Wearing Out Racial Discourse: Tokyo Street Fashion and Race as Style

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Introduction

The street fashions worn by young urban Japanese have for several years held an international reputation for their striking—often startling—idiosyncrasy. The photographs of Shoichi Aoki, who has chronicled these fashions at some length in his magazine *FRUiTS*, and now in a book and exhibition featuring the same material (Aoki), show the variety and national specificity of these styles. While Japanese designers have been making a mark on the world's catwalks for some time, this street-level fashion reputation is relatively new, and contrasts with older perceptions of Japanese street fashion as characterized by a mimicry of western youth styles uninformed by their original social contexts.

Unlike the rockabilly and punk poseurs who congregated in Tokyo's Yoyogi Park in the 1970s—whose existence seemed to confirm stereotypes of the Japanese as obsessive copiers of the west with no creativity of their own—the often flamboyant creativity of the fashions displayed in the pages of *FRUiTS* are notable for their irreverence and innovation. However, not surprisingly—and perhaps inevitably—this innovation functions through the reconfiguration of existing styles, for example constructing a motley from misappropriated traditional Japanese clothing items, or decorating the body with imagery taken from Japanese animation or "cute" culture. In *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (1987), Dick Hebdige famously discusses these themes of reconfiguration and recontextualization in the context of late twentieth-century British street fashions. In so doing, he utilizes Levi-Strauss's term

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bricolage to highlight the gathering together of existing influences in this process of innovation, as opposed to "inspired" creation, which supposedly occurs *in vacuo*.

The *kogyaru* style is one of the street fashions that can be found among Aoki's photographs. While its moment has passed, the *kogyaru* style, and its related aesthetic, exerts a continuing influence on young Japanese of both sexes. The strangeness of the *kogyaru*'s appearance has made her a prominent part of the Japanese *zeitgeist*, and this garishly dressed and made-up fashion victim, falling down stairs on her platform shoes or performing her trademark *para para* dance among a synchronized phalanx of her kind, became an object of ridicule in both personal and media discussions in Japan. However, while the *kogyaru* might appear bizarre and alien even to the majority of Japanese, it seems only reasonable to suspect that—as with the other street fashions mentioned above—the *kogyaru* style is a *bricolage* of imagery which predates its appearance. Like Hebdige's punk or mod styles, the *kogyaru* style can be understood to be a startling recombination and recontextualization of images and ideas present more generally in the society that produced it. The precise nature of these images and ideas makes the *kogyaru* an excellent case study for a discussion of the impact of racial aesthetics on Japanese fashion and ideas of attractiveness, the *kogyaru* serving as an exaggeration or distortion of themes which are generally expressed in a more subtle way.

The *Kogyaru*

The term *kogyaru,* or *kogal*, is a combination of *ko*, meaning child, and the English loan word "gal." It therefore does very little to define this style, besides associating it with young, possibly infantilized, women or girls. The *kogyaru* style, like any other, is defined primarily by a set of trademark physical signifiers, a number of which are notable for their toying with physical attributes that can be understood to carry a racial significance.

Most notable among these physical signifiers is the *kogyaru*'s dark skin. This desire for a deeply tanned complexion is part of a fashion more widely subscribed to by young Japanese, called *ganguro*. *Ganguro*, or "blackface," is a key component of the *kogyaru*'s strangeness and unintelligibility in the eyes of older, or more conservative younger,

Japanese, in light of the traditional Japanese prizing of pale skin, particularly in women. It therefore marks a recent shift in attitudes toward skin color.

The *kogyaru* sports a deeply tanned face, augmented by dark foundation, and offset by white or very pale lipstick and eye shadow. The purpose of the lipstick presumably is to further accentuate the darkness of the skin, and the eye shadow—in addition to creating the same contrast—is thought to make the eyes look bigger, the final effect notable for its revisitation of an earlier, western, style also referred to as blackface: that of the black and white minstrel show.[1] However, the *kogyaru* style also requires vertiginous platform boots and miniskirts (thought to make the legs appear longer) and commonly features bleached-blonde hair. It is also regularly combined with blue- or hazel-tinted contact lenses.

