PARIS 1990

March. Time for the fall/winter women's ready-to-wear collections. A bewildering world, late capitalism at its most seductive and its most repellent. I am standing in the Cour Carrée of the Louvre along with hundreds of other members of the fashion pack. The designers seem to measure their stature by how long they can make their audiences wait, and this one is at least an hour late. Never have I seen a gathering of such intimidatingly stylish people. It's not simply what they're wearing and the aplomb or arrogance with which they carry themselves, but the fact that everyone is checking out everyone else. Who's who, who's wearing what, assessed by an audience that knows exactly which designer, what year, the exact price points. We are, I suppose, performing for each other. The sourness of intense class distinction and status jockeying pervades the air.

Inside, more politics—this time, of seating. Are you in the front row? Further back? At the foot of the runway or somewhere along the side? Do you get a seat at all? Buyers—without whom the fashion designers could not survive—always complain that they are given low seating priority. The choice spots go to powerful fashion journalists, the editors of Vogue, Elle, The New York Times, The

International Herald Tribune, *among others, celebrities (including other designers, sometimes), and wealthy clients. Seating can reflect the way a particular journalist writes about a particular designer; those who "appreciate" the work have better seats, while those who pan a collection can be moved toward the back—in extreme cases, even banned. For those like me, who operate at a far less exalted level, seating still matters. The best seats and most cordial treatment come from Comme des Garçons, and no doubt this is one reason I have written about them so extensively. Yet seating can be forgotten at a truly outstanding show. Occasionally, even standing, one can forget the cramped quarters, the sore feet, the crowds. When the lights go up and the models parade down the runway, color, form, and movement can create captivating visions of beauty.*

Afterwards, there is for the buyers and the assiduous fashion journalist the nitty-gritty work of going to the showrooms and viewing the clothes on the rack. Here one can see other color and fabric choices. Here the orders are placed. Assistants bring drinks and food for guests; occasionally there is a self-service table. Rail-thin models, often clad in black catsuits or leotards, stand ready to try on a particular garment if buyers want to see it draped and moving on a body. Videos of the collection play; assistants attentively follow buyers as they place their orders. It is an exhausting, busy time, for the decisions made here are commercially critical for designer and retailer alike.

And competition is fierce. This is no less true for Japanese designers, who keep close tabs on the competition, down to the smallest detail. I attended one collection with two representatives from a rival; they discovered that the programs had an error which had been painted over with white-out—and chortled with glee at the unseemly mistake. When I visited for interviews, each press liaison asked me where I had been, to whom I had spoken, what I thought of the collections. In one case, I informally mentioned to one representative that I had liked another designer's collection; it was the kiss of death for fieldwork rapport. After that, I could say nothing right. A fashion editor who was with us took sympathetic note and winked at me knowingly. Small incidents, yet they eloquently point to the continuous jockeying for critical and commercial success in an industry renowned for its economic vicissitudes. The seeming frivolity of aesthetic spectacle and play are, for those in the industry, a deadly serious business, where reputations, jobs, capital, and perhaps a company's very existence are at stake. Nowhere do the contradictions of our consumer capitalist lives seem more readily visible.

4. the limits of the avant-garde? gender and race on the runway

THE WORK OF the Japanese avant-garde and the general arena of fashion provide a unique lens through which to view a central political/intellectual dilemma of our late twentieth century-worlds: the possibilities, not for pristine resistance or opposition, as though such a thing were possible, but for what Linda Hutcheon (1989) calls "complicitous critique" within a discursive field defined by commodity capitalism and mass culture. The work of the avant-garde designers enacts oppositional gestures to convention: contesting the boundaries between fashion and art, challenging the conventions about what counts as clothing, rethinking the relationship between form and function and the relationship between garments and gendered, raced bodies, refiguring the beautiful, enlarging possibilities for enacting gender, and subverting the gender binary. But what can their contestations and oppositional practices mean in a domain suffused, indeed constituted, by commodification? A domain whose very existence is defined by the endless production of desire in consumers, planned obsolescence, the global assembly line, and the reinscription of class distinctions?

Focusing on these questions in the arena of fashion forms part of my larger political and intellectual project as a woman of color in the academy. For many

people on the margins, style is not merely superficial decoration but an arena for the production of potentially oppositional identities. Sometimes the body is the most available surface for inscribing resistance. Studying fashion thus becomes an intervention that seeks to widen the spaces in the academy for what counts as legitimate academic inquiry and for what counts as political. Popular or mass culture is still viewed with considerable suspicion in some circles, and fashion, in particular, still indexes the frivolous. On the plane of gender, philosopher Iris Young articulates the dilemma (1990), what one might call a patriarchal double bind: that fashion both defines woman as object, requiring our interest in the aesthetic production of ourselves as gendered subjects in order to be fully woman, while at the same time condemning fashion as a trivial occupation for silly girls. Such a stance presupposes some inviolable moral space beyond fashion, thereby ignoring the ways we all create our identities through clothing and gesture, and masking the fact that there is no outside the fashion industry. The notion of fashion as frivolous also indexes a particular positioning vis-à-vis "the masses": Fashion is suspect because convention associates it with consumption not production, peace not war, women not men, pleasure not pain, aesthetics not politics, embodied subjects marked by and constituted through gender, race, class, culture, and history, not the disembodied Master Subject.[1] A scrutiny of fashion requires a reexamination of these hierarchized binaries, forcing a serious confrontation with pleasure, desire and aesthetic beauty as well as with disciplines, coercions, and oppressions—or, restated more felicitously, with the aesthetic pleasures, desires, and political possibilities that can open up within particular regimes of power.

What are those possibilities? Walter Benjamin long ago articulated the problematic that still haunts us in our very different historical moment, in his Arcades Project. Unlike more pessimistic members of the Frankfurt School, Benjamin found contestatory potential in the utopian dream-images and the desires articulated in mass culture, including fashion. In his version of dialectical thinking, mass culture could contain the seeds of historical awakenings that might spur socially transformative change (cf. Buck-Morss 1989). On the level of fashion and the individual subject, Carolyn Steedman makes a related point in her *Landscape for a Good Woman*, when she writes of her mother's desire for a Dior New Look dress, a "proper envy" of the upper classes that constituted a political critique of class structure. For Steedman's mother, fashion enabled the moment of critique, and Steedman calls for a structure of political thought and action that could take seriously her "proper envy." Benjamin

articulated this constitutive contradiction: fashion's utopian dream wish that held critical and transformative possibility, coupled with its reinscription of capitalist logics, its commodity fetishism, and its dissimulation of ruling class interests, where the desires for revolutionary and perhaps violent change could be channeled into the fetishizing of fashion's latest trend. This chapter explores some ramifications of this constitutive contradiction. Animating the analysis is the supposition that any utopian gestures in fashion always occur within, and inevitably reinforce—even as at other levels they might contest—our contemporary capitalist regime of truth.

However, when we consider questions of contestation, disparate and perhaps contradictory fields of power must be considered. Fashion immediately suggests its imbrication in reproducing the forces of capitalism, making it at first glance unlikely to support any contestatory claims. Yet the fashion world is globally dispersed, profoundly implicated in capitalist *and* colonial/neocolonial relations, and it is perhaps the key site in urban societies for the production and performance of identities as gendered, raced, sexualized, class bodies. Consequently, fashion's wish images and fantasies must also be analyzed as they are worked through gender, sexuality, and race, perhaps at some levels contesting, contradicting, yet remaining inextricable from class reproduction and capitalist recuperation. After appraising the insights of European social theorists on the subject of fashion, this essay examines questions of contestation through an analysis of several Comme des Garçons runway shows over a ten-year period, asking, in effect, what difference a *non-Western* fashion avant-garde might make in terms of fashion's contestatory potential.

CONTESTATORY FASHION?

Fashion has provided the ground for articulating far-reaching arguments about the nature of our present society and historical moment, including processes of signification, subject formation, forces of domination and inequality, and the possibilities for political transformation. Using fashion as their point of entry, several Continental thinkers have theorized critical aspects of social formation and cultural politics.

Any mention of fashion in academic circles immediately evokes Roland Barthes's *The Fashion System*, an exercise in early high semiotics and an

attempt to demonstrate the privileged status of linguistic models for social analysis. Barthes takes as his object of study the discourses of fashion as they circulate in fashion magazines[2] in service of his larger project: to further studies in semiology, the science of signs, applying Saussurean linguistic models to extralinguistic domains. In *The Fashion System* he attempts to capture the structure and the code of fashion and, on one level, he successfully argues that fashion discourses constitute a signifying matrix. In analyzing "how vestimentary meaning is produced" (59), Barthes attempts mightily to apply Saussurean categories to the corpus of fashion discourses he has amassed: delineating *langue* from *parole*, finding the elementary signifying unit ("the *vesteme*") of what he calls "the vestimentary system," distinguishing syntagm from paradigm, establishing the system of meaningful differences and their variants that constitute the vestimentary code. Though fashion is convincingly presented as a meaningful discourse through this semiological approach, Barthes begins to show the strains of applying Saussurean concepts when he is forced to confront the literal materiality of clothing. He distinguishes an *object* of signification (e.g., a sweater), a *support* of signification (e.g., a collar), and a *variant* (e.g., the type of collar: boatneck, closed, etc.). The support of signification is the excess that cannot be accounted for in the vestimentary sign.

Here, we see the inadequacy of Saussurean formulations that figure language as an abstract system of differences, i.e., of negative relations. The materiality of the garment in this instance must be conceived as prior to signification and cannot be accounted for within a purely negative system of differences. Barthes's appropriation of the Saussurean paradigm cannot account for this materiality within its own terms, revealing the limits of a Saussurean semiological project. Pierre Bourdieu (1975, 23) rightly notes Barthes's rigid formalism and his forced transposition of linguistic models to extralinguistic domains, further arguing that Barthes's mode of analysis simply uncritically reproduces common-sense assumptions in an academic register. For Bourdieu, Barthes remains part of the celebratory apparatus that creates the phenomenon of fashion: for him, a truly critical approach would reveal and problematize the underlying mechanisms of capitalist production and class reproduction (26). Further, in terms of the understanding of fashion itself, Barthes's rigid, structured semiological grid is of minimal usefulness, for the operations of signification Barthes describes could be attributed with equal persuasiveness to any extralinguistic signifying system. That he chose fashion as his object seems merely incidental.

In contrast, for Jean Baudrillard (1976), fashion is the central logic of our "consumer society," "the most superficial game and the most profound social form—the inexorable investment of all domains by the code"[3] ("*le jeu le plus superficiel et . . . la forme sociale la plus profonde—l'investissement inexorable de tous les domaines par le code*") (Baudrillard 131). In *L'échange symbolique et la mort*, Baudrillard is in a transitional phase of his thinking. He has problematized the Marxist categories of production and consumption which were foundational in his earlier work and is on the way to articulating fully the notions of simulation and the hyperreal that animate his later theorizing. At this point, Baudrillard associates production with a phase of history defined by the Industrial Revolution (77). In its place, he argues, we have entered a new regime of simulation, a world where the referential and the real dissolve in an enchanting play of floating signs that refer only to each other. Fashion embodies the processes of simulation and the rule of the code. Rather than the "real" itself, Baudrillard argues that fashion creates a world of representations or models of the real. Fashion becomes the "*jouissance de l'arbitraire*," at once exceeding the purely economic domain even as it remains the highest expression of the workings of commodity capitalism (142). According to Baudrillard, fashion invites censure not because of its sexual element—indeed, he argues that fashion paradoxically desexualizes subjects into mannequins—but because it interrupts the economic principle of utility, the puritanical valorization of use and function. Fashion's power is precisely that of the "pure sign that signifies nothing" ("*signe pur qui ne signifie rien*") (144).

For Baudrillard, fashion is a totalizing logic permeating what he calls at this point "modernity" and will later call "postmodernity." Consequently, there is no way to subvert fashion, "for there is no reference with which to place it in contradiction (its reference is itself)" ("*parce qu'elle n'a pas de référentiel avec lequel la mettre en contradiction (son référentiel, c'est elle-même)*") (151). Reacting against fashion simply reproduces the principles of its code; fashion cannot be transcended. Instead, the project must involve "a deconstruction of the form of the sign of fashion and of the very principle of signification, just as the alternative to political economy can only be in the deconstruction of the commodity form and the very principle of production" ("*une déconstruction de la forme du signe de mode, et du principe même de la signification, comme l'alternative à l'économie politique ne peut être que dans la déconstruction de la forme/marchandise et du principe même de la production*") (151).

Baudrillard's characterization of fashion displays his penchant for hyperbole, particularly in his insistence on fashion as the enchantment and *jouissance* of the code, a fairyland of floating signs; this emphasis on simulation and models will spin off in ever more grandiose formulations in later work.[4] Nonetheless, he does argue convincingly that fashion is an exemplary instance—*the* exemplary instance—of the logic of contemporary society, a logic that cannot be transcended. Baudrillard's formulations are useful and prescient, articulating what will become a standard premise of a poststructuralist politics: that there can be no outside space of transcendence and that a political project must depend in part upon problematizing the foundational assumptions constituting the tacit, unspoken—hence unquestioned—rules of the game.

