Clothing fantasies:
A case study analysis into the recontextualization and translation of subcultural style

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B.A., Concordia University, 2019

Extended Essay Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

in the
School of Communication (Dual Degree Program in Global Communication)
Faculty of Art, Communication and Technology

Approval

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Date Approved: August 31, 2020

Abstract

Although the study of subcultures within a Cultural Studies framework is not necessarily new, what this research studies is the process of translation and recontextualization that occurs within the transnational migration of a subculture. This research takes the instance of punk subculture in Japan as a case study for examining how this subculture was translated from its original context in the U.K. The frameworks which are used to analyze this case study are a hybrid of Gramscian hegemony and Lacanian psychoanalysis. The theoretical applications for this research are the study of subcultural migration and the processes of translation and recontextualization.

Keywords: subculture; Cultural Studies; psychoanalysis; hegemony; fashion communication; popular communication

Dedication

Glory to God alone.

Acknowledgements

"Ideas come from pre-existing ideas" was the first phrase I heard in a university classroom, and this statement is ever more resonant when acknowledging those individuals who have led me to this stage in my academic journey.

I would like to firstly thank my supervisor, Dr. Sun-Ha Hong for his support and patience. I feel very fortunate to have had a supervisor who cared deeply about maintaining a high standard of academic achievement and who worked with me to realize this goal.

I am grateful to Dr. Ahmed Al-Rawi, who first instilled in me a sense of academic purpose and value. From being his student at Concordia University to now working alongside him as a research assistant at Simon Fraser University, I would not be where I am today were it not for seeing you as a model for academic and professional success.

Likewise, at Concordia University I would like to acknowledge the many professors who opened my eyes to the beauty of Cultural Studies. In particular, I would like to thank Dr. Lindsay Balfour for introducing me to theories of hospitality. I would also like to thank Dr. Chris Gutierrez for introducing me to Lacanian psychoanalysis, something this research project makes significant use of. Both of you were profoundly influential in my academic and personal development.

I would like to thank all of the students I taught as teaching assistant at Simon Fraser University. It is cliché, but I learned as much from teaching you as you did from me. In particular, you all helped me to realize that my first thesis idea was not as brilliant as I had once thought and that I should pursue a topic I am personally better suited for.

My family. My mother, father, sister, and grandparents; each of you have uniquely influenced me to the point where I am today.

Lastly, I would like to thank Mark for your love and care over the years. I am unflinchingly grateful for your belief in me and for being a source of support throughout the good times and the bad.

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Prologue

In this world there are only two tragedies. One is not getting what one wants, and the other is getting it.

(Oscar Wilde, 1893)

Today, simply uttering the word 'swastika' evokes revulsion, indeed terror, in many. Yet by all accounts, throughout most of its long history, the swastika, the Zelig of all symbols, was comparatively benign. Prior to its transfiguration, it served as religious phylactery, occult talisman, scientific symbol, guild emblem, meteorological implement, commercial trademark, architectural ornament, printing fleuron, and military insignia.

(Heller, 2008)

I was dismayed when, one evening, while searching me after a raid…the astonished detecting took from my pocket, among other things, a tube of Vaseline... One of whose ends was partially rolled up. Which amounts to saying that it had been put to use. Amidst the elegant objects taken from the pockets of the men who had been picked up in the raid, it was the very sign of abjection, of that which is concealed with the greatest care, but yet the sign of a secret grace which was soon to save me from contempt. When I was locked up in a cell, and as soon as I had sufficiently regained my spirits to rise above the misfortune of my arrest, the image of the tube of Vaseline never left me. The policemen had shown it to me victoriously, since they could thereby flourish their revenge, their hatred, their contempt. But lo and behold! That dirty, wretched object whose purpose seemed to the world- to that concentrated delegation of the world which is the police… stout of muscle and strong in their moral assurance- utterly vile, became precious to me ….I would indeed rather have shed blood than repudiate that silly object.

(Genet, 1987)

Chapter 1.   Introduction

In an increasingly globalized world, the (mis)use of signs is increasingly a subject of debate. Recently, numerous statues, such as those of Christopher Columbus in Baltimore (Seipel, 2020), Leopold II in Belgium (Porterfield, 2020), and Edward Colston in Bristol (BBC, 2020), have been torn down in response to the newfound resonance of Black Lives Matter in a post-COVID-19 reality. What these movements show is the radically different meanings which signs can hold in different locations and across time; what was once an honorary statue now becomes a symbol of historical and continued oppression.

The importance of this issue is compounded by the contemporary instance of subcultures which are created virtually through echo chambers and filter bubbles which polarize users by creating different information pathways (Foth, Mitchell, Estrada-Grajales, 2020, p.733). The potential consequences that these online subcultures can have, such as incel subculture and the far-right subculture, are well documented, such as the 2017 Quebec Mosque shooting (Hetu, 2019). There is, as a result, an increasing need to understand the process of subcultural radicalization, and considering the often-times transnational nature of fake news (Linvill & Warren, 2020), there is also a need to understand how subcultures and subcultural style become translated and recontextualized.

My research seeks to better understand the process of translation and recontextualization that occurs when a subculture is taken from its original context and begins to manifest in a different, transnational context. I will use a case-study based approach, using the example of punk subculture in Japan to show how subcultures are recontextualized along the parameters of a dominant, hegemonic culture.

In order to understand the process of recontextualization and translation, I will apply two theoretical frameworks to my case study: hegemony and psychoanalysis. Hegemony, as a theory, helps understand subcultures as being always/already relational to a given parent culture. Psychoanalysis on the other hand, provides a framework for understanding the inherent contradictions which are the genesis for a particular subculture, which in turn, change, when this subculture is recontextualized.

1.1. Research Question

The primary research questions for this study are:

RQ 1. What is the nature of a recontextualized subculture? How is the recontextualized subculture similar and different to the same subculture in its original context?

RQ.2. How does the process of recontextualization and translation occur?

RQ.3. What is the difference between the process of recontextualization and the process of translation?

These questions are in alignment with the methodology for this research project which is a case study. They were chosen because of their potential application in future studies of recontextualization and subcultures. The intention of this research is to go beyond the respective case of punk subculture in Japan, and for this research to also be of use to individuals interested in studying other instances of recontextualization such as cancel culture, as well as individuals interested in online subcultures such as those mentioned above.

1.2. Organization

This research is organized in the following way. Firstly, my theoretical framework serves as a deconstruction of my project title: Clothing fantasies: A case study analysis into the recontextualization and translation of subcultures. As such, the first part of my theoretical framework involves defining what exactly is a subculture, and what combination of definitions is my research making use of. Next, to address the aspect of 'Clothing fantasies', my research mentions those aspects of psychoanalysis I will be using, paying particular attention to limit the scope of this discussion to the requirements of this study. Following this, I delineate the concepts of translation and recontextualization and explain how they are not interchangeable and actually represent a broad bipolarity in terms of epistemic potential.