Japan is a lucrative market for skin bleaching cosmetics, as are a great many countries around the world. While the popularity of skin bleaching cosmetics can be seen to result from a racist hierarchy of skin color, which attributes "white" skin with the highest aesthetic value, it is also the case that paleness of skin has a long history of being associated with delicacy, refinement, and an aristocratic insulation from outdoor labor. This is certainly the case in Japan (where whiteness also denotes purity more generally) but has also traditionally been the case in western countries identified as white in racial terms.

However, the continuing market for skin bleaching cosmetics in Japan is now offset by a large number of tanning salons, and the rise of *ganguro* is more unambiguously related to issues of racial perception. Its very contradiction of a prizing of paleness, as well as the recentness of its appearance, removes the possibility of justification in terms of traditional aesthetics.[2]

In western countries, the traditional prizing of pale skin began to wane in the 1930s, due to the fashionability of an outdoors, California lifestyle typified by film stars like Douglas Fairbanks, Jr. However, while Japanese have readily taken on a variety of fashion influences from western countries in the past, the considerable time lag between this cultural moment and *ganguro*, as well as the continuing desire for paler skin in the interim, indicates a lack of direct connection with this trend.

The rise of *ganguro* is quite clearly tied to notions of racial identity. The unease or disapprobation present in white, western reactions to the

popularity of skin bleaching products in nonwhite countries stems from a perception that the consumers of these products are compelled to emulate a European complexion by a globalized ideal of attractiveness. Whether or not this perception is accurate, it would seem to be the case that Japanese women have not historically sought to tan themselves to appear less like the Caucasian, western body. Anecdotal and literary accounts relate a sense of disappointment when comparing the white skin of pale Japanese women with the white skin of foreign, "white" bodies (Wagatsuma 138–39, 49ff.), and the low regard in which people of African descent have been held in Japan in the past marks a concern with the Japanese position in a hierarchy of race whose rungs are primarily separated by gradations of color.

However, a Japanese concern with skin color, rather than explaining the *kogyaru* and *ganguro* fashions, only raises more questions concerning why dark skin has become popular at this particular historical moment. In order to answer these questions, it is necessary to consider in some detail the history of Japanese perceptions of racial difference and the dissemination of western racial ideas in Japan.

Japanese Perceptions of Racial Difference

The Japanese policy of *sakoku*, or "closed country," was forcibly ended by the United States in 1853, when the infamous "black ships" (or steam ships) of Commodore William Perry entered Uraga Bay. Perry presented the Japanese with the US–Japan Treaty of Friendship, a document aimed at establishing an unequal trade relationship with the formerly isolationist country. Soon after, Perry was visiting Japan again in order to ratify the treaty (which the Japanese had no option but to accept), and, as part of the accompanying celebrations, members of his crew performed a black and white minstrel show for their hosts, who reportedly found it highly entertaining (Leupp 7).

These events heralded the arrival of a time when Japan could no longer insulate itself from the harsh realities of the world during the age of colonialism. Suddenly finding itself at the mercy of western powers which were in the process of dividing up the surrounding geography among themselves, Japan's first concern was the preservation of its sovereignty, and the most logical way of doing this was to strengthen itself in the areas which made colonial powers strong.

Where once Japan had sought to lock out foreign influences, it now began to consume them voraciously. It became an eager student of western sciences and arts, and set about building itself into a modern colonial power in its own right. However, these efforts remained compromised by one seemingly ineluctable reality: the race of the Japanese people.

While colonialism was made possible by inequalities of technology and resources, it was justified using hierarchies of race. Irrespective of its material achievements, Japan would seemingly never be able to deal with the western powers as an equal because its people were Asian, part of the Oriental mass whose inferiority supposedly invited the guiding hand of white rule. The modern knowledges so eagerly absorbed by the Japanese were saturated by ideas of white supremacy, and the colonialist project was underwritten by social Darwinist conceptions of racial competition.

