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**EXPLORATION OF THE GENDER MYTH VIA
FASHION MEDIA**

ANDROGYNY AND DANDYISM IN CONTEMPORARY FASHION MAGAZINES

Magister Thesis presented by
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Title: EXPLORATION OF THE GENDER MYTH VIA FASHION MEDIA:

Androgyny and Dandyism in Contemporary Fashion Magazines

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Abstract:

This paper attempts to analyze different representations of ‘androgyny’ as fashion tendency in contemporary fashion magazines (*Vogue*, *i-D* and *LOVE Magazine*) for the period of 2010 and 2011. In order to show the development of ‘androgyny’ as fashion tendency, this study first explores how androgyny metamorphosed from a ‘hidden’ signifier of unconventional sexuality to ‘visible’ postmodern teaser for sexual identities.

Currently, we live in the ‘*Age of Androgyny*’ where the modern androgynous dandy is being seen as an aphrodisiac for the fashion industry. This study also tries to provide explanation of how ‘androgyny’ and ‘dandyism’ evolved from concepts to parallel trends in fashion due to their frequent and simultaneous reappearance in fashion media. In order to create nuanced portrayal in the understanding of androgyny and dandyism, qualitative method was used by describing, analysing and interpreting the representation of these trends in three different fashion and art publications.

The fact that this tendency for ‘gender fusion’ is increasingly finding its way into mainstream culture, with emphasis on the fashion industry, raises the question of whether the society is more open towards different gender expressions or is ‘androgyny’ just another exploitative form for the fashion industry.

Keywords: *Androgyny, Dandyism, Gender, Identity, Fashion Magazines, Photography*

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1. INTRODUCTION

By manipulating properties of body modifications and supplements people communicate their personal characteristics, including the important distinctions of gender. Even when forms of dress and their properties are largely shared or similar for both sexes, gender distinctions can be clearly communicated by a minimum of manipulations of dress (Barnes & Eicher 1997, 16).

Fashion is never static, never fixed, it is ever-changing. Fashion is a concept that signifies additional and alluring values attached to clothing, which are enticing to ‘consumers’ of fashion (Kawamura 2005, 4). Clothes are one of the most visible markers of class and gender and therefore useful in maintaining or subverting symbolic boundaries in society (Crane 2001, 1). For social scientists beauty is a social construction and anything can potentially become beautiful and aesthetic. In other words, beauty depends on the context in which it is placed. Styles of clothing can be discussed in their relation to structural changes in society and, thus, they cannot be taken out of the social context. There is a strong bondage between fashion and society, according to Barthes (2006, 91) absence of fashion correspond a totally stagnant nature of society.

Gender and sexuality have always challenged the world of fashion. Barnard (2002, 141) argues that fashion and clothes reproduce sex and gender identities and positions. Fashion can be seen as cultural barometer for contemporary issues, thus gender as one of the crucial aspects of fashion can be analysed as a cultural phenomenon and gender differences as cultural differences. Fashion is known to playfully cross traditional gender boundaries, expose stereotypes, and reveal society’s artificial construction of femininity (Wilson, 2001). Gender identities are not fixed but they are always in the process of making, Oakley (2000) notes that to be a man or a woman, a boy or a girl is as much a function of dress gesture occupation, social network and personality as it is of possessing a particular set of genitals.

Fashion defines gender, and renders it visible (Buckley & Fawcett 2002, 7), but it is the media that shapes the body by addressing it as a social agent, creating and recreating beauty ideals of the period it depicts. The rise of fashion media in the last century brought with itself standards in terms of gender roles, fashion, trends and numerous different issues. According to Jobling (2006, 3) fashion magazines have a profound impact on the social and

cultural scene and the potential to make a lasting rather than fleeting impression on the consciousness of any individual. Fashion spreads challenge ideals of beauty, on one hand they create stereotypes of how women and men should like, but on another hand, fashion has proven to provoke pre-established aesthetical norms. The advent of new styles has been accompanied by controversies about modesty, morality and sexuality. Dominant ideas about femininity and masculinity have been challenged by the way they have been represented in fashion publications.

During the last two years the ‘gender bending’ motion has reached its pick in fashion media, from cover pages, to editorials and advertising campaigns for recognizable fashion brands. Wilson (1992, 34) notes that many of us may feel threatened and insecure related to gender bending, but Barnard (2002, 117) sees the going against the grain of one’s sex as the most refined form of sexual attractiveness. This can be seen in recent representations of androgyny and dandyism in fashion magazines in western society. According to Shinkle (2008,13) the fashion image is an interface between lived body and the visible, public body, which gives better understanding of gender differences through conveyed images in fashion magazines.

Contemporary fashion publications like *Vogue*, *i-D* and *LOVE Magazine* encourage their readership to think of themselves in terms of appearances, and thus to become more and more open about challenging ‘prefabricated’ gender roles and the possible fusion between masculinity and femininity. What is the most beautiful in virile men is something feminine, what is most beautiful in feminine women is something masculine (Sontag 1961 cf. preface of *LOVE Magazine*, spring/summer 2011, 227). Diverse images in fashion magazines associated with ‘androgyny’ can be seen as indication of the struggle to define women’s identities in the 21st century. The style is being labelled as ‘powerful concept’; ‘hard core’; ‘Mrs. Dandy’; ‘elegant androgyny’; ‘androgyny cool’; ‘androgyny chic’; ‘newish androgyny’ or ‘haute androgyny’. Layers of meanings are given to ‘androgyny’ in fashion terms during 2010 and 2011, but given the variety of visual evidence, one would be pressed to identify the reason behind ‘Age of Androgyny’¹ and its frequent association with dandyism.

Gender bending is not a new story in the western society. It is an already established concept, but in the world of fashion, it is the creative energy behind the current mainstream that forces us to rethink its future – is ‘androgyny’ just a fad, fashion or classic? Besides

¹ WGSN, *the leading online fashion trend-analysis company*, ‘Forecast for 2011’. www.wgsn.com (accessed February 11, 2010)

being linked to blurring the lines between masculinity and femininity, androgyny is also being 'intertextualised' with unconventional sexuality, homosexuality and transvestisms. The fact that this 'trend' is increasingly finding its way into mainstream culture, especially the fashion industry, raises the question of whether the society is more open towards different gender expressions. Are the fashion magazines displays of the society that is prepared to accept changes in gender roles or they are just protagonists of the 'renewed' tendency in fashion? Which were the steps that brought this 'trend' that is frequently linked to dandyism to the mainstream level and can we assume its future?

1.1 Purpose and focus of the study

This paper focuses on analysis of different representations of 'androgyny' as fashion tendency in contemporary fashion magazines (*Vogue*, *i-D* and *LOVE Magazine*) for the period of 2010 and 2011. Currently, there is a constant play with the concepts/styles of 'androgyny' and 'dandyism' in the fashion media and ad campaigns. This study shows how fashion industry has always been preoccupied with the thin line between masculinity and femininity, which leads to the question of whether society is now more open towards gender fusion or is this 'repeatable' tendency, just an exploitative form for the fashion industry.

In order to provide a detailed understanding of 'androgyny' as current tendency in fashion, this study first explores this tendency as a signifier for unconventional sexuality that subsequently led to its transformation into a postmodern teaser for constructing sexual identities. This study also tries to provide explanation of the crucial factors that contributed towards the construction of current meaning of 'androgyny' as a part of the mainstream culture.

Dandyism, which from a timeless concept became a style (fashionable trademark) as a result of its frequent appearance in fashion terms, shows a strong interconnectivity with 'androgyny'. In the light of more recent developments, it will be analysed how 'androgyny' has gradually came to be linked to dandyism, with emphasis on power dressing of female dandies, homosexuality and transvestisms, through its mediation in fashion imagery of recent publications.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 An Interpretative Approach to Fashion Magazines

The aim of the thesis is to create a nuanced portrayal in understanding androgyny and dandyism, by describing, analysing and interpreting the representation of these trends in three different fashion publications: *Vogue*, *i-D* and *LOVE Magazine*, for the period of 2010 and 2011. I have chosen these three magazines because of their diversity and different approach in covering fashion issues, especially the topics my research is focused on.

Vogue, a monthly fashion magazine, has an in-depth coverage of latest trends in fashion, which makes it the most influential fashion publication. *i-D*, is a bi-monthly fashion and lifestyle magazine, dedicated to fashion, music and art widely known by its innovative photography and typography style. The last publication I have chosen is *LOVE*, which is a bi-annual magazine. In particular I have focused on *Androgyny issue*, which can be seen as a key protagonist for the current gender-bender moment, which is the main idea behind this issue.

2.2 Qualitative Research Strategy

In order to get comprehensive result of the afore-mentioned topics in the selected magazines, I decided to apply ‘qualitative research strategy’ (Bryman 2008, 21). The use of the qualitative research method assists in providing in-depth descriptions and illustrations rather than surface-level observations. Bryman and Bell (2007, 17) argue that qualitative study is full of important details, which are frequently important for the qualitative researcher. Barthes (2006, 11-32) system of ‘sign, signifier and signified’ is used as a tool for analysing fashion magazines, but the focus is on images, not on texts, since images dominate fashion magazines and all other means of communication.