The next primary section of this research study is a literature review which examines the academic discourse surrounding Japanese subcultural style. From this review, I draw some primary themes which serve to contextualize my own research as filling a gap in understanding the process and constituent elements of production which lead to a subculture's presence in a different context.

The methodology for this research is explained and justified in its own chapter. In order to analyze the recontextualization and translation of subcultures, I identified a case study method as being the most conducive to better understanding these processes. This chapter explains how I will conduct the case study analysis and also highlight the importance of extrapolation as the purpose of this research is to contribute to a discourse beyond the respective case study.

Following this, I identify three waves of Japanese cultural punk style, beginning with Comme des Garçons in the 1980s, continuing with Undercover in the 1990's, to the contemporary moment of a reinvigoration of punk subculture with companies such as WACKO MARIA, CIVILIZED, and Takahiromiyashita The Soloist. In these sections, I compare the clothes produced by Japanese companies to those worn by punks in the U.K. From this, I make links between the original instance of punk subculture in the U.K. and punk in Japan, showing both similarities and differences.

The section on Japanese cultural punk style is primarily descriptive, and I include a separate chapter on data analysis. Here, using the tools of hegemony and psychoanalysis, apply these to show that the process of recontextualization occurs against the axis of hegemony and that the process of translation can be understood within a psychoanalytic framework.

I further explain this in the findings of my research which serves as a culmination of the previous chapters and a summary of the case study results. In this section, I also point to the future potential applications of this research in other cases of recontextualization and translation. I conclude by listing some of the limitations of this study and mention some opportunities for further study.

Chapter 2.   Theoretical Framework

The purpose of the theoretical framework for this research is to explain and define some of the key terms in my research including subculture, hegemony, psychoanalysis, and translation/recontextualization. This is not meant to be an exhaustive historical review of the terms. Instead, I am explaining how these terms are used specifically in this research. This is particularly important for a subject like psychoanalysis which has broad potential uses, ranging from purely philosophical to professional and clinical.

The theoretical framework is organized topically, first defining subculture as it is understood in the contexts of Critical Theory and sociology. The particular psychoanalytic concepts which will be used in this research are the triangulation of *objet petit a, jouissance*, and the mirror phase. Finally, the processes of recontextualization and translation will be described.

2.1. Defining Subculture

Despite being written in 1979, Dick Hebdige's book *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* remains the gold standard for subculture studies within a Cultural Studies framework. When I initially read this book, I realized it was very similar to the kind of work I wanted to do, but I noticed that it only studied subcultures within their original, U.K. context and, as a result, was Western-focused. Through no fault of its own, it did not take into account how these subcultures could be translated and recontextualized in different regions. Part of the intention behind this study is to expand upon Hebdige's book and apply a similar kind of analysis to translated subcultures. What this will accomplish is not a quasi-anthropological finding of Japanese subcultural practices. Rather, it will reveal and elucidate the process of translation which occurs when a subculture moves from one context to another.

The two frameworks this research uses to understand subcultures are sociology and Critical Theory. Some of the questions this research will answer in this section are: What is a subculture? How is a subculture different from culture? What is the relationship between style and subculture?

2.1.1. Subculture as a response to hegemony (Critical Theory)

Hebdige (1979) begins his book with the statement that, "The meaning of subculture is, then, always in dispute, and style is the area in which the opposing definitions clash with most dramatic force" (p.3). If a subculture is defined by its dispute, then the question must be asked, in dispute with what? The answer, as Hebdige (1979) later makes clear, is hegemonic culture.

Hegemony is most famously associated with Antonio Gramsci, who describes hegemony in relation to the subaltern. Gramsci, in his prison notebooks, avoids giving a direct definition of hegemony, and instead uses it to describe a "process" (Smith, 2010, p.39) in which

> The politico-historical criterion on which our own inquiries must be grounded is this: that a class is dominant in two ways, namely it is leading and dominant. It leads the allied classes, it dominates the opposing classes. Therefore, a class can (and must) lead even before assuming power; when it is in power it becomes dominant but it also continues to lead" (Gramsci, 1971, p.136-137).

This description is useful insofar as Gramsci makes a distinction between domination and leadership, the difference being the use of violence, or coercive power. This difference is confirmed by Gramsci when he writes "If a revolutionary minority were to succeed in violently taking over power, this minority would be overthrown the next day by a counter coup launched by capitalism's mercenary forces, for the uninvolved majority would allow the cream of the revolutionary forces to be massacred" (1977, p.127). Thus, hegemony is the exercise of non-coercive, non-violent power by the ruling class on to the working-class, to convince the working class that the ruling class' interests are also their interests.

Building off of the work of Gramsci, Gayatri Spivak further develops the idea of hegemony in relation to the subaltern. Spivak (1988), in her influential essay "Can the Subaltern Speak", makes the claim that the defining characteristic of the subaltern is that they cannot speak (Spivak, 1988, p.104). This, of course, does not mean that they cannot utter words or phrases. Rather, speech in this way is interpreted as a Foucauldian ability to produce discourse (Foucault, 1981, p.61).

Like Spivak, Ranajit Guha (1982) also defined subaltern in a negative sense by describing the elite (in the Indian context) as being wealthy landowners and those who have receive a Western-style education. The subaltern, then, are all those who have not received this education and/or do not own land. The benefit of this definition is that it establishes *a priori* the relationship between culture (hegemony) and subculture (subaltern). According to these negative definitions of subculture, just as Foucault (1998) would describe power relations as being always/already present in a social system (p.63), so too are culture-subculture relations always/already present in a given social system. This is not to conflate the concepts of subaltern-hegemon with culture-subculture. Rather, it is to suggest that the dialectical relations between them are equidistant and similar enough to be compared by Hebdige (1979, p.15).

2.1.2. Subculture as differential association (sociology)

The basis for subcultural studies in sociology primarily comes from Edwin Sutherland (1947) who broke from the Lombrosian, positivist view of criminality to create a theory of differential association. The theory of differential association posits that individuals are not innately criminal, but rather, that "criminal behavior is learned in communication with other persons, predominantly in intimate groups" (Matsueda, 1988, p.281).

This theory was later expounded upon by Albert Cohen, himself a student of Sutherland, whose 1955 book *Delinquent Boys* argued that a subculture arises out of the perceived imperfections and contradictions found in the parent culture (Calluori, 1985). For example, Cohen makes the argument that elementary schools are middle-class institutions, run by middle-class teachers, and which communicate middle-class values (Cohen, 1955, p.131; Baudrillard,1998, p.59). According to Cohen (1955), individuals not from this background experience strain and consequently, will form together to create a new (sub)culture with its own set of values and goals (p.59).