In *Distinction* (1984) Pierre Bourdieu combines a Durkheimian preoccupation with systems of classification with a Marxist concern for systematic inequality and class struggle. In this study of taste and consumption, he seeks to give "a scientific answer to the old questions of Kant's critique of judgment, by seeking in the structure of social classes the basis of the systems of classification which structure perception of the world and designate the objects of aesthetic enjoyment" (xiii). Bourdieu's project is to demystify the claims of high culture, showing how the supposedly transcendent domains of refined taste are constituted through a system of class distinction, permeated by the logic of cultural and symbolic capital. Fashion, music, political orientation, leisure, lifestyle, tastes in food, types of dwelling, and interior decoration become sites where class distinctions are articulated and reproduced. Basing his project on a comprehensive survey of over 1,200 respondents, Bourdieu convincingly analyzes the functioning of taste and its relation to social class. He utilizes the standard methodologies of social science to impressive effect, persuasively mapping this relationship through discursive analysis supplemented with charts, photographs, statistical tables, interviews, excerpts from journals, and advertisements.

However, the seemingly comprehensive nature of the inquiry cannot mask the limits of its conceptual foundationalisms. Despite occasional protestations to the contrary, Bourdieu in the end appears to subscribe to a class-based objectivism that takes consciousness and meaning as ultimately derivative. Indeed, structure, culture, science, production, consumption, among other categories, remain unproblematized, rather than terms that must themselves be subject to interrogation. The Durkheimian legacy couples a classificatory imperative with an emphasis on social *science*, creating a matrix of closed categories that ultimately misses the fluidity of the social battles Bourdieu so richly describes in his vignettes. The lived nature of the classificatory *struggle* never sufficiently emerges from the totalizing grid of classification. Here, for example, is the revealing description of the presuppositions that inform *Distinction*:

> Thus, the spaces defined by preferences in food, clothing, or cosmetics are organized according to the *same fundamental structure*, that of the social space determined by volume and composition of capital. Fully to construct the space of life-styles within which cultural practices are defined, one would first have to establish, for each class and class fraction, that is, *for each of the configurations of capital, the generative formula of the habitus* which retranslates the necessities and facilities characteristic of that class of (relatively) homogeneous conditions of existence into a particular lifestyle. . . . By superimposing these homologous spaces one would obtain a *rigorous representation* of the space of lifestyles, making it possible to characterize each of the *distinctive features* (e.g., wearing a cap or playing the piano) in the two respects in which it is *objectively defined*. (208–9, emphasis mine)

Bourdieu clearly assumes that he can exhaustively, objectively specify class and class fractions, precisely linking them with specific displays of taste. Yet one wonders whether his respondents' choices can be so neatly read off this presumed foundational structure. The fixity and "objectivity" of his categories are meant to signify rigor. Ironically, however, despite Bourdieu's criticism of Barthes's rigidity, the totalizing reach of his own rationalizing grid seems equally rigid, exposing the limits of this classificatory imperative.

In *Distinction* Bourdieu's appraisal of fashion exhibits similar conceptual difficulties. At one level, his analysis does the important work of enabling us to understand the ways the clothing we wear, indeed, the very production of bodies, is inseparable from class relations. Distinguishing "being" from "seeming" (200), he argues that the working classes value function and labor, while the clerical and managerial classes place a greater emphasis on appearance. Accordingly, in choosing clothing or cosmetics, the working classes are presumably concerned with practicality, value, durability, and function; conforming to normative fashionable bodies and gendered ideals of attractiveness are of peripheral concern. In the middle classes, for whom performance evaluations on the job may in fact be related to appearance, preoccupations with cosmetics, diet, and proper clothing heighten markedly. Indeed, Bourdieu makes even more precise and far-reaching claims: "The interest the different classes have in self-presentation, the attention they devote to it, their aware-

ness of the profits it gives and the investment of time, effort, sacrifice, and care which they actually put into it are proportionate to the chances of material or symbolic profit they can reasonably expect from it" (202). According to Bourdieu, the upper classes demonstrate the greatest satisfaction with their appearance and their bodies, as the literal embodiments of hegemonic ideals, conquering nature through the moral/aesthetic value they call "*tenue*"—that which is not vulgar (206). Once again, the correlations are presented as being seamlessly—and suspiciously—tight. The outlines of the analysis are convincing, but one wonders what Bourdieu might do with someone like Carolyn Steedman's mother, whose working-class positioning combined with an uneasy, contradictory identification with the upper classes and a political critique of class structure that was paradoxically nurtured by her very identificatory desire and her resulting envy of the upper classes. That is, while Bourdieu's reproductive model is compelling in its general contours, empirical realities are likely to be more open-ended, contradictory, and complicated. And it is precisely the fissures and contradictions in such a narrative of reproduction that might reveal contestatory possibility.

Bourdieu's work on the fashion industry as such is therefore useful, indeed indispensable, at one level, but its totalizing closure and class foundationalism prove once again to limit the analysis. In a work that precedes *Distinction*, entitled "*Le couturier et sa griffe*," "The couturier and his signature" (1975), Bourdieu takes as his object the domain of haute couture (luxurious made-to-order clothing, rather than high fashion ready-to-wear).[5] He characterizes the dynamics of the field of haute couture through its two poles: the established couturiers, who represent luxury, aristocracy, and elegance, versus the challengers, who emphasize their difference from established convention through the invocation of modernity, artistry, and the subversion of perfection. He perceptively describes the challengers' task as "vigorously breaking with certain conventions (introducing, for example, mixtures of colors or materials that had been excluded up to that point), but within the limits of convention and without calling into question the rules of the game or the game itself." ("*Le jeu des nouveaux entrants consiste à peu près toujours à rompre avec certaines des conventions en vigueur (en introduisant par exemple des mélanges de couleurs ou de matières jusque-là exclus), mais dans les limites des convenances et sans mettre en question la règle du jeu et le jeu lui-même*") (12). In the same passage, Bourdieu goes on to note that the newer couturiers often emphasize "liberty, fantasy, newness (often identified with youth)" ("*la liberté, la fantaisie, la nouveauté (souvent identifiées à la jeunesse)*," while older, established houses shun anything too unconventional, instead opting for understatement, elegance, and refinement. Because the newcomers to the field cannot hope for the same kind of haute-bourgeois prestige accorded the established houses, they must discredit as unfashionable or outmoded anything owing its prestige to age, to history, and to the existence of the bourgeoisie/aristocracy who are its primary customers (15). An emphasis on modernity, the future, or on revolutionary visions is thus always already part of the challengers' stories; so are the invocations of street style and youth. Art, finally, holds a special place for challenger and established designer alike. Given that fashion is designated a decorative and therefore lesser art, Bourdieu notes that designers often gesture toward their own artistic endeavors and their links to the artistic world (16).[6]

Through this delineation of fashion, Bourdieu probes the more general operations of what he calls a field: art, fashion, sports, academia, politics. In fact, one could argue that Bourdieu has little interest in fashion as such. Rather, he shows the ways these challenges to convention through battles for legitimacy never really threaten the existence of a dominant class or subvert the rules of the game (27). What is missing, Bourdieu argues, is the possibility for agnosticism about the game itself, an agnosticism he finds essential to an "objective apprehension of the struggle" (28). This objective apprehension would reveal fashion's implication in the reproduction of class. Bourdieu notes that the appearance of new couturiers, such as the influential modernist Courrèges, signals the emergence of a new managerial class that espouses values such as dynamism, function, modernity, and freedom. In this class, women as well as men may hold managerial positions. Bourdieu notes that the new couturiers have adapted to the shift in gender roles, pointing to this phenomenon as one of the ways the "effects of recent transformations of the dominant class make themselves directly felt in the field of haute couture" ("*les effets des transformations récentes de la classe dominante se font le plus directement sentir dans le champ de la haute couture*") (33). Fashion and other fields (art, the academy, politics) in fact become arenas for the reproduction of class and for the imposition of the symbolic violence of legitimation, "gentle violence that can only be exercised with the complicity of its victims and because of this fact give the appearance of liberatory action to an arbitrary imposition of arbitrary needs" ("*violence douce qui ne peut s'exercer qu'avec la complicité de ses victimes et qui peut de ce fait donner à l'imposition arbitraire de besoins arbitraires les apparences d'une action libératrice*" (35). Bourdieu ends his article with a

clear message. Fashion is simply another battlefield in the timeless, eternal class struggle: "The dialectic of distinction and of pretension is the principle of this sort of race pursued among the classes, which implies the recognition of the same goals: it is the motor of this competition that is none other than the gentle, continuous, interminable form of the class struggle." "*La dialectique de la distinction et de la prétention est le principe de cette sorte de course poursuite entre les classes qui implique la reconnaissance des mêmes buts: elle est le moteur de cette concurrence qui n'est que la forme douce, continue et interminable de la lutte des classes*" (36).

In this essay Bourdieu convincingly demonstrates that fashion and other domains of taste are inseparable from class distinction. His analysis of the operations of haute couture are unfailingly insightful and can apply with equal elegance to the field of ready-to-wear. For example, Bourdieu's description of the strategies available for newcomers to challenge the fashion establishment aptly characterizes the work of Comme des Garçons and other so-called avant-gardistes.[7] Their invocations of modernity, street style, the subversion of convention, and artistry are predictable, even as related claims have been made by French challengers to the established couturiers. Yet, though at one level indispensable and incontrovertible, the reproductive model of class cannot exhaust the political and interpretive possibilities presented in the fashion world.

Bourdieu's treatment of gender is especially telling in this regard. In the end, for Bourdieu the historical emergence of a new class and new possibilities for women's employment signify simply another shift in the ways the dominant classes can reproduce themselves. Bourdieu's analysis is compelling; at the level of class, the new managers—whether male or female—can find their interests and their class bodies articulated in the work of the new couturiers. Yet might the entry of more women into the labor force in the new managerial classes and elsewhere produce other kinds of shifts that cannot be reduced fully to class reproduction? What of gendered power relations and the gendered constructions of families and workplaces? Bourdieu's final invocation of the symbolic violence of the eternal class struggle in the end is oddly ahistorical, for historical developments are reduced to mere instantiations of class reproduction. Again, he leaves no room for contestation, for ambiguity, for meanings that resist closure, for the disruptions other forces such as gender and race might offer to this totalizing narrative, or for the ways class formation and class identities are themselves gendered and raced. Though Bourdieu might provide us with provocative insights and a useful framework for understanding the

world of high fashion, we must take care to note the ways that his narrative of class reproduction might be interrupted by other forces, especially in the work of non-European, non-white Others.

A final analyst of fashion provides a critique that reveals fissures in Bourdieu's classificatory grid, yet ultimately remains within a liberal humanist, power-evasive theoretical frame. Gilles Lipovetsky criticizes Bourdieu and takes Baudrillard's emphasis on the totalizing logic of fashion into historical terrain in *L'empire de l'éphémère* (translated as *The Empire of Fashion*). Taking his cue from Baudrillard, he sees seduction and the ephemeral as central organizing principles of social life. Lipovetsky's historical approach enables him to argue against Bourdieu that fashion is far more than a site of class struggle, for when seen in terms of the *longue durée*, it has constituted a democratizing influence and a sign of modernity. For example, the sumptuary regulations of aristocratic societies enforced fixed social hierarchies, while modern fashion introduces the possibility of mobility and change. The old class order is disrupted by a valorization of youthfulness; the age hierarchy supersedes the class hierarchy. Indeed, for Lipovetsky fashion is a democratizing influence that promotes individualization and the formation of consumer-subjects who hold the democratic values of tolerance, pluralism, and openness to transformation. Like Bourdieu, Lipovetsky subscribes to a conceptual scheme that problematically separates culture from structure. Against Bourdieu's analysis of class *structure*, he stresses the centrality of modern *cultural* values and significations, in particular that of the New, which permeates fashion and forms the basis of modern democratic society.

Lipovetsky makes a convincing case for analyzing the emergence of fashion historically, arguing that its appearance was coextensive with modernity. However, his appraisal of fashion as a domain fostering democratic values uncritically reinscribes liberal humanist presuppositions about the subject and about power. For example, he celebrates the notion of the individual (the always already whole subject), who chooses and who is conditioned to accept the New. There is too little acknowledgment of the ways the emergence of the liberal humanist choosing subject is above all a consumer-subject, inextricable from the growth of capitalism and the formation of bourgeois possessive individualism. Lipovetsky's embracing of this choosing subject inevitably erases those histories of power and domination. Indeed, Bourdieu shows that the valorization of the New among the couturiers and the managerial classes is simply part of the struggle for legitimacy among the dominant classes, a struggle that never seriously jeopardizes class hierarchy itself. And because

Lipovetsky accepts as foundational divisions such as public/private, he fails to account for the ways public social forces intersect in, and construct, the private. Consequently, he cannot effectively come to terms with Bourdieu's class analysis. For example, Lipovetsky argues that in a society permeated by the logic of fashion, individuals no longer buy with an eye toward social recognition or social competition, but keep uppermost the purely private values of functionality and individual well-being. Yet as Bourdieu eloquently argued, these seemingly private values can in fact be produced and reproduced through "public" discourses and are far from innocent of class distinction. Lipovetsky ultimately becomes a liberal humanist cheerleader for fashion.