At the beginning of the research I first carried out quantitative content analysis of various *Vogue*, *i-D* and *LOVE Magazine* editions published in the period between 2010 and 2011, with a purpose of observing representation of androgyny and dandyism for this specific time-frame. This analysis was constructive for understanding the difference in the coverage of these topics in each magazine. This also helped me to make selection of the images, which I subsequently used for the in-depth study in my qualitative analysis. Photographic images play a key role in defining global fashion culture and in charting its discursive space (Shinke, 2008, 1). They are seen by many as the driving force behind the fashion system, with cultural

specialists and creatives from the industry signalling the photograph as fashion's 'ultimate signifier' (Saville cf. Shinkle 2008, 1). Besides the image analysis, an extensive study of previous coverage about these topics in online databases of these magazines was done. The content analysis served as pre-study for understanding the evolution of a trend in fashion media.

The next step was to interpret the gathered data through relevant theoretical concepts. According to Goffman (1997, 7) one of the most deeply seated traits of man is gender; femininity and masculinity are in a sense the prototypes of essential expression. Something that can be conveyed fleetingly in any social situation and yet something that strikes at the most basic characteristics of the individual (Ibid).

Thus, in order to find the underlying and connotative meanings of the chosen images I was using the semiology as method in my study. This method helped me to perform a personal analysis using my personal system of signification and interpretation, since images are seen as meaningful constructions, which can be variously interpreted. In addition I have not used all images that I found through content analyses of these magazines, as that kind of investigation would have gone far beyond the scope of this thesis. That is why I decided to focus my study to a limited time period (2010 - 2011).

As mentioned, the goal of this research is the collection of information in order to support the used theories, so the composed and analysed information should be regarded as a 'snapshot' from a process of observation, reception and analysis. This research aims at achieving reliability by using the above-mentioned methodologies, as reliability by definition means that the used methodology leads to trustworthy and correct answers, not affected by accidental factors. The concepts of reliability and validity, however, can be understood in different ways. High reliability can be hard to achieve using the qualitative method, simply because the collected data is interpreted by the researcher.

3. ANDROGYNY

The famous dandy manifesto; androgynous silhouette walking the catwalks; the huge gap between yin and yang is no longer there, as the feminine and the masculine present in all of us seem to get along just fine for once.

British Vogue, March 2010

3.1 Background

The term ‘androgyny’ derives from the Greek words for male and female, and suggests a state intermediate between masculinity and femininity. To feminists androgyny represents escape from the prison of gender, from socially enforced preconceptions of ways in which women and men ought to differ in their psychology and behaviour. What they suggest is psychological androgyny, the combination in a single person, of either sex, of so-called feminine and masculine character traits (Warren 1980, 170).

‘Androgyny’ is increasingly finding its way into mainstream culture, especially in the fashion industry. Fashion divides, but also has the tendency to erase the division of the sexes. One intriguing refinement of fashion’s historic tendency to exploit masculine versus feminine instability in gender identity has been to periodically resort to androgyny as a way of addressing the problem (Davis 1994, 35). The androgynously toned fashion had a tendency to constantly reappear in the period following the First World War at times reaching a zenith, especially with the unisex styling from mid-1960’s and late 1970’s to the 1980’s punk movement, and then to the 1990’s representation of androgynous models in ad campaigns. Steele (1985, 99) wrote that androgynous fashion during the 1980’s was far from being incorporated into the sartorial mainstream. However, the meaning of androgynous trend in fashion has changed, and now it represents the latest ‘mantra’ in contemporary fashion media.

3.2 Androgyny - symbolic meaning for non-conventional sexuality

How can a relational system be reached through sexual practices? Is it possible to create a homosexual mode of life? To be “gay”, I think, is not to identify with the psychological traits and the visible masks of the homosexual, but to try to define and develop a way of life (Foucault 1997, 135-140).

3.2.1 Visual codes

“Fashion and clothing are instrumental in the process of socialization into sexual and gender roles”.² Much of the gender intersection with fashion is based in the garments themselves and the cumulative effect of appearance (Barnard 2002, 117). Clothes are visual representation of our identity and are layered with meanings. According to Barnard (2002, 117) they are used to establish a ‘code’ and through this code members of the community can construct and communicate gender status to themselves and to others. Clothing does more than simply cover the body for warmth, modesty or comfort. Codes of dress are technical devices, which articulate the relationship between a particular body and its lived milieu, the space occupied by bodies and constituted by bodily actions. In other words, clothes construct a personal *habitus*³ (Featherstone 1987 cf. Craik 2005, 4).

Fashion can be seen as a language that we use in order to be able to communicate our identity with others, but the basic requirement is the interpretative skills of the ones to whom we want to communicate our messages that can be of different nature. Due to the intimacy with the body, clothes are critical tool for representation of different identities, and they are highly effective in endlessly constituting but never fixing them (Craik 2005, 9).

The codes of fashion are visual, consciously or unconsciously they articulate social, sexual or cultural messages in public or private spaces. Historically speaking, in attempt to ‘fix’ feminine or masculine identities and the ‘visual codes’ with which they communicate their preferences, fashion sometimes crossed the boundaries of what is acceptable. According to Garber (1992, 51) gender roles and categories are most vulnerable to critique when they are most valorized and most ardently coveted and admired.

3.2.2 Visible vs. Invisible Attire

‘Androgyny’ has been fashionable many times throughout history, but most recently developed by lesbian and bisexual women, has slipped easily into the mainstream of youth culture more generally. Moreover the media frenzy over ‘lesbian chic’ (possibly fuelled by panic over the erosion of visible differentiation between straight and queer women) has inspired some middle-class lesbians and ‘bi’ women to reclaim fashion and to muscle in on

² Malcolm Barnard, *Fashion as Communication* (London: Routledge, 2002), 117

³ Habitus includes ‘the unconscious dispositions, the classification schemes, taken-for-granted preferences which are evident in the individual’s sense of the appropriateness and validity of his taste for cultural goods and practices’ as well as being ‘inscribed on to the body’ through body techniques and modes of self-presentation (Featherstone 1987, 64)

some of the 'boys fun' organized around the plethora of new clubs and bars (Entwistle and Wilson 2001, 218). This is to some extent facilitated by a new-found disposable income in the climate of greater opportunities for middle-class women.

Until the 1990's, fashion itself may have provided the most important signifier in the construction of queer identities in the West (Entwistle and Wilson 2001, 219). It was in the end of the 19th century when sexologists Krafft-Ebing (1886 cf. Vänskä 2002, 7) and Ellis (1985/1900 cf. Vänskä 2002, 7) popularised the idea that a person's sexual identity was not only an inner quality but could be also determined from appearance. They argued that if a woman is dressed in elegant, masculine tailored suits and tuxedos, it was evidence of her homosexuality, of her 'inner pathology' (Ibid. 8).

If invisibility has played a strategic role in the survival of lesbian relationships and cultures under fundamentally hostile circumstances, it has also played a significant role in the maintenance of heterosexual hierarchies; visibility creates its own set of dilemmas, it may disrupt or contradict received ideas and accepted beliefs. It may propose new kinds of social categories or inject new meanings into old ones (Doan and Garrity 2006, 41). In relation to fashion magazines, Lewis and Rolley (1997, 299) conclude that the importance of dress as a signifier of sexual identity, and the one that provides hints towards identifying 'sexualised' activity unite to provide a supplementary pleasure in the activity of consuming (queer culture). 'Looking like what you are' in terms of self-presentation is crucial for a recognisable queer identity and structurally central to the theorisation of marginal identities (Entwistle and Wilson 2001, 229).

Since the 19th century and especially during the 1920's masculine attire, androgynous hints and details from the dandy signature look became signifiers for the visibility of unconventional sexual preferences for women. The appearance was constructed upon fashion for 'boyish' or 'mannish' looks; press descriptions in the 1920's referred to androgynously dressed women as 'boyish,' 'school boyish,' 'tomboyish,' or just 'modern'. The adoption and display of the dandy male costume, monocle, pinstripes, tailed coat, page-boy haircut is not only read as cross-dressing, but according to Fontenot (2008, 167) it also has the unusual distinction of feminizing the male wearer while masculinizing the female. The appropriation of the range of dandy codes was a conscious act for women who wanted to express their unconventional sexual preferences. According to Ellis (1985/1900 cf. Garber 1992, 155) sexually inverted women had a pronounced tendency to adopt male attire.

Three 'pieces' of the 'vestimentary' puzzle have been of special interest, both to gays and to straights, as powerful and powerfully ambivalent, floating signifiers of erotic style in

the period since the First World War (Garber 1992, 153). In this case they are articles of clothing, accessories both before and after the ‘fact’ of lesbianism: the monocle, the cigarette, cigarette holder or cigar (Ibid.153-154). Women appropriating these accessories, especially the ones who took on masculine uniforms during the First World War were accused of “*inappropriate appropriation of masculine power*”.⁴ Masculine smoking practices, androgynous posture along with masculine clothes accompanied with ‘dandy’ essential elements and lack of feminine signifiers were visible statements of unconventional sexuality and empowerment for many key figures in the cultural and social life, identified as lesbians.

From a hidden signifier for unconventional sexuality within ‘gay’ circles, the androgynous allure and its inseparable part, the dandy costume, have become a way for many queer subjects to cultivate a high profile relationship to mainstream culture. Fontenot (2001, 169) notes that the androgyny cultivated in a person is not always about transcendent, ‘ungendered’ place, some a priori state of nature before culture and outside history, but sometimes it is rather a ‘mode’ of androgyny that calls attention to its own artificiality, its performativity; it brags of its dependence on accessories, as seen in fashion.

3.2.3 Postmodern teaser for sexual identities

Postmodernity allows ethnic minorities, women, lesbians and gay men to affirm, find or retrieve an identity (Wilson 1992, 7). The variety of possible lifestyles and choices available in contemporary society liberates the individual from tradition and enables him or her to create a meaningful self-identity. Crane (2000, 11) remarks that the consumption of cultural goods, such as fashionable clothing, performs an increasingly important role in the construction of personal identity, since one’s style of dress conveys an initial and continuing impression-making image.