Also moving away from pathological, positivist notions of criminality is David Matza (1964), who coined the term "delinquency drift" to describe individuals who can simultaneously subscribe to both conventional and subterranean values. This establishes "deviance" as non-pathological and also not extraordinary, and instead has the potential to be expressed within any member of society. Matza's (1965) provocative conclusion is that part of why individuals become deviant is simply that they are labelled

as such. This idea forms the genesis for what will later become called the labelling tradition in sociology (Erikson, 1962).

As compared to the Critical Theory-based definition which is meta-social in scope, the sociological definition of subculture places more emphasis on the individual. It creates the possibility for an ordinary, pathologically average person to drift in and out of a subcultural state of mind. It also acknowledges that subcultures are formed when individuals come together in groups and create an alternate social system with a unique set of values, goals, and aspirations.

2.2. Psychoanalysis & the Object-Cause of Desire

The sociological and Critical Theory definitions are useful in understanding the process by which subcultures are (re)created in a dialectical process, but what they fail to address is *why* subcultures arise in a particular context. More related to this research project, the question is *why* punk subculture, which comes from a specific U.K. context, finds its way in Japan where it not only exists, but thrives and becomes a hegemonic culture? I have identified psychoanalysis as a framework for helping to resolve this question and supposed contradiction.

Psychoanalysis has its basis in the work of Sigmund Freud and has since been continued by individuals such as Slavoj Žižek, Jacques Lacan, and Julia Kristeva. Psychoanalysis has a broad possible range of applications, from purely theoretical work, to clinical, professional work. Perhaps because of this, psychoanalysis and Freud's work have occupied an ambivalent space in academia, tee-toeing the traditional boundaries of science and philosophy. Because of the immense possible applications and understanding of psychoanalysis, this research seeks to answer only one question: what is the relationship between *objet-petit a, jouissance*, and the mirror stage, and how can these be applied to a neoliberal, capitalist framework?

2.2.1. Objet petit a

Objet petit a is a recurring theme in Lacan's writing, appearing various times in many seminars. The easiest part to understand of this concept is the "*a*" which stands for "*autre*" or "other" (Lacan, 2014, p.103). Next is *petit* which means small in French. *Petit a* (small other) is defined in opposition to *le grand Autre* (the big Other) (Sheridan,

2001, p.xi) which this research will examine later in relation to the mirror phase. Finally, and most difficult to understand is Lacan's ambivalent understanding of *Objet. Objet,* as the name would suggest, means object. However, the object that Lacan is referring to is not necessarily a physical object, rather, it is the object-cause of desire (Lacan, 2014, p.101). Taken together, the *objet petit a* rather than representing *something* actually represents *something missing*; it represents the lack of fullness in the self, and is that object (physical or abstract) which individuals search for, buy, eat, consume, in the continual process of psychoanalytic identity formation. Further reinforcing the abstract nature of *objet petit a* is that Lacan requests it goes untranslated, "thus acquiring, as it were, the status of an algebraic sign" (Sheridan, 2001, p.xi).

2.2.2. Mirror phase

The mirror phase heuristic remains one of Lacan's most enduring legacies, and although useful for clinical applications, this research uses the concept of the mirror phase in a slightly different context.

Starting literally, the mirror phase entails what Lacan refers to as a child looking into a mirror and, in this moment, experiencing a "libidinal dynamism", the dynamism being the realization of the separation between ego and subject (Lacan, 2001, p.1). Lacan's argument is that prior to this mirror phase, children have no realization of themselves as subjects and experience the world in pure chaotic materiality, what he refers to as "the real" (Sheridan, 2001, p.x). This moment of realization is similar to Althusser's (2001) concept of interpellation, wherein individuals are "always/already subjects" (p.176), but that individuals only recognize their subjectivity in certain interactions, such as the experience of being hailed (p.174).

Importantly, along with the process of identification, there is another significant process which occurs during the mirror phase, which is the "*méconnaissance*" (Lacan, 2001, p.17),or misrecognition which occurs between the self-as-ego and the self-as-subject; the self-as-subject is alternatively referred to as the "le grand Autre" which I previously alluded to. It is precisely this misrecognition which causes the ego, the individual, to desire to begin with.

2.2.3. **Jouissance / Anxiety**

Perhaps the most important psychoanalytic concept for this research is Lacan's heuristic of *jouissance*, however it is also particularly difficult to understand and requires explaining in further detail.

Firstly, *jouissance* is the object of a drive. Lacan writes in *Seminar VII* that "*jouissance* appears not purely and simply as the satisfaction of a need but as the satisfaction of a drive" (Lacan, 2015, p.209). The drive which Lacan (1998) refers to here is the death drive, the drive which is at the basis for all other drives (p.275). Jouissance is a kind of pleasure, however, it is not the pleasure-principle which psychanalysis asserts as guiding rational human behaviour. Instead, jouissance is pleasure-pain, the result of going beyond rational pleasure, what Lacan (2004) refers to in French as "*jouissance fourrée sans doute*". This phrase has been variously translated as "*jouissance* under wraps" (Lacan, 2014), "backhanded *jouissance*" (Lacan, 2012), and popularly as "backhanded enjoyment" (Hewitson, 2015), though no such reference exists for this translation despite it being used often. Regardless, it is clear that the pleasure which is derived from *jouissance* is not absolute and is instead ambivalent, existing in between pleasure and pain. This can be affectively described as the feeling of eating one too many desserts, buying one too many dresses, watching one too many YouTube videos. Thus, for Lacan, *jouissance* is one step ahead of pleasure.

Furthermore, the nature of *jouissance* links it to the *objet petit a* and the mirror phase. *Jouissance* is not a drive towards an object, indeed this is what is understood by the pleasure principle. Instead, *jouissance* is a drive back, it is a destructive drive which aims to go back to the primordial pre-signification self. This establishes *jouissance* as a superlative meta-drive in which the subject is always trying to go back to this self, and that it is in this lifelong repetitive pursuit which individuals experience pleasure; pleasure in trying, but inherently failing, to go back to the pre-signification self.

2.2.4. **Summary and Definitions**

Bringing together the different concepts of *objet petit a*, mirror phase, and *jouissance* is not altogether difficult, partly because they are all part of Lacan's psychoanalytic system. Put simply, the mirror phase, the moment of object-other signification, results in the development of the *objet petit a*, which is the object-cause of

desire and which creates *jouissance,* pleasure which is attained from trying, but eventually failing to return to the pre-signification self. This study can now return to Wilde's (1983) quote: "In this world there are only two tragedies. One is not getting what one wants, and the other is getting it." The contrapositive to Wilde's statement is that although there are only two tragedies, there are an infinite number of comedies, insofar as from Lacan's point of view, every action the individual takes is an attempt towards *jouissance*.

