CHAPTER FIVE

Gender and Sexuality

ANNAMARI VÄNSKÄ

In 1923, the American painter Romaine Brooks wrote to her lover Natalie Barney about her social life in London:

> Never have I had such a string of would-be admirers, and all of my black curly hair, and white collars. They like the dandy in me and are in no way interested in my inner-self or value."[1]

And in 1990, the American philosopher Judith Butler established the idea of gender as performative in her now classical book *Gender Trouble*:

> As much as drag creates a unified picture of "woman" [. . .], it also reveals the distinctness of those aspects of gendered experience which are falsely naturalized as a unity through the regulatory fiction of heterosexual coherence. In imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself—as well as its contingency.[2]

Both excerpts remind us that social status, gender, and sexuality are discursive and historically constructed. They also remind us that clothing plays a central role in their construction and in theorization of gender. An understanding of dress practices and fashioning oneself illuminate ways in which social changes are experienced by individuals and how they are used in theorizing gender and sexuality—in this case by an independent modern woman and a lesbian artist and a philosopher who established and popularized the idea of gender as performative.

In the first decades of the twentieth century, dress practices highlighted women's changing social identity and at the end of the millennium, they were used to highlight the constructedness of gender. The period after the devastating First World War has been described as a time when women's societal visibility and assertive sexuality came to the forefront of scientific and public debate in Europe and America. It was also the time when fashion became a "woman's thing," and dress a political tool in advocating women's rights. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, sexual minorities, fashionable men and children are gaining more visibility—as are even fashionable pets, especially little lap dogs, which we have begun to dress fashionably.[3] During the past one hundred years, fashion has become a central factor that defines and expresses the real and imagined status of humans in relation to gender. But fashion also expresses and defines what it is to become, or rather, *to look like*, human, as lap dog fashions testify.

(C) BLOOMSBURY PUBLISHING

THE 1920s: WOMEN IN TROUSERS

After the demise of feudal class societies, clothing increasingly became a marker of gender. Up until 1920s, in Western societies, being a woman was largely associated with wearing skirts and dresses, while being a man was associated with wearing trousers. When a child was born, it was clothed in a dress regardless of gender, but when the child grew up, its clothing practice changed according to gender. When a boy became an adult at the age of thirteen, he discarded his dress and started wearing trousers.[4] Becoming a woman, on the other hand, did not include this kind of rite of passage. Women never seized wearing a dress, and therefore remained more like infants throughout their lives.[5] Wearing a skirt was thus also an important marker of women's social inferiority. This is one of the reasons why societal changes in women's lives after the First World War changed women's social status and employment patterns, and led women to adopt masculine tailoring and comfortable clothes. The independent young modern woman, the *flapper* or *garçonne* in French, was able to move about, ride a bicycle, and even play golf. Her style became the emblem of modernity, embodying novelty, change, youth, glamor, and sexual subjectivity.[6] The flapper's societal freedom changed her figure into an androgynous, flat, and geometrical boyish form.[7] She abandoned the Edwardian model of fashion, the frilly petticoats, S-shaped corsets, and large hats, and started wearing loosely fitting tunics—and trousers. For the first time in history, adult women's fashion drew from girl's dress: the dropped waistline and short skirts.[8] While young girls had worn flapper styles since 1914, the adult flappers appeared only in mid-1920s.[9]

Perhaps the best-known designer re-interpreting the modern woman's boyish look was Gabrielle "Coco" Chanel. She changed the dominant paradigm of femininity by rejecting the hour-glass silhouette, by creating the Chanel-look and by introducing trousers to middle and upper class women.[10] Another often-mentioned designer is Jean Patou. Before the war, he had already designed tailor-made jackets for women, and after the war, he started designing sportswear for women. In his designs, he borrowed from men's wear and emphasized women's natural waistline.[11] Social change was also apparent in the modern woman's short hairstyles: the "bob," the *coupe carrée*, the *coupe à la Jeanne d'Arc*, and the *coupe à la garçonne*[12] (Figure 5.1).

After returning home from the battlefield, men's wardrobes were intact, but their spirits were shattered from the horrors of war. The unchanged wardrobe represented the old world order and the precarious political atmosphere fed a pleasure-seeking life of jazz, partying, and cocktail drinking. Soon a range of casually-dressed androgynous *new men*—businessmen, sports idols, film stars, gigolos, middle class youth, and artists—took the floor of fashionable clubs in Europe and America. These cosmopolitan men aspired to get rid of men's strict dress code and took inspiration from sports clothing, work uniforms, and avant-garde art.[13] The post-war male's casualty and effeminacy was directly linked to war. Men wished to distance themselves from wartime masculinity, and from values associated with it.

In fact, men's wardrobe had never been so limited as it had become by the twentieth century. Before the so-called "great masculine renunciation" in the eighteenth century, men were the fashionable peacocks. But now the variety of clothing available to men had been reduced significantly. While men had been wearing skirts and sarongs in the previous centuries, now these garments were regarded feminine, exotic, and deviant, and therefore unsuitable for an average man.[14] The new man's interest in comfort and casual style aimed to free men from hard warrior-like masculinity, and materialized in soft materials: linen, silk, and fine wool flannel. Men also got rid of stiff collars in favor of the softer ones,

(C) BLOOMSBURY PUBLISHING

(C) BLOOMSBURY PUBLISHING

FIGURE 5.1: Actress Ina Claire wearing a herringbone tweed skirt and jumper by Chanel, *Vogue*, 1924. Photo: Edward Steichen/Condé Nast via Getty Images.

exchanged their formal suit jackets for informal ones, and started wearing sweaters—a garment that in the pre-war era was mostly worn by sailors, workers, and athletes. Men also "dared to remain in flannels . . . all day long," in other words challenged the strict middle class dress codes of a proper dress for each time of the day.[15] The changes evoked modern sensations of leisurely outdoor life and free bodily movement and eroticized the male as the soft cloth accentuated the body underneath the clothes (Figure 5.2).