In recent years androgyny has been inflected in the mainstream culture, because of fashion re-occupation with this trend that initially was introduced as fashionable during the 1920’s. Due to its recent popularity the visibility of ‘androgyny’ has caused difficulties for the ones who want to convey messages referring to sexual preferences by using recognizable details common for its presentation. According to Entwistle and Wilson (2001, 217-218) although feminist lesbians visibly fought fashion as a constraining and feminizing force of

⁴ Laura Doan, *Fashioning Sapphism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 67

capitalism and “*heteropatriarchym*”,⁵ fashion has always had an important role to play within lesbian and bisexual culture. It is in the beginning of the 1990’s when the situation started to be more complicated due to the media passion with ‘androgyny’ often referred as ‘lesbian chic’ (Vänskä 2002, 9). The result was ‘androgyny’ with elements of dandyism present in every corner of the mainstream popular culture, which in turn led to a situation of another re-interpretation of its signification.

Silverman (1986 cf. Entwistle and Wilson 2001, 218) explained that postmodern fashion puts quotation marks around the garments it revitalizes, allowing them to be re-read in a space of ironic distance between the wearer and the garment. This opens up a space for ‘playing’ with fashion, which is the antithesis of being its victim, and thus the feminist arguments about the regulation of women’s bodies through fashion decline in importance (Ibid.). To ‘dress right’ in sense of highlighting the intentionally constructed messages around sexuality, gender and class has caused some difficulties (possible misreading) in the post-modern society.

There is one aspect in the whole story that remains unchanged; androgyny has always been referred to as the “*comfort zone*”⁶ for women wanting to express their ‘natural self’, beyond constructed ideals for femininity. In this context comfort can be taken to embody resistance to the hegemonic discourses of ‘proper’ feminine or masculine behaviour and attire (Entwistle and Wilson 2001, 222). According to Evans and Thornton (1989 cf. Entwistle and Wilson 2001, 222) looking for an expression of an authentic ‘natural self’, women based their appearance on the masculine model (short hair, trousers, no make-up) or an infantile model (coloured dungarees and lace-up shoes).

The ‘comfort zone’ can also signify the ease one might feel from the degree of fit between the outside of one’s body and its inside (the imagined self). According to Entwistle and Wilson (2001, 222-223) it can also be explained as wish to close the gap between performance (acting) and ontology (being), a desire to be self-present to both oneself and others. The choice of comfortable clothes proposes identity as a ‘natural’ phenomenon – giving identity an essentialism, which therefore assists heterosexuality in retaining a false binary (Ibid, 223). It covers up the ‘construction’ of identity and therefore masks its historical roots as a discourse, closing down other potential positions or movements within that discourse (Entwistle and Wilson 2001, 223). Comfort in androgyny was and can be read as

⁵ Further explanation on heteropatriarchym (Hemmings 1999; Nestle 1989)

⁶ Joanne Entwistle and Elizabeth Wilson, ed., *Body Dressing* (Oxford: Berg, 2001), 221

recognizable queer sign to both oneself and others, a way in which identity is mapped onto the body.

What is being represented with androgyny in postmodern society can be interpreted as manoeuvre of its “*performativity*”⁷. From a signifier of homosexual identities androgyny became appropriated by the mainstream popular culture and the fashion industry itself, and thus gained many other meanings. In light of the more recent developments, there is already a discussion about a possible change in the whole discourse. The crucial question refers to the current meaning of this trend in postmodern fashion, and whether ‘androgyny’ that reached the mainstream level still signifies ‘hidden’ unconventional sexual preferences or there is already a need for establishing new dress codes.

3.3 Fashion Forward Concept

Contemporary fashion is preoccupied with representation of gender issues and ideals as well as how to break the boundaries between masculinity and femininity. This can also be analysed through the development of ‘androgyny’, current trend-muse for the fashion industry and the way it has been depicted in the fashion media. In terms of gender identity, androgynous is a person that does not fit into the masculine versus feminine criteria. This idea has been played on by the fashion industry for decades, but in the last century this unconventional style attracted only the braver members of the industry and some well-known public figures. Nonetheless, in the last few years it can be said that it is already infiltrated into the mainstream fashion culture. What is the cause and what the effect is, or to what extent changes in the view of gender influenced fashion, or vice versa, is still difficult to be decided. It is most likely that the changes in clothes, fashions and the view of gender tended to reinforce each other (Svendsen, 2006, 86).

Androgyny in the contemporary society seems like an inseparable part from the popular culture, which is evident from the numerous news articles, advertisements, editorials and blog posts. In fashion terms this trend according to the way it has been presented in the fashion media, seems to be ‘in vogue’ in the last few years. This can be linked to the idea that the modern society and culture are more comfortable at handling sex issues and playing with gender roles through the androgynous look, and thus it was indispensable that this look became a part of the mainstream stage. Wilson (2003, 122) refers to androgyny as tendency

⁷ Further explanation of *identity performativity* (Joanne Entwistle and Elizabeth Wilson, ed., *Body Dressing* (Oxford: Berg, 2001), 221-224

that has “*ceased to be sacred*”.⁸ As modern fashion plays endlessly with the distinction between masculinity and femininity, it seems that some preconditions have been established in the contemporary society that gives freedom to its representatives to express shifting ideas about gender roles.

Although according to fashion magazines it could be said that androgyny is being present all the time in the new century, it is remarkable to depict the small changes in this trend in order to satisfy the need of fashion for constant novelty every season. Therefore it can be said that there is a strong bondage between social actualities and developments of trends in popular culture and fashion as its inseparable part.

3.3.1 Clothes have no sex

When you meet a human being, the first distinction you make is ‘male or female’ and you are accustomed to make the distinction with unhesitating certainty.

(Freud 1933, 141)

The unisex style has been played on by the fashion industry for decades. But it was in the 1960’s when it became modern, under various influences of subcultures, especially music. That was the period when the adoption of decorative and sexualized styles for man and desexualised and simple styles for the woman, were blended into one, the unisex style. For decades, women’s fashion has mimicked menswear and its aesthetics. But now, the boys are also borrowing from the girls, with both avant-garde and established designers leading the unisex way for both sexes.

The unconventional unisex fashion at first attracted only a limited audience. The attributes of femininity were replaced by those of androgyny, using the unisex mode. Designers such as *Jean Paul Gaultier, Giorgio Armani, John Galliano, Kenzo, Rei Kawakubo* and *Yohji Yamamoto* have purposely pushed the limits of men’s fashion by offering new radical looks. Many have swapped the unisex themes of the 1960’s and 1970’s for androgyny and cross-dressing (Garber 1992 cf. Craik, 2005, 192). Both approaches evoked sexual imagery, desires and fantasies. By the 1980’s, utility and practicality were in the fore, with more than a touch of androgyny: ‘His Pants for Her’ epitomised the adaptation of male pants

⁸ Elizabeth Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2003), 122

with minimum seaming, wide elastic bands and cheek-hugging fit. Meanwhile, women started wearing men's shirts and modified men's suits, as well as 'His Pants for Her' underwear. Designer *Romeo Gigli*, acknowledged that many women prefer to wear trousers and men's shirts; he explicitly designed clothes for the androgynous couple, that share the same wardrobe (Gerrie 1992, 39).

Nowadays this trend has reached the 'mainstream'. The evidence of today's fashion fascination with sexual ambiguity is everywhere. The focus of the media is on fashion, but the ideology of ambiguity is in all aspects of popular culture. It is revealing to depict how fashion industry correctly predicted current trends more than thirty years ago with the unisex style. There is a significant debate as to whether the popularity of unisex style is connected to a liberalization of the gender difference or transformations in attitudes to gay and lesbian sexuality.

3.3.2 Age of Androgyny

Fashion magazine's pages in 2010 and 2011 are being haunted by the 'androgyny' trend. From the September issue of *Vogue Paris* (2010), devoted to androgyny, to the cover of March issue of *Vogue Germany* (2010), shoot by *Karl Lagerfeld* dedicated to androgynous dandy celebrities, the modern androgynous dandy is seen as an 'aphrodisiac' for the fashion industry. According to Barthes (2006, 256) "*the modern dandies are androgynous*"⁹ and "*the multiplication of fashion in a single being is always considered by Fashion an index of power*".¹⁰ These references give better insight in explaining the correlation of androgyny versus singularity. *Karl Lagerfeld* made an editorial for *Vogue Germany* (April 2010) in which he positioned his model (German actress *Diane Kruger*) to be a symbol for muting characteristic of androgyny and dandyism.

⁹ Roland Barthes, *The Fashion System* (Oxford: Berg 2006), 256

¹⁰ Roland Barthes, *The Fashion System* (Oxford: Berg 2006) 256-57



Figure 1 Diane Kruger by Karl Lagerfeld
(source: Vogue Germany, April 2010)

During 2010, many renowned fashion forecasters made a prediction for 2011 as the ‘Age of Androgyny’, and even WGSN¹¹ focused on this trend in their December 2010 report. Clear indication that their prediction became real, is the strong influence of the androgynous trend in the last collection presented on the runways during the most important fashion weeks worldwide that took place in January 2011. The ‘gender-bender’ notion that fashion designers are heavily dependent on currently and the style statements from big-wigs of fashion industry are just a testimony of the same. In 2011 collections of *Proenza Schouler*, *Balenciaga’s* *Nicholas Ghesquiere*, *Jean Paul Gaultier*, *Marc Jacobs* and *Calvin Klein*, there is a strong push toward androgyny that would be read as socially acceptable trend. *Dior’s Homme* designer *Kris van Assche*, *YSL’s* designer *Stefano Pilati*, and almost everyone in the fashion industry is accepting the new wave in androgyny and ‘cross dressing’ inspiration to push the sexuality envelope even more. Knowing that fashion magazines are put into function to diffuse ideas that encourage selling of latest styles, but also to help the readers to construct their personal identities according to socially acceptable ideals, it comes as no surprise that the androgynous trend has been continuously represented and reinforced in the fashion media.