Lacan's specificity of jouissance as being partly painful is particularly applicable to this research as one of the differences between punk subculture in the U.K. and punk subculture in Japan is the fact that in Japan, punk is presented as a luxury commodity fetish. In the U.K. at the time, anyone was free to rip up their clothes. However, what makes jouissance a useful heuristic for this research project is that it more accurately describes luxury purchases, which are beyond what is rationally pleasurable. For example, in 2019 Kapital (Figure 2.1) released a denim jacket in collaboration with Marvel. The jacket, from a brand with very little recognition outside of Japanese fashion circles (unlike more mainstream European luxury brands whose logos are instantly recognizable), looks ripped up, old, like it was a DIY project- and yet it costs over $6000 USD. Jouissance helps explain this contradiction behind why someone might/did pay, what is by most accounts, a lot of money for a denim jacket, and in particular one which looks so used and worn.

Figure 2.1 Kapital; Marvel, (2019). "Villains" Denim Jacket

2.3. Consumer Drives

In *The Consumer Society,* Baudrillard (1998) outlines some of the unique developments of late-capitalism, in particular the abstraction and signification of products. Drawing from a dual background in semiotics and sociology, Baudrillard (1998) makes the claim that "you never consume the object in itself (in its use-value); you are always manipulating objects (in the broadest sense) as signs which distinguish you either by affiliating you to your own group taken as an ideal reference or by marking you off from your group by reference to a group of higher status." (p.61). Thus, the idea of *needing* a product is an illusion and instead, the feature of late-capitalism is that "few objects today are offered alone, without a context of objects which 'speaks' them" (Baudrillard, 1998, p.27) Such is this signification that when a product as banal as Robin Hood flour changes packaging, this warrants a public explanation and coverage by the news (Evans, 2020).

In the context of clothing and style, what this means is that clothing choices and purchases are always signifying. Baudrillard describes this signification as occurring in two ways: communication and differentiation (p.60). By communication what is meant is the semiotic inertia behind not just iconic products, but indeed all products. Roland Barthes (1977) classifies this process as myth, and gives the example of the otherwise unremarkable Panzani pasta advertisement as commodifying "*italinicity*" (p.35) through the tangential associations of freshness, taste, and high culture. The same is true with clothing; as products which exist in an ideological semiological system, they are inherently referential. When Jun Takahashi makes reference to *2001: A Space Odyssey by Stanley Kubrick* (Figure 2.2), it is not just because the colours are nice. Rather, it is because the film represents themes of abandonment, destruction, transcendence, which are many of the same themes that punks in the U.K. were responding to.

By differentiation, Baudrillard draws on a Cultural Studies idea of culture as being defined by the "shared meanings or shared conceptual maps" (Hall, 1997, p.18), and that purchases serve to either orient oneself towards or against the hegemonic culture. Importantly, this process of differentiation is always enacted through production/creation (Baudrillard, 1998, p.88), rather than negation or rejection.

Figure 2.2 Undercover. (Fall/Winter 2018-2019). *ORDER-DISORDER*

2.4.   Recontextualization and Translation

2.4.1. Subculture as differential association (sociology)

This research is interested in the translation and recontextualization of subcultures and subcultural style, and as such, it is necessary to define and contextualize these terms and how they are being used in this research.

Linguist Per Linell (1998) defines recontextualization as "the dynamic transfer-and-transformation of something from one discourse/text-in-context ... to another" (p.154). Linell (1998) further delineates recontextualization into three possible manifestations: intratextual, intertextual, and interdiscursive (p.248). Intratextual recontextualization involves the same text being interpreted differently by different actors, and interdiscursive is a meta-narrative recontextualization akin to Foucault's (1976) concept of the regime of truth. Intertextuality is the most useful concept for this research and is the one which will be developed further.

Intertextuality is a term coined by Julia Kristeva (1980), which she developed in an attempt to synthesize Bhaktin's (1981) notion of *heteroglossia* and De Saussure's semiotic approach to language. Kristeva defines intertextuality as the process by which meaning is not transferred directly from writer to reader but instead is mediated through,

or filtered by, "codes" imparted to the writer and reader by other texts" (1981, p.69). Seen in this way, a cultural object does not, in itself, contain meaning; instead, its meaning exists through "the relation between textual systems and discursive articulations of collective identities" (Allor, 1998, p.230).

Importantly, as Basil Bernstein (1996) notes, "in this process of de- and re-location the original discourse underwent an ideological transformation according to the play of specialized interests among the various positions in the re-contextualizing field" (p.113-114). Thus, recontextualization is *always* a politically loaded action, as invariably, in the crossover between contexts, there exists the application of an ideological-semiological system. An example of the politics of recontextualization is cultural appropriation.

2.4.2. **Cultural Appropriation?**

Cultural appropriation can be roughly described as "the taking—from a culture that is not one's own—of intellectual property, cultural expressions or artifacts, history and ways of knowledge and profiting at the expense of the people of that culture" (Writer's Union of Canada, 1992, quoted in Ziff & Rao, 1997, p.1; p.24). Rogers (2006) elaborates on Ziff & Rao's research by considering four types of cultural appropriation: cultural exchange, cultural dominance, cultural exploitation, and transculturation (p.477). What is most applicable to a discussion of cultural appropriation, as it is commonly understood is what Rogers (2006) refers to as cultural exploitation which is defined by the author as " the appropriation of elements of a subordinated culture by a dominant culture without substantive reciprocity, permission, and/or compensation" (p.477).

In Japan, I do believe there are instances of exploitative cultural appropriation, such as the fetishization of Native American culture by Japanese brands such as Visvim, Goro's, First Arrows, and others which are 'inspired' by Goro's. However, given the definition above, I do not consider the adoption of punk subcultural style in Japan to be an example of cultural appropriation.

In the first example, of brands which are "inspired" by Native American culture, I would argue this does constitute exploitative cultural appropriation. Goro's is perhaps the exception to this categorization because the individual, Goros Takahashi, was specifically accepted by the Lakota Tribe and is rumoured to have been the first non-

Lakota member invited to a Sun Dance (Li, 2018). The vast majority of these brands, however, are derivative of Goro's and, in lacking any direct engagement with Indigenous cultures, become engaged in a process of cultural appropriation. Perhaps the reason why this appropriation is not often discussed is that Japan itself is often the target of cultural appropriation. Barthes (1982) writes on Japan as a longstanding object of desire for the West and contemporaneously, issues around the wearing of kimono continue to circulate. However, this does not make Japanese companies' appropriation of Native American culture any less problematic, and indeed the reason why it is exploitative and problematic is that there are both historical and contemporary Native American artists producing jewelry. It is by virtue of a strange, Baudrillardian hyperreality that the Japanese copy of these designs (and not the originals) have come to accrue cultural capital.