(C) BLOOMSBURY PUBLISHING

FIGURE 5.2: Man's two-piece wool leisure suit with knickerbockers, c. 1920, as worn by the Prince of Wales (left) and the Duke of York (right). Photo: Sean Sexton/Getty Images.

While men's look softened, women's look hardened. Women's trousers became a political garment, signifying women's liberation and intellectual independence.[16] But trousers also signified class and sexuality. Most middle and upper class women wore skirts and dresses because they did not have to work, while working-class women wore trousers

32427.indb 110 28/09/2016 14:49

because they had to work. But trousers also signified sexuality: while long skirts and dresses hid women's legs and made them look "respectable," trousers made the legs visible and the look therefore "improper" and "immoral."[17] The sexual meanings of trousers transformed the garment into a key in defining and explaining deviant sexuality: lesbianism. These meanings were largely produced by sexology, a new science about sexuality. It popularized the idea that a person's sexual identity was not only an inner quality but could be discerned from appearance.[18] Women's masculine behavior and masculine appearance were read as signs of homosexuality. The sexually and economically independent woman, who took over the streets and the work place, was thus characterized as a lesbian. The same applied to men who took on the more feminine look with softer materials: their appearance was read as proof of homosexuality. Sexologists, who drew heavily on the meanings of garments, thus constructed the stereotypes of masculine lesbian and the effeminate homosexual. In the years to come, cross-dressing—women wearing masculine, men feminine garments and materials—played a significant role in self-identification of lesbians and gay men.[19] Inter-war years thus established the notions of modern women and men as well as homosexual and lesbian identities, and how they could be discerned from clothing.

1930s: MANNISHNESS RULES!

On October 29, 1929, the Wall Street stock market crashed and triggered an economic depression in the United States and Europe. Only two years later, 2.5 million people in Britain, five million people in Germany and over eight million people in the United States were unemployed. It was a sudden end of the post-war reality. In contrast to the "gay twenties," the political and social atmosphere tightened. With the rise of fascism, Nazism, and communism, a call for moral, aesthetic, and social order swept Europe. Traditional gender roles of masculinity and femininity were back in fashion again, and simplicity, sensibility, and realism became the defining words. Interest in traditional warrior-masculinity was apparent in the uniformed body. When Hitler came to power in 1933, military uniforms became the symbol of totalitarian authority in constructing the racially pure male. Even some avant-garde movements, especially the Italian futurism and the Russian constructivism, underlined the centrality of uniform clothing in creating the new nation and the new citizen.[20] Men's fashions became harder: padding and the defined shape of a double-breasted suit accentuated a broad chest while long broad lapels accentuated the shoulders, and the high waist and wide trousers, the column-like shape of the figure. The outfit signaled a stronger masculinity and "served as the base for an athletic silhouette that placed a neoclassical stamp on masculine elegance."[21]

Contrary to this, women's designs accentuated femininity—like Christopher Breward has noted, economic depression and political uncertainty lessened optimism that the modern woman's dress had symbolized in the 1920s.[22] Women's hemlines dropped and clothing hugged the body, revealing the feminine form. Still, female masculinity[23] was not altogether absent: the female figure became a mixture of femininity and masculinity. The avant-garde fashion designer Elsa Schiaparelli, for example, saw the body as a playground where rules about gender could be broken. Fashion periodicals also published reports about women's suits and other clothing made in "masculine fabrics" of wool flannel, and plaids. Women's dress was structured and styled according to traditional men's wear and broad, padded shoulders, notched lapels, and deeply cuffed trousers were in fashion. Women's upper body was defined by shoulder pads originally popularized by Elsa Schiaparelli in 1930, while the lower body was defined by narrow waist-line and leg-hugging materials.[24]

(C) BLOOMSBURY PUBLISHING

(C) BLOOMSBURY PUBLISHING

FIGURE 5.3: Young woman on a bicycle, wearing a three-piece Aquascutum trouser suit, October 1939. Photo: *Daily Herald* Archive/SSPL/Getty Images.

Female masculinity became a trend and it was called "mannish." It contrasted feminine fashions that favored the slim and soft silhouette and body-hugging materials. The mannish look continued to underline women's changed social standing: a growing number of women worked outside of the home, and necessitated a masculine professional dress (Figure 5.3).

The new and popular cinema and film stars became important fashion setters and their appearance was sold to the public by popular press. Film stars were styled by leading designers: Gilbert Adrian, Howard Greer, Edith Head, Elsa Schiaparelli, and Travis Banton.[25] They constructed a new type of femininity on screen: the powerful and career-oriented woman whose toughness was accentuated through glamorized costuming. They also highlighted appearance as a discourse of illusion and artifice; how dress simultaneously represses the body and highlights it. Joan Crawford wore a dress with dramatic and large ruffled sleeves designer by Adrian in the film *Letty Lynton* (1932), accentuating the film star's feminine figure with masculine shoulders. Marlene Dietrich, the heroine of the mannish look, on the other hand, was represented wearing low-heeled shoes, mannish hats, and ties—and reported to purchase boys' suits for her daughter, Maria.[26] Department stores had specialized areas under the title "cinema fashions," and sold garments and accessories worn by the favorite film stars making the adoption of Hollywood styles easy for the audience.[27] Thousands of women also curled their daughters' hair into innocent and cute ringlets after Shirley Temple, the most famous child star of 1930s,[28] while thousands of men followed the masculine elegance of Gary Cooper, Fred Astaire, and Cary Grant who made English stylishness known by wearing Savile Row suits.