¹¹ WGSN, *the leading online fashion trend-analysis company*, ‘Forecast for 2011’. www.wgsn.com (accessed February 11, 2010)

‘Androgyny chic’ has been an inspiration for special editions of magazines, like the *Androgyny issue* of *LOVE Magazine* (Spring 2011) or the androgyny editorial of *Vogue Paris* (September 2010). Magazines have contributed to the promotion of androgyny as an influential movement within the fashion industry and popular culture. For *Androgyny issue* of *LOVE Magazine*, the editor in chief, *Katie Grand* quoted *Riccardo Tisci*¹² who once said that the kind of society that prompts a question like “*is that a boy or a girl is simply too narrow, in an ideal world, there would be another six or seven ways to fit sexuality, we wouldn’t have to be one or the other*”.¹³

3.4 Androgynous bodies, geographies of meanings

Certain social groups may be seen as having rigid or unresponsive selves and bodies, making them relatively unfit for the kind of society we now seem to desire.

(Martin cf. Halberstam 2005, 76)

The body, as a physical form, is trained to manifest particular postures, movements and gestures (Craik 2005, 4). Therefore, it is difficult to separate the body from issues such as bodily movement, gender and sexuality. Craik (2005, 4) adds that the body is trained to perform in socially accepted ways by harnessing movement, gesture and demeanour until they become ‘second nature’. There has been a strong influence on the body due to modernity (contemporary obsessions with newness and futurism), feminism (gendered patterns of social relations) and Foucault (the role of institutional ethics in bio-politics) as the sources of bodily motifs (Frank 1990 cf. Craik 2005, 113).¹⁴ The way we ‘wear’ our bodies is how we want to present ourselves, because our identity is spread over the surface of the body, according to Entwistle and Wilson (2001, 225) it is constructed as the outward text of the inner ethics of the self. It can be said that the prime medium with which individuals present themselves is the body, which is “*an interface, a threshold, a field of intersecting forces where multiple codes are inscribed*”.¹⁵ (Braidotti cf. Buckley and Fawcett 2002, 8-14)

¹² Creative director of Givenchy; introduced the transgender model Lea T to the fashion world with the Givenchy fall winter 2010 campaign

¹³ Katie Grand, “Editor’s Letter”, *LOVE Magazine*, 10 Jan. 2011, 85

¹⁴ These sources of influence have been an inspiration for Bryan Turner’s discussion of bodily functions in terms of reproduction (patriarchy), regulation (external), restraint (internal) and representation (commodification); (Frank 1990, 133)

¹⁵ Cheryl Buckley and Hilary Fawcett, *Fashioning the Feminine: Representation and Women’s Fashion From the Fin de Siècle to the Present* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2002), 8-14

Lately, there has been a strong push towards representation of androgynous models in the fashion media. The concepts developed often question both ideals of femininity and masculinity. According to Craik (2005, 82-130) the ambivalence of the slender female body continues to underpin definitions of femininity, but from another point the implications of effeminacy, auto-eroticism and homosexual desire have put the male bodies in the spotlight in fashion representations. Fashion magazines influence construction of body ideals, Wilson (2003,119-122) notes that sometimes they ask their readers to experiment with their own bodies and identities, which is in contradiction with the cultural arguments according to which the self and the identity are received at birth.

The representation of androgynous figures in the fashion media is not a new story, the body has been a narrative for the ‘androgyny’ trend for years, but currently it can be said that it reached its ‘peak’ within the fashion industry. Oakley (1972, 158) noted to be a man or a woman, a boy or a girl is as much a function of dress gesture, occupation, social network and personality as it is of possessing a particular set of genitals.

It can be said that the trend of representation androgynous models in the fashion magazines and add campaigns started with the advertisements for *Calvin Klein* in the 1990’s. According to Craik (2005, 130-133) ‘Obsession’ campaign for *CK* marked a particular construction of gender and sexuality, addressing its attributes to both men and women.

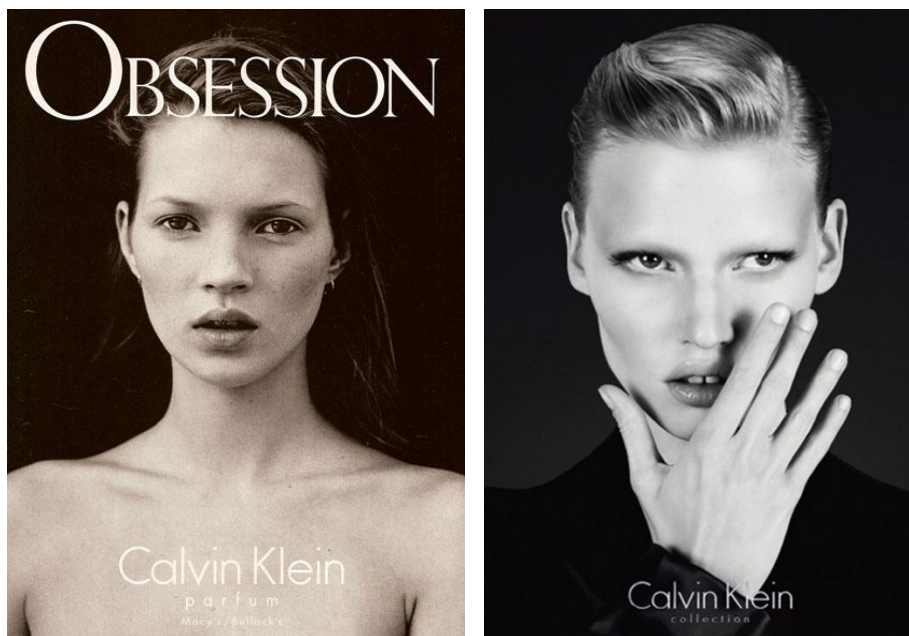


Figure 2 *Androgynous cool*: Kate Moss (left) Obsession perfume campaign 1990’s, Lara Stone (right) the new face for Calvin Klein campaign 2010; Photography no.1 by Mario Sorrenti; Photography no.2 by Mert Alas and Marcus Piggott
(source: Calvin Klein advertising campaign 2010)

Possibly the 'fresh' angle in the whole story of the development of 'androgyny' as trend in fashion is its representation through transgendered models in fashion photographs and advertising campaigns for recognizable high end fashion brands. Androgyny, in which the two sexes co-exist in one form and which the transvestite imitates in his own person, is an original state of power (Ackroyd 1979 cf. Wilson 2003, 122). The image of the brand is determined from these campaigns and their latest choice of androgynous and transgendered models gives us the message that in fashion there is a new gender fluidity in which traditional male and female attitudes are less relevant. *Marc Jacobs*, *Jean Paul Gaultier*, *Karl Lagerfeld* and *Givenchy* are among the few who chose androgynous models like the 'it' model *Andrej Pejic*¹⁶ or *Lea T*¹⁷ to be the new faces for their campaigns and collections, where each model is like a guessing game for the viewer.

¹⁶ Hilary Alexander, "Andrej Pejic, the 19-year-old gender-bender catwalk star says he would consider 'a sex change' for Victoria's Secret", *The Daily Telegraph*, 6 March 2011, <http://fashion.telegraph.co.uk/columns/hilary-alexander/TMG8364339/Andrej-Pejic-the-19-year-old-gender-bender-catwalk-star-says-he-would-consider-a-sex-change-for-Victorias-Secret.html> (accessed 5, May, 2011)

¹⁷ David Colman, "The Dreams of Lea T- transgender icon in the body of a 21st century model", *V Magazine*, Spring 2011, <http://www.vmagazine.com/2011/03/the-dreams-of-lea-t/?page=1> (accessed 15, May, 2011)

4. DANDYISM

Dandy is a clothes-wearing Man, a Man whose trade, office and existence consists in the wearing of Clothes. Every faculty of his soul, spirit, purse, and person is heroically consecrated to this one object, the wearing of clothes wisely and well: so that the others dress to live, he lives to dress ... What is it that the Dandy asks in return? Solely, we may say, that you would recognize his existence; would admit him to be a living object; or even failing this, a visual object, or thing that will reflect rays of light (Carlyle 1831, 217-218).

4.1 Background

Dandyism is a concept beyond time, a study of elegance and refinement, perfect equilibrium of person and impression. It is a concept that never dies; it evolved in style, merging with modern fashion to enter the 20th century-the era of mass culture and modern media.

Baudelaire (1863 cf. Purdy 2004, 194) described dandyism as a frame of mind for a person who elevates aesthetics to a living religion. The dandy is not an ordinary person, he/she aims to shock the viewer rather than just to please the eyes, and the dandy is in constant search for an abstract ideal.

The dandy ‘phenomenon’ stayed alive for over two centuries and even today it is the ultimate symbol par excellence of glamorous rebellion against status quo. Not always avant-garde, the dandy was sometimes a bohemian, sometimes an exclusive vision, always to varying degrees: a rebel. The dandy has held a place in society and influenced history. Each generation has processed its own ‘brand’ of dandies with general characteristics that can distinguish them.