In contrast, I argue that the Japanese adoption of punk subcultural style does not constitute exploitative cultural appropriation. First of all, punk in the UK, as will be further discussed, is itself an appropriation. Punk emblems like the union jack and tartan print are themselves appropriations from the British aristocratic class, which, following Hall's definition of culture as being shared conceptual maps (1997, p.18), does constitute a different culture. Furthermore, the origins of punk as an anti-capitalist movement make it resilient to appropriation; for instance, individuals in Japan or elsewhere in the world are free to rip up their jeans and clothes if they so choose. When Undercover sells ripped up jeans for hundreds or thousands of dollars, this selling does not necessarily come at the expense of the youths who were doing the same in the U.K. To this extent, if anything, what is perhaps being appropriated in this instance is Vivienne Westwood's particular interpretation of punk subcultural *style* (as a fetish commodity). Here again, there is a difference between punk and American Indian inspired jewelry. While there is a clear difference in social capital between brands like Goro's and actual Navajo jewelry, in the example of punk in Japan, Vivienne Westwood's clothes continue to enjoy popularity alongside domestic brands (Kurokawa, 2013).

2.4.3. Translation

Both translation and recontextualization involve the production of a new text. The difference between them lie in the closeness to the original text. Spivak (1993), for example, stresses the need for the translator [to] surrender to the text" (p.183). By

surrender, Spivak (1993) stresses the intimate, even "erotic" (p.183) relationship which must develop by the translator and the text, such that the original rhetoricity is maintained. Spivak gives two examples to illustrate her point. The first example is her famous translation of Derrida's *De la grammatologie*, which was produced for a large-scale, quasi-global audience. She contrasts this experience with her translations of Mahasweta Devi's texts in which she feels "almost no fear of being accurately judged by my readership here." (p.190). The difference in the affect of translating these texts is synecdoche for her larger, deconstructionist, post-structuralist argument which is that the translation of a text is a completely new text in and of itself.

Thus, the difference between translation and recontextualization can be surmised as the distance between the (re)producer and the original text. Translation, as Spivak has shown, is an intimate process requiring an emotional relationship with the text. Recontextualization, on the other hand, is more distant and involves the intentional separation of context from a text. Both recontextualization and translation are political acts. Not only is the act of writing a translation a political act as Spivak has shown, but so too will the translated text take on its own power according to the circumstance of who it was originally produced for, and the audience for the new translated text.

This has particular relevance for the case study of punk subculture in Japan as some aspects are closer to a translation and others to recontextualization. For example, the commodified nature of punk clothes in Japan are a recontextualization of punk subculture in the U.K. insofar as it marks a radical departure from the original *ethos* of punk. In contrast to this, the signifiers, such as some brands' usage of tartan print and references to post-punk band Joy Division are more of a translation since the designers and brands so surrender to the rhetoricity of the source material by engaging on a level of not just visual aesthetics but also more tangential cultural elements such as art and film.

Chapter 3.   Literature Review

3.1. Postwar Subcultures

Considering power relations as always/already present in a social system (Foucault, 1998), it logically follows that subcultures are also always/already present in a given social system. Certainly, prior to Western contact, there have existed subcultures in Japan. However, this research is interested not in subcultures in and of themselves, but rather in the *process* of recontextualization and translation which occurs in relation to subcultures. As such, the starting point for this literature review will be the post-war period of Japanese history where an early representation of imported subcultural style can be seen. The purpose of this literature review is to review the past writings on Japanese subcultural style and to position my own work against this body of knowledge.

Hiroshi Narumi's (2015) study on postwar Japanese subcultural style is a useful exploratory inquiry into the subject. Narumi (2015) examines five Japanese subcultures and their corresponding clothing styles, Roppongi-zoku, Miyuki-zoku, Harajuku-zoku, futen-zoku, and bôsô-zoku (p.418). The first three Narumi states are related to mod subculture, the fourth hippie subculture and the last one being representative of punk subculture (p.418). Importantly, the first three names refer to different neighborhoods in Tokyo which suggest that these subcultures are demarcated geographically as well as thematically.

Narumi's (2015) analysis of Roppongi-zoku, Miyuki-zoku, and Harajuku-zoku identifies all three as originating in mod (sub)culture. Within this broad category contained various expressions of style, ranging from "a suit or blazer" to "jeans and T-shirts" (Narumi, 2015, p.418-419). Narumi's logic is then that this can be "distilled into two distinct styles: Ivy style and Continental Style" (2015, p.419). This is significant because it marks an early instance of a subculture being adopted by a culture whose context is significantly different than the original parent culture. Mod subculture is described by Hebdige as being personified by a "'Typical lower-class dandy' (Goldman, 1974), obsessed with small details of dress (Wolfe, 1966)" (Hebdige, 1979, p.52). Mods challenged the class-based expectations of the U.K. through an appropriation of the men's suit:

They made themselves like Ronald Blythe's discontented labourers into 'masterpieces': they were a little too smart, somewhat too alert, thanks to amphetamines. And as Dave Laing remarks (1969) 'there was something in the way they moved which adults couldn't make out'; some intangible detail (a polished upper, the brand of a cigarette, the way a tie was knotted) which seemed strangely out of place in the office or classroom. (Hebdige, 1979, p.52).

Thus, the men's suit becomes a caricature of itself and becomes a tool by which the working-class mods critique the ruling-class. For mod style to then be "distilled" into "Ivy stye" (Narumi, 2015, p.419) is a contradiction and reflects the conflicts which occur when a subculture is recontextualized in a context which is significantly different than the original part culture. Without the ideological critique, mod style becomes just a men's suit, and does, in essence, return to that which it critiqued as being ruling-class expectations. This calls to mind Spivak's advice about the rhetoricity required in for a translation. In this case, of the Japanese post-war recontextualization of mod subculture, there is a rhetoricity which is missing, and which causes the self-collapse of the possibility of mod subculture existing in Japan. Overall, Narumi's text is a useful starting point in understanding the origins of foreign influence in Japanese style. Furthermore, the contradiction in conflating Ivy style and Mod Style highlights the need for understanding the politics of recontextualization and translation, since, in this case, although the aesthetics are similar (men's suits, and dandy/preppy style), the ideological context is very different.