For the Japanese, at the mercy of acquisitive white powers with superior material resources, the reports of study groups sent to America must have been sobering. As part of their tour of American society, Japanese reformers were shown the lowly position of blacks, whose supposed mental inferiority and lack of motivation destined them to subservience, and the marginalized and impoverished state of Native Americans, whose supposed lack of evolutionary competitiveness damned them to retreat, and eventual extinction, in the face of white expansion (Weiner 105–06). The lesson to be learned by the nonwhite Japanese was clear: all over the world, western civilization was visiting a racial destiny of subjugation or extinction upon seemingly inferior societies, and being Asian (while sparing them from slavery or genocide) fated them to a lack of respect and freedom.

This understanding in no way led to a Japanese rejection of racial differentiation or racial hierarchies—far from it. As noted by John Dower,

> the half century or more during which the Japanese initially turned to the West for education coincided almost exactly with the period when scientific racism dominated the natural and social sciences in Europe and the United States. In Japan, that is, the very process of Westernization involved being told that the racial inferiority of the Japanese was empirically verifiable, thus placing Japanese scientists and intellectuals in the awkward position of either ignoring such arguments or attempting to repudiate their ostensible teachers. (204)

The centrality of racial ideas to the western knowledges the Japanese sought to take on, as well as the simple reality of the white domination of the world which such views purported to explain, made their rejection almost impossible. Rather, racial hierarchies and theories of racial competition seemed of fundamental importance to the Japanese project of strengthening the nation's position, but such a strengthening could only take place through a change in the racial identity of the Japanese themselves.

The idea of a change in racial identity might initially seem absurd, given racial identities' supposed foundation in the unavoidable and unchanging reality of inherited physical attributes. However, a more sustained consideration makes it clear that racial identity is a far more complex structure, created through the fixing of cultural significance onto certain anatomical features. In Omi and Winant's words,

> *race is a concept which signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies*. Although the concept of race invokes biologically based human characteristics (so-called "phenotypes"), selection of these particular human features for purposes of racial signification is always and necessarily a social and historical process. (53)

That ideas of racial difference result from social and historical processes is illustrated by the numerous available examples of race's capacity to shift its boundaries or modify its connotations. The Japanese are arguably in possession of the most varied and unstable history of racial categorization to be found.

The modernizing slogan "*datsu a nyu o*" or "out of the East and into the West" (Morikawa 175; Cronin 83), points to a nineteenth-century imagining of Japan's movement across geographical and racial boundaries. This imaginary movement was given a more concrete representation at the Chicago World Exposition of 1893, when Japan successfully lobbied to have its pavilion situated, not along the Exposition's central concourse (which represented the world's cultures in an "evolutionary" order culminating in the modern societies of the west), but on the "Wooded Island," a feature originally intended to remain empty. In addition to being situated adjacent to the displays of western countries, the Wooded Island both literally and figuratively separated Japan's representation from geographical and racial hierarchies and

schematizations which would have cast it in a lowly position (Snodgrass 5–16). "Out of the East," at least, if not yet "into the West."

Furthermore, once the Japanese had assimilated those discourses which had made the formulation of racial hierarchies possible, they could use them to modify or add nuance to Japan's own position within them. Japanese anthropology was able to establish a sub-hierarchy within the category of "Asians," with the Japanese at the top and therefore closest to Caucasians (Weiner 105–06).

In addition to elevating the Japanese within this hierarchy, this also served as a justification for imperial Japan's policies toward "inferior" nearby peoples such as the Koreans and Chinese as well as the native Ainu of the northern Japanese island of Hokkaido, banning local languages, customs, and dress and replacing them with the more "civilized" culture and government of Japan.[3]

While there were certainly negative reactions to Japan's finessing of racial categories in western countries, there was also widespread approval and even support. The most notable evidence of such support is the acceptance of the Japanese as "honorary whites" in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Attempts were made to trace the historical origins of the Japanese "race" back to ancient Israel or Babylon or—in Nazi Germany—to Aryan stock (Sato 125–26; Leupp 8–9). In 1930, the government of South Africa even passed a law which made the Japanese officially white (Bernal 403–04). Such actions reflect an attempt—even by white non-Japanese—to alter the position of the Japanese people relative to the boundaries of racial identity. The motivation behind such efforts is obvious: Japan had already compromised racial categorizations by modernizing and increasing its military and economic power, making a redrawing of racial boundaries necessary. The connection between racial identity and these factors is most apparent in the Nazi attempts to make their military allies white and the South African attempts to do the same for an important trading partner. Japan threatened to disprove conceptions of Asian inferiority, but such a threat could be neutralized by arriving at a belief that the Japanese had never been Asian to begin with. Such attempts—both internal and external—to articulate a new position for the Japanese, one distanced from established racial categories while at the same time wholly dependent upon ideas of racial categorization, gave rise to a Japanese intellectual predisposition towards exceptionalism, which continues into the present.[4]