The dandy has become a transformational myth, through its reinvention; it represents an exploration of various limits that make creative ideas valuable in fashion terms. The concept of dandyism is being recognized nowadays as a subject that represents an oscillation between gender positions, rather than a fixed status, inscribing the body into a cultural narrative of constant change.

4.2 Dandyism – timeless concept

Appearance is an illusion.

(Newton 1972, 101)

4.2.1 Broadcast of identities

From act of rebellion in the 19th century, through breaking premeditated gender boundaries in the 20th century to a basic concept for building media stardom, the concept of dandyism has remained a mirror of the society. In a constant search for possible behaviours, the dandies have many times tested the lines of eccentricity, but today they exhibit a recognizable trademark for elegance, key inspiration for current fashion trends.

Before we can call it a fashion, it is a phenomenon, a media for itself, according to Garelick (1998, 32) the dandies follow the saying that in society, as long as you are producing an effect, remain; if the effect is produced, leave. Feldman (1993, 117) noted that by advertising the self as nothing but the sum total of powerful, premeditated, costumed poses, the dandies have created a phenomenon linked to range of performances and behaviours in different times, expressing various meanings.

As the bourgeois male dandy of the early 19th century transgressed his role through the impeccable public presentation of his image by using his clothes, gaining his own status of power and influence over the dominant aristocracy, so did the female dandy of the twentieth century, by subverting the gender boundaries, promoting the powerful career woman and adding a new ingredient to this phenomenon, the sex appeal. The meanings of masculine and feminine attires changed in the 20th century, and so did the image of the dandy, that contributed toward further fashion evolution.

As a phenomenon focused on impression, dandyism had used the details as media tools, transforming the ‘unique persona’ added to the image of a dandy into a potential recognizable figure. According to Arnold (2001, 114) the ultimate goal of a dandy is to be recognized, to be acknowledged as a living object or failing this, a visual object. Dandy’s play with old forms allows a limited number of combinations; appearances are never destroyed but are simply recombined and given different significance (Ibid.)

4.2.2 Gender oscillations

At the beginning of the 20th century, male dandies lost their cultural position as modern, masculine man; moreover there was another notion that dandyism gives femininity to

masculine clothes. Mass culture through fashion photography, ‘borrowed’ the individual style of the dandies and recreated it into a feminised, buyable consumer product (Garelick 2001, 37).

A woman whose activities departed from the stereotypical female ones in the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, was considered as ‘imitating’ male activity and was open to criticism, not only she was not considered successful, she was not ‘womanly’ enough, she was ‘no longer a woman’ (Fillin - Yeh 2001, 16). Following this statement, there is a strong impression that dandies contributed towards blurring the gender lines, both in dress and behaviour and contributed towards building the image of female dandies. There was a wave of changes in women’s social position in the beginning of the 20th century. It showed that the modern, new women, drew from masculine symbols of the dandies, and used cross-dressing to transform the masculine world of dandies and create the powerful concept of female dandyism that evoked discourses related to femininity and masculinity (Vänskä 2002, 5). Although the dandy image underwent metamorphosis from decadent figure to overly gay figure, it is a concept that undermines the social separation of the sexes, it is also still being linked to the female dandies.

Fashion theory often positions fashion as a system of signs. Baring this is mind it can be observed how the body through fashion tested the normative codes of class and gender by challenging the code-reading vision. Goffman (1959, 2-17) noted that when we put on clothes, we choose to display a particular presentation of self. Given the basic maxim of dandyism, the clothes are an important part of the gender performance; thereby they serve as an instrument for constructing masculine and feminine identities. Butler (1993, 136-137) suggests that gender performance is a kind of drag performance, and that “*in imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself as well as its contingency*”¹⁸, but later clarifies that she never thought that “*gender was like clothes or that clothes make the woman*”.¹⁹

4.3 Fashionable trademark

To inoculate contemporary clothing with a bit of dandyism, via Fashion, was fatally to destroy dandyism itself... Fashion was, in a sense, given the task of neutralizing dandyism... It is in fact Fashion that killed dandyism. (Barthes 2006, 65-70)

¹⁸ Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”* (London: Routledge, 1993), 137

¹⁹ Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”* (London: Routledge, 1993), 231

Although Barthes forecasted the connection between modern fashion and dandyism, he was wrong to prematurely ‘kill’ this phenomenon that is quite ‘revived’ and present nowadays. Rather than ‘kill’ dandyism, fashion actually helped escorting it from its 19th century incarnation as a social and literary movement into its 20th century version: modern media celebrity (Garelick 1998, 184). Time has shown that the dandy is more than a movement of unstable endurance; on the contrary it is a phenomenon that has become a style due to the frequent repetition in the world of fashion. According to Wilson (2003, 16) fashion is one among many forms of aesthetic creativity which makes possible the exploration of alternatives. The latest fashion trends witness constant reappearing of dandyism, the female dandy in the 2010 fashion magazines is described as “*fusion of the styles of Beau Brummell, Oscar Wilde and at times a touch of Coco Chanel*”²⁰. The dandy attire is an ‘everlasting’ inspiration for the fashion industry, it may have started as an avant-garde movement, but now mixed with ‘androgyny’ it is the most desirable ‘look’ for the contemporary woman.

The ideals of ‘la mode’ and dandyism are similar, according to Barthes (2006, 65-70) both depend upon phases of newness, foreignness, surprise and scandal, both concern the aesthetics of performance, both strive to grasp the present, existing in the current moment. From a larval form of bore according to Connolly (1975, 13) to a symbol for rebellion in challenging pre-established norms and rules related to class and gender, it has become an essential inspiration for the current fashion trends, the dandy remained a ‘guideline’ for the social reality. The society of dandyism reproduces as an emblem of complete originality; its official topics are elegance, social life and social class divisions, social tools for personal advancement (Garelick 1998, 20-22). Striving to become an art object, the dandy dehumanizes himself/herself in order to create his social spectacle (Ibid. 22). Although the dandy longs to be an irreproducible art object, a self-media for his/her uniqueness, the contemporary fashion magazines instructs his/her public image to imitate highly reproducible fashion objects.

²⁰ Daniel P. Dykes, “The Female Dandy:2010, Women’s Fashion Trend”, *FASHIONISING.com*, <http://www.fashionising.com/trends/b--The-Female-Dandy-2010-Womens-Fashion-Trend-1982.html>

5. FASHION MAGAZINES

*The magazine is the machine that makes Fashion.
(Barthes 1990, 51)*

5.1 Symbolic Treasures

The fashion magazine is a prime motivator that helps us to understand the meaning of clothing and determining what is 'in' and what is 'out' in the moment. Magazines represent both, cultural products and commodities. Their production is characterized with a different audience that includes readers, advertisers and the fashion world itself. The fashion magazine and the fashion photograph tend to be regarded by many historians and critics as ephemeral and exiguous forms of cultural production (Jobling 2006, 1). Likewise the other forms of cultural production, the popularization of fashion spreads does not only emanate from the society, but also comments on it (Jobling 2006, 12). Fashion magazines recognize new discoveries, re-evaluations, and reinterpretations of styles that have been misunderstood or belong to the past. If designers create the form of fashion items, fashion magazines create their legend. They legitimize fashion and the 'fashion world' in cultural terms (Hauser 1982, 468).

Fashion magazines are a link between cultural production and reception of fashion, and as such they can facilitate the formation of the collective concept of what fashion is, but at the same time they transform fashion as an abstract idea and aesthetic discourse into wearable clothes. The ambiguity in fashion magazines is that they can be positioned between art and commerce. In one way worldwide recognizable fashion magazines can be used as social glue for different ideas related to gender and its perception by the society. But also, their glamorous nature and credibility just adds value to the idea of forming relevant and acceptable lifestyles and makes them socially valuable for the readers.

5.1.1 Displays of possible identities

Fashion publications are inspirational for consumers' idealized images of self in everyday life, and they can be instructional for constructing their identity. They make the suppliers of fashion socially relevant to readers, who potentially can be consumers of the fashion industry itself. As intermediaries between producer and consumer, fashion magazines legitimize fashion and the fashion world in cultural terms by showing what the latest trends may be,

who the designers that introduce these trends are, but also where the newest collections can be purchased.

The consumer-object-meaning associations are created by advertising texts and the 'fashion system', which McCracken (1986 cf. Thompson and Haytko 1997, 38) defines as a constellation of fashion designers, fashion-oriented advertising, fashion media (and other journalistic gatekeepers), socially recognized opinion leaders (such as media celebrities), and finally, radical countercultural groups whose styles can influence the creations and perceptions of designers, cultural gatekeepers, and opinion leaders. If in the past one's identity was fixed and steady, now in postmodern society identity is vibrant and has to be formed and reproduced.

According to Wilson (1985, 158) fashion magazines come on rather like pornography. They indulge the desire of the reader who looks at pictures and wants to be one of the perfect beings reflected in the pages. Fashion images are consumed both passively and defiantly by readers who lust for the pleasures of the image as much as the clothes they depict (Craik 2002, 111). Fashion images are allied to psychological formulations to construct 'renewed' notions of gender and sexual identity. Photographs in fashion spreads provoke viewers and consumers into confirming their own identity through structures of desire, and thus constituting a nexus between fashion and selfhood (Craik, 2003, 112). According to Hebdige (1979 cf. Jobling 1999, 39) they try to blur the lines between politics, parody and pastiche; the street, the stage and the screen; between purity and danger, the mainstream and the margins to flatten out the world.