3.2. Lolita Subculture in Japan

In reviewing the literature on Japanese subcultural style, I identified a large body of knowledge concerning Lolita style and subculture (McKnight, 2010; Park, 2011; Winge, 2008). This is not entirely surprising, as Lolita literally provides a fetishistic gaze nominally based on Nabokov's pedophilic novel. The concern here is one which Spivak identified as being the rhetoricity between the translator and the original text. The original text, in this case, should not be seen as Nabokov's book, but rather Lolita subculture in Japan, and the translators are those academics, whether Japanese or not, who write on Lolita subculture. The question which I am raising here is on whether these

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academics do 'surrender' to the text, and whether they submit to the rhetoricity of Lolita subculture.

For example, Kathryn Bernal (2016) writes on the heterogenous nature of Lolita subculture and warns against the misidentification of Lolita subcultures with values of promiscuity and overt sexualization (p.90). Bernal (2016) later writes on her positionality "as both an "insider"—as a member of the Lolita subculture in real space, as well as via virtual global communities—and as a critical observer, or "outsider" research analyst" (p.95). This explicit and implicit difference is reflected in other writings on Lolita subculture which seem to confirm Bernal's warning by reverting to tropes of infantilization and sexualization. For example, Park (2011) writes that "In essence, Lolitas are attempting to prolong childhood with the Lolita aesthetic via the use of kawaii." (p.59). Furthermore, McKnight (2010) analyzes the film *Shimotsuma monogatari* (Kamikaze Girls) to uncover the role and relationship between rococo aesthetic and Japanese subculture. McKnight (2010) cites one of the characters, who says that "Whenever I really want to get into the rococo spirit and give everything I have to being a Lolita, I force myself into a tight corset and make my waist smaller." (p.135). Despite academics acknowledging that "Gothic/lolita as a counterpublic has not gone mainstream" (Gagné, 2008), it continues to be one of the most written about topics in relation to Japanese subcultures. This writing can be either descriptive or critical, and although sometimes the academics involved do openly reference their rhetoricity with the text, such as Bernal's article (2016), what is more frequently the case is that they do not. From this, I point out two conclusions.

Firstly, that Lolita subculture is overrepresented in the academic discourse around subcultures and subcultural style in Japan. The effects that over-representation can have on a population are well documented. Tuck & Yang (2014) write that "some communities—particularly Indigenous, ghettoized, and Orientalized communities—are over-coded, that is, simultaneously hyper-surveilled and invisibilized/ made invisible by the state, by police, and by social science research" (p.811). Secondly, the nature of this overrepresentation is not neutral, and in (re)producing tropes of infantilization and sexualization, also (re)produces a dichotomous relationship where "on the one hand there are Westerners, and on the other there are Arab-Orientals; the former are (in no particular order) rational, peaceful, liberal, logical, capable of holding real values, without natural suspicion; the latter are none of these things" (Said, 1978, p.49). As Fanon

(1986) notes, this dichotomous relationship and the imaginaries which emanate from this research serve to deny the racialized subject an ontology and Hegelian sense of being/*dasein* (p.109).

In summary, translation and rhetoricity are concepts which are not only important when a subculture migrates transnationally, they are also important when a subculture becomes the subject of academic inquiry. As this review has shown, the risk is that well-meaning academics (re)produce orientalist imaginaries of the Orient as being exotic and salaciously sexual. This research project moves beyond Lolita subculture, which has been noted, is still a marginalized subculture, and instead takes on the subject of hegemonic punk culture, in particular to understand the processes of recontextualization and translation.

3.3.   Punk Subculture in Japan

A past study which is, in content, applicable to this research is Yuko Kurokawa (2013) who examines the influence of Vivienne Westwood in Japanese street fashion throughout the 1990's. Kurokawa (2013) identifies the magazine *Cutie* as a site of social resistance insofar as it "effectively encouraged its readers to erase boundaries between the sexes and have the courage to express themselves as unique human beings through their attire, without worrying how other people saw them." (p.65). Furthermore, Kurokawa (2013) identifies Vivienne Westwood as being heavily featured in this popular culture magazine, and cites the reason as being the introduction of punk to Japan via individuals such as Hiroshi Fujiwara (p.68). Interestingly, Kurokawa (2013) identifies a difference in how menswear and womenswear adopted punk style. For men, the adoption came out of the post-war appreciation for military garments, as is also stated by Narumi (2015). For example, Vivienne Westwood's military inspired designs, especially the parachute suit (figure 3.1) with its straps, referenced back to this previously appreciated military aesthetic while also pushing it forward into the realm of the avant-garde. For women on the other hand, the appeal of punk did not come from the silhouette or military references. Instead, it came from the tartan check pattern, "already popular in Japan" (Kurokawa, 2013, p.71) and which was then subsequently appropriated by first *Kogal* and later Lolita subcultures. In both cases however, the clothes abandon their ideological roots from the U.K. and come to accrue new meanings in Japan. This will be further discussed in the case study portion of this research.

Figure 3.1 *SEX.* **(1976) Parachute Shirt**

Chapter 4.   Methodology

The methodology for this research is a case-study based analysis. I identify three waves of punk subculture as occurring in Japan, and describe their relation with punk subculture in the UK. Afterwards, these will be analyzed through the application of the two theoretical frameworks previously established, hegemony and psychoanalysis, to describe the process of recontextualization and translation which occurs when a subculture exists in a context different than its original context.

The reason for choosing a case study comes from the extrapolative nature of this study. The purpose here is not just to research punk subcultural style in Japan, but rather to better understand the process of recontextualization and translation as it applies to subcultures. As was mentioned in the introduction, the potential applications for this research are both commercial, with corporations wanting to better understand how to market their products, and also governmental, considering the rise of online subcultures. In either scenario, a case study method is of benefit because of how it can be applied to scenarios beyond the respective cases.

However, case study as a method, is frequently a subject of academic debate. As such, it is worth describing precisely how this research understands case studies and how they will be used throughout this research. Firstly, in an attempt to clarify the byzantine triangulation of method, methodology, and case study, VanWynsberghe & Khan (2007) describe case studies as a "transparadigmatic heuristic"(p.9) with seven features, some of which are a small sample size, contextual background, multiple data sources, and extendability" (p.4). This definition, rather than limiting case studies to one particular set of regulations and norms, acknowledges the diverse nature of case studies while also including guidelines for consistency. Their conclusion is that a successful case study is accomplished by:"(a) providing detailed descriptions obtained from immersion in the context of the case, (b) bounding the case temporally and spatially, and (c) frequent engagement between the case itself and the unit of analysis" (VanWynsberghe & Khan, 2007, p.9). With regards to the case study research for this study, the detailed descriptions will be provided by looking at particular aspects of punk subculture in Japan, such as Undercover's Fall/Winter 2018-2019 menswear show. The three waves that this study has identified as being the most relevant for the adoption of punk subculture in Japan also help to bound the case temporally and spatially. Finally,

the engagement between punk subculture in the UK (unit of analysis) and Japan (case itself) is made throughout the case study chapters.