Despite the mannish trend in women's clothing, cross-dressing was still seen as a sign of non-normative sexuality. Elsa Schiaparelli who was interested in excess of gendered appearance, nevertheless warned women against going "too extreme" with their masculine appearance. Coco Chanel, on the other hand, underlined that her suits were "boyish," not masculine. She wanted suits to "harmonize femininity," not to produce an air of masculinity.[29] This may have some bearing to the fact that the mannish suit was established as the sign of the modern lesbian identity in the 1930s, epitomized in the British novelist Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* (1928). Its protagonist Stephen Gordon is described as a woman with a masculine appearance and personality in contrast to her female body. Gordon's image not only made cross-dressing a sign of lesbianism but also standardized it.[30]

POST-WAR: SPECTACULAR FEMININITY AND INVISIBLE GAY MEN

During the Second World War, appearance and fashion lost their relevance in defining individuals' gendered and sexualized identity, and styles remained practically unaffected throughout the war. But once the Second World War was over, Paris made an effort to re-establish its position as the fashion capital with Christian Dior's "New Look" in 1947[31] (Figure 5.4). It represented an opposite to wartime fashions and a deliberate attempt to break free from the masculine appearance with its square-padded shoulders.[32] The style was exaggerated, Victorian-inspired, and ultra-feminine. It consisted of crinoline skirts which emphasized the full bust, the corset that underlined the hour-glass waistline and high-heeled shoes that accentuated the length of the legs. It has been interpreted as a figure of the modern, post-war fertility goddess[33] in accordance with the "baby-boom generation." This may well be the case—Dior is known to have emphasized the rehabilitation of femininity after the uniforms that constructed "women like boxers."[34] In its nostalgic reach to a supposedly more stable time, the "New Look" represented traditional femininity. It was not the look for the emancipated woman. But it can also be interpreted as reaction against the war and disvaluing of femininity. Furthermore, the look was so exaggerated that it was almost a caricature of femininity and in this sense represented a more contemporary tendency of articulating femininity as thoroughly constructed. The

(C) BLOOMSBURY PUBLISHING

(C) BLOOMSBURY PUBLISHING

FIGURE 5.4: French fashion designer Christian Dior arranging one of his evening dresses. Paris, mid 1950s. Photo: Mondadori Portfolio via Getty Images.

"New Look" represented what the philosopher Simone de Beauvoir wrote in her classical book *Second Sex* in 1949: "One is not born, but rather becomes, woman."[35] The ultra-feminine new look made the post-war woman.

Simultaneously, the look raises other questions regarding the relationship between a designer's sexuality and his/her designs, taken up in a recent fashion exhibition, *A Queer*

32427.indb 114 28/09/2016 14:49

History of Fashion: From the Closet to the Catwalk (2013). The exhibition listed many gay designers, among them Christian Dior.[36] Analyzing the "New Look" from this perspective, it can be asked, how much did the fact that homosexuality was still a crime, and the sexological and psychoanalytical discourses about homosexuality as inversion, affect Dior's designs? During the 1940s, it was still commonplace to think that a gay man was a woman trapped in a man's body and vice versa. Was the hyperbolized "New Look" an expression of Dior's "inner femininity" when he stated that dress was "an expression of personality?"[37] Or, did he emphasize femininity as constructed and performed because he knew about female impersonators, a popular form of entertainment in homosexual subcultures and in the war front?[38] Be that as it may, but in its overstated femininity, the "New Look" represented femininity as female impersonation or, in contemporary terms, femininity as drag.

Analysis of Christian Dior's styles as expressions of the designer's closeted homosexual identity has its problems. Nevertheless, a reading of the look as an effect of closeted sexuality has a point: in the 1940s, being openly homosexual meant the threat of public exposure, blackmail, and imprisonment not to mention violence and trials. Being gay meant remaining invisible. Invisibility was even advocated by the first gay rights organizations such as Mattachine Society (1950) for gay men and Daughters of Bilitis (1955) for lesbians. Both advised their members to adhere to normative gender roles and dress codes. Lesbians were advised to wear skirts and blouses, and to discard signs of masculinity and the established style of the mannish lesbian.[39] Gay men were urged to abandon femininity, to stick to restrained colors, and to dress according to conventions of male fashion: dark suits, simple shirts, tie, and sports jackets. The fear of exposure was reflected in lists of "don'ts" for gay men: "Don't masquerade . . . in women's clothes . . . don't be too meticulous in the matter of your own clothes, or affect any extremes in color or cut; don't wear conspicuous rings, watches, cuff-links, or other jewelry; don't allow your voice or intonation to display feminine inflection—cultivate a masculine tone and method of expression."[40]

The list of don'ts clearly indicates the central role of clothing in creating gendered and sexualized identity. One may wonder, however, how gays and lesbians recognized each other in this hostile atmosphere. Perhaps through excessive designs like in Dior's case, but mostly by speaking about sexuality by not naming it directly: through small details of their clothing, style, and behavior.[41] In fact, the detail became a symbol of a special kind of clothing technique and a crucial marker of sexual difference. Gay men, for example, used accessories, red ties, suede shoes, and non-masculine associated colors in "speaking" to other gay men through their clothing.[42] It is noteworthy that the modern notion of homosexuality coincides with the rise of ideas about the modern society as a society of appearances[43] and clothing as a language-like institution from which individual styles are differentiated as parole.[44] Of course, not all accepted invisibility. Working-class lesbians in the lesbian bar scene in England and in the United States invented a new norm for the lesbian: the butch–femme couple. While the butch wore masculine attire, the femme dressed in traditional feminine outfit. The butch–femme thus resisted dominant norms of gender and transformed gender into role-playing.[45] This preceded the 1960s maxim of showing one's sexuality openly, advocated by the Gay and Lesbian Liberation Movement.

1950s: REBELS AND PLAYBOYS

But women, gays, and lesbians were not the only groups to use clothing as a sign of their gendered or sexualized identity. Post-war Western culture also saw the birth of the youth

(C) BLOOMSBURY PUBLISHING

culture and the new consuming man: the bachelor. This also created new categories of clothing: casual wear and youth wear.[46]

The idea of leisure had been linked to clothing of the upper classes already at the turn of the century[47] but in the post-war culture it had trickled down to middle classes. Again, a *new man* emerged: the hedonistic and consumer-oriented bachelor whom the founder of the *Playboy* magazine, Hugh Hefner, popularized in 1953. The bachelor was a man, who was always (allegedly) heterosexual, lived in a penthouse, and spent most of his time "mixing up cocktails and an hors d'oeuvre or two, putting a little mood music on the phonograph and inviting in a female acquaintance for a quiet discussion on Picasso, Nietzsche, jazz, sex . . ."[48] His lifestyle included a fascination for a conservative yet casual dress, a red velvet smoking jacket, loafers, and a pipe, and who had a taste for the latest technological devices (radio, tape recorder, record player, and a television set), gin and tonic, and pretty girls[49] (Figure 5.5). The idea of the bachelor was constructed through his

FIGURE 5.5: A man wearing a smoking jacket from Christian Dior's collection at the Dior Men's Boutique in Paris, 1955. Photo: John Sadovy/BIPs/Getty Images.

(C) BLOOMSBURY PUBLISHING

32427.indb 116 28/09/2016 14:49

activities, wardrobe, appearance and luxurious life-style—much in the same way as ideal femininity was defined in women's high fashion magazines.[50]

Alongside the bachelor, post-war culture also produced youth culture, symbolized in the concept of the teenager. The teenager designated an age stage and white middle class youth already in the 1940s, but in the 1950s it referred to youth's novel visibility in public culture and to a stylistic identity. The fashion- and consumer-oriented teenager was constructed and popularized by such films stars as James Dean and Marlon Brando who represented the "rebellious youth," a new market niche through their filmic characters.[51] The film *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1951) fashioned Brando as the rebellious and sexually alluring "working-class stud" through his costume: his leather jacket, jeans, and the stained, greasy, and sweaty-looking and body-hugging white T-shirt with rolled-up sleeves.[52] James Dean's character, Jim Stark in the film *Rebel Without A Cause* (1955), popularized the red bomber-jacket. Both characters made the white T-shirt, still an undergarment in the 1930s, and jeans—a garment mainly worn by children in the 1930s[53]—into a fashionable and defiant outfit. The characters also constructed "rocker-look" and the "Teddy-look," the earliest youth subcultures or "style tribes."[54] Brando and Dean, but also Montgomery Clift and Paul Newman, were ambassadors of teenage fashion.[55] Paradoxically, while these styles were defined as "rebellious," they centered on a normative understanding of masculinity and femininity. The young boys wore masculine attire while the girls sported a girlish feminine look: panniers that accentuated waistline, padded bra, ponytails, and ballerina shoes.

1960s: SEXUAL REVOLUTION AND SINGLE GIRLS

Even if youth culture, with its different style tribes, was established in the 1950s, it was only fully developed in the 1960s and included also girls and young women. The decade brought about many novelties: the first orally consumed contraceptive, the Pill, liberation movements, and new technologies in clothing manufacturing which made mass production of new materials and cheap clothing possible. The decade also saw the "second wave" of feminism: the Women's Liberation Movement aimed at ending women's social discrimination in work and at home, and pursued women's right to make decisions about their own bodies.[56] Young women became less dependent on men and a new type of young woman emerged: the single girl. Helen Gurley-Brown describes her in *Sex and the Single Girl* (1962) as financially independent and sexually experimental. This new girl was encouraged to take on a job as a sales clerk, shop assistant, or a model, giving her economic independence. At the end of the decade, the Gay and Lesbian Liberation Movement pursued equal rights for non-heterosexuals, encouraging people to show their sexual identity openly.[57] A new politics of visibility ensued via street theater, drag shows, demonstrations, and finally the first Gay Pride parade in 1972 with people wearing T-shirts with slogans such as "Gay is Good" printed on them.[58]

Liberation movements affected change in the gendered appearance of women and men. Sexuality was detached from marriage and family life and defined exceedingly as a personal matter. This materialized in unisex and minimalist styles at the first part of the decade, and in more natural, ethnic, and simple clothing at the second part of the decade. The ideology of "free love" epitomized in the hippie look: casual, colorful, loose, and ethnic clothes, and naturally-grown body hair—long hair for women and men, unshaven beards, legs, and armpits. A new belief in the future and the human's capacity of conquering distant planets materialized in man-made synthetic materials and futuristic looks by such designers as Courrèges and Pierre Cardin. Their designs included "space

(C) BLOOMSBURY PUBLISHING

32427.indb 117 28/09/2016 14:49

age clothing" made of plastic: transparent coats, dresses, and shoes—clothes "with nothing or next to nothing under them,"[59] underlining the new approach to gender, body, and sexuality.