5.1.2 Gender associations

Fashion photography in contemporary magazines invites the viewers into a world of fantasies by placing fashion in different discursive contexts and in many occasions it is just using the clothes as an alibi for the representation of other contemporaneous issues and ideas. Fashion magazines embody the concept of particular lifestyle. According to Yates (2003, 6) they can also be seen as cultural realm, one that depends heavily on social and cultural processes for its effective operation. But also, they have always tried to encourage their readership to develop a belief in (and thus legitimate) the idea that a new, transformative era of gender relations had been reached (Ibid, 144). The shift in representation of femininity, masculinity and sexuality in magazines is always linked to other developments in popular culture. The fashion magazine industry is understood as a monolithic meaning-producer, which circulates

editions that contain ‘messages’ and ‘signs’ about the nature of gender inequalities (Yates 2003, 6).

Fashion photography can be seen as commentary or critique on changing definitions of sexuality and gender roles. According to Myers (1987 cf. Craik 2003, 111) that can be managed through authorised erotic images, which are acceptable because they are produced for fashion rather than gratuitously. Fashion imagery is characterised by a distanced quality that estranges the image from the spectator and disrupts and subverts conventional stereotypes about sexuality and roles (Evans and Thornton 1989, 82).

5.2 Androgyny and Dandyism in Fashion Magazines (2010-2011)

Intimacy of the double-page spread projects a feeling of ‘jouissance’ between the model and each viewer/reader.

(Brookes cf. Ash and Wilson 1992, 18)

5.2.1 Introduction

Androgynously toned fashion, began to be mediated in fashion magazines in the 1920’s.²¹ This fashion was influenced by female dandies as most prominent fashion-forward figures, and subsequently with the development of unisex styling it reappeared in the pages of various fashion publications during mid-1960’s and late 1970’s. Central to the photography of the 1970’s was the obsession with sexual motifs: ‘homosexuality’, ‘transvestisms’, and ‘miscegenation’²² (Hall-Duncan 1979, 196). By the 1980’s, in fashion there was more than a touch of androgyny. For instance, ‘His Pants for Her’ epitomised a decade since men’s fashion for women has been adopted. During the 1990’s fashion photography entered a new phase of controversy with post-feminism, new masculinity, ambivalence towards homosexuality and sexual well-being (Craik 2003, 111).

Currently, there is a stronger push in the way in which this trend that is frequently associated with dandyism is being represented in various fashion publications. This

²¹ Brooks’s self-portrait, reproduced in reviews of the work that she exhibited internationally in the 1920s, circulated in the pages of widely read publications such as *Le Figaro*, *Bulletin des Arts*, *Sketch*, *Revue de l’art*, *L’Art et lesartistes*, *Vogue*, and *International Studio* (Doan & Garrity 2006, 41)

²² Helmut Newton’s images represent models dressed in ‘tuxedos’, engaged in scenes of lesbian flirtation for *French Vogue*, March 1979 (Nancy Hall-Duncan 1979, 196-197; Jobling 2006, 22-25)

‘tendency’ has reached its zenith during the last two years. The comeback of “*Mrs. Dandy*”²³ occurred in 2008-2009 and it was, in 2010-2011 when the spotlight was directed on androgynous dandies and transvestite silhouettes. This trend already entered the mainstream stage and it allures from various cover pages of fashion spreads and ad campaigns for many recognizable names within the fashion industry. From the way fashion magazines approach this tendency currently, it can be said that the ‘modern androgynous dandy’ is seen as a ‘muse’ for the fashion industry. The current climate of interest in ‘androgyny’ will be analysed through the way in which it has been diffused and represented in three different fashion/art publications between 2010 and 2011: *Vogue*, *i-D* and *LOVE Magazine* (*Androgyny issue*).

5.2.2 Under theoretical scrutiny

The study of the fashion garment represented by image and text, i.e. the garment dealt by the fashion magazine, allows for immediate methodological advantage over the analyses of real clothing (Barthes 1990, 8). Furthermore Featherstone (1991 cf. Jobling 2006, 12) noted that images invite comparisons, they are constant reminders of what we are and what we might become if we invest effort.

Although it seems that ‘androgyny’ as a tendency in fashion terms is constantly reinvented, Barthes (2006, 54) expressed ‘renewal’ in fashion as linked essentially to the apparent novelty of combinations, in this case meanings, not to the novelty of features.

5.3 *Vogue, Love Magazine* (*Androgyny issue*), *i-D* (2010-2011)

Finally the magazines dictate what's at the top. We don't design clothes, but we can be very selective in our reporting. The insistence by us on a certain ease and modernity has been decisive, and we try to resist moving away from that.

(Mirabella cf. Jobling 1999, 2)

In the past two years, leading fashion and art publications like *Vogue*, *i-D* and *LOVE Magazine* have been the main protagonists in developing, setting this trend in the spotlight,

²³ *Vogue Germany*, “Mrs. Dandy” editorial, August 2008, 184-189

and facilitating its way into the mainstream popularity. Many cover pages, editorials and advertisements in these magazines tried to reinforce the re-emergence of the androgynous look. They began to refer to these trends as ‘elegant’, ‘cool’, ‘chic’, ‘newish’, ‘genius’ and even ‘haute’ androgyny.

Through analyses of these publications for the period between 2010 and 2011, it can be seen how ‘androgyny’ has been ‘intertextualised’ with dandyism, with emphasis on power dressing of female dandies, homosexuality and transvestisms. The images represented in them look natural and there is a prevailing idea of fusing genders, but also they do not seem to present beauty standards or ideals of a certain group or certain gender.

Following the pre-2010 period of ‘dandyism boom’²⁴ by 2010 there was already a well-established and inseparable link between how androgyny and dandyism are being represented in these publications. *Vogue Germany* published two numbers with androgyny inspiration on the cover pages in the last two years. In March 2010 it was the film star *Diane Kruger* in an editorial named ‘Dandy Diane’ and again in February 2011, *Milla Jovovich* for the provocatively named editorial ‘Girly girls’. Both, covers and editorials, tend to explore ‘androgyny’, but still there are visible differences in the way that it is being depicted.



Figure 3 Diane Kruger by Karl Lagerfeld (left); Milla Jovovich by Francesco Carrozzin (right) (source: *Vogue Germany*, April 2010 and *Vogue Germany*: special edition, February 2011)

For the editorial ‘Dandy Diane’, the model is presented as embodiment of the female dandy. The poses are intentional, and she is represented as an elegant figure with gestures signifying

²⁴ *W Magazine*, ‘Art and Commerce’ (representative editorial), October 2009, 133-140

ultra-femininity. The single association towards ‘androgyny’ are the masculine clothes and symbolic resources given to dandyism. In comparison to these images, Mila Jovovich in ‘Girly Girls’ is represented as an androgynous figure. The image of her, expresses freedom of movement, and unintentional look, which seems rather ‘natural’, and thus the model looks like she is in a ‘comfort zone’ with her clothes and body. There are softer hints to dandyism and higher relevance to androgyny here. Also, there is an impression that the model is more in touch with her masculine side.

From a different, more provocative perspective of ‘androgyny’, the cover page of *LOVE Magazine* No. 5, Spring Summer 2011 features three different cover sets for the same edition. The whole issue, which is named *Androgyny*, is inspired by the transgendered model *Lea T*. This issue of *LOVE Magazine* offers a “hard core”²⁵ approach to the ‘renewed’ trend. The three different covers for the same issue, give three different perspectives to the story of androgyny.



Figure 4 Kate Moss and Lea T. (first cover); Lea T. (second cover) and Kate Moss (third cover) by Mert Alas & Marcus Piggot (source: *LOVE* magazine, Spring/Summer 2011)

The first version features *Lea T* kissing *Kate Moss*²⁶, which suggests a gender play that fits the androgyny issue. It signifies the ‘homosexual’ angle of ‘androgyny’, making it a provocative intro to the whole issue that has created a lot of ‘buzz’ in the fashion world. The second version features *Kate Moss* solo cover. Here she is represented as an androgynous ‘rock’ figure with just few references towards her femininity. The third version is *Lea T*’s solo cover, in a pose and clothes that signify gender that can be a puzzle for the

²⁵ *LOVE* magazine (*Androgyny Issue*), ‘Hard Core’, Spring / Summer 2011, cover page

²⁶ Kate’s mannish look is reminiscent of the Calvin Klein nineties campaign for unisex perfume CK One, which helped launch her career as the ‘anti supermodel’

viewer/reader. Linked to the cover pages is the editorial featuring the same models unsurprisingly named “*His ‘N’ Hers*”.²⁷ (Appendix I)

What is in common for the three different visuals for the cover page of this issue is the use of ‘black and white’ that signifies neutrality of sex appeal. The use of simple ‘black and white’ signifies no intention of representing or challenging beauty ideals, it is just a manner of addressing the subject of androgyny, just supporting or even giving a higher priority value for this trend in fashion terms. Although *Kate Moss* is depicted as an embodiment of ‘androgynous rock chic’, the other signifiers, as the unisex hairstyling and the leather jacket are closer to the masculine attire of this look. In comparison to her, *Lea T* is dressed in more feminine clothes, her pose and styling is rather feminine as well, and it is only her neutral make up and the ‘sharp’ lines of the face that tell the viewer her ‘biological sex’. In the image where the two models kiss, *Kate Moss* with minimal make-up and a quiff undercut, is hardly recognisable as she is pictured locked in a passionate hold close with transgender model *Lea T*. The hand of *Kate Moss* on *Lea T*’s body signifies a more powerful and initiative role for the passionate embrace. Obviously *Kate* has been casted as the ‘male’ while *Lea T* plays ‘the female’ model. There is a strong play with gender roles and their positioning in the current interpretation of this trend. The image gives the viewer a freedom to interpret the trend from different perspectives of whether it is a signifier of homosexuality, the way to open up the question of transvestisms or is it just another time when fashion got bored of the feminine attire.