Racial Change

This relationship with ideas of racial hierarchization, which entailed incorporation and acceptance, but also modification, of racial categories, had an impact which extended beyond its clear influence on the history of Japanese economic and colonial policies. It was the physical appearance of the Japanese body more than anything else that served to fix the Japanese within a particular racial category, and this appearance was largely, but certainly not entirely, resistant to manipulation. The effectiveness with which the Japanese went about incorporating modernity—previously thought to be the exclusive preserve of the white west—into their own culture can be associated with a view of national—and by extension racial—identity characterized more by evolution and progression than fixity, and this theme can also be seen in ideas and attitudes towards the Japanese body itself:

> Sometimes I feel that the white skin of the Caucasians tells me that after all I am an Oriental and cannot acquire everything Western, however Westernized I might be. It is like the last border I cannot go across and it is symbolized by the white skin. (Wagatsuma 146)

This attitude, recorded by Hiroshi Wagatsuma, highlights the difficulty of separating racial identity from ideals of modernity or "Westernization." However, contrary to the views of this informant, for some time there have been themes or preoccupations within Japanese popular culture which deal with the possibility of racial change, which can serve as a kind of corporeal westernization.

Japanese doctors performed the first medical procedure to add an upper fold to the Asian eye in 1896, and similar procedures are still performed today (Gilman 100). While predominantly motivated by the acceptance of a western ideal of attractiveness, this "upper lid Westernization" (Balsamo 62) was also in some cases thought to bring an improvement in Japanese sight (Gilman 102; Frühstück 158). Nineteenth- and early twentieth-century procedures to raise the bridges of Japanese noses, as well as a host of less invasive technologies, such as the use of tapes, glues, or small tools to crease upper eyelids (Miller 50; Wagatsuma 161–62), permanent waves, the bleaching of hair, and—most recently—the changing of eye color using tinted contact lenses, all sought to modify the appearance of the Japanese

body in a way clearly influenced by those physical attributes associated with the European or Caucasian body.

At a more frivolous level, an early slogan used by McDonald's in Japan promised that, "If you keep eating hamburgers, you will become blond!"[5] Similarly, Japanese scholar Koichi Iwabuchi recalls eating Kentucky Fried Chicken in Tokyo in the late 1970s "and feeling that I was becoming an American" (Iwabuchi 54–74).[6] This connection between food and bodily change serves as a literalization of ideas of racial change through westernization, in which western popular cultural practices are consumed and internalized by the Japanese body, and consequently bring about a change in the racial signification of the Japanese body itself. In fact, the westernization of the Japanese diet has resulted in some change to the Japanese physique, in particular an increase in average height. Given that popular Japanese conceptions of racial difference have often dwelled on the reputedly longer legs of Caucasians, this change is not insignificant in this context.

What is significant to a discussion of the *kogyaru* in these attitudes is the weakening of racial fixity they reflect. The Japanese have a history of compromising racial differentiation, both by demonstrating competencies previously thought antithetical to their assigned racial category, and through conscious attempts to shift the Japanese position within larger racial hierarchies. It seems inevitable that such a history would make race's essentialism and claims to natural and objective reality much weaker in Japan than elsewhere.

Race as Style

Under such circumstances, it follows that the treatment of and attitude toward racial appearance will be altered. Where racial features and racial identity become things that can be—at least to an extent—put on and taken off, the integrity of racial hierarchies can be expected to weaken somewhat, as suggested by the *kogyaru*'s combining of different racial markers. This is not to say that certain racial identities will not be prized more highly than others, but rather that the sense of rigid differentiation and hierarchization between them will be undermined by a sense that the boundaries of racial identity can be crossed, or at least blurred slightly. While practices such as "upper lid Westernization" are generally understood to reflect an inappropriate idolization of

Caucasian appearance, the *kogyaru* is not the only example suggestive of a more complex dynamic at work behind a seeming obsession with the "Western," "white" body.