In youth cultures, the English mod culture embraced a more androgynous and unisex look. It represented a more equal relationship between girls and boys, and made the mod style more conceptual and political.[60] Mod boys rejected the "crude conception of masculinity" of the previous decade and embraced a more feminine, and visually understated style. It consisted of slick suits, parkas, polo shirts, turtlenecks, clean jeans, and Clark's boots.[61] The style also represented a reaction against the upper class somber elegance of the "establishment of men's fashion," Savile Row. It represented a new attitude towards male dress accentuating hedonism instead of asceticism, stirring a label of "Peacock Revolution" in the British press.[62] The dandyesque yet androgynous and unisex looks were visible in appearance of the pop stars. *The Beatles* and *The Who* were the incarnation of mod style while the *Rolling Stones* embraced a more decadent dandy-look.

The mod girls' style is illustrated in the designs of Mary Quant, a designer not much older than those she designed for. Quant is credited for creating the miniskirt, the "Chelsea girl," and the "London Look"[63] (Figure 5.6). Her designs represented a new breath of fresh air and mixed femininity with young girls' social, economical and sexual independence. The "Queen of the Mods" was a lesbian singer: Dusty Springfield. She masqueraded black American soul singers through her outfits and the high beehive hairstyle, heavy mascara,

FIGURE 5.6: Models wearing clothes by Mary Quant at the Carlton Hotel, August 15, 1967. Photo: Keystone-France/Gamma-Keystone via Getty Images.

(C) BLOOMSBURY PUBLISHING

32427.indb 118 28/09/2016 14:49

and false eyelashes and peroxide-blonde hair, killing any naturalistic ideas about femininity.[64] Furthermore, Springfield's performances were impersonated by drag queens. But Springfield did not only lend her look to drag queens, she also impersonated them. She thus popularized her own style and the styles impersonated by drag queens, making gay male sub culture's camp performances known for a mainstream audience.[65]

Even though the above-mentioned example may indicate otherwise, the "swinging sixties" was an era of sexual license that mainly liberated heterosexual men and women. The romantic view of liberating sexuality was made possible with social changes, and its materializations through technological advancements and the rise of popular and youth culture. The 1960s was an era of fantasizing a better future and it gained tangible results through fashion. The next decade began with optimistic views about the future but ended in a bleak pessimism, materialized in punk aesthetics.

1970s: ANTI-FASHION AND ARTIFICIAL GENDER

In the 1970s, the "street" became an important symbol of revolutionary ideas. It was a stage for political activism for oppressed groups and a place that democratized fashion by becoming a source of inspiration and a market place. The street became the symbol of "anti-fashion" put forth by musical and sexual subcultures that opposed the prevailing (adult) social and gender order. Even though "fashion was not in fashion," as Valerie Steele has put it, the decade is remembered for certain garments and materials: hot pants, vinyl maxi-coats, Lycra pantsuits, Lurex tops, polyester suits, bell-bottoms, wide lapels, wide ties, and unisex platform shoes.[66] Men's shirts were open to the waist which accentuated the eroticism of the male torso, while women's dresses were slit up to the crotch highlighting the erotic power of women's legs. The decade was not without style; it was a decade interested in excesses, distortions, and non-natural fibers. This intensified the idea that codes of taste, propriety, and gender were class-bound and culturally constructed, not natural facts.

Artificiality of gender is visible in the image and style of androgynous glam-rockers such as David Bowie and Marc Bolan. Their look challenged normative ideals about beauty, gender, and sexuality. Bowie's influences came largely from the gay and drag queen culture which made a journalist describe him as a "swishy queen, a gorgeously effeminate boy" and "as camp as a row of tents, with his limp hand and trolling vocabulary."[67] Bowie's "genderfuck" style had a huge influence on youth in general and gay men in particular.[68] Another influential group was the New York Dolls, a proto-punk band who dressed, in their own words, as "Puerto Rican sluts," and promoted "polymorphous pan-sexuality." Their appearances owed much to such drag queens as Jackie Curtis, one of the most famous stars of Andy Warhol's Factory (Figure 5.7). Warhol himself is known to have impersonated the stereotype of the "dumb blonde," and he rarely appeared in public without his signature peroxide-blonde wig.

The ideas of trashing established norms of gender were taken to extreme in the mid-1970s punk, in its DIY music and sartorial aesthetics (Figure 5.8). Punk's anti-establishment values and critique of capitalism and beauty norms laid down by the "dominant classes" were embodied in Mohawk haircuts in shock-colors, overtly visible make-up, and piercings, safety pins, and lavatory chains as jewelry.[69] Punk produced clothes from found materials, torn fabrics, and waste: plastic bags, rubber, tin, and old tires.[70] This was intended to assault the hegemonic ideology of fashion and expose the unnaturalness of beauty, decency, and the standards of acceptable femininity and masculinity. Punk aesthetics helped

(C) BLOOMSBURY PUBLISHING

32427.indb 119 28/09/2016 14:49

(C) BLOOMSBURY PUBLISHING

FIGURE 5.7: Transvestite superstar Jackie Curtis photographed in 1970, the year Curtis began filming *Women in Revolt*. Photo: Jack Mitchell/Getty Images.

construct gendered and sexualized identities for the disadvantaged, highlighting fashion as an important arena of sexual politics. The subcultural fascination in gender-bending clothing practices signaled a willingness and interest in blurring the boundaries between "normal" and "perverse" sexuality—themes that were fully developed in the fashions of the next decade.

32427.indb 120 28/09/2016 14:49

(C) BLOOMSBURY PUBLISHING

FIGURE 5.8: Sid Vicious, Vivienne Westwood, and punks in audience at a Sex Pistols gig, November 15, 1976. Photo: Ian Dickson/Redferns.

1980s: IRONY OF FASHION

In *Fashion Zeitgeist,* Barbara Vinken describes 1980s fashion as "postfashion." The concept refers to the ways in which fashion took up ideas set forth in the previous decade and became self-aware and self-reflective about its own histories and practices. Fashion changed direction: instead of trickling down from the upper classes to the lower ones, it moved upwards, from the street to the catwalk. Fashion became more conceptual and abstracted, and in terms of gender and sexuality, it decidedly aimed to deconstruct prevailing ideals. "Nothing could be more out of date than to clothe oneself as 'woman,' as 'man' or as 'lady'," Vinken sniffs.[71] Blurring gender categories visualized, again, in the fashion-oriented *new man*. This time around, his figure was circulated in men's fashion media and his look drew from the "stylistic homosexual identity," offering heterosexual men new ways of shopping and looking at other men and at themselves.[72] A *new woman* was also re-invented: she was (again) assertive and economically independent. This time around her powerfulness materialized in the "power dress": the boxy-shaped masculine pinstripe suit expressing strength, aggressiveness, and upward mobility.

Gender bending was also visible in popular culture and sexual subcultures. Pop stars such as Annie Lennox, Robert Smith from the Cure, Pete Burns from Dead or Alive, Boy George from Culture Club, and Michael Jackson mixed masculinity and femininity through pierced ears, noses and lips, nail polish, and visible make-up regardless of gender. They were the style ambassadors for the youth as their image was disseminated globally through music and style press and the newly established music television, the MTV. The new media landscape also made sexual minorities more visible and legitimate, and made their distinctive sartorial styles known outside the subculture. One such figure was the ultra-masculine Tom of Finland-type clone. He dressed in bomber jackets, Levi's jeans, and Doc Marten boots. The figure was a counter-attack on the stigmatized effeminate gay man but it was also the effect of the heterosexist and homophobic culture that had pathologized gay men after the AIDS crisis.[73] The macho look accentuated the muscular and healthy body in contrast to the prevailing stereotype of the homosexual man's ill and diseased effeminate body.

The lesbian-feminist style, on the other hand, celebrated androgyny or gender blending that aimed to reveal the "real woman" beneath cultural constructions of femininity. It critiqued fashion as a time-consuming practice and women's oppression. Like the clone, gender blending also rejected femininity. It was defined as structurally secondary and personally vulnerable to violence and exploitation. Androgyny was a strategy to minimize the stigma of femaleness and to accentuate that lesbians did not dress for men. Stylistically, androgyny was a combination of flat shoes, baggy trousers, unshaven legs, and faces bare of make-up. Another distinct style was the S/M lesbian who dressed in leather, rubber, and uniform styles. The butch or the "top" wore vests, waistcoats without shirts, or no clothes on the upper body, revealing the body from the waist up. The "bottom" or the femme wore skirts, dresses, lingerie, and high heels, revealing her body from the waist down.[74]

In the spirit of a wider ethos of postmodernism, defined by such philosophers as Jean Baudrillard, Jacques Derrida and Jean-François Lyotard, fashion underlined that it is an effective tool in constructing and deconstructing gendered appearance. This is exemplified in the work of Jean Paul Gaultier and Vivienne Westwood. They are both designers known for their attempts to question taste, propriety, and categorical boundaries of gender. Gaultier mainstreamed stereotypes of gay culture: the sailor, the clone, the cross-dresser and the gay S/M leather fetishist. He also transformed the figure of the drag queen into a campy and excessive representation of femininity. Gaultier's designs are openly camp; they

(C) BLOOMSBURY PUBLISHING

(C) BLOOMSBURY PUBLISHING

FIGURE 5.9: Jean Paul Gaultier. Man skirt, Paris, c. 1987. Photo: The Museum at FIT.

32427.indb 123 28/09/2016 14:49

embrace the unnatural, the artificial, and the exaggerated. He became one of the first popular household names through the costumes he designed for Peter Greenaway's film *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife & Her Lover* (1989). His signature garments, underwear-as-outerwear, the cone-bra, popularized by Madonna in *Blond Ambition* tour (1990), and the male-skirt converted the seriousness of gender into frivolous role-play (Figure 5.9). Unlike Christian Dior, Gaultier openly employed gay culture's bombastic mannerisms of gender performance and produced clothing full of double entendre. His designs also transformed the pejorative definitions of sexuality—gay, whore, slut—into symbols of powerfulness. He erased negative connotations historically attached to gays and sexually active women and transformed them into acceptable styles and popular fetish looks. The Italian designer Giorgio Armani claimed, in his turn, that there are no gender-specific garments, colors or styles and moved constantly between women and men in constructing their new social identities in the rumpled, baggy, shapeless and still yuppie chic linen suit.

The 1980s also saw the rise of women designers. Vivienne Westwood, who had already brought the punk style into the world of fashion, dressed her models in bodysuits with fig leaf -designs placed on genitals. The design simultaneously referred to and drew from the biblical narrative of the "The Fall," describing the transition of the first man and woman from a state of innocence to the state of sexuality, and how they covered their sexual organs, the genitals with these "first clothes." Westwood suggested that all clothing is sexually charged and that it centers on a paradox of hiding and revealing. While dress hides the forbidden and the secret body, it also draws attention to it. The Japanese designer Rei Kawakubo explored the gendered nature of color and cut, designing collections with "genderless" colors of black and white, and creating dresses that accentuated body parts that are not typically seen as sexual. She also experimented with class in her Poor Chic clothing, transforming class into masquerade.[75] And Jil Sander, one of the few openly lesbian designers, created minimalistic and androgynous looks for the modern fashion-conscious (lesbian) woman.

The 1980s witnessed a conceptual move in fashion. It highlighted dress as disguise and costume, and in doing so, the artificiality of gender and sexuality. But it was the next decade that normalized the idea that it is not only the extreme examples but the ordinary aspects of dress that construct gender and sexuality.

1990s: QUEERING FASHION

The 1990s was a decade when fashion visualized in an accelerating speed and was increasingly represented in image-form. Even though visuality has defined fashion since the birth of the modern fashion system and the modern fashion media at the turn of the 20th century[76] it was now intertwined in the lives of people through advertising, music videos and lifestyle magazines with glamorous advertising. In the twenty-first century this development has only increased with the invention of "new media," the Internet, social media with its different image-based applications, and blogs.[77] Images produced new visibility for fashion and became important means of influencing how fashion was perceived, marketed, and disseminated. Images of clothes became more important than clothes, and fashion became a field where editors, photographers, graphic designers, stylists, and art directors could use their creative freedom and intuition in producing fantastical narrative-like scenarios that created an alluring atmosphere around the designs and imagined consumers. While films such as Sally Potter's *Orlando* (1992) and Neil Jordan's *The Crying Game* (1992) mainstreamed non-heterosexuality, new music genres such as grunge, hip-hop, and techno blurred gender categories and

(C) BLOOMSBURY PUBLISHING

FIGURE 5.10: A New York billboard displaying Kate Moss for Calvin Klein, shot by photographer Steven Meisel. Photo: Niall McInerney, Bloomsbury Fashion Photography Archive.

(C) BLOOMSBURY PUBLISHING

introduced more conceptual and gender-neutral club clothing. Through such avant-garde fashion and lifestyle magazines as *i-D*, *Dazed & Confused*, and *The Face*, fashion advertising became an art form of its own right.

In these publications, fashion advertising became decidedly *queer*. This meant that fashion advertising not only used snapshot aesthetics in their attempt to create an air of "realism" and "authenticity" around the brand. It also meant using unconventionally gendered models and marketing strategies addressing a newly found niche market: the homosexual consumer.[78] In its academic form, as *queer theory*, queer makes critical questions about naturalness of gender and sexual identity. While queer has historically been used as a colloquial and abusive word about homosexuality, in the 1990s academics started using it as a concept that challenges ideas about the naturalness of gender and heterosexuality.[79] Queer is against identity, it is its deconstruction. In terms of visuality, queer attempts to make clear-cut categories of gender and desire—whether gay or straight, female or male, feminine or masculine—impossible. This is visualized in fashion advertising which underlines the multiplicity and mobility of identification and desiring possibilities through the unisex and androgynous styling of the fashion models. In terms of clothing, queer accentuates cross-gender identification. Perhaps the most cited queer theorists Judith Butler[80] and Judith Halberstam[81] have both used the figures of the drag queen and the drag king in theorizing the cultural constructedness of gender.

Furthermore, the role of constructing gendered and sexualised identities largely shifted from garments to models and visual images. In fact, when clothes became more ordinary and casual—t-shirts and jeans for everybody—advertising became more interested in sexual subcultures. Benetton and Calvin Klein were the forerunners of queering fashion. They introduced advertising that had little to with promotion of clothes, but everything to

do with playing with the accepted norms of gender and sexuality. Benetton represented unconventional families consisting of Caucasian and African mothers holding a Chinese child, while Calvin Klein advertised jeans, underwear and perfumes with androgynous and ordinary-looking models including Kate Moss, Stella Tennant, Eve Salvail and Jenny Schimitzu (Figure 5.10). *Haute couture* fashion houses from Versace and Gucci to Dolce & Gabbana soon followed this trend and used sexually daring advertising in selling affordable accessories: underwear, bags and sunglasses.[82] Diesel and Sisley offered basic everyday clothes but glamorized them with provocative images created by the brands' marketing departments and famous fashion photographers Oliviero Toscani, Helmut Newton, Corinne Day, Jürgen Teller and Steven Meisel. Many of the advertising campaigns created by these photographers became the target of heated public debate, and some of the campaigns were abandoned because of their non-normative and sexually explicit content.[83]

In the 1990s, high fashion advertising decidedly drew from the past. One much-used visual theme was the 1920s androgyny and the tradition of cross-dressing. It even produced a trend called *lesbian chic*.[84] It was a nostalgic style that drew from visual representations of aristocratic female dandies: from Romaine Brooks' paintings and filmic representations of cross-dressed Marlene Dietrich and Greta Garbo. In 1998, the British footballer David Beckham wore the famous sarong and gave the concept *metrosexual*[85] a manly face. Paradoxically, fashion, which had been seen as the most immoral part of culture, had become the forefront of progressive queer politics. It had recognized and made visible the new consumer, the affluent, fashion-conscious homosexual and his/her new field of economics, the pink dollar.[86] A growing number of companies advertised for this new consumer, making it increasingly hard to separate homosexuality from heterosexuality.

However, even though queer became visible in fashion, the prerequisite lies in social change, advocated by the LGBT movement and especially the American-based AIDS-activism groups such as Queer Nation and Act Up who fought for ending violence and prejudice against homosexuals. The groups used t-shirts with slogans such as "We're Here! We're Queer! Get used to it!" in normalizing non-heterosexuality. To be gendered was now theorized as a function of dress.[87] At the beginning of the new millennium, visualization of fashion has only increased and gender construction extended from women, men and children to our pets.

2000s: FROM *SEX AND THE CITY* TO FASHIONABLE LAP DOGS

Contemporary fashion is thoroughly intertwined with visuality. A new genre has been created: the fashion film.[88] It is an attempt to intertwine brand image with moving image, and to go from costume drama into a film that mediates fashion and narrates a desirable lifestyle. One of the most influential fashion films was actually a television series: *Sex and the City*. It first aired on TV in 1998 and went from a cult hit into a globally watched award-winning success over six seasons. The series featured four single women discussing sex and relationships, and made fashion into a tool for constructing the new millennial woman. The series also made fashion into a character of its own, mainstreamed exclusive designer labels—especially the shoe designers Manolo Blahnik and Christian Louboutin—and granted the series' costume designer, Patricia Field, a position as fashion guru.[89] It connected characters with reality: clothes worn by the characters were auctioned in reality. While the series offered viewers a virtual shopping spree, it also provided some viewers with actual designer clothes.

(C) BLOOMSBURY PUBLISHING

Sex and the City conjured up an image of the contemporary glamorous and fashion-conscious single girl. It made dressing-up into a fun and empowering game, and transformed the main-character, Carrie Bradshaw, into "a stiletto-heeled role model for women in our time, click-clacking her way through the politics of fashion."[90] *Sex and the City* not only managed to popularize big *haute couture* brand names, it transformed high heels and ultra-feminine dress into a "third-wave feminist" tool for constructing femininity. The four characters underline the idea that there is no single femininity or a model to be a woman.

The fashion industry has continued its search for new consumer niches. The new fashion consumers that used to occupy a marginal spot in fashion are children and pets. As families have become smaller in size, both emotional and economical investment in children and pets has increased. Children are important players in and for the global and local fashion markets, and childhood has become an essential point in the social formation of fashion-oriented global consumers. Little girls especially are represented as "mini-fashionistas" who know how to dress and which brands to consume. This has increased the supply and demand of children's designer clothes. High-fashion brands such as Dior, Versace, Calvin Klein, Burberry, Armani, Alberta Ferretti, and Gucci all have children's wear collections (Figure 5.11). Childhood is shaped by fashion, but fashion has also become an important means to construct gendered childhood: girlhood and boyhood. Separate clothing for girls and boys was introduced in the 1930s, after which gender division has only increased. Gendering starts early: babies, whose gender cannot always be

FIGURE 5.11: The new millennium has seen the rise of children's high fashion. All the major brands have their children's lines, New York, 2010. Photo: Annamari Vänskä.

(C) BLOOMSBURY PUBLISHING

(C) BLOOMSBURY PUBLISHING

FIGURE 5.12: Clothing does not only make gender, it makes the human. In 2010s, fashion's search for ever-new markets is going to our pets. Fashionable clothing for lap-dogs sold in a specialized boutique, Tokyo, 2014. Photo: Annamari Vänskä.

recognized at first glance, are dressed in colors and materials associated with gender of children—pink and frilly dresses for girls, blue jeans for boys.[91] Children's gendered clothes exemplify how gender is inscribed in clothing: in the design, cut, color, pattern, and material. Clothing makes gender, not the other way round.

But clothing does not only make gender, it also makes the human. This is specifically visible in the world of pets. Little lap dogs are increasingly dressed in fashionable outfits, they have their own pet fashion weeks, and pay regular visits to pet salons.[92] Fashion humanizes dogs: their clothing follows same patterns, colors, and designs as clothes designed for humans. There are more conservative and grown-up looks such as pullovers with Burberry tartan, or oilskins by Barbour. Dog wear is also gendered: there are pink dresses, underwear with bows and laces for girly dogs, and leather jackets and hoodies for more streetwise dogs. Furthermore, dog clothes accentuate signs of race (!) and class familiar from the human world of fashion. It is revealing how straightforwardly the visual signs of gender have trickled from one species to another. This is proof of how profitable gender is for the fashion industry. It has transformed gender into a set of signs that can easily be attached to new things, and even species. In the post-industrial commodity domain, fashion has reached, what I would call, its posthuman phase. It is not only a tool that constructs gender; it is a tool for constructing the human. Dress neither needs a body to signify gender nor humanity.

Some designers are clearly taking up on posthumanism. The late Alexander McQueen's collection "Plato's Atlantis" (2010) and the Dutch avant-garde designer Bas Kosters' 2015 collection entitled "Permanent State of Confusion" blur the categorical boundaries of gender, human, and the animal. While McQueen's designs such as the Armadillo Boot drew from the world of animals and non-humans, Kosters' models were dressed in childishly patterned gender- and human-bending outfits. Both designers seem to state that the tendency to sell ready-made gender is mind numbing. The new millennium should be less about gender than the previous one, and more about humanity.

(C) BLOOMSBURY PUBLISHING