In different ways, these theorists of fashion offer insights into the fashion world. Barthes argues for fashion as a signifying system. Despite its class foundationalism and totalizing classificatory imperative, Bourdieu's insightful work on fashion provides a political and conceptual frame for understanding the dynamics of the avant-garde in fashion and the inextricability of taste from class reproduction. Lipovetsky and Baudrillard mark the pervasiveness of the logic of fashion in our regime of capitalist (post)modernity, while Lipovetsky's fissuring of Bourdieu's narrative of relentless class reproduction leads to a critical reappraisal of Bourdieu's description of the fashion world. Finally, Baudrillard articulates the possibilities for always already complicitous critique in a commoditized world defined by fashion.

Still, these insights are mediated through a highly problematic, Eurocentric gaze. What happens to their Western narratives of signification—the *jouissance* of the code, class reproduction, and the formation of individualist bourgeois subjects—when we consider other axes of power, such as gender, race, sexuality, and (neo)colonialism? Without a broader consideration of these issues, can we adequately address the possibilities for contestation in this elitist, highly problematic domain? The following section explores these issues, arguing that in the early 1980s Japanese avant-garde designers created a sensation in the fashion world, presenting what seemed to be a shockingly different version of gender and fundamentally problematizing what counts as clothing. Bourdieu's model of the field of fashion, and particularly his treatment of the role of avant-gardes, enable us to appraise avant-garde experimentation within our regime of commodity capitalism. After setting the shock of Japanese fashion into historical context, our inquiry focuses on the stagings of gender, sexuality and race in Comme des Garçons runway shows. The wish-images showcased on the Comme des Garçons runway, the fact that the designers are Japanese—not

European, not white, and in particular shifting relations of power vis-à-vis the West—inevitably position this work differently. The nature and the degree of difference are the issues. These considerations in turn bear implications for European theories of fashion, and in particular, for Bourdieu's model of class reproduction. For what happens when we think seriously about gender, race, and Orientalism along with the workings of class and commodity capitalism Bourdieu and others so acutely describe?

STARTING FROM ZERO

Let us return, then, to the early 1980s and the initial shock of Japanese fashion. Why the uproar? What was so radically different? The October 23, 1982 edition of the *Toronto Star* and its UPI correspondent situate us historically, in this report on the collections shown in the fall for the following spring. The headline trumpets:

> **Oo-la-la! Sexy French fashions fall back on derrières**
> PARIS (UPI-Special)—Sexy fashion is back—and behind.
> The liberation of women from being sex objects has gone out the window in this week's 1983 Paris spring-summer and ready-to-wear shows for international store buyers and press.
> Tight skirts with a Marilyn Monroe wiggle, skirts slit up front-back-sides, tops like wired brassieres, bareback sweaters, strapless gowns, tight waists, necklines cut to the point of no return, bare navels, see-through dresses . . .
> The revolutionary turn to sensuous styles means 1983 will be the year of the derrière.
> The French press calls the look 'la starlette.' And it could be fun for some women but a put-down for others with an anti-sexist outlook (A3).

The article sets the dominant tone of fashion for the year, and ends with the appearance of the Japanese designers. This was the second Paris show for Rei Kawakubo and Comme des Garçons.

> However, the most-talked-about show was not one by a Paris creator, but by one of six visiting Japanese designers invited in an unusual gesture by the French to show their wares.
> Rei Kawakubo of the Comme des Garçons firm stunned the audience by draping gray tatters full of holes on mannequins with hair drooping in all directions and blobs of lipstick on one eyebrow or cheek.

> They looked like street fighters in a slum, victims of a nuclear war or females beaten up by men in the final insult to women of the Paris 'sex object' fashion parade.
>
> But Kawakubo said she had in mind an anti-fashion 'natural look' with pre-washed and stretched fabrics, unset hair and lipstick any place a liberated woman felt like putting it" (A3).

The contestation here lies in particular figurations of gender and, less obviously, race. For what lay behind this anti-fashion, natural look, the drooping hair and gray tatters? As analysts have argued (Chapter 2, this volume), Kawakubo, along with Yamamoto and Miyake, share certain aesthetic points of departure that can be read as an aesthetic oppositional to reigning European and especially French clothing conventions. These points of departure must be understood in terms of the different ways clothing articulates gendered, raced bodies. Comparisons to the contemporaneous work of classic French designer Yves St.-Laurent and the more avant-garde Claude Montana and Thierry Mugler are revealing. All three articulate the body and clothing in terms of an exquisite, precise fit based on cutting and tailoring. Theirs are crisply articulated, disciplined bodies, curving and normatively feminine bodies in a Western sense. This aesthetic point of departure depends on cutting and tailoring fabric to conform closely to, even creating, an idealized notion of feminine curves. These are bodies shaped by a Western disciplinary regime, premised on the ideal of a tall, long-legged woman with an hourglass shape.

The challenge represented by the work of Rei Kawakubo, Issey Miyake, and Yohji Yamamoto lies precisely in the potential radical refiguration of clothing's articulation of bodies. Perhaps this refiguration reached its most uncompromised expression in the Comme des Garçons lines of the early eighties. Kawakubo talks of the sensuality of the clothing coming not from the way a person looks, but from the feel of the clothing. Her stated goal is to create a sense of *jiyū*, freedom, in her designs. One way this freedom is enacted is through the input of the wearer; that is, many of the early designs based on wrapping can adapt to individual bodies, and the garments can be worn a variety of ways, changing with the wearer. For me, this is one of the strengths of the Japanese design from this period: that it usually looks as good on Asian bodies as it does on other raced bodies. Kawakubo's clothing does not shy away from making Japanese bodies look Japanese rather than some inadequate imitation of Western ideals; many different kinds of bodies can wear her clothing well. Indeed, the work of Comme des Garçons offers wearers multiple possibilities for adjust-

Elasticized cotton dress. Spring/Summer 1983
Photographed by Peter Lindbergh. Courtesy Comme des Garçons

ing garments to the shape of the individual wearer. For example, a line in the mid-80s, the "elastic" collection—based on shirring and gathers—created holes in different places in a garment and gathered the fabric around the holes. Wearers could choose where they wanted to put their heads or their arms. Play and the pleasure of the unexpected animate this clothing, and this play can articulate a different vision of gender and race.

In addition to deploying culturally specific aesthetics and refiguring the relation of clothing to bodies, Kawakubo and others have been engaged in rethinking the decorative "prettiness" of fashion. In an exhibit at the Fashion Institute of Technology called "Three Women," that focused on the radical challenges presented by the clothing of Madeleine Vionnet, Claire MacCardell, and Kawakubo (representing the '20s, the '50s, and the '80s, respectively), curator Harold Koda told me that for all three designers, decoration was adjunct to function, so that, for example, a bow would be of a piece with a collar. In Kawakubo's case, the finishing on a garment will often serve as decoration. In a modernist sense, for her form follows function. But the garments she designs often go beyond the modernist aesthetic, challenging us to examine our assumptions about what counts as function—collars are attached to nothing, jackets appear with four arms, what looks like a coat is a collar and lapel, but a void gapes where the garment's shoulders, front and back should be. Such a coat surely offers next to no functional protection from the elements. One could argue that Kawakubo is deconstructing garments—literally, by exposing their constituent parts, and figuratively, by making the so-called functional nonfunctional and decorative, while making the functional decorative. In the process, she subverts our notions of decoration and function.

This aesthetic disruption, leading us to confront our assumptions about what counts as clothing, constituted the challenge of Japanese fashion. In an analysis of the reception of the work of David Henry Hwang, Angela Pao (1992) argued that *M. Butterfly*'s subversive potential should be appraised in terms of "the undeniable challenge it presented to the spectators' socially and culturally determined narrations of experience and their allied competence as theater goers" (14). I would argue that in the fashion world, the work of Kawakubo, Yamamoto, and Miyake, among others, forced a similar reappraisal of cultural competencies and interpretive practices that construct clothing conventions. This radical questioning participates, in a different medium, in the anti-foundationalist critiques of received categories that so defined the 1970s and 1980s. I see in the work of the avant-garde Japanese designers, especially in the early

1980s, a parallel in another medium to the world of social theory, a laying bare of the equivalent of fashion's narrative conventions. As I have argued elsewhere in this volume, the reception of their work in the European and U.S. fashion worlds cannot be separated from discourses of race and nation. Their avant-garde challenge is always already raced.

At another level, however, Bourdieu's analysis of the fashion world provides us with significant insights into the degree of potential intervention. Though perhaps the Japanese disrupted convention and challenged the reigning interpretive apparatus of fashion, they could not do so in a manner that completely called into question the world of fashion itself; after all, their goal was acceptance in the West and the world of international fashion, and acceptance means marketability and at least some degree of critical approbation. We will see that the initial shock was inevitably recuperated, appropriated, and further commodified as one might expect in the culture industries, even as the influence of Japanese fashion spread in the 1980s and even as Kawakubo, Yamamoto, and Miyake are still known for—and are marketed in terms of—their experimental and avant-garde aesthetic moves. Indeed, as Bourdieu pointed out, challengers to fashion hegemonies often stress modernity (in this case, new fabrics dependent upon high-tech research and development), and a future orientation—starting from zero.

The particular niche occupied by the avant-garde is one that is designed to appeal to the artist/iconoclast; consequently, the invocation of art recurs repeatedly in these circles. Indeed, Bourdieu has argued that fashion's secondary status as a decorative or applied art further fosters this compensatory invocation. For example, Kawakubo and Yamamoto have originated artistic image books distributed to the press and to customers, which commission work from some of the art and fashion world's best known photographers (e.g., the Starn Twins, Peter Lindbergh, Bruce Weber, Timothy Greenfield-Sanders). The images are often abstract and enigmatic, or playful visual rhymes that may have nothing explicitly to do with clothing. Rather, they enact and express an "artistic vision." Kawakubo is known for the aesthetic and design control she exercises over her boutiques, and indeed, the main boutique on Aoyama-dōri in Tokyo is a virtual art gallery; the work of a featured artist is displayed near the entrance to the boutique. Within the last five years, these have included American artist Jim Dine, French artist/designer Line Vautrin, and Cindy Sherman, whose photographs for Comme des Garçons were also featured on their large format, direct-mail postcards. In addition to clothing, Kawakubo sporadically designs a line of furniture that draws on both minimalist and, more recently, postmodern aesthetic tradi-

tions. Yamamoto finds other means of artistic expression through music—acoustic guitar and vocals that allude to James Taylor and Neil Young. Miyake, in particular, has had his designs showcased in museums and among the three is best known for the creation of artistic, otherworldly museum pieces.

Yet art and fashion are also industries, and aesthetics cannot be divorced from commerce, for these designers also head large capitalist organizations with hundreds of employees. All have subsidiary lines that are less expensive, less radical, and thus more commercial. For Miyake, these include Plantation, a more casual line, and Permanente, which recycles classic Miyake designs in slightly modified form. Miyake also licenses widely, so that one can buy Issey Miyake handkerchiefs, futon covers, umbrellas, luggage, and fragrance. Yamamoto's "Y's" features classic tailored shapes;[8] Kawakubo's ancillary lines include Tricot, Shirt, Robe de Chambre for nightwear, Homme Deux, men's business suits, perfume, and the recent "Comme des Garçons Comme des Garçons" bridge (intermediately priced) line manufactured in Italy. Any capitalist firm must sell to remain in business, and though the aesthetically minded find it problematic, being understandable—i.e., marketable—is considered a virtue in the fashion industry.[9] The commercial lines may also whet consumer desire for the high fashion items. In aesthetic terms, then, any avant-garde gesture is tempered by the fact that: (1) it may be less contestatory because it must eventually be sold, and no collection can consist entirely of "image pieces"; and (2) aesthetic experimentation in one line may be supported by the economic success of more commercial lines.

In short, the aesthetic principles informing Japanese avant-garde work are always already raced, based on different clothing/body relationships that arise in part from different cultural conventions. These different cultural conventions and practices constitute an implicit critique of Eurocentrism. In the moment of their appearance in the West, the work of the Japanese designers presented a challenge to Western clothing conventions and the cultural competencies and interpretive practices that reigned in the Paris-Milan-New York-London fashion circuit. And these occurred on the planes of gender and race.