Although transgender models get cover pages, they also feature prestigious editorials. In a way this can be seen as a precondition for establishing a ‘relevant’ transgender story in fashion terms, since it is important for cross-dressing, transexuality and ultimately gender non-conformity to infiltrate mainstream culture. For instance, the September issue of *Vogue Paris* (2010) was devoted to androgyny, and in particular the editorial dedicated to the ‘rise’ of this tendency ‘*Rive Gauche et Libre*’ captures the rock & roll spirit of androgyny, featuring female models *Malgosia Bela* and *Daphne Groeneveld*, as well as the ‘protagonists of the transgender androgynous look’ - *Lea T* and *Andrej Pejic*. Both of them have bone structure of a man but slim body of a woman, which makes them fit for representing female as well as masculine attires in the editorials and various ad campaigns. This editorial is also in black and white, suggesting neutral feelings towards stronger implications of gender roles. The editorial is a ‘pastiche’ of ideas towards the established codes of ‘masculinity’ and

²⁷ *LOVE Magazine (Androgyny Issue)*, Cover Page, Spring / Summer 2011

‘femininity’. Although more feminine attire is imposed to the male and transgender models, for the female models the gender associations are easily readable. An interesting aspect in this editorial is the way in which different body shapes and ideals are being depicted, giving a more layered meaning to what ‘androgyny’ is. (Appendix II)



Figure 5 Andrej Pejic, Lea T. and Daphne Groeneveld by Mert Alas & Marcus Piggot (source: Vogue Paris, September 2010)

The ‘androgynous’ influence is also evident in *i-D* magazine, which is illustrated by the numerous editorials about androgyny and androgynous models. For instance, in the winter 2010 issue a whole editorial was dedicated to *Andrej Pejic* (Appendix III). The difference with the previously examined images is the use of neutral soft colours, not only black and white illustrations. The set looks rather natural; the model has messy hair, no make-up and wears comfortable ‘sporty’ clothes. He looks as if he is at ease with the idea of being read as either ‘man’ or ‘woman’. On one photographs he appears half naked. This image has strongly androgynous tones and his body is like a canvas for the viewer/reader imagination. But given the fact that *i-D* has an edgier approach towards provocative and sometimes even for marginalised issues in society this is the kind of representations they are aiming for. Inferring from the ‘androgyny’ inspired issues in 2010, it seems like *i-D* is still under the influence of the ‘boy meets girl’ attire. In spring 2011, the *Exhibitionist* issue which “*is not only about clothes, it is also about who’s inside them*”²⁸, there is a whole story about the comeback of unisex clothing named ‘Bare Essentials’.

Nothing gives better reference to the symbiosis of androgyny and dandyism like the editorial named ‘Pleine lune’ in *Vogue Paris*, May 2011 issue. In this edition dedicated to *Yves Saint Laurent’s* ‘Le Smoking’, the renewed style is referred as “*esprit chic masculine*

²⁸ Holly Shackleton, “*Editor’s Letter*”, *i-D* magazine, Spring 2011, 27

qui ne finit pas de se décliner en glamour et humour – féminins”.²⁹ ‘Pleine lune’ editorial is ‘moving the glamour of dandy menswear to womenswear’ as the second possibility for ‘dressing up’ in the same evening (Appendix IV). The photographer captures the model *Anja Rubik* as an embodiment of traditional he/she perceptions. The editorial depicts her as an airy woman, positioned as an ambiguous figure, wearing feminine garments, but also masculine dandy clothes. These images are in a way a mixture of androgyny and femininity.



Figure 6 Anja Rubik by Mikael Jansson
(source: Vogue Paris May 2011)

The idea behind is that you do not have to choose, you can have both ‘boy-look’ and extremely ‘girl-look’. The photographs are being taken in the streets of Paris. The ones where she wears feminine clothes are in intensive colours and everything is in movement, even the model herself. On the opposite site where she wears masculine clothes with ‘borrowed’ details from the dandy attire, the images are in black and white, here everything seems ‘fixed’, even the model seems like intentionally posing for the photographer and the viewer. It appears like she wants to portray the elegant female dandy attire while wearing masculine clothes. The background on the photographs where she wears feminine clothes is blurry, except for the model, which is in the foreground, making her the dominant figure in the image. On the contrary to that, the black and white images where she wears masculine clothes, it seems like the foreground and the background are fused, and that there is no

²⁹ Vogue Paris 2011 May, 117

dominancy here. The model as well as the background (in this case Paris recognizable sights) are equally represented, and there is a notion of mystical and obscure feeling. Possibly this can be interpreted as the general acceptance of clear separation between masculinity and femininity in the society. Although, it seems that the fusion of masculinity and femininity is more than welcomed, especially with the explosion of 'androgyny' in fashion terms. Nevertheless, the other issues related to 'androgyny' and their significations are still in the shadow. Whilst nothing in fashion is completely new anymore, it is still refreshing to introduce a 'novelty' by the use of many different variations and issues when depicting the current 'androgynous' trend. The idea of black and white versus vivid colours, clear versus dim, masculine vs. feminine in one story, the one referring to 'androgyny' contributes towards multiple ways of seeing femininity and masculinity and the way they fuse.

The whole trend of 'androgyny' is being reinforced not only by these fashion magazines covers and editorials, but also by various advertising campaigns. The prime motivation for various ad campaigns, including the ones for *Marc Jacobs*, *Jean Paul Gaultier* and *Givenchy* (2010-2011) is to strongly push towards crossing gender boundaries (Appendix V). It is worth mentioning, that not only these fashion brands are influenced by 'androgyny' in their designs, but also they chose androgynous and transgender models to be cover faces for their campaigns. This leaves the impression that these models that strive to look both feminine and masculine are the 'muses' in the fashion world today, since they are the ones representing the notion that it is 'luxurious' to be 'androgynous'.

6. CONCLUSION

According to fashion magazines it could be argued that ‘androgyny’ has been ‘in-vogue’ many times in history. It is still remarkable to depict the small changes in this tendency in order to satisfy the need of fashion for constant novelty every season. The general notion is that in the last two years the possible meanings of ‘androgyny’ have multiplied.

There are varieties of possible answers on whether ‘androgyny’ is different in the way it is currently being represented. It can be analysed from a sociological perspective, but also as a fashion phenomenon. One aspect which is mutual to both fashion and society is the fact that masculinity and femininity should not be conceived as opposite ends of one spectrum. Through combining the various components of both masculinity and femininity the building of the never ‘fixed’ postmodern identities is facilitated. The chronological analyses of ‘androgyny’ as social conduct shows that from a signifier of unconventional sexuality androgyny became a teaser for constructing sexual identities in post modernity.

One aspect in investigating ‘androgyny’ seems to reappear and that is the strong bondage with ‘dandyism’. Although both ‘androgyny’ and ‘dandyism’ are male concepts, their parallel development as social ideas and fashion trends appears to be frequently applied to feminine identities. The dandy suggestion of an androgynous persona-typically a male character with feminine aesthetic sensibilities, gives space for further research. The dandy image gives elegance to the androgynous silhouette, but other barriers regarding contextualisation of these two terms still exist.

In a way fashion creates social conduct and in return is shaped by it. The effect of this can be analysed in fashion magazines, which are currently full of stories about androgyny. The various cover pages, editorials and advertising campaigns create an atmosphere that society is more open towards different gender expressions. It could be argued whether fashion photography can provide a relevant tool for analysing society and social issues, but at the same time it would be myopic to say that such imagery is without deeper ideological meanings. Transgendered models and scenarios that imply variety of sexual preferences on cover pages of mainstream fashion and art magazines which are considered as protagonists of this tendency, gives an approach for analysing current developments in postmodern society. Knowing that these provocative representations just few years ago were considered to be ‘taboo’, a general assumption can be made that society is becoming slightly more open towards different gender roles and positions.

The fact that ‘androgyny’ reached the mainstream level in popular culture with emphasis on fashion, forces us to rethink its future as fashion trend. Bearing in mind the deeper ideological meaning that ‘androgyny’ carries, it thus cannot be summarised as fad, fashion or classic. Androgyny is a current fashion statement, but in fashion nothing stays on top for a long time. However, it is also apparent that in fashion nothing is really new, and due to a limited number of ‘appearances’ and combinations everything re-appears after a while. This leads us to the conclusion that the significance of this tendency is not and will not be exhausted in fashion. I believe that motivational factor for the reappearance can be the idea that particular silhouettes that are popular right now, but are not naturally androgynous, while appearing globally, are not yet mass market – they still belong to the hipsters. To conclude with Claude Cahun’s words: “under this mask, another mask”.³⁰

³⁰ Claude Cahun, *Disavowals: or Cancelled Confessions*, trans. Susan de Muth (Oklahoma: Tate Publishing, 2007)

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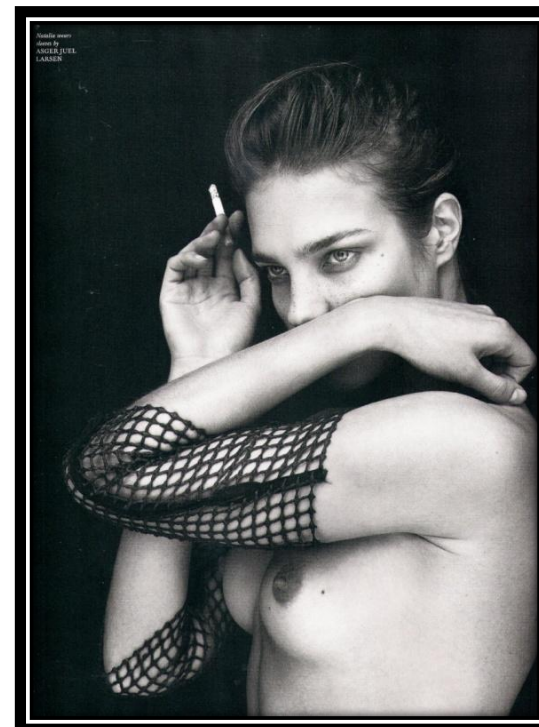
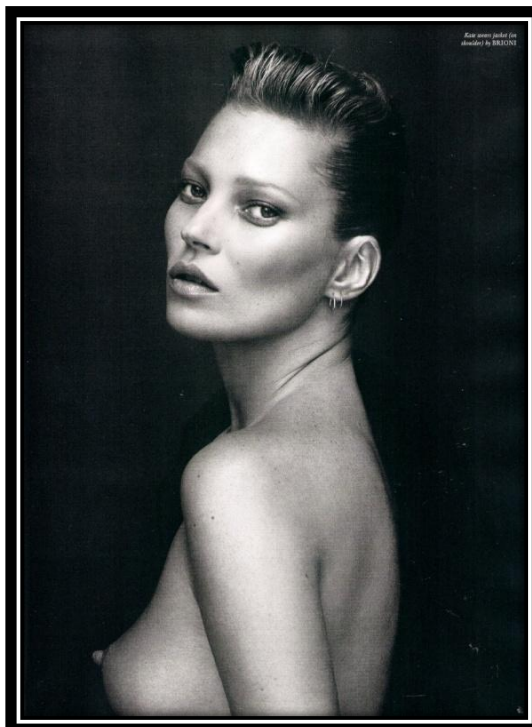
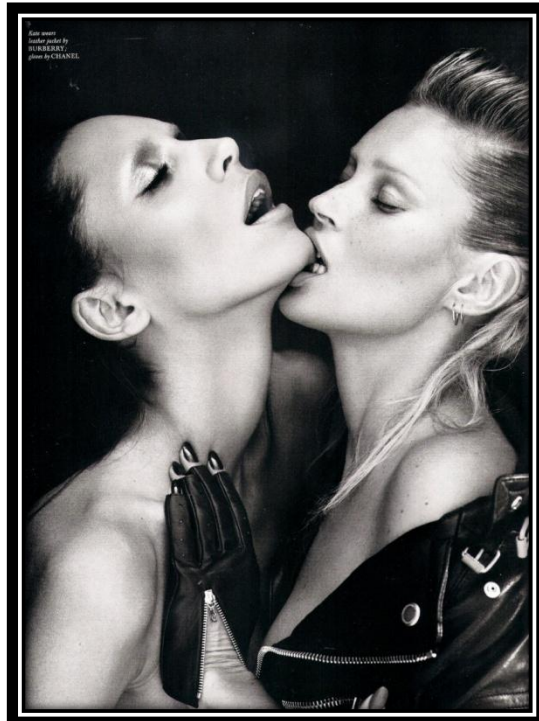
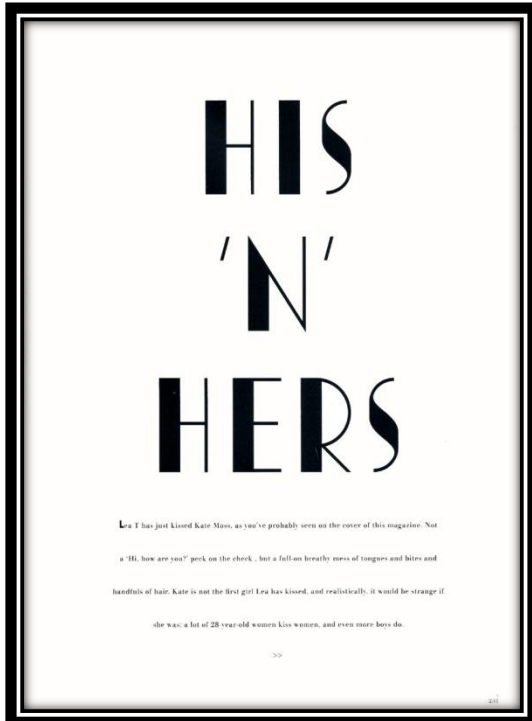
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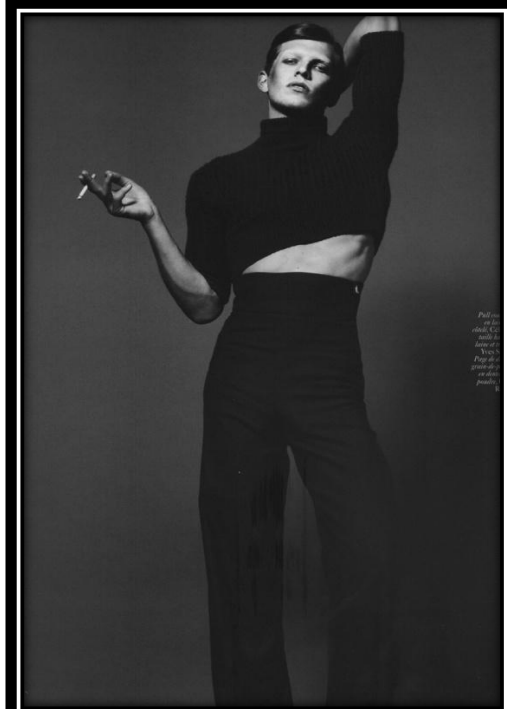
Appendix I

“His ‘N’ Hers” editorial, *Love Magazine*, Spring / Sumer 2011 (models: Kate Moss, Lea T, Natalia Vodianova; photography: Mert Alas & Marcus Piggot)



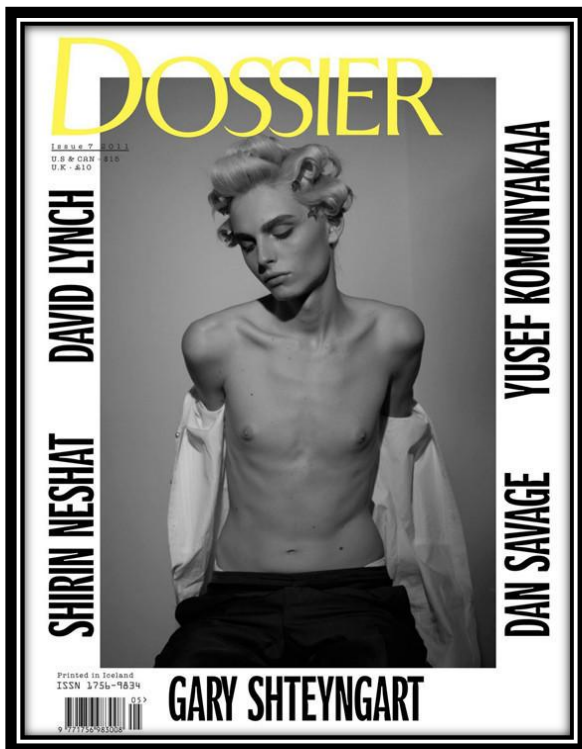
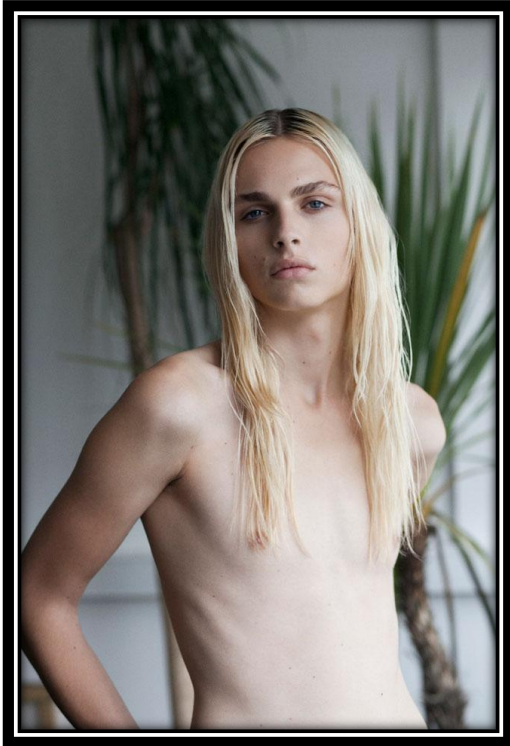
Appendix II

'Rive Gauche et Libre' editorial, *Vogue Paris*, September 2010, (models: Malgosia Bela, Andrej Pejic and Daphne Groeneveld; photography: Mert Alas & Marcus Piggott)



Appendix III

Editorial, *i-D magazine*, Winter 2010 (model: Andrej Pejic; photography: Thomas Lohr)



A similar image of Andrej Pejic appeared on the cover page of fashion / literature / art / culture publication *Dossier*, US, May 2011. It was censored by various book retailers on the pretext that customers can confuse the cover page model for a woman.

Appendix IV

'Pleine lune' editorial, *Vogue Paris*, May 2011 (model: Anja Rubik; photography: Mikael Jansson)



Appendix V

Advertising campaign: *Jean Paul Gaultier*, Spring / Summer 2011



Advertising campaign: *Givenchy*, Fall / Winter 2010



Advertising campaign: *Marc Jacobs*, Spring / Summer 2011