The first case is that of Comme des Garçons, which was arguably one of the first instances of a punk subculture being produced by a Japanese company. Furthermore, despite operating within the realm of high-fashion, Comme des Garçons' business success has led it to influence both high-fashion and street-fashion brands in Japan.

The next case which will be examined is Undercover, which (re)presents punk subculture in a significantly different way than Comme des Garçons. Importantly, and as will be discussed further, Undercover is the gatekeeper node for the social network of actors involved in the punk street culture scene in Japan, and Tokyo specifically.

Finally, I provide a brief survey of the contemporary proliferation of Japanese companies that draw on punk iconography to sell their products. Influenced by Comme des Garçons and Undercover, these brands push the envelope of punk by creating sub-subcultures such as grunge, cyber-punk, and music-punk.

Each of these cases will be juxtaposed with a description of British punk subculture as described in Hebdige's landmark study. This procedure follows the case study logic insofar as Hebdige's account of punk subculture in the U.K. is generally accepted in academia. Using this text as the standard allows me the freedom to make more interpretive and subjective claims when it comes to arguing for how punk was recontextualized and translated in Japan. Lastly, the engagement with the theoretical framework will come later in the analysis and findings chapters of this research where I return to the concepts of hegemony and psychoanalysis.

Chapter 5.   Case Study, Wave 1: Comme des Garçons

This next portion of the research will describe the fashion brand Comme des Garçons for the purpose of understanding how it translates and recontextualizes punk subculture in Japan. Comme des Garçons is a Japanese clothing and lifestyle brand started by Rei Kawakubo in 1973 (Bolton, 2017). Despite Kawakubo (and other Japanese designers) often resisting being considered a "Japanese brand" (Thurman, 2014), Comme des Garçons, Yohji Yamamoto, and Issey Miyake are often considered as being the trifecta of Japanese high-fashion (English, 2011), whose work destabilized the previously euro-centric fashion environment. Comme des Garçons maintains both offices and manufacturing facilities in Japan, and despite originally being produced for a domestic audience, is now sold internationally. Furthermore, in a fashion landscape dominated by large conglomerates such as LVMH and Kering, it is worth mentioning that Comme des Garçons remains independent despite its large-scale expansion in recent years.

The "Comme Universe" (Richardson, 2018) is an expansive list of companies operated by business partners and couple Rei Kawakubo and Adrian Joffe. Apart from the Comme des Garçons flagship line for women, there is also Comme des Garçons SHIRT (menswear collection), Comme des Garçons Homme Plus (fashion forward menswear collection), Comme des Garçons Parfums (perfume collection), and Dover Street Market (retail concept stores), as well as dozens of other companies operating under the umbrella of Comme des Garçons. Importantly, the direct relationship of Comme des Garçons and punk subculture in the U.K. is established by virtue of Kawakubo being an "excellent customer" at the SEX store jointly opened by Vivienne Westwood and Malcolm McLaren in the 1970's (Thurman, 2014).

Unlike other fashion brands which wax and wane in popularity, it is truly a remarkable feat that, since its inception, Comme des Garçons has managed to stay relevant and popular, most recently attracting attention with their collaborations with Supreme (Figure 5.1) and recognizably graphic "PLAY" logo (Figure 5.2). This chapter will examine Comme des Garçons through the heuristic of social binaries and boundary-violations which are present both in Comme des Garçons in Japan and in punk subculture of the UK.

Figure 5.1 [Left] Comme des Garçons X Supreme, 2012
Figure 5.2[Right] Comme des Garçons PLAY, S/S 2020.

5.1.   Comme des Garçons as liminal

Despite the brand's origin in Japan in 1973 (Bolton, 2017), it was Comme des Garçons' first runway show in Paris in 1981 which established its vision of liminal ambivalence. By liminal ambivalence what is meant is that, since its inception and especially in its collections throughout the 1980's, Comme des Garçons has sought to violate the boundaries and social binaries of "East/West…Male/Female…Subject/Object… Self/Other…Child/Adult" (Bolton, 2017, p.14). Indeed, CDG's very name evokes a violation of boundaries; Comme des Garçons translates into English as 'like the boys', which is a linguistic transgression of a male/female gender/sex binary. However, Comme des Garçons is not a unisex brand, and neither was it selling men's clothes to women; Kawakubo has actually confirmed that rarely do women buy the men's collections (Obrist, 2013). Instead, Kawakubo was, at the time, designing clothes for women that were 'like the boys' in terms of being oversized, monochromatic, and otherwise not in conformity with the standard of femininity at the time. This was in opposition to the European fashion at the time represented by designers such as Azzedine Alaia, Thierry Mugler, and Jean-Paul Gaultier whose clothes were "colourful, exuberant" (Hoffman & Lecamp, 2015). In contrast, Comme des Garcon's collections throughout the 1980's (Figure 5.3) represented a radical re-orientation of performative femininity (Kondo,1997, p.128).

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An example of this violation of boundaries can be found in Comme des Garçons'
Fall/Winter 1982-1983 collection *Holes* (Figure 5.3), which challenged the idea of what
lace could be. Cambridge English Dictionary (n.d.) defines lace as "A decorative cloth
made by twisting thin thread in delicate patterns with holes in them". Comme des
Garçons' sweater stays within this definition of basically what lace is, as cloth with holes
in it, but deconstructs the expectation of lace as a fine fabric with dainty, geometrical
patterns, by instead producing a garment with oversized, asymmetric holes.

Interestingly, these two particular boundaries, of class expectation and gender
binary are precisely two of the same boundaries which were being challenged by punk
subculture in the UK. Hebdige (1979) writes on David Bowie inspired punks, who were,
"in short, challenging at a symbolic level the 'inevitability', the 'naturalness' of class and
gender stereotypes" (p.89). This was accomplished through their articulations of a
"profane aesthetic" (p.28) with similar deployments of deconstruction such as the punk's
usage of ordinary objects-   "safety pins… school uniforms… [and] hair dye" (p.107) in
order to deconstruct the aesthetic and ideology of the dominant parent culture.

Figure 5.3 Comme des Garçons 'lace' sweater, *Holes* F/W 1982-1983.

5.2.   CDG SHIRT

One of the reasons why Comme des Garçons remains an excellent example of
the Japanese translation of punk style is in how, even within the brand, it contains
elements of multiplicity and heterogeneity. Within the umbrella of CDG, there exists
dozens of sub-brands and business ventures (Richardson, 2018), each focusing on a
particular facet of the overall CDG vision of ambivalent liminality. One sub-brand in

particular is Comme des Garçons SHIRT (extant) and its sub-sub label Comme des Garçons SHIRT Boy (now defunct). Comme des Garçons SHIRT, as its name suggests, focuses on men's dress shirts, and, in terms of design, it exists somewhere in the space between the avant-garde Comme des Garçons HOMME PLUS and the more casual Comme des Garçons PLAY. As such Comme des Garçons SHIRT challenges the social binary of formal/casual, and by association, class structure, by manipulating what is usually thought of as a formal garment (Figure 5.4).