This said, Bourdieu points out the common strategies required of challengers to the established couturiers: they must promote themselves as subverting the old order without wholly problematizing the field of fashion itself. Indeed, they cannot do so without calling into question their own *raison d'être*—after all, their ultimate goal is not to deconstruct the field, but to succeed in it. Similarly, Baudrillard argues that the only significant intervention

possible in the commoditized regime of fashion is to throw into question its foundational logic, which again no designer can completely afford to do. Do we say, given these inevitably compromised and complicit interventions, that all contestatory potential is therefore vitiated?

FABRICATING GENDER

I have argued that one of the key interventions made in the clothing of "the Japanese avant-garde" designers lies in their figurations of gender. Inevitably, however, these interventions are animated by multiple, constitutive contradictions.

First, the high-fashion industry and by extension the work of Kawakubo, Yamamoto, and Miyake at one level participate enthusiastically in the relentless reproduction of the gender binary. The industry itself is predicated on the division of markets between men's and women's clothing (though of course there can be crossover in the practices of consumption), reflected in the showing of the collections (men's and women's collections are shown separately, according to entirely different schedules), in the organization of retailing (departments or boutiques specialize in either men's or women's clothes), and in fashion journalism (women's magazines and trade papers are often separate from the men's, e.g., *Women's Wear Daily* and *Daily News Record*, *Ryūkō Tsūshin* and *Ryūkō Tsūshin Homme*).[10]

Even within the binary organizational strictures of the fashion industry, the work of avant-garde designers in Japan offers a different way of crafting gender, based on the presumed relationship between clothing and bodies. Certainly, especially in the 1980s, Miyake, Yamamoto, and Kawakubo made strong statements about a different aesthetic of shape, where the garments do not follow the body's outlines, but define a space around the body. This inevitably refigures the clothing-body relationship and the construction of gender based on womanly curves or masculine linearity. For example, Kawakubo claims she begins with an abstract shape, and her concern is first for the clothing itself. In an interview with me, Kawakubo spoke of her point of departure as a "concept," not pattern or tailoring techniques. She further emphasized the spontaneity of her sources of inspiration: "It's not on the basis of the pattern. The sensation of having experienced the feel of the material. . . . It's purely the sensation of the moment. Right now, I like warm things or heavy things. . . . It's just that sensation." This conceptual and tactile aesthetic takes on marked contrast to the "body conscious" fashion of the West:

> I don't understand the term "body-conscious" very well. . . . I enter the process from interest in the shape of the clothing and from the feeling of volume you get from the clothing, which is probably a little different from the pleasure Western women take in showing the shapes of their bodies. It bothers Japanese women, doesn't it, . . . to reveal their bodies. I myself understand that feeling very well, so I take that into account, adding more material, or whatever. It feels like one would get bored with 'body-conscious' clothing (1987, 92).[11]

Here Kawakubo links different principles of clothing construction to differences in gender construction, sexuality, race, and nationality; Western "body-conscious" clothing depends upon Western figurations of gender and sexual display, while Kawakubo's clothing and aesthetic sensibility articulate a sensuality enjoyed by Japanese women. Kawakubo thus discursively constructs racialized gender differences as a principle shaping her work.

Yamamoto and Kawakubo have spoken specifically of a blurring of gender categories, where the wearer they envision is not bound by familiar gender conventions. Even the name of Kawakubo's company, Comme des Garçons ("like the boys")[12] gestures toward these gender contestations, enshrining a kind of boyish (*manisshu*, "mannish," as it is sometimes called in the Japanese press),[13] troublemaking image. Paradoxically, early on this was articulated in a highly Western mode: before it became known in the West, Comme des Garçons clothing was often photographed in ways that were very garçonne, illustrative of the company name: hat tilted to the side, a cigarette dangling from the mouths of the very French-looking models.[14]

It is precisely this ambiguous gender imagery that has puzzled many a Western observer. A male editor at a well-known fashion magazine told me of his bewilderment in the face of the "shapeless" clothing designed by the Japanese, which fails to reveal a woman's body. He said that he would never want *his* girlfriend to wear Japanese fashions; rather, his taste ran to the form-fitting styles of Azzedine Alaia, whose clothing has curves, even if there is no one in them, and Thierry Mugler, famous for his parodically sadomasochistic, femme-fatale designs.

Amanda Stinchecum, a commentator on Japanese aesthetics, has this to say about Kawakubo's work and its challenge to conventional gendered images:[15]

> As a woman, she is aware of the expectations of not only men, but women as well, that women look and act pretty, and that this prettiness conform to accepted norms. The lips should be red, the eyelids blue, the waist narrow, the hips curved, and so on. To be appealing, clothing, too, is supposed to meet certain expectations: symmetry, neatness, sexiness (suggesting if not revealing—Kawakubo's clothes do neither). Her designs express both a reaction against these expectations, and an interest in pure form. . . . Kawakubo's clothes are the most extreme because she, more than the others, refuses to meet the expectations we have of clothing and of women (76).

Kawakubo concurs, restating emphatically to me, "I've never once thought about a woman's 'beauty.'" ("*Yappari, onna no utsukushisa ni kangaeta koto ga nai.*") In some interviews, Kawakubo expresses the expectation that her ideal consumer would be someone like herself: an independent career woman (1987, 90).[16] A Comme des Garçons representative explained, "The goal for all women should be to make her own living and to support herself, to be self-sufficient. That is the philosophy of her clothes. They are working for modern women. Women who do not need to assure their happiness by looking sexy to men, by emphasizing their figures, but who attract them with their minds" (Coleridge 1988, 89). Indeed, to me Kawakubo insisted fiercely on that independence: "I don't have the slightest conception of depending on someone, of saying, 'Help me.'" She elaborates elsewhere that she does not design with a particular kind of person in mind; rather, the concern is with the feeling the clothing imparts: "To put it in extreme terms, I want to value the feeling of freedom that comes when someone wears the clothes, something psychological and spiritual rather than the actual feel and fit of the clothing" (1988).[17] The refrain of newness, of freedom emerges strongly in Kawakubo's discourse. At one level, such statements could be taken as typical strategies mounted by new designers, for Bourdieu perceptively argues that the necessity to assert marketable difference often takes the form of dynamism, modernity, and subverting convention.

Moreover, the reference to independent women as consumers is surely a marker of the accession of women to the professional and managerial classes in advanced capitalist societies. Kawakubo, Miyake, and Yamamoto clearly design with professional and creative women in mind. The late designer Tokio Kumagai links clothing to these dramatic social changes:

> Men and women are crossing over. There's no longer a notion that because you're a man, you have to do this, or because you're a woman you have to do this. . . . Even husbands wake up in the middle of the night to take care of the kids; even wives are working, earning money, so from the point of view of everyday life, differences are disappearing. The obstructive view that because you are a woman you have to wear a slim skirt no longer exists (142, translation mine).

Bourdieu might simply see these developments as expanding the reach of the professional and managerial classes, this time in a female guise. Certainly this

is at one level unassailable. Yet can we say that considerations of gender and race might nuance a narrative of class reproduction?

To address such questions will require a closer examination of how this difference is embodied and enacted in the designer's own creative vision. How, if at all, has it shifted over the years? I want here to make an argument that the initial, extremely radical shock has been gradually modified, though not necessarily in a linear progression. Comme des Garçons is establishment now, although it is still considered experimental and avant-garde; indeed, experimentation has been institutionalized as the distinctive feature and the trademark of the work of Kawakubo, Miyake, and Yamamoto. Their aesthetic moves have been incorporated into mainstream fashion. After the 1991 fall/winter collection, a Comme des Garçons employee commented to me that that even a well-known conservative fashion reporter seemed at last to have understood the clothing and gave the collection excellent reviews. "We're wondering whether someone slipped something into her drink," she said wryly.

A closer examination of four women's collections—early, middle, late periods, if you will—allow us to consider more specifically the nature of the gender contestations Comme des Garçons clothing might foster. Inevitably, such an analysis is partial and located; I include, for example, those collections I actually attended in Paris and Tokyo. Because I was interested primarily in decoding the aesthetic/capitalist logic by which the collections operate over time, the focus remains on the women's collections. A thorough analysis of gender production must also take into account the contemporaneous men's collections and, ultimately, processes of consumption and resignification.[18] I will argue that through changes observable in the women's collections, we can see gradual modifications in the radical silhouettes as well as critically important aesthetic continuities and the possibilities for continuing opposition and difference. Though partial, these stagings of wish-images will also be suggestive, allowing us more concretely to examine provisionally questions of gender contestation and recuperation, foregrounding the contradictions animating Kawakubo's work and by extension the work of all avant-gardes in the fashion industry.

PERFORMING GENDER

The focus of my analysis here is the presentation of Comme des Garçons high-fashion ready-to-wear in the Paris runway shows, which must be set within the

context of Comme des Garçons's history and more generally, within the landscape of the Paris collections, or *défilés*.

Comme des Garçons had been in existence for over ten years by the time they showed in Paris. The firm was established in 1973, and Kawakubo opened her first boutique in the fashionable Minami Aoyama section of Tokyo in 1976. She added a men's line in 1978, and in 1981 presented her first women's collection in Paris—not in one of the large tents at the Louvre, where established designers show, but in the Hotel Intercontinental. This early 1981 collection forms a reference point for Western analysts, even though Kawakubo had been designing clothing for a decade or more. This is one telling indicator of racial marking: for racialized, non-Western subjects, existence commences from the time of introduction to the West.

The *défilé* is a very particular event, and an equally particular yet revealing object of study. It is a climactic moment in a designer's work on a collection, an opening night for the world's fashion critics and buyers. It presents designers with an opportunity to showcase their clothing and to stage their aesthetic and corporate image, for shows ideally unify the meanings of individual clothing pieces in ways difficult to achieve were the garments simply hanging in a showroom. The collections allow designers the opportunity to thematize the significant difference(s) that will ideally bolster their reputation as creators and stimulate consumer desire. In fact, the ways things are shown on the runway are not necessarily exactly the ways they will be sold, and designers usually showcase a few image pieces that embody the spirit of the house or the collection; these are not expected to sell on a large scale. Fashion shows are thought to enact creative visions, and they have the feeling of festival, of reunion with colleagues, of performance.

What made the early Comme des Garçons shows so radical? Holly Brubach, style editor for *The New York Times*, once classified designers in terms of two approaches to fashion. One, exemplified in the work of the Japanese and most of the British avant-garde designers, makes an intellectual and aesthetic challenge, calling attention to the troubles in the world. The other views fashion as simply one of life's exquisite pleasures, where clothing is meant "for eating lunch at a French restaurant where the walls are painted some flattering shade of pink" (92). I myself had not appreciated the degree of this difference until I went to Paris in 1990 to see the collections and attended shows mounted by establishment high- fashion designers such as Hanae Mori, the only Japanese designer of haute couture. Like her peers at Chanel, Ungaro, and St. Laurent, Mori is known

for upper-class, classically feminine looks. Her clothing tends to be tailored, soigné, close to the body. The *défilé* performs this version of femininity. At the Mori ready-to-wear show, carefully coiffed and painted models sashayed out in high heels to the latest Top-40 hits—that year, Paula Abdul and Soul II Soul. Tossing their hair, they flirted with the audience and the video cameras at the end of the runway in an almost parodically feminine style. This conventional gender performance characterizes many fashion shows. Staging, then, is crucial. The models' makeup and gestures, the way they walk, the music, the lighting, all shape representations of gender. With this in mind, let us turn our attention to four Comme des Garçons women's collections shown over a period of eleven years.

Fall/Winter 1984–5

This collection extended themes from the first Paris showings in 1981, but still presented a dramatic alternative to the exaggerated padded shoulders and the sexy styles that characterized the fashion of the period.

Staging of this and other early Comme des Garçons shows was considered highly unconventional at the time. The antifashion tone to this Comme des Garçons *défilé* begins with the music: initially, there is none, a feature that attracted much commentary in the fashion press. Generally, shows begin when the lights go down and the music starts; when the lights rise, the models emerge. The 1984–5 show is brightly lit from the outset, and the models stride out to silence. When music does begin—at an unpredictable moment—it is relentless percussion, rather than the usual Top-40 or latest house hits.[19] The models walk briskly, energetically, wearing heavy, flat shoes and sandals. There is no flirting or simpering here: the women are unsmiling, sullen, sober, sometimes defiant, and they seem oblivious, even hostile, to the onlooker's gaze. The women wear little makeup, and hair is arranged to appear messy, standing out from the head. Occasionally, the models wear tricornered hats, like soldiers from the Revolutionary War, or crushed caps reminiscent of a medieval burgher, heightening the impression of gender transgression or cross-gender impersonation—except, perhaps, for the long hair that protrudes from underneath the hats. Indeed, the models look unkempt, rather than conventionally pretty or elegant. Unlike celebrations of conventional femininity in most fashion shows, the atmosphere here indicates that the world is a troubled place, and that fashion is not outside or above that trouble. Women are not meant to be pretty, but tough and defiant. These are women with a major attitude.

Comme des Garçons Collection
Autumn/Winter 1984–5, Courtesy Comme des Garçons

This collection was known for its use of indigo and *sumi*-ink dye processes; many garments allude to recognizably Japanese motifs, and they are representative of Comme des Garçons in their looseness, volume, and asymmetry. For example, some pieces resemble large, flowing caftans that are shirred, unevenly cut, or hang asymmetrically. The series featuring *aizome*, or indigo dye, recalls traditional Japanese patterns. A series dyed with *sumi* ink explores the gray scale, using traditional techniques to make garments that push the cutting edge of style. Despite the invocation of Japanese techniques and dyes, however, the overall impression is of displacement in space and time, for the clothing refers to garments from various cultures and various historical periods, unifying the ages: monkish garb, peasant clothing, medieval attire, academic robes, kimono, Japanese work clothing, street style and bag ladies. In making these allusions, the garments also escape easy encompassment into any single category.

Recognizable shapes and motifs occur in this collection and are reprised in later work. Long, loose, layered, asymmetrical pieces dominate this particular season. Kawakubo has often designed jumpers; a typical shape is the jumper with one bare shoulder, held up by a single asymmetrical piece or strap. In this collection, the shape is wide and loose; in later collections, the jumper is far more conventionally elegant and close to the body. Another Kawakubo trademark is layering, appearing here in long knit dresses made from loose, sometimes differently colored, layers. The effect this time is bulky, though the overall shape is relatively close to the body. Staging elements heighten the importance of this segment: lights go down and relentless, atonal music commences, echoing the percussion in the beginning segments.

By this time, Comme des Garçons's work is sufficiently well-known for the designer to play with her own image. In this case, the innovation occurs with the appearance of color. A series of pale wheat, beige and ivory knits, including slim asymmetrical sweaters, pants created from draped and folded fabric, and loose caftan-like dresses and coats, garners applause. A later series stages its difference: the lights dim, then rise, as models silently stride onto the runway in garments of warmly hued burnt orange, gold, salmon pink, rust, and burgundy. Again, the audience breaks into enthusiastic applause.

By 1984, Comme des Garçons and Yohji Yamamoto had attained international prominence. The aesthetic conventions of this collection—wrapping, tortured shirring, voluminous layers and folds, the absolute rejection of symmetry—had become familiar themes in their work and disseminated outward. Chunky, flat shoes and voluminous shapes were beginning to take hold in

other designers' collections. The loose, black clothing first shown on the runways by the Japanese could be seen on the streets, even worn by the fashion pack in the Cour Carrée of the Louvre, where the major collections are shown. Bernadine Morris of *The New York Times*, reporting on this 1984 show, wrote: "While the Japanese clothes provide an original approach to the art of dressing, they no longer inspire panic. The world still seems safe for Western dress" (C10). The invocations of panic and safety for Western dress demonstrate in what threatening and revolutionary terms Japanese designers were initially perceived. This collection should impart a sense of why "the Japanese" and Comme des Garçons caused such a sensation and inspired such strong international reactions.

Still, at this point the gender images and subversions of staging conventions were clearly occurring within a highly comprehensible frame. The long, loose, primarily black or navy garments were by now no longer surprising; rather, they presented an alternative to "sexy" styles that could, in 1984, be subsumed within the realm of the intelligible. Indeed, one could argue that by this time there had been some modification in the garments themselves; for example, Kawakubo showed some narrow shapes that fit the body closely, even though the body is wrapped in multiple layers or swathed in fabric. Shirring and smocking in these pieces simultaneously obscure and reveal "feminine curves." Moreover, though Comme des Garçons had used innovative staging devices and gender performances—sullen models in a silent parade, for example—the convention of the fashion show itself is clearly still fully in place. In short, the work of Comme des Garçons contested certain fashion conventions, presenting particular wish-images for gender that highlighted independence, rejection of stereotypical femininity, dynamism, movement, and loose, architectural shapes that had a unisex look, problematizing conventional notions of sexiness. Yet these contestations occurred fully within a frame of intelligibility that does not—cannot—fundamentally call into question the rules of the game.

During the mid-80s, Kawakubo concentrated on slimmer silhouettes, saying she had grown tired of wrapping and enormous volume, and she often chose to play with Western tailoring in forms like the suit. However, in this movement toward tailoring, there was always a recognizable Comme des Garçons difference: for example, combining cutting and tailoring with draping. The distinctive Comme des Garçons aesthetic preoccupations with wrapping, asymmetry, and folding never disappear, but occur along with drafting techniques associated with Western clothing traditions.

To illustrate more recent strategies, I analyze here the two collections that I attended: the first in Paris, the second in Tokyo. They carry through recognizable Comme des Garçons drafting themes and aesthetic motifs, yet differ markedly from the 1984–5 collection in staging, silhouette, and figurations of gender.

Fall/Winter 1990

I attended this show in Paris and subsequently paid a visit to the Paris showroom, where Comme des Garçons representative Jody Quon provided technical and aesthetic commentary.

Staging and music set the tone for this gender performance. The theme for the collection is "modern sweetness," a message carried out in the selection of urbane pop/jazz by female vocalists: Dionne Warwick, Eartha Kitt, Sarah Vaughan, Astrud Gilberto, among others.[20]

The music accompanies a gender performance that emphasizes the gamine; the women here are energetic, but retain a touch of sweetness and naiveté. The model who opens and closes the show displays a gangly, slightly embarrassed awkwardness. On the one hand, this injects a note of artlessness refreshing in the face of the supermodel sophistication typical of many fashion shows, but such charm remains recognizably, even stereotypically, feminine. The jaunty, fast-paced music provides accompaniment as the models walk out briskly (again, no sashaying here); most smile engagingly at the audience. Makeup appears conventionally feminine; hairstyles tend toward the short and gamine, while longer hair is tied up in irregular, spiky strands. Sometimes, the models wear whimsical caps shaped like a Hershey's kiss.

This collection features a number of themes connected to drafting and to fabrication. One was the L-shape; many garments display an L-shaped piece that dangles from the garment like an extra appendage. A second is the use of strings. In Paris and New York, this is the year of the anorak: a parka gathered at the waist, sometimes hooded, and closed at the hem by a string. Comme des Garçons not only plays with the anorak shape, but uses string closures for skirts and pants as well as jackets. A third theme is nonwoven fabric, including synthetics that resembled insulation batting, for example, or tubular nylon jersey woven into updated versions of fishermen's sweaters.

In this collection Kawakubo deconstructs Western clothing conventions. She cites Western garments—anorak, jacket, jumper, schoolgirl dress, middy blouse—so that each retains distinctive features that make it recognizable, yet

each is thrown off balance. For example, anorak shapes are cut with voluminous amounts of fabric; one displays a ballooning L-shaped appendage, like a huge extra sleeve or pouch, dangling from the back. Baseball jackets appear with the typical knit collar, but the sleeves are closed with string, and the jacket is cut so that the back is split and gathered, making an inverted "V" that extends above the waist. Sometimes the fabrication is unusual, another characteristic Comme des Garçons move: for example, long versions of baseball jackets made of nylon tricot over bonded fabric—a 2 × 1 polyester where two threads to one are knitted together. Generally, such material appears *inside* the garment, as interfacing. Kawakubo also appropriates schoolgirl uniforms and girlish dresses in the form of Peter Pan collars and middy blouses. These look demure, yet feature unusual drafting techniques that create an off-kilter, sometimes even tortured, impression. For example, a dress with a Peter Pan collar is asymmetrically skewed and has a large pouch-like protrusion of extra fabric in the front; the middy blouses display characteristic shirring, asymmetries, and unexpected appendages of fabric.

Among Kawakubo's strong points are her jackets, where innovations appear in both fabrication and drafting. A major series features jackets and trousers of soft, synthetic fabric reminiscent of insulation batting, in shades of celadon, gold, rust, and gray. A jacket I own from this collection has a shawl collar that can be worn conventionally, displaying an open slit at the base of the neck. Alternatively, the head fits through the opening, making the "collar" a decorative piece that floats horizontally across the collarbone. Some jackets and trousers feature L-shaped pieces that hang like extra arms or droopy pockets. Transparent blouses appear with banks of ruffles cascading down the model's *back* instead of the bodice. Another jacket series pairs brightly colored plaids with solids. These garments are formed from pieces of fabric sewn together, so that they can expand or contract depending on the shape of the wearer's body.

Sometimes, the drafting innovations are scarcely visible. The Noir, or evening, collection exemplifies the economy of expression for which the Japanese are famous. For example, armholes are cut as slits on the bias of the fabric, rather than cutting a round hole in the fabric or setting in a sleeve. A fairly straightforward pair of pull-on slacks and a tube skirt have an L-shaped waistband, visible only to the wearer. Occasionally, the drafting is more apparent. One series combines rust and blue stripes in a series of tops and garments that are both shorts and skirts. Stripes reveal the direction of the grain of the fabric, so the ensemble inevitably reveals the complexities of its construction in its vertical, slanted, and horizontal stripes. Quon's commen-

tary is eloquent here: "There is tension in all the garments, yet they are made for comfort."

The Noir, or evening series, as well as the show's finale, accent soft fabrics and feminine, gamine images. The long dresses in Noir use velvets of polyester/rayon/chambray; two colors are woven together and the fabric cut as close to the surface as possible in order to produce an iridescent effect and a soft, luxurious surface texture. The dresses are long, relatively simple shapes; some feature scarves, capelets, and trains, others have armholes in a halter or racerback style, or open under the arms, like a kimono. The finale is unprecedented for Comme des Garçons: a bride, who traditionally ends the shows of the established couturiers. She appears in a wedding gown with short sleeves, a fitted bodice, and a skirt made of multiple layers of fabric in the material reminiscent of insulation batting. Her veil is a white cap with a huge visor.

As the bride clearly shows, the clothing itself combines with staging to produce recognizable gender performances. Baseball jackets, parkas, pants, capris, and culottes produce a young, sweetly boyish effect when worn by the short-haired, gamine models. The schoolgirl look defines another important series: however deconstructed and unusual, this is a gender image of naiveté and innocence. Here, the hair, pulled up in topknots that end in spiky tendrils, adds an air of youth with an edge of unruliness. Suits and jackets are more sophisticated, yet the staging—the smiling, gamine models, the jaunty, urbane music—imparts the impression of "modern sweetness" otherwise absent from the garments themselves. Finally, one can only note the ironic, yet unmistakable gender recuperation in the finale, marked by the appearance of a bride—no matter how unusual her garment. Gamine, at once girlish and boyish, heterosexually coupled, the women in this Comme des Garçons show may be brisk, energetic, and cheery, wearing clothes that cite and deconstruct Western clothing conventions, but they are indisputably feminine.

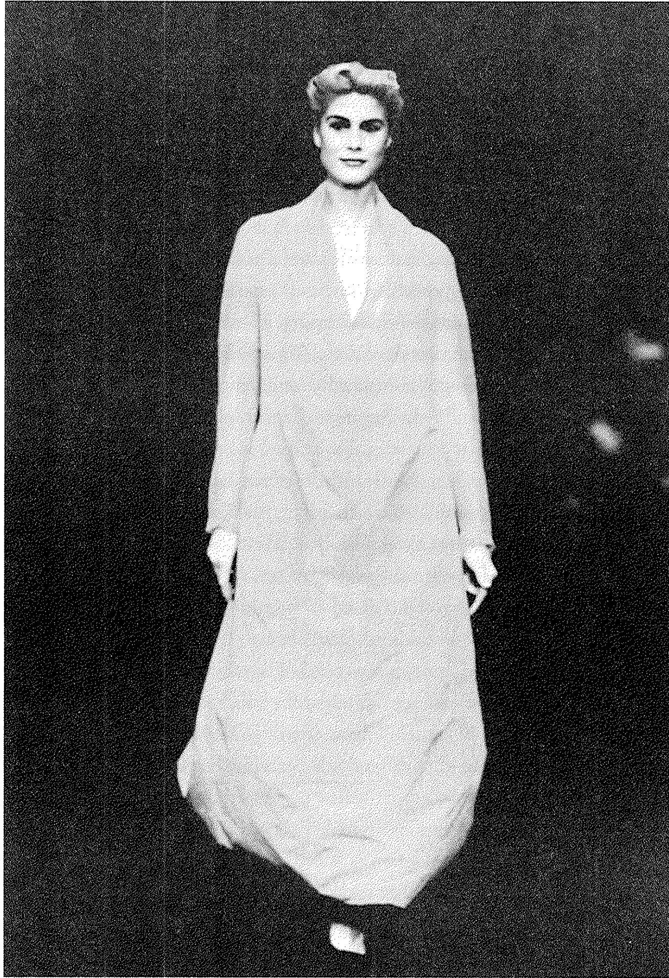
Spring/Summer 1991

This collection was seen as a real departure for the company, the first really "pretty" show in Comme des Garçons history. Kawakubo used "feminine" fabrics, including diaphanous chiffon, jerseys, taffetas, hand-crocheted lace, and a range of colors, from soft pastels and chiffon hand-dyed with *sumi* ink to brilliant reds. Wrapping and folding were carried to new heights with this collection. One theme was a rolled hem, in which hems were not cut and stitched; rather, the fabric was folded over on itself, imparting a softer look. Each chiffon piece was constructed of multiple layers, or chiffon was layered over lace or stretch fabrics. The drafting theme for this collection was the circle. Accordingly, the Noir section featured Grecian-inspired ball gowns with circular sleeves, and taffeta gowns with layers of circularly draped material, first stiffly protruding in front, like a pouch, then in the finale to the collection, dipping low in the back. Characteristic Comme des Garçons preoccupations with asymmetry—blouses and dresses with one sleeve, scarves dangling to one side, notches cut under the arms at odd angles—recur here.