The supposedly Caucasian or "Western" appearance of characters in Japanese *anime* and *manga* has been remarked upon repeatedly in popular and academic discourse (Buckley 275). However, a more comprehensive consideration of these media forms shows that the utilization of racialized features in the design of these characters is actually quite varied, different racial features being associated with a variety of styles and genres. For example, I would argue that macho action heroes intended for older male readers are often idealized representations of the tough, active, Japanese body: dusky skinned, bushy browed, and with a mane of wild black hair. On the other hand, characters in the homosexual romance *manga* popular with young women tend to have curly blond locks and wide blue eyes, and can be understood to represent refinement, sensitivity, romance and exoticism, and romantic "ladies comics" in general depict "the white man as sex object and romantic target" (Kelsky 149). Such a stylistic usage of racial features is paralleled in the use of foreign models in advertising, where the Caucasian couple in an advertisement for a wedding chapel is intended to evoke the popular Japanese association of a western lifestyle with romance, and the use of a female Caucasian model in an advertisement for cosmetics or a hatchback car seeks to project a sense of the glamour and independence associated with the western woman. As in western advertising, an African American model might be used to convey a sense of athleticism or inner city style. Rather than suggesting a singular idealization of one set of racial attributes, then, such a use of racialized bodies figures a set of varied racial significances that make their related physical features appropriate in particular circumstances for creating differing styles.

In discussing the popularity of foreign models in Japanese advertising, Millie R. Creighton argues that, in addition to the perception that white foreigners are the standard of attractiveness and the bodies for which fashionable clothes are designed, *gaijin* also are considered to have bodies more appropriate for certain kinds of behavior. Sexuality, individualism, and self-indulgence (all useful qualities when encouraging consumption) can be represented by *gaijin,* who are associated with such qualities, rather than Japanese, in whom such behavior has traditionally been frowned upon. In addition, kissing and nudity—

considered inappropriate public behavior in Japan—are associated with foreign models ("Imaging the Other in Japanese Advertising Campaigns" 142–45).[7]

What is significant in the examples of both *manga* and advertising is that, rather than simply reflecting the idolization and prioritization of one particular racial appearance, different racial identities are attributed with different significances, which might be more or less applicable depending upon context. While it would be unjustified to claim that there is no hierarchization of racial identities at work here, it is nevertheless true that racial differences do have a horizontal, as well as vertical, arrangement, where different racial identities are prized more highly in some contexts and less in others. In the more fanciful representations of *manga*, in addition, it might be argued that this has resulted in a tendency to blend different racial signifiers together in some contexts, so as to create a kind of "identikit" assemblage of qualities associated with more than one racial group.

In the context of the *kogyaru* and *ganguro*, the utilization of an African American style in Japan is of particular interest, being a relatively recent phenomenon, which contrasts with the traditional Japanese disdain for Africans and dark skin. The *ganguro* style is the most striking reflection of a shift in the attitudes young Japanese have toward the black body, which has led to the so-called *kokujin bûmu* ("black boom") and the adoption of a de-racialized "black style" among many Japanese young people.

According to John G. Russell, ". . . Western constructions of blackness [are] yet another 'brand,' like whiteness or westernness, for purchase in the Japanese perennial quest for identity" (118). At a basic level this simply parallels the worldwide marketing popularity of a de-racialized black style (114–15). When a white western teenager listens to gangsta rap, wears his jeans below the hip, or buys the Nikes worn by his favorite black American basketball star, he is, to some extent, consuming race. This significance is less glaring because it does not seek to simulate anatomical features associated with a particular race, but it is nevertheless there and is implicit within the strategies used to market these commodities. This kind of marketing quotes certain meanings and significances attached to the black American body, and the black skin of the *ganguro* is only a more direct quotation of the same thing.