CDG SHIRT frequently employs British iconography in its collections as part of its overall class commentary. In particular, the tartan print features prominently in CDG SHIRT collections (Figure 5.5) where it used to further critique class expectations around formality and menswear. This marks a symmetry with punk subculture in the UK which used this very same fabric, tartan, as a way to subvert class expectations and as a symbol of resistance. For example, [Vivienne] Westwood included tartan in her "seditionaries" collection of 1977 in a juxtaposition that can only recall the seditionary aspect of the eighteenth-century tartan" (Martin, 1988, p.218).

Comme des Garçons SHIRT Boy was a sub-sub label, existing as a capsule collection within the runway shows for Comme des Garçons SHIRT up until its unexplained cessation after Spring/Summer 2019. The impetus for CDG SHIRT Boy was to question the social binary of child/adult as it relates to clothing. Why does children's clothing look the way it does? CDG SHIRT Boy held up this question to critical scrutiny by producing obviously children's clothing but scaled up for adults (Figure 5.6). Interestingly, CDG Shirt Boy is the gendered opposite of Lolita subcultural style which creates girls' clothes for women. The fact that CDG SHIRT Boy is now defunct should not be read as a reflection of failure, but rather perhaps simply the end of this period of signification; that the point has been made and that the more important and enduring legacy and social critique is that of class which CDG SHIRT continues to uphold.

At first glance, the clothes do not conform to the traditional vision of punk as being monochromatic, black, distressed, DIY, grimy, dirty. However, the spirit of social transgression, which Hebdige (1979) describes as being integral to punk is re-enacted here, with clothes which challenge binaries of gender, child/adult, and formal/informal. Therefore, what is shared among both punk subculture in the U.K. and Comme des Garçons' particular translation of punk, is a defiance and challenge of social boundaries, norms, and expectations. It is natural therefore, that Comme des Garçons' clothes do

not look like those produced by punks in the U.K. since the contexts for challenging social values are very different in contemporary Japan and in the U.K. in the 1960's and 70's.

Figure 5.4 [Left] Comme des Garçons SHIRT, F/W 2019-2020.
Figure 5.5 Middle] Comme des Garçons SHIRT, F/W 2020-2021.
Figure 5.6 [Right] Comme des Garçons SHIRT Boy, S/S 2019.

5.3.   CDG Parfums

The contemporary fashion landscape is marked by clothes acting as "loss-leaders" for fashion companies (Polan & Tredre, 2020, p.xiv). Increasingly, companies are using accessories, shoes, and perfumes as a primary source of revenue. One of the consequences of this strategy, however, is the risk of brand dilution as these products often have low homophily with their respective parent company. This is not the case with CDG Parfums, which eschews traditional norms around fragrance and instead presents a product which in form and content are countercultural. For example, the description for ODEUR 53 reads:

> An abstract anti perfume. The latest technology is used to clone odours from inorganic materials. Smells never before used, with no precise name only abstract ideas.
>
> The Freshness of Oxygen, Flaming Rock, Freshly Mowed Grass, Wash Drying in the Wind, Sand Dunes, Pure Air of the High Mountains, Flash of Metal, Nail Polish
>
> (Comme des Garçons Parfums, 2020)

I make no claim to know what a flash of metal *smells* like, but what is evident here is a challenge, indeed, a mockery of traditional perfumes and their descriptions. CDG is completely in on the joke that their perfume descriptions are nonsensical, as is the physical shape of their bottles (Figure 5.7) which are specifically designed to *not* stand upright. Defying the expectations of what a product *is*, in addition to how it is *used*, is part of the CDG's universe punk-inspired mockery of its audience.

5.4. Collaborations with artists

One of the defining characteristics of Comme des Garçons' as a company is its history of collaboration with other brands and artists. Although this is now increasingly seen in the contemporary fashion environment, when Comme des Garçons was inviting contemporary artists and brands to collaborate on projects in the 1980's, this was considered a new phenomenon.

One of the most interesting examples of this practice of collaboration is Comme des Garçons' long-standing history with contemporary artist Cindy Sherman. From 1983-1994, Sherman worked on a series titled Fashion which included work for French Vogue (Figure 5.8). Here, Sherman mocked the consumers of Comme des Garçons by juxtaposing the expensive clothes with a dishevelled, bruised face. Rather than be offended at this bastardization of their clothes, Comme des Garçons were thrilled and hired Sherman in 1994 to produce a campaign which blurs the binary between art and advertisement (Figure 5.9).

Figure 5.7 [Left] Comme des Garçons Parfum (2020)
Figure 5.8 [Middle]Cindy Sherman (1984)
Figure 5.9 [Right] Cindy Sherman (1994)

Another example of Comme des Garçons' avant-garde artistic collaboration is with Jean-Michel Basquiat. Recently, for their Spring/Summer 2019, CDG SHIRT produced a range of shirts bearing his artwork (Figure 5.10), however their history of collaboration goes back further when, in 1987, Basquiat himself walked in a Comme des Garçons HOMME PLUS runway show (Compain, 2017). For a brand with a punk aesthetic, this kind of transfer of social capital by an artist like Jean-Michel Basquiat (while living) is a testament to the brand's rhetoricity in accurately translating and representing subculture aesthetic and ideology.

There are two conclusions which I draw from CDG's history and practice of collaboration. First is related to a point I made earlier in this research about the possible cultural appropriation of punk subculture. In this case, Comme des Garçons truly cannot be accused of cultural appropriation since it participates directly with artists, including those which subvert and mock its own customers. Secondly, although not cultural appropriation, what Comme des Garçons does demonstrate in these examples is the power of neoliberalism to subsume and commodify any critiques made against it. Comme des Garçons' fluent capacity to commodify art which critiques capitalism is unsettling because it questions the very ability for art to make meaningful social critique.

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Figure 5.10 Comme des Garçons SHIRT, S/S 2019

5.5. Comme des Garçons as ambivalent

The overall conclusion about Comme des Garçons is that it is ambivalent. Firstly, It is ambivalent in its social critiques. In this case, ambivalent means that it operates in between social binaries and in doing so, critiques social conceptions of gender and class. It is also ambivalent about its customers, it is not afraid, and rather, seems to enjoy, mocking its audience through confusing products and collaborations with artists who purposefully mock its customers. Finally, it is also ambivalent to social critique. A critique of CDG as being elitist will be rebutted by the fact that the brