on discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people, and in 2015 entered into the 'bathroom wars', by offering gender-neutral bathrooms in the White House (Marcus 2015). In popular culture, series such as *Orange Is the New Black* and *Transparent* (Amazon 2014–17), brought visibility to transgender characters and actors, and transgender subjectivity at large. All of this, however, has failed to prevent the continuing transgender vulnerability and hate crimes against transgendered people in the United States and elsewhere, especially against trans people of color (Griggs 2015; Transrespect 2016; Allen 2017).

These realities lead us to suggest in this chapter that gender is not being undone, but rather that it is changing rapidly, and that fashion has a key role in this change. In this process of re-imagining gender, fashion discourse and fashion design are extending their binary-based vocabulary of gender, to include not only 'unisex', but also neologisms such as 'agender', non-binary and 'ungendered'[2] fashion. We insist, however, that we have to take a closer look at how the ways in which fashion (including designers, media, models, consumers, images and actual material garments) participates in doing gender and making changes to it may be making it more flexible and plural rather than erasing or undoing it. We also suggest that by looking at different areas of (meaning) production in fashion we may need and find methodologically new ways of addressing and conceptualizing how fashion indeed participates in making gender.

While it is possible to conceptually and theoretically distinguish between gender and sexuality, in practices of everyday life – fashion included – they entangle and influence each other in multiple ways. Heteronormatively thinking, it is supposed that women are 'naturally' feminine and desire (cis) men, who are 'naturally' masculine and desire (cis) women (Butler 1990). This has also long been a prerequisite for fashion designers, and photographers, who have focused on women's fashion, and on producing garments that have been culturally associated with feminine sexuality and sensuality. Some theorists have even gone as far as stating that theorizing fashion equals theorizing femininity (Tseelon 2001), while others have emphasized that women's ways of wearing clothing can also be interpreted

as nonverbal resistance (Crane 2000: 99–132; Holland 2004). Either way, critical and theoretical thinking about fashion's ability to enhance heterosexual appeal has been entwined with feminist theorizing of the 'male gaze' (Mulvey 1989) based on a strictly binary notion of gender. Already changing the 'lens' into a lesbian one affected the conceptual knot between femaleness, femininity and always being the object of the gaze (Lewis and Rolley 1997; Lewis 1997); queering the gaze and the notion of gender performance has further complicated theorizing the routes of desire in corporeal doing, being looked at and looking. It is one of our questions in this chapter, how both the erasure and proliferation of the markings of gender in fashion affects the politics of sexuality and desire.

Fashion and (Non-)binary Genders

Taking a broad historical and cross-cultural perspective on the subject of gender and dressing, individual and collective clothing choices have not revealed consistent manifestations or expectations of what could or should be worn by women or men. In the West, historically, fashion has tended to reflect and perpetuate a largely dichotomous gender system. Even with women wearing trousers and the introduction of so-called 'unisex' garments, fashion has remained substantially divided down the two gender lines. It is notable also that while more unisex dressing in the 1970s may have made women's clothes slightly more masculine, it never made them totally unfeminine. Hollander notes how 'assortments of blouses and sweaters' were worn with trouser and skirt suits 'to suggest Dressing for Success, rather than [...] bodily self-possession' (1994: 170). At the same time in popular culture, parallel attempts to feminize men's appearance, or to de-emphasize male masculinity, highlighted by glam rock and its icons, such as Marc Bolan, David Bowie or Roxy Music in the United Kingdom, proved to be particularized and short-lived in mass fashion (Chrisman-Campbell 2015; Paoletti 2015). US musicians including Iggy Pop and The New York Dolls had an even more select following.

Yet by the 1980s fashion was registering significant change and offering greater flexibility for dressing beyond the strictly demarcated gender binaries. While 'power dressing' continued to impact corporate culture in the United States and beyond, the growing presence of women in previously male-dominated professions had meant that 'work dress began to evolve away from the very tailored and conservative look' (Steele 1989: 88). However, innovation toward less gender-defined fashion did not originate in the United States in the 1980s. Among the most significant fashion innovators in the latter part of the twentieth century were designers of Japanese origin, who introduced a much less gender-defined way of dressing in the 1980s, which caused a 'revolution' in Paris (Kawamura 2004)

and proved a distinct fashion counterpoint to power dressing. Kenzo, Kansai Yamamoto and more particularly the designs of Issey Miyake, Yohji Yamamoto and Rei Kawakubo of Comme des Garçons introduced garments that took their origins from the looser, less body-defining clothing particular to eastern sartorial traditions, rather than more fitted and tailored western dress. Also, in the mid-1990s, in the popular domain and originating in Europe, the British football star David Beckham was the most iconic example of the newly-defined 'metrosexual'. Referenced as a product of urban heterosexual masculinity, akin to the eighteenth-century dandy, the metrosexual was more concerned with fashion and appearance than in any time since the 'great masculine renunciation' of the nineteenth century (Geczy and Karaminas 2013: 49–98; Flügel 1930).

Aforementioned developments are not without significance for this chapter, which continues to argue that avant-garde fashion's relationship with gender took some basic points of departure after the 1980s. One, premised by the work of the Japanese designers and their successors, the 'Antwerp 6' and designer Martin Margiela, was more conceptual and even 'intellectual', predicated on looser, softer garments, often featuring black, navy blue and more neutral colors. The other kept true to more gender-defined styles, but featured greater opportunities for both women and men to wear styles, fabrics and colors typically associated with the so-called 'opposite' gender. It is these distinctions that we discuss in the next section.

Alternative Femininities and Masculinities

As mentioned already, femaleness and fashion have been historically closely connected, especially since the development of the somber men's suit. Also, in terms of cultural hierarchies, because of its labeling as feminine (Bancroft 2016: 22), fashion has widely been valued as trivial, and inferior to spheres considered masculine and traditionally performed by men, such as politics, business and high culture. However, it is arguable that in modern times in the West, women, even though corporeally they may be more defined and controlled by fashion, also have had more leeway than men in terms of moving between femininity and masculinity in their way of dressing. In this sense, alternative femininities (Holland 2004) have existed as a possibility for women alongside more controlled feminine styles. But how about alternative femininities in men's fashion? And what are we exactly talking about when using the terms 'masculine' and 'feminine' when discussing men and women, and garments?

It is notable that if gender is largely considered to be constructed through culture and society, it can also be said that it is garments – as cultural artifacts and

changing historically – that reinforce the gender/ing of people. And it is designers of fashion that influence the gendering (or ungendering) of garments at given times. Certain clothing items have sustained, post the 'great masculine renunciation' (Flügel 2004), specifically gendered meaning or signification, which seems to be challenging to unravel. In the feminine category of garments, we find skirts, high-heeled shoes, such underwear as bras and 'girdles', and sheer stockings (see, e.g. Gandolfi 1989; Parkins 2002; Small 2014; Steele 2001). Also such decorative elements as jewelry, and such corporeal features as bodily 'curves' and long hair have been connected with the female body and often considered as factors of female beauty – which, of course, is literally made up with make-up. In terms of the materiality of the garments, softer fabrics and softer colors have been signified as feminine, as have large or excessive folds of garment (cf. the avant-garde, less obviously gendered use of folds, see Smelik 2015). Pink and blue are prime examples of the gendering of colors, and the changing historical associations connected to them (Garber 1992). The enduring label of masculinity has been attached to trousers (Kidwell and Steele 1989; Smith and Greig 2003), jackets, suits (Kuchta 2008), more subdued colors, coarser fabrics, neckties, short hair and wearing no makeup or jewelry (except for the wristwatch, and perhaps also the wedding ring as a signifier of normative heterosexuality).

The western fashion system, taking a lead from wider dress practices, has provided some possibilities for challenging the culturally set pairing of femaleness and femininity, and maleness and masculinity. The most obvious example, of course, is the history of women and trousers, both work life and sports having provided these otherwise male-gendered garments for women in order to enhance their corporeal mobility (Smith and Greig 2003; Luck 1992). Even though wearing trousers mostly has not really 'masculinized' women as already noted (Hollander 1994), some of the alternative ways of dressing up without wearing a dress within the female sphere may be positioned within 'female masculinities' (Halberstam 1998) – and therefore form a case of alternative masculinities performed by female bodies. The drag king phenomenon of lesbian women aiming toward emphatically masculine style and corporeal performance (Grace and Halberstam 1999) is one example. This can be distinguished from, but also draws historically upon, the likes of the practical outfits of rural women working within agriculture (Halberstam 1998), in coal mines or during war time. In the contemporary world of fashion, models such as Casey Legler have reiterated the drag king style and butch, not androgynous but clearly masculine appearance. What is interesting about Legler, in terms of the fashion system, is that this former competitive swimmer, now based in New York City, was the first woman with a contract as a male Ford Model, in 2012. As for 'newly visible alternative femininities', one has to take into account the performances of fashion models who seriously challenge the gendered

expectations of normalized cis femininity. Andreja Pejic from Bosnia, originally working as a male model, is now one of the best-known female transgender models, who was posing both in androgynous and feminine ways before her transitioning in 2013. Lea T and Hari Nef are also models who slid across the binary gender divide through the fashion system, at a moment when transgender identification was gaining popular attention.

Designers were also challenging gender stereotypes in what was being presented in menswear collections. The appointment of Alessandro Michele as the new creative director of Gucci at the beginning of 2015 proved to be another fashion marker in this transitional year. His second menswear collection for Gucci in June 2015, which was described in the press as 'defining', comprising garments that incorporated 'ruffles, bows, embroidery, appliqué, lace and jacquards', was described as seeming 'to span from the Renaissance to the punk era' (Madsen 2015). As the article goes on to note, this was not 'androgyny', but rather a presentation of alternative masculinity that reflected the designer's own ambiguous ideas around sexual orientation. Michele was not alone in throwing out fashion challenges to gendered norms of masculinity and femininity through use of colors, fabrics, shapes and with the choice of models. A number of other designers were also moving across and between gender binaries in their designs and practices. London-based Grace Wales Bonner won Emerging Menswear Designer at the British Fashion Awards in 2015, for designs that are more intersectional in their approach to gender, race and identity, having drawn on Black style as embodied by James Baldwin, and colonialism, referencing the life of Malik Ambar, a sixteenth/seventeenth-century Ethiopian former slave who gained political power in India (Wales Bonner 2016).

We can trace the fashion origins of these more 'feminine male masculinities' back to the 1980s in particular. Shaun Cole (2000, 2009) has eloquently documented the masculine appropriations that occurred in that decade and earlier, while acknowledging the parallel prevalence of more effeminate styles. Designer Jean Paul Gaultier introduced the 'man-skirt' in 1985. He, and other designers including Dries Van Noten and Vivienne Westwood, continued to challenge gender norms in their utilization of this stereotypically feminine garment for men. Cole has drawn our attention to the fact that the male skirt, in the form of the kilt, was not a new form of drag or cross-dressing, but rather the reflection of the masculine ideal, quoting Steele's reminder (Cole 2013: 190; Steele 1989: 9) that the kilt is a form of (Scottish) male national dress. In dress and in fashion, context and timing, and the body inside the garment, should not be overlooked when investigating a 'new look'. For example, when Kanye West sported a 'skirt' in 2011 and the garment in question was a black leather kilt worn over tight black leather leggings, designed by Ricardo Tisci of Givenchy. While West drew surprised comments, his appearance was far from 'feminine'

and very much within a masculine dress tradition. The same could be said of David Beckham, who sported a Gaultier designed sarong in the 1990s. The referencing was to male dress practices, within and beyond western traditions. What we can conclude from these examples, and there are many more (see, e.g. Carreño 2014), is that by 2015 fashion's points of reference, culturally and historically, were more expansive than ever before. Fashion also references changes in society at large, notably for our argument the greater acknowledgment and visibility of LGBTQ people (Hyland 2015). As well as the existence of examples of 'alternative femininities and masculinities' in fashion garments, design, style and icons, by 2015 a greater range of clothing options were available across the fashion spectrum, which were less gender defined than at any time in the previous century.

Intellectuals of Design and Indeterminate Gender

Writing, again in 2015, journalist Alexander Fury identified 'The Alternatives', in the form of designers, located in various parts of the world, who were 'subverting fashion's status quo' by pursuing a more conceptual approach to fashion. He described their work as perpetuating 'a visual language of distress and decay' very much 'at odds with contemporary tropes of luxury'. The aesthetic was contrary to what might be considered pleasing or 'attractive', often due to the scale of garments not being made to fit, but rather being significantly over or under the body size. Also, the demarcation between genders was eroded so wearers could be either male or female, 'stranding onlookers in a hinterland of indeterminate gender identity' (Fury 2015). The aforementioned Japanese and Antwerp designers provided a stylistic and creative backbone to these changes, which in the twenty-first century represented a particular fashion approach. Fury acknowledged the work of the brands Alyx and Vejas, whose designers would both be finalists in the 2016 LVMH young designer competition (Figure 1). A point of consistency is the appreciation by these designers of the construction of garments and their relationship to the human body, an understanding that is evident in, but not limited to, the work of Rei Kawakubo, Martin Margiela, Rick Owens and Demna Gvasalia, of the brand Vetements. Beginning as a fashion collective in Paris in 2014, one characteristic of Vetements has been to show identical garments on men and women in their catwalk shows and their fashion imagery (Fury 2016). Their more gender fluid shapes, often oversized, hark back to the work of Martin Margiela, with whom Vetements chief designer Demna Gvasalia worked briefly. In the United States, the designer who best represents this approach is Rick Owens.

FIGURE 1: Vejas AW 2015. Photo by Rachel Chandler (published in *Dazed*).

Characterized by the color black, soft, draped fabrics, the likes of dropped-crotch pants and distressed leathers, Owens' designs have projected a gothic aesthetic, and change little across fashion seasons. Skillfully cut, and ignoring fashion's obsession with 'newness', they typically defy distinct gender identification. They are products of Owens' training in pattern cutting, skill in draping, interest in sportswear and undoubtedly are influenced by his own self-declared bisexuality (Frankel 2011). Showing both women's and menswear collections, he has also challenged the norms of the fashion runway show with his focus on consistency, rather than rapid seasonal change, providing his designs with 'an aura of timelessness' (Yoon 2015) (Figure 2). The concept of confounding fashion time also resonates with less binary prescribed design relationships to gender. That said, 2015 also witnessed interesting changes in the gendering of fashion retail, which internationally reinforces 'men's' and 'women's' wear by the separation of garments and accessories in shops, and on websites.

In the spring of 2015, Selfridges flagship department store on London's Oxford Street opened a pop-up department called 'Agender' that stated its aim as creating a 'genderless shopping experience' (Tsjeng 2015). The work of British designer Faye Toogood, the concept was simple, yet for a department store, revolutionary: to create a space where men and women could shop for clothes irrespective of gender distinction. Toogood had a strong affinity for the project, not only having created store interiors for brands such as Comme des

FIGURE 2: Model walks the runway during the Rick Owens show as part of the Paris Fashion Week Womenswear Spring/Summer 2016 on 1 October 2015 in Paris, France.

Garçons and Alexander McQueen, but also for her eponymous ungendered clothing brand (http://t-o-o-g-o-o-d.com). The department was described as follows:

> All the clothes are bagged up in white cases made from stiff artists canvas, with a slit running down the middle to offer a glimpse at the garment inside: black tulle-overlaid hoodies from Nicopanda, gold embroidered Ann Demeulemeester jackets, graphic-print Yang Li sweatshirts. All accessories come in unmarked white boxes.
>
> (Tsjeng 2015)

While the project was in effect a short-lived experiment, for those paying attention it was more than another take on cross-dressing based on binary thinking. At best, it was a 'bold declaration of self-identity' (Tsjeng 2015). This aspect of the project continues with the campaign film, featuring Hari Nef and a cast of performers who cross racialized, color, age, corporeal and gender distinctions. The film provides a lasting record of the close association of fashion with identity and 'becoming'. Interestingly, on the project's website, the term 'agender' has been defined *not only* as 'without gender', but also, and more importantly, as 'moving between genders or with a fluctuating gender identity (genderfluid); third gender or other-gendered; includes those who do not place a name to their gender' (Selfridges 2015). This further supports our account of the recent changes in the fashion system's gendering tendencies being rather about proliferation and fluidity than erasure of gender.

In contrast to the Selfridges initiative, the introduction the following year by global fashion brand Zara of its 'ungendered' line proved much more controversial (see, e.g. Sciacca 2016). The Zara collection comprised sixteen items including jeans, T-shirts and sweatshirts in neutral colors, shown on male and female models. The collection harked back to 1960s 'unisex' while also referencing the fact that the featured garments are standard everyday wear for many women and men, typically distinguished only according to size and fit. Perhaps this was influenced as much by retail competition as by gender politics. The rapid global growth and competitive aspirations of the Japanese clothing brand Uniqlo, owned by Fast Retailing Co. was proving a major market challenge to Zara's parent company Inditex SA (Huang and Takada 2017). Uniqlo's styles were more casual and everyday-focused than those of Zara. They also espoused and promoted collaborations with designers. At the time of writing this chapter, the company was promoting its Fall 2017 collaboration with British designer Jonathan Anderson. The designer's label, JW Anderson, was named men's and women's wear brand of the year in 2015, and his ethos has been the concept of a shared rather than a gendered wardrobe.

Other changes have also been evident since 2015 in the fashion system at large. In April 2016 fashion authority Vanessa Friedman reported in the *New York Times* how Gucci had announced that from 2017 they would no longer hold different shows for men's and women's wear, but would combine the two into a single, seasonal show, as a way of simplifying their business (Friedman 2016). This move followed similar announcements by Burberry, Tom Ford and Vetements, some of whom were also changing their production calendar, to enable customers to 'see now and buy now'. While this change on the one hand seems

to reinforce our observations of more fluid gender distinctions being acknowledged by the fashion system, it could equally be more a sign of fashion wanting to bring products to consumers as fast as possible. Perhaps both impetuses are evident, for fashion is not only a complex business, but also a reflector of social and cultural change.

In response to the Zara initiative, one commentator expressed the view that mainstream retailers' gender fluid clothing has both positive and negative effects on the LBGTQ community:

> 'On one hand, genderless lines in the mainstream encourages everyone to accept more diverse forms of gender expression, which creates positive change for the queer community', she said. 'On the other, the industry seems focused on masculine style for all genders, erasing femme identities and perpetuating a standard that femininity is still very narrowly defined and only acceptable for a limited scope of identities'.
>
> (Sciacca 2016)

This leads us to wonder how thoroughgoing the cultural change in terms of gender and sexuality has yet been, no matter the ubiquity of the discourse and representations, and the malleability of garments.

Conclusion

To return to our thesis stated at the beginning of the chapter, 2015 proved a pivotal year for more fluid gender and identity recognition in fashion/by the fashion industry, in the United States and other western cultures. In comparison to earlier times, this twenty-first-century phenomenon meant referencing more diverse 'forms' of earlier fashion trends, and also bringing forth new aesthetics, which worked against the notion of normatively 'attractive', neither according to 'feminine' nor 'masculine' standards. Also, on the runways the demarcation between genders was eroded so wearers could be either male or female, or 'other-gendered'.

Beginning our discussion on changing representations of gender in and through fashion, we also took into account the broader changes in theorization of gender and sexuality, noting that along with other ways of *doing* or constructing gender, fashion is a relevant one. And since gender and sexuality entangle and influence each other in multiple ways – also through fashion – the ways in which garments are designed may also challenge the former heteronormative notions of gendered desire.

We recognized three 'streams' of both fading and proliferating gender in contemporary fashion:

1. unisex clothes have returned but sized and cut differently;
2. feminine styles have become more accessible for men, but also more masculine styles for women, with openly gay women modeling (e.g. Casey Legler). New visibility of trans and non-binary people, also in fashion, has further complicated the former cis and binary thinking of corporeal styles;
3. the 'alternatives' – more conceptual design – continue to produce less gender-defined fashion. This is coming more into the mainstream with projects such as Selfridges Agender, and Uniqlo's 'democratic design'. We also pointed out that avant-garde fashion's relationship with gender took some new, gender-bending points of departure after the 1980s, rather than simply returning to former sartorial notions of unisex.

It was our aim to show that even though in 2015 and after there has been a lot of discussion about the 'ungendering' of fashion, it is arguable that fashion has actually reflected and supported the proliferation and fluidity of gender and sexual identification. It is our conclusion that gender is not being undone, but rather changing rapidly, and that the way fashion is *used*, not only by the industry and the media, but also by people wearing it, has a key role in this change. Therefore, there is reason to think that the phenomenon we have been analyzing is not simply a 'fashion moment', but part of a broader societal and cultural process. Nevertheless, we are talking about a really short and recent period of time, and the profoundness of this change remains to be seen, beyond the catwalks.

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NOTE

1. We co-taught a graduate course titled 'Ungendering fashion' at Parsons School of Design in Spring 2016 (29 February–11 March), which we began planning well ahead in 2015. That course also generated the ideas that underpin this chapter. Note also that 'Ungendered' fashion was the name chosen by Zara for a new collection launched in Spring 2016. The name stuck, and was used, for example, for a panel entitled 'Ungendering fashion' held at The Museum of the City of New York, 12 October 2016, including Peche Di, founder of Trans Models New York, the world's first transgender modeling agency; Sara Geffrard, editor-in-chief, *A Dapper Chick*; Luna Luis Ortiz, photographer and HIV/AIDS activist; Ryley Pogensky, model and contributor; and Anita Dolce Vita (moderator), fashion and culture blogger, dapper Q.

Notes on Contributors

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* * * * *

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* * * * *

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The making of *Out of the Box*' in *Interpreting Sports History at Museums and Historical Sites* (2019) and 'Above the rest: Chopines as trans-Mediterranean fashion' in a special issue of *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies:* 'Touching the Ground: Platform Shoes in the Early Modern Hispanic World' (2014). Her forthcoming book on collaboration and sneaker culture will be released by Rizzoli in Fall 2019.

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crossing gender boundaries

Crossing Gender Boundaries *presents a timely reminder that the personal remains the political, the body remains a battleground and that dress maketh not just the cisgender man and woman but also the agender, the genderqueer, the genderfluid, the non-gender, the transgender and the trans*.*

Alex Franklin, Editor of *Clothing Cultures*

This volume presents a collection of the most recent knowledge on the relationship between gender and fashion in historical and contemporary contexts. Through fourteen essays divided into three segments – how dress creates, disrupts and transcends gender – the chapters investigate gender issues through the lens of fashion. *Crossing Gender Boundaries* first examines how clothing has been, and continues to be, used to create and maintain the binary gender division that has come to permeate western and westernized cultures. Next, it explores how dress can be used to contest and subvert binary gender expectations, before a final section that considers the meaning of gender and how dress can transcend it, focusing on unisex and genderless clothing.

Andrew Reilly is professor at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, where he teaches courses related to behavioral aspects of fashion and dress. **Ben Barry** is associate professor of equity, diversity and inclusion at the School of Fashion and director of the Centre for Fashion Diversity and Social Change at Ryerson University.

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