However, seen in the historical context of Japanese interactions with racial categorization, the affectation of actual physical markers associated with blackness reflects a view of racial identity that is less fixed and essentialized and more fluid and performative. It suggests a view of race that is partly about choice, and particularly choices of consumption and style. In keeping with the racial representations seen in advertising and *manga*, the set of significances and associations attached to racial identity make racial features themselves signifiers of certain qualities that can be taken on in order to quote a certain style.

Also in keeping with the examples of advertising and *manga*, the *kogyaru* blends signifiers of different racial identities in a way that is less suggestive of a rigid hierarchy of racial identity and more evocative of a horizontal smorgasbord of racial associations that she can reach across to claim whatever combination of markers she desires. Dark skin and African American style is accompanied by blonde hair and often blue eyes, as well as an attempt to generate the effect of wider eyes and longer legs.

While the *kogyaru* style does not at all suggest a rejection of racial categorization resulting from the weakening of hierarchies and boundaries, it does mark an increased plurality and playfulness in how racial signification is approached. It is true that the *kogyaru* style is organized around racial discourse's prioritization of certain anatomical features. After all, why is hair dyed brown or blond and why are blue or hazel contact lenses chosen over a potentially limitless list of alternate colors, if not because the Caucasian body is being referred to as an arbiter of what is "natural"? It is also worth noting that both the "black" and "white" styles being utilized are associated with western—and specifically American—bodies (the black style in question has nothing to do with, for example, African style).

Despite this continued concern with racial categories, however, the affectation of such racialized features has nothing to do with the logic of racial passing. In mixing and matching racialized features, the *kogyaru* is formulating a new and singular position relative to the aestheticization of racialized anatomy, not seeking entrance to another existing categorization. This can be contrasted with the idealization of racially coded features seen in Japan in the past, whose preoccupation with the Caucasian body resulted in a hierarchization that positioned one racial identity as an ideal to emulate. The addition of a black style results in a blending of different ideals of racial appearance,

destabilizing racial hierarchies, and creating hybridized ideals of racial style.

Clearly, then, the sense of strangeness, or even grotesqueness, with which the *kogyaru* is received in mainstream Japanese society results from her confusion of racial styles and movement away from older ideals concerning the coherency and aesthetic appeal of different, racially significant, features. This opens up the question of where the *kogyaru* style falls relative to Hebdige's distinction between "conventional" style and "subcultural" style, where the former naturalizes itself while the latter draws attention to its artificiality (100–02). Certainly the *kogyaru* constitute a youth subculture whose referencing of racial styles conservative Japanese find ugly and bemusing. But does such referencing constitute an ironic comment on the history of Japanese attempts to move between racial categories or rather a naturalization of the Japanese discourse of racial fluidity that resulted from these attempts?

The *Kogyaru* and Racial Mimicry

The answer would seem to be a combination of the two. The *kogyaru* style might be taken as evidence of a failing of racial hierarchization and differentiation, as the Caucasian body is no longer given sole priority, and physical attributes associated with more than one racial category are appropriated and then blended in a way that suggests a lack of concern with the coherence or stability of racial identities. However, at the same time, these themes have clearly resulted from an historical concern with racial identity and racial change within the Japanese popular imagination, and as such only seem to signal their intensification and extension.

This paradoxical state of affairs calls to mind Homi Bhabha's discussion of mimicry, in which the attempt to emulate a group attributed with a superior position only works to destabilize the boundaries and categories that make such a superior position possible. While colonialist discourses encourage mimicry, this mimicry never quite achieves a complete transformation, and the result can be a destabilization of the categories that brought it about, a weakening of what Bhabha describes as "the concept of 'fixity' in the ideological construction of otherness" ("The Other Question" 66). The preceding

discussion has drawn attention to numerous examples of Japan's lack of fixity with regard to racial categories, and this lack of fixity has been brought about through the acceptance of discourses that place the white, western body in a position of superiority.