The theme of this collection is "mature elegance," a marked staging contrast to the young, jaunty collection preceding it. Again, music is telling: the show begins with quiet, ambient sounds of birds chirping, a shimmery New Age score followed by soft solo piano reminiscent of Satie. The models walk out slowly, in stately fashion, mostly unsmiling; their (usually long) hair is pinned up loosely and powdered to give it a subdued, gray cast. Faces, too, are powdered to a matte finish. Retro elegance is a theme: the hairstyles evoke the turn-of-the-century, while the accessories—hats with veils, cloches, large flowers pinned to the head—recall the 1920s and 1940s. According to Kawakubo, the atmosphere of the collection is meant to symbolize beauty in a troubled world.

This collection approaches conventional Western clothing, but we also see striking continuity in the Comme des Garçons aesthetic/corporate image of avant-garde artistry. Kawakubo claims to have become tired of volume, wanting to work with slimmer (and more commercial, more accessible) shapes and different materials. Nonetheless, she retains the distinctive features that enable Comme des Garçons to set itself apart from the mainstream. For example, the rolled hems are at first glance barely discernible, but they give the garments an unfinished softness and constitute a patterning innovation. The use of folding emerges even in very simple-looking garments: a double-layered chiffon T-shirt I have from the collection is a single, continuous piece with two sleeves and a hole for the neck at either end. To wear the T-shirt, one must fold it up inside itself. Such distinctive features are both drafting innovations and effective commercial strategies that distinguish a Comme des Garçons product.

Themes from previous collections recur, yet are refigured in distinctive ways. For example, the show begins with a series of garments dyed with *sumi* ink, reminiscent of the *sumi*-dyed garments in the 1984/5 show. This time, however, the fabric is chiffon, and the gender presentation is ladylike, feminine, stately. Models appear in flowing chiffon jumpsuits and dresses, some



Comme des Garçons Collection
Spring/Summer 1991, Courtesy Comme des Garçons

with diaphanous vests that float as the women walk slowly down the runway. Layers occur in many guises: a long, diaphanous dress with an open bodice that reveals the breasts is worn over another transparent dress, so that the breasts are covered, yet visible through the fabric. Some chiffon dresses end in a triple hem. One characteristic print for this collection is a stained-glass pattern that appears on dresses and jumpsuits; many of these are worn underneath transparent chiffon. Another distinctive feature is a series of coats, jumpsuits, and dresses made of lace in a daisy pattern; these are often shown with a translucent chiffon overgarment.

The drafting theme, the circle, appears primarily in two forms. One is a circular sleeve made of a continuous piece of fabric joined in the back. It appears most strikingly in a series of long jersey dresses with a Grecian air. All are of pale gray or white, with slightly flared skirts and a train; sometimes the train resembles a scarf tied at the waist, draping to the floor from the hip, while another trails from the waist at the back of the garment. Smocking positions the skirt asymmetrically on the hips. A second circle motif is a pouch. As waltzes set the tone, the Noir or evening collection culminates in two brilliantly red ballgowns. One is a jumper style in which the stiff fabric creates a huge, circular pouch in front, revealing a diaphanous red blouse underneath. The finale is a short ballgown of bonded fabric rising to the knees in front, dipping almost to the floor in back. The circle motif here appears in a back that curves low, displaying bare skin almost to the waist.

What of the gender images presented here? Mature elegance is indeed an apt characterization. The stately manner of the models' walks, their hair and makeup, the contemplative music, the historical resonances to the turn of the twentieth century, the '20s and the '40s, the soft, recognizable femininity of the fabrics (lace, chiffon, taffeta, jersey), the gentle colors (gray, white, apricot, pale green), the soft prints (stained glass and mineral patterns) all seemed recognizably feminine, elegant, pretty. The brilliant reds and characteristic navy and black also appeared; these, too, were used in garments that often emphasized softness and revealed the body even as they often retained a characteristic Comme des Garçons sense of complex, tense construction. I found this collection moving when I viewed it in person, precisely because the combination of conventional femininity and the subversion of clothing conventions throws the viewer off balance. One's expectations are at first defined by the conventionality of the clothing silhouettes and the feminine gender performances, but these are undercut by the fabric and drafting innovations. Con-

ventionality, then, creates a ground for the figure of striking innovation. The tension between reinscription and subversion of convention seems to be a productive one in this instance. Still, as in the previous collection, there is no doubt that the performances of gender here remain firmly within recognizable gender binaries.

Spring/Summer 1995, "Transcending Gender"

These binaries are opened out and problematized four years later in the Comme des Garçons collection for Spring/Summer 1995, which explicitly thematizes gender transgression. Labelled "Transcending Gender," it features a combination of elements considered masculine with the conventionally feminine, pairing man-tailored suits and stiff fabrics with ruffles, skirts, and diaphanous materials. It is the first collection we treat here that explicitly goes beyond the feminine/masculine binary to problematize conventional definitions of gender and sexuality.

The leimotif of the collection is a skirt or dress worn over slacks, topped with a man-tailored jacket and finished with flat, mannish shoes. The collection begins with androgynous model Kristin McMenamy striding out in a gray suit jacket and white shirt, and a skirt worn over a pair of narrow slacks. Her white "men's" shoes pick up the dazzling white of the shirt and offer stark contrast to the gray slacks; their flatness emphasizes her businesslike walk. This first series offers variations on the serious business suit, worn by various supermodels with slicked down hair, spit curls, and bright red lips. Like latter-day Marlene Dietrichs, they walk, serious and unsmiling, down the runway.

The basic motif of dress or skirt over pants occurs in multiple variations. One series features diaphanous skirts that float over shiny, stiff pants, peeking out from a man-tailored jacket; another, all white, highlights asymmetrically, irregularly ruffled or scallopped dresses over white trousers, topped by morning coats or jackets. A later series is based on variations of white shirts, often with tortured ruffles or ties, that are dress length and worn over pants. The subsequent series is based on variations of short evening or cocktail dresses, all characteristically asymmetrical, worn over narrow slacks. Some are short ballgowns, white with black tulle underskirts, recalling in shape both the bridal dress of fall/winter 1990 and the red ballgowns of spring/summer 1991. Characteristic Comme des Garçons jumpers and dresses appear, but this time over straight-leg trousers. A cocoa-colored strapless gown is paired with crisp, white slacks.

The Noir collection garners applause, shouts of approval, and an explosion of flashes as photographers catch the images on camera. The garments are truly striking: slim, tailored redingotes or morning coats and stovepipe trousers in black and charcoal are combined with a frothy overskirt of white tulle; sometimes the skirt is long enough to make a train. It is as though one could be Cinderella and Prince Charming at once, in a tuxedo/morning coat *and* a full-length ballgown.

The collection highlights other characteristic Comme des Garçons themes. In a distinctive move returning to her work of the 1980s, Kawakubo sometimes plays with jackets, literally deconstructing them into their constituent elements. "Jackets" appear with no back, hanging from the neck like an apron, a vestigial sleeve dangling from the front; in a few instances the jacket is simply a pair of asymmetrically cut lapels that hang off the neck, worn over unusually high-waisted pants. It is as though Kawakubo is asking us to problematize what counts as a jacket. How many of its distinguishing features can be removed before it signifies something else?

A third visible theme is a return to volume in some of the pieces. Some pants and skirts are constructed to be so voluminously wide that they look several sizes too large for the wearer. Waistbands appear to be folded over and held up by a belt. Large-shouldered jackets appear, in an apparent parody of the broad-shouldered silhouettes of the 1980s. As always, the collection both possesses its distinctive features—the skirt over pants, the transcending gender theme—and carries through recognizable Comme des Garçons motifs: layering, asymmetry, volume, uneven shirring and hems, the backless jacket, deconstructed silhouettes, the voluminous ballgown silhouette for Noir.

Elements of staging carry through the ironic "Transcending Gender" theme. Most obvious is the use of models: a pair of male twins stride down the runways with the women, reinforcing the ambisexual look of the collection. At one juncture, they open a series featuring diaphanous tops, suit jackets with open backs, and long skirts; at another, tight jumpsuits; at yet another, jackets with peplums ruffled in the back. The men present no obvious break in continuity with the female models, save that they wear no lipstick. The musical aspect of staging plays ironic counterpoint to the clothing, serenading the audience with jazz versions of 1960s retro tunes: "Wives and Lovers," where we see jackets and vests vaguely reminiscent of aprons appearing first on the male models; "Come Together," accompanying a series of Nehru jackets; "The Look of Love," featuring cocktail dresses over pants, in an avant-garde Palm

Comme des Garçons Collection
Spring/Summer 1995, Courtesy Comme des Garçons

Comme des Garçons Collection
Spring/Summer 1995, Courtesy Comme des Garçons

Beach/Jackie O look. Other instrumentals have a synthesized, astral quality, culminating in the finale: a synthesized version of "Telstar" accompanying the final parade of all the models on stage. Perhaps the synthesized quality of the music could be said to highlight modernity and constructedness. Perhaps it alerts us to the notion of gender as itself synthetic or man-made.

What, then, of gender subversion? Certainly, the collection strikingly recombines conventionally gendered elements in new, unexpected syntheses that subvert gender binaries. The masculine silhouette is modified by touches of conventional femininity when the jackets appear with both skirt and pants; the gender binary is problematized from the opposite side when masculine trousers are added to feminine cocktail dresses. The use of male models highlights the potential appropriateness of the clothing for "both" sexes, while the combination of conventionally gendered elements highlight the constructedness of what is masculine and what is feminine. Moreover, the collection overtly introduces the issue of sexuality: the women in suits look relatively butch, if softened by lipstick and a skirt, while the men in skin-tight jumpsuits, diaphanous blouses, and jackets with ruffles on the back introduce a femme softness. Notably, gender transgressions were not spectacularized in ways that made them seem unnatural. Rather, the seriousness of the models' expressions, the businesslike walk, the seamless procession of both female and male models, made gender transgression seem unremarkable.

Though the explicit theme in this collection was "transcending gender," I have argued that even the most "feminine" Comme des Garçons collections contain elements of subversion in their usual avoidance of Western curves: nipped waist, décolleté, short, tight skirts. Nonetheless, the innovative and thought-provoking recombinations of gendered elements visible here do not occur in every collection. Indeed, "Transcending Gender" was followed in 1995 by "Sweeter than Sweet," which featured feminine motifs such as the use of pink—again, even though the silhouettes retain characteristic Comme des Garçons oddities and asymmetries. Gender reinscription thus followed gender "transcendence."

To understand this shift, we must understand the workings of capitalist logics in these collections and in any designer's work. Like others, Kawakubo operates according to this logic. Whatever the previous collection, the present collection must somehow both contrast dramatically with it and yet retain the distinctive features that mark it as the work of a particular designer. I would argue that the function of the fashion show is to stage these crucial differences

and similarities between collections. The differences create a sense of novelty in order to stimulate consumer desire: we must have the latest. Hence, the themes, the music, sometimes the fabrication, of specific collections become a study in distinctive contrasts. For example, for a three-year period, including the two years I describe in this section, the themes were: (1) Fall/Winter 1990—"modern sweetness," featuring jaunty, girlish models, "manmade" fabrics like tubular nylon, and a lighthearted feeling in music and presentation; (2) Spring/Summer 1991—"mature elegance," a serious, ethereal, womanly collection, with transparent fabrics and a nostalgic air; (3) Fall/Winter 1992—"chic rebel," tough gender images that featured black lipstick, strong shapes, vinyl skirts, fishnet leggings, and loud, 1960s music, notably, Led Zeppelin. The distinctive difference necessarily reproduces the logic of fashion, the marketing tactic that keeps consumers buying.

Yet because Kawakubo's clothing and that of all the avant-garde designers is always off-kilter, never just the latest trend, it is also somewhat removed from the vicissitudes on the level of consumption that affect more conventional clothing. It will always be unconventional. In this way, the work of the avant-garde goes "beyond fashion," the industry's highest compliment; never completely in-fashion in the trendy sense, it is also rarely out-of-fashion. While inevitably reproducing a capitalist logic premised on the recombination of old elements in new syntheses to whet consumer appetites, the work of Kawakubo and others can in fact be worn for years. After all, the distinctive differences between collections cannot overshadow the necessity for the designer to possess certain trademark features that make it recognizably hers; Comme des Garçons garments are generally successful in imparting these trademark continuities. Though the construction of distinctive differences surely ignites consuming passions afresh with each collection, I am more skeptical about the differences between any two collections if one were to examine the garments free of their framing in the shows. For example, the "modern sweetness" collection featured numerous pieces that were far from young and sweet. Many are suitable for a professional wardrobe and in fact remain "in-style" for many years. A constitutive contradiction, then: Comme des Garçons, like other designers, depends on the novelty and contrast from collection to collection to create and feed consumer desire, yet it must also perform its distinctive, recognizable Comme des Garçons features from collection to collection. These continuities become their trademark. Finally, its clothing can also serve the wearer for many years, in some ways subverting the logic of incessant and

rapid change that fuels the capitalist engine. Gender and aesthetic contestation, then, can be arresting, and it is always already contradictory, both reinscribing and contesting convention. These interventions in turn are inevitably compromised by their participation in the logic of commodity fetishism and the production of consumer-subjects.

COMPLICITOUS CRITIQUE

Finally, then, what can it mean to be a "chic rebel"? What can we say about the contestatory potential of Kawakubo and Comme des Garçons in providing an aesthetic/political/intellectual challenge in the field of fashion? And what sort of intervention could this be, given the elitism of high fashion and its inextricability from the forces of capitalist reproduction?

Bourdieu gives us the tools to understand the operations of this particular field. His analysis would suggest that the Japanese, like other challengers, would have to present their work as innovative, whether in fabrication, color, experimentation, modernity, youth, or street style. This strategy is itself dictated by the structure of the field and the designers they challenge: the "tradition" of elegance associated with the aristocracy and haute bourgeoisie. Here, Bourdieu captures the overall contours of the Comme des Garçons corporate image, marketing strategy, and critical reputation in the field. In this case, the emphasis on modernity, experimentation, and new directions takes on a distinctive cast: it is linked with race and nation, as I argued in Chapter Two, as the Japanese are troped in terms of a culturally specific aesthetic and an emphasis on experimentation. Extending Bourdieu's analysis of the modernist revolution of the 1960s in the work of designer Courrèges, in which he linked the appearance of such designers to changes in class structure, one could argue that the emergence of "the Japanese" simply indicates the addition of another first-world superpower to the roster of global capitalist consumers and corporate exploiters in the garment industry. Such an interpretation is indisputable at one level, as interimperial and capitalist rivalries are played out in the fashion arena. Furthermore, as Bourdieu indicated, challenges to convention within a field of fashion are inherently limited. Even if new colors or fabrics or shapes or drafting techniques might appear, the game of fashion itself can never be fully called into question, for ultimately the new or subversive strategies are attempts for designers to distinguish themselves from others in order to succeed at that game.

Indeed, this necessity to ever recreate the new often leads designers, whether established or avant-garde, to plunder the world for ideas. The exotic, whether in terms of the Orient (Martin and Koda), Africa, Latin America, or folkloric costume from Europe, recurs in the fashion world. So do enshrinements of a neocolonial WASP/European dominance, embodied most strikingly in the clothing and advertisements of Ralph Lauren and the success of companies such as Banana Republic. The politics of such moves are, of course, never considered, as relations of domination are rendered into high style. A recent Comme des Garçons controversy serves as a case in point. Their 1995 men's show featured models with shaved heads and striped, pajama-like clothing sometimes printed with identification numbers. The resonances with the Nazi death camps were unmistakable, and in the wake of protest from Jewish groups, Comme des Garçons removed those garments from their collection ("A Bad Fashion Statement," 8). Kawakubo herself claimed that the designs were supposed to resemble pajamas and averred that she had no intention of invoking the camps. Similar controversies had erupted the previous year when Chanel featured designs based on the Koran, and with Jean-Louis Scherrer's collection that seemed to recall Nazi uniforms ("Designer Won't Sell Pajamas," 3). Decontextualized from structures of power, oppressive historical events, sacred objects, and subjugated peoples can become simply appropriable aesthetic motifs.

Finally, contestatory gestures—refiguring clothing conventions, offering different possibilities for constructing gender—are inevitably mitigated through the fact that fashion is above all a capitalist enterprise based on making a profit, that it is premised on the production of desire in consumers, and that high fashion in particular, through its exorbitant cost, is centrally implicated in the production of social distinction. The breathtaking price tag is part of the object's preciosity, an index of social status, and it arouses and maintains desire. Issey Miyake put it well when he stated that the price is part of the design. Kawakubo herself says that she is very practical; she wanted to be able to make something and sell it. She is equally dedicated to the notion that her work is different and challenging, insofar as the entire line cannot be so different that it will not sell.

The consideration of these issues cannot be seen solely in terms of the work of the design firm itself, and here, the fashion show offers one very partial and particular point of entry into issues of contestation. Ideally, further inquiry should be extended to include the processes of production and consumption. Who is it, for example, who is sewing those clothes, and under what condi-

tions? At best, the answer is likely to be problematic, as it would be throughout the garment industry. On the other hand, it is on the plane of reception where possibilities for contestation often lie, and much of the celebratory literature on fashion and subculture from British cultural studies, feminists and people of color, stress the ways the creative recombining of clothing and gesture provide potential arenas for opposition—that is never beyond contradiction and at least partial recuperation.

Production processes were off limits to me at Comme des Garçons, as was most of the business end of the enterprise, but preliminary interviews with consumers of avant-garde fashion in both the U.S. and in Japan suggest that in both settings Comme des Garçons signifies the different. Playwright David Henry Hwang, who sometimes wears Comme des Garçons, comments that there is always something off-kilter about Comme des Garçons clothing that gives it a distinctive quality. This distinctiveness contributes to the construction of an inner circle of fashion cognoscenti who are able to recognize the aesthetic, class-bound meanings of Comme des Garçons and other avant-garde designers. In Japan and in the United States, consumers tend to be those who want something artsy and different about their clothing, and include many in the art, design, advertising and media fields (*gyōkai*, "the industry," as it is known in Japan). The prime difference between Japan and the U.S. is that the average Japanese consumer of Comme des Garçons and other Japanese designers is much younger. This is due in part to the strong yen and the correspondingly greater cost of the garments in the United States or Europe. It can also be attributed to the vast numbers of younger Japanese working people who live at home and have large disposable incomes. For them, Comme des Garçons is something one might wear in college or before getting married—when one might turn to Hanae Mori, for example. The twentysomething graphic designer daughter of Japanese friends owns pieces from Yohji Yamamoto's Y's and from Comme des Garçons; the latter she likes because "it's a little different" (*chotto chigau deshō*). In the marketplace of commodity capitalism, Comme des Garçons signifies the unusual, even as it confers name brand social status and enforces exclusion and elitism, marking the wearer as unconventional, perhaps artistic, iconoclastic. When specifying the class fractions to which Comme des Garçons most appeals, one could say that Rei Kawakubo is an artist's and designer's designer.

As compelling as these interpretations might be, one wonders whether the narratives of global capitalist systems and class reproduction exhaust the political and interpretive possibilities presented by the work of Comme des Garçons

and others. What difference, I asked at the outset, do gender and race make in the reproductive model of class? Two recent interactions at an academic party alerted me to one axis along which the work of Japanese designers continues to assume importance. Upon learning about my book, a woman asked how the Japanese designers were affected by Paris, as though Parisian fashion were the sole standard and model which, surely, the Japanese must imitate. Later that evening, a colleague asked me about the production of Comme des Garçons garments. I replied that both Comme des Garçons and Yohji Yamamoto produce their "simple" garments—the less expensive and structurally less complicated bridge lines such as Comme des Garçons Shirt—in France and Italy. He evinced considerable surprise, averring that it was France and Italy that were known for the quality of their production. The existence of high-quality high-fashion production in Japan seemed astonishing, given Asia's association with cheap labor. In both cases, assumptions of racialized cultural superiority in the terrain of fashion buttress a European hegemony. Under such circumstances, the work of non-white, non-Western designers can reveal and challenge Eurocentrisms in the elitist domain of high fashion.

Along the same lines, gender and race come to bear in Western discourses about designer Rei Kawakubo herself. As a Japanese woman, she is unusual in the field of international fashion design for her strong and unconventional aesthetic vision and for the figurations of gender her clothing allows. Equally notable, she is president of her company. Other Asian women have been internationally successful, but through more conventionally feminine and elegant clothing and through more conventional personas. Kawakubo by contrast is known for her asceticism and seriousness. The stereotypes to which all Asian women are subject in the West also plague Kawakubo. In the Western press, one invariably finds allusions to her height ("petite") and her demeanor ("quiet," "timid"), even as her designs are bold and iconoclastic. Alternatively, dragon-lady stereotypes resurface (e.g., "iron lady"), particularly in relation to Kawakubo's control of the company and her leadership in projects such as the image book/magazine *Six*, and the design of her boutiques and furniture lines. Kawakubo is inevitably subject to stereotyping as an Asian woman, but her production and creation of challenging garments and her simultaneous management of the business, disrupt any assumption of fragility or submissiveness.

More important, Japanese avant-garde clothing offers to consumers different opportunities to construct gendered, raced bodies that do not seem like inferior imitations of normative Western bodies.[21] In a gesture of parity with the

West, Kawakubo uses few Asian models in her shows. This is an eloquent statement that she, like other Asian designers, must work on the terrain of *yōfuku*, Western clothing, at one level enshrining Western ideals. An aesthetic imperialism is replayed there. However, Kawakubo does not attempt to adopt Western clothing conventions wholesale or to make Japanese bodies look like Western bodies; indeed, her clothing—especially in the earlier collections—can adapt to the shape of the individual wearer. It offers to consumers possibilities for gender figuration that are largely absent from the work of designers from the Parisian cut-and-tailor mode. In short, the work of Comme des Garçons and other Japanese designers implicitly contests Eurocentric racial hegemony in the garment industry.

Comme des Garçons and the others among the Japanese avant-garde further provided a challenge to established reading and interpretive practices in the world of fashion, including fundamental issues like what counts as clothing and the very definition of fashion itself. Bourdieu suggests that all designers must at some level invoke art in order to compensate for fashion's more lowly status. Yet the subversion offered here may be more thoroughgoing than Bourdieu would lead us to believe, for the work of Comme des Garçons and others suggests productive possibilities for critique in the blurring of boundaries between fashion and art, fashion and sculpture, fashion and architecture. These border-crossings lead to questions about commodification in the artistic domain, where as in the fashion world, vanguardism always occurs within a capitalist regime that recuperates novelty and contestation as marketable difference. Such moves from a non-Western locale also allow fashion to make claims for intellectual, political, and aesthetic seriousness, including the rethinking of the field itself: for example, reconsidering the cultural and historical specificity of the art/craft boundary as in Japan, where conventions allow the designation of craftspeople as "living national treasures," a phenomenon not found in the U.S. Questioning the fashion/art boundary from the other direction calls to mind a whole host of artists, especially women artists, who use conventionally feminine materials and themes such as clothing in their artistic productions. I think here of the work of Judith Shea, whose metal sculptures are eerie fragments of clothed bodies—a tank suit, part of a pair of jeans—that disturbingly evoke the fragmentariness of the subject, or the powerful feminist work of Japanese artist Shōko Maemoto, who uses men's and women's clothing in installations bristling with savage irony. These women tell us through their work that mundane feminine preoccupations like clothing can also be the stuff of serious art and of serious political and intellectual critique.

Finally, what of gender contestation? I would argue that certainly the early collections of the 1980s and the "Transcending Gender" collection enacted possibilities for performances of gender, sexuality, and, less obviously, race that had not existed on the high-fashion runways. The early collections departed dramatically from the fitted, womanly silhouettes prevalent in high fashion to that point. The intervening years have seen occasional gender subversions, such as Jean-Paul Gaultier's eroticizing of male bodies with backless pants, transparent tops, and skirt/pants; Yamamoto has also put men in skirts. The "Transcending Gender" collection is notable in women's wear for its ironic, humorous, even parodic juxtaposition of conventionally gendered elements, and it provoked reflection on gender conventions. The use of male models for the women's collection clearly departs from standard practice, even from Comme des Garçons's own usual practice, drawing attention to the arbitrariness of the gender binary and to definitions of normative sexuality. Other houses have sometimes used male models in their women's collections, but in such cases, it is likely to be someone in flamboyant drag—RuPaul, for example. The marked difference in the Comme des Garçons show was the smooth continuity of male models with the female, the lack of disruption to the serious, yet gently ironic, tone. "Real men" and "real women" could wear these clothes on an everyday basis, the show seemed to say. Though the runway show is indeed a particular, delimited phenomenon, certainly this Comme des Garçons collection presented a vision of gender and sexuality that remains unusual, both on the runway and on the street. "Transcending Gender" dramatized this wish-image, a different form of cultural possibility despite, or rather enabled by, its enmeshment in capitalist structures of class reproduction.

Ultimately, the point is to try and understand the multiple and contradictory forces at work when we consider issues of contestation and reinscription. Fashion as a field is inevitably problematic, and as the logic of commodity capitalism, it permeates our lives: there is no outside fashion. It is also one of the key arenas for the formation of subjectivities, and as such, reproductive models of class—though crucial—cannot exhaust the complexities of subject formation. The emphasis on closure and totalization along the class axis forecloses the possibility of ruptures and interventions when other forces are considered. Indeed, excluding those other forces is a fundamentally Eurocentric move that elides its own positioning in a gendered, neocolonial world system. For example, in the context of the nineteenth century, Ann Stoler argues

that the formation of European bourgeois subjectivity and sexuality in fact occurred through a gendered, racialized imperialist project that implicitly contrasted the European bourgeois subject with its colonized Others. Stoler's point is telling: the formation of European class relations and classed subjectivities *cannot be thought* without considering its simultaneous enmeshment in the forces of race, gender, and imperialism.

What difference do gender, race, and neocolonialism make in the work of Comme des Garçons? I have argued that their shows and the reception of their work indicates that important kinds of gender subversions and rethinking of clothing conventions occurred, especially in the early collections. The neocolonial positionings and colonizations of consciousness represented by European and U.S. popular culture and standards of beauty were both reinscribed and contested in this work. These interventions were in turn inseparable from geopolitical and racial positionings and were understood at least partially in racial and national terms. Indeed, one could argue that the challenge Japanese fashion offered to figurations of gender was precisely a racial challenge. Over the years, the disruption Comme des Garçons and other avant-garde designers represented has become less surprising, as some of the moves have been incorporated into mainstream fashion. Still, one cannot say the clothing has lost its edge, as the "Transcending Gender" show indicated. Gender, race, sexuality, as well as class, shape the performances of identity enacted on the runway and the wish-images and visions of cultural possibility they represent.

In the end, the work of Comme des Garçons points us toward a proliferation of contradictions and questions, and perhaps a reconsideration of conventional categories such as resistance or accommodation, opposition or sell-out. Its contestatory gestures and radical moves should spur a rethinking of hierarchized binaries that would relegate to fashion and other conventionally feminine preoccupations a secondary place. Such conventional critiques of fashion and of "mass culture as woman" (Huyssen), exemplified in the work of analysts like Jameson and neo-Frankfurt School analyst Wolfgang Haug, are premised on an anxiety of contamination that threatens the purity of the intellectual's location above the masses. But the recuperations and contradictions in the avant-garde enterprise also suggest the inadequacy of recent celebratory moves enacted in scholarship by feminists (Young, Silverman) and people of color (Mercer), or, more insidiously, Lipovetsky's enshrinement of heroic, individualistic resistance through fashion, based on an always already masculine, liberal, individualist subject. The complex, contradictory nature of contestation and of any attempt at intervention must

be held in mind. Avant-gardes may make limited interventions that are at one level contestatory, but heroic claims for revolution, novelty, and vanguardism must always be suspect—and, therefore, interrogated. Inevitably, novelty and revolution become recuperated as commodifiable difference. Nonetheless, as I argued in the context of a Japanese factory (1990), though one cannot cleave to easy definitions of accommodation, sell-out, and resistance, one cannot abandon attempts at intervention, no matter how problematic the site.

Ultimately, fashion seems a particularly compromised arena for hopes of radical contestation. But, as in academia—another elitist domain whose existence is partially premised on the reproduction of class—limited contestation within a field is possible, as the Comme des Garçons collections demonstrate. After all, meaning is never fully closed, and in those moments of instability, ambiguity, and contradiction may lie the potential for interventions that might destabilize a field, ultimately exposing and throwing into question its constitutive logic. Indeed, to leave conventions unchallenged is, I think, the more problematic stance. To do so would abdicate whole realms of pleasure, desire, self-creation, and potential opposition and critique. As Baudrillard argued, this would fail to disrupt the totalizing logic of fashion and commodity capitalism, the regime of truth within which we, inevitably, fabricate our lives. The work of the Japanese avant-garde designers, while seeming initially ex-orbitant to our political and intellectual concerns, may be suggestive, perhaps even instructive. Even as the designers mount a limited challenge on the terrains of clothing conventions, aesthetics, Orientalist figurations of race, and the representation of gender, they do so in a domain thoroughly constituted by the logic of the commodity, class elitisms, neocolonial dominance, and the global assembly line. None of us can escape fashion; no one among us lives beyond it. In considering questions of cultural politics, the dangers are many: the claims of an avant-garde that would deny its enmeshment in capitalist reproduction, celebrations of the popular that ignore the forces of massification, celebrations of the aesthetic that ignore politics, pessimistic views of the masses that view any attempt at contestation as always already vitiated. Our inquiry into high fashion suggests that narrowing our political scope to the aesthetic domain conventionally defined—remaining a chic rebel without engaging other organized efforts at mobilizing political subjectivities and effecting social transformation—is, to understate the case, a limited strategy. Yet to abdicate any site—particularly one, like fashion, that is so thoroughly emblematic of the workings of contemporary capitalism—is even more problematic. Our task as politically committed cultural workers is to seek

out the conditions of possibility for efforts at transformation in multiple sites and to pursue those efforts, not as a heroic vanguard of resistance from some transcendent space outside discourse, politics, and the logic of late capitalism, but as subversion that is always and only subversion from within.

ENDNOTES

1. Thanks to Elizabeth Long for helping to clarify these issues.
2. Primarily *Elle* and *Le Jardin des Modes*.
3. The translations from Baudrillard in this section are mine.
4. For a cogent analysis of Baudrillard's work, see Douglas Kellner, *Jean Baudrillard: From Marxism to Postmodernism and Beyond*.
5. Cf. Chapter 2, "Orientalizing." Haute couture can be designed only by a select number of houses, whose ranks are controlled by the Chambre Syndicale de la Couture. Hanae Mori is the only Japanese among those ranks. Miyake and Kawakubo would likely disdain the idea of haute couture as elitist, passé or perhaps too limiting, while Yamamoto has offered what he has called "nouvelle couture"—fanciful designs in his ready-to-wear collection that evoke the made-to-order fantasies of haute couture. The son of a dressmaker, he speaks nostalgically of clothing made to order for a single customer.
6. Bourdieu goes on to describe the ways avant-garde artists sell not just their artistic work, but their lifestyles and their artistic comportment, something that could well be said of the avant-garde designers as well.
7. For three classic works on avant-garde contestation in the arts, see Renato Poggioli, *The Theory of the Avant-Garde*, Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, and Rosalind Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*. For a general perspective on avant-garde aesthetics, see Paul Mann, *The Theory Death of the Avant-Garde*. The latter two works, in particular, point out with skepticism the avant-garde's inevitable and problematic claims for novelty and originality.
8. Yamamoto's mother was a dressmaker, and he himself is a graduate of Bunka Fukusō, the renowned fashion school which produced many of Japan's top designers, including Kenzo and Mitsuhiro Matsuda. Of the three avant-garde designers, Yamamoto is known as the most commercial and the most apt to use tailored silhouettes.
9. For example, in an interview Jeff Weinstein of *The Village Voice* deplored Comme des Garçons's decision to put out the "Shirt" line, speaking disparagingly of a "market-driven aesthetic," which he contrasted to the purer aesthetics of the Comme des Garçons women's line and Homme Plus.
10. The imperative to reproduce these dualisms was strikingly apparent in a 1989 exhibition at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, commemorating the fortieth anniversary of Snoopy, the famous beagle from the Charles Schulz comic strips. A sister/consort, Belle, was invented for Snoopy, and the museum curators asked designers to create costumes

for Snoopy and Belle, which most of the designers did. Seeing hundreds of men's and women's fashions worn by two anthropomorphized stuffed animals demonstrated the pervasive stubbornness of the gender binary, even as the exhibit also produced a bemused irony in some, where the very absurdity of men's and women's clothing in this context could act to destabilize the categories.

11. Bodei konshasu tte yoku wakarimasen ne. Onna no hito no sen wa kirei da kara dasanakya mottainai to iu kanjikata mo konshasu deshō. Watashi nanka, dochira ka to ieba, fuku no shiruetto ni tsuite no kyōmi, fuku jitai no voryumu kan kara hairu no de, sukoshi chigau n desu, tabun, seiyō no josei wa sen o dasu no ga kairaku mitai na. . . Nihon no josei wa sen ga deteru to totemo ki ni suru deshō. Sō iu kanji ga yoku jibun de mo wakaru no de, soko o keisan shite bunryō o iretari shimasu. De mo bodei konshasu ni tsuite wa, chotto aki ga kiteru kanji desu ne.
12. The use of French, English, or Italian names is common, indeed the norm, among Japanese fashion companies, unless the name of the individual creator is used. Some examples include Monsieur Nicole, Rose is Rose, Oxford Quincy, Novespazio. Even when the creator's name serves as the name of the company, it is usually given in Western order, family name last, given name first, rather than the usual Japanese order, which reverses the terms. Consequently, we have Yohji Yamamoto, Issey Miyake, Hanae Mori, Atsuro Tayama for A.T., and so on. This I would read as a sediment of aesthetic colonization and the fact that Japanese designers are playing the fashion game on someone else's field, which is still defined in Paris, Milan, London, and New York. All the Japanese designers of international stature are eager to be accepted as "universal," which means, de facto, being accepted in Europe and the United States.
13. See, for example, an article in *An-an*, the quintessential young woman's fashion magazine. In a section called "Mannish," the caption extols the virtues of a monotone look in brown, that gives a "mannish look with a boyish image" (*An-An* 593. September 18, 1987, 77).
14. This early work is sometimes compared to that of Sonia Rykiel—whose casually elegant, very French designs now seem extremely conventional in comparison to Kawakubo's (Sudjic 79).
15. Further gender contestation occurred in the early collections, when makeup was eschewed or used to disrupt convention. Neither Kawakubo nor most of her staff wear any makeup, and in her early shows the models tended to wear makeup used in unconventional ways—pink on the corners of the eyes, color underneath the eyes. The greatest aesthetic disruptions in this regard took place in the early Paris collections, when makeup artists placed "blotches of color on their faces suggesting that the designer had battered women or the victims of Hiroshima in mind. Nothing of the sort" (Morris 1982, C10). It was, in fact, a move to subvert aesthetic conventions. Kawakubo said, "If you are to put color on the face, it need not be on the lips. It can be anywhere" (ibid.).
16. On the consumption side, there appears to be some truth to this image, at least according to a Brussels boutique owner who carries both Comme des Garçons and Yohji Yamamoto clothing. She says in response to a question about the kind of woman who

buys this clothing, "My clientele is composed for the most part of women who want to please themselves above all. These women are therefore physically and financially independent. In general they have strong personalities, feel good about themselves, and want to safeguard that spirit of independence." (Ma clientèle est composée en grande partie de femmes qui veulent se plaire avant tout à elle-mêmes. Ces femmes sont donc physiquement et financièrement indépendantes. Elles ont en général une forte personnalité, se sentent bien dans leur peau et veulent sauvegarder cet état d'esprit.) ("Les japonais: incompris ou admirés?": 97).

17. Kyokutan ni ieba, kigokorochi yori mo fuku o kita toki ni sono hito ga ukeru seishinteki na mono, fuku o kiru koto de kimochi ga furī ni natta to iu yō na koto o daiji ni shitai.
18. One crucial difference marks the staging of the Comme des Garçons men's collections. Unlike the women's, which uses professional models, the men's shows feature "real men" who are not models. For example, a joint Comme des Garçons/Yohji Yamamoto show in Tokyo in 1990 featured many musicians, including jazz luminaries Don Cherry and Charles Lloyd, Lounge Lizard John Lurie, Edgar Winter, Ottmar Liebert, among others, as well as film stars such as Dennis Hopper. The rationale for this practice has to do with the perceived necessity to acquaint men with the appeal of fashion; seeing "real men" who have other lives and who are not models should, according to this logic, make the clothing seem more approachable to other "real men." In practice, this allows a degree of role subversion absent from the women's collections; the men sometimes joke among themselves, ham it up, or otherwise show that they are indeed not professional mannequins.
19. For the 1991 spring/summer collections, for example, the big hit on the runways in Paris was house group Dee-Lite's "Power of Love"; in Tokyo it was Dee-Lite's "Groove is in the Heart," followed closely by Snap's "Oops Up" and Caron Wheeler's "Living in the Light."
20. For example, the first tune was a breathy rendition of "*L-O-V-E*" followed by Dionne Warwick's "You'll Never Get to Heaven."
21. In *A Notebook on Cities and Clothes*, Yamamoto shifts to European bodies as the model, while making adjustments for the domestic Japanese market.