Speaking in more general terms, Marilyn Ivy has already drawn a connection between Bhabha's discussion of mimicry and western stereotypes of the Japanese as mimics and copiers (7). The *kogyaru* provides a particularly striking example of such mimicry and its significance because it takes place upon the Japanese body, presenting a literal embodiment of mimicry and the confusion and destabilization it can bring. According to Bhabha,

> [mimicry's] threat . . . comes from the prodigious and strategic production of conflictual, fantastic, discriminatory "identity effects" in the play of power that is elusive because it hides no essence, no "itself."
>
> ("Of Mimicry and Man" 90)

The *kogyaru* style certainly does not result from a sense of disillusionment with racial categorization; rather it continues an existing preoccupation with racial identities and a shifting Japanese relationship with them. However, at the same time, the attempt to mimic cannot help but destabilize the very same racial structures that allow such a racialized style to come into being. In so doing, it once again constitutes a continuation and magnification of existing themes in the Japanese conception of race, where attempts to shift the Japanese position relative to racial categories—while resulting from an acceptance of racial difference and hierarchies—weakens racial discourse's claim to result from essentialized, biological difference. Without such a weakening already having taken place, it is difficult to imagine the *kogyaru* style ever coming into being.

Conclusion

While racial styles are utilized in marketing and fashion widely outside Japan, the history of Japanese interactions with discourses of racial identity makes it a particularly interesting site for their study. It shows the very direct connection between particular anatomical features and hierarchies of racial difference, which in turn provides a context for the

appropriation or simulation of particular, racially significant, physical features within the arena of fashion. However, the significance of the *kogyaru* would seem to lie in her complete disregard for the coherence of her racially charged *bricolage*. To accuse the *kogyaru* of trying to appear "white" or "black" is absurd; clearly it is neither the intention nor the effect of the *kogyaru* style to do any such thing. The history of Japanese interactions with discourses of race, during which the Japanese have sought to change their position within a structure that demeaned and excluded them, while at the same time being influenced by ideas of white superiority, has created the circumstances under which this kind of fashion can come into being. The history of Japanese interactions with discourses of racial difference can be seen to have weakened or disorganized the boundaries of race in all kinds of ways, leading—perhaps inevitably—toward a time when racial identities can decompose into a fragmented collection of markers and stylistic affectations, which can be playfully mixed and matched by young Tokyoites as they please.

While resulting from racial discourse's prioritization and aestheticization of racially coded features, the racial styles exemplified by the *kogyaru* do not constitute a Japanese attempt to move from one racial category to another. Although originating in an attempt to resolve tensions and ambiguities in the Japanese sense of racial identity, the undermining of race's foundation in the idea of immutable anatomical difference has turned at least some racialized features into free-floating signifiers, transported, or simulated using various technologies so that they may be applied to any body according to the dictates of fashion. Within such an arena of play, the *kogyaru* perhaps becomes one of the "conflictual, fantastic . . . 'identity effects'" described by Bhabha.

Notes

1. Of course, western blackface itself is a useful example of the construction of racial identity (see Foster 141).
2. There is a history of dusky skin being associated with the qualities of men of action and adventure. Older Japanese men might still take this attitude (see Miller 48–49), and some tanning might even be acceptable in a young woman if it is associated with a sporty lifestyle. However, the *ganguro* attempt to make the skin as dark as possible is something entirely new.
3. Of course, these policies were applied further afield during Japan's later period of wider expansion.
4. Most notably in the Japanese discourse of *nihonjinron* (see Dale; Befu; Yoshino).

5. Moritsugu Ken. "Understanding Double-Deck Psyche Of Japan A Must For Foreign Firms." *Japan Times*, January 30, 1986 (cited Creighton 46).
6. However apparent such themes might have been during the 1970s, introduced franchises such as McDonald's and Kentucky Fried Chicken have since become thoroughly domesticated within Japan, and their aura of western exoticism has faded.
7. However, rather than suggesting that the use of *gaijin* in advertising reflects an identification with the Caucasian body, Creighton argues that they "contribute to Japanese occidentalisms by reinforcing a clear distinction between the Japanese 'us' and *gaijin* other" ("Imaging the Other in Japanese Advertising Campaigns" 141). Given advertising's appeal to identify with and emulate the ideal consumers it represents, Creighton's claim that this advertising seeks to portray its models as alien and irredeemably different from Japanese consumers is difficult to accept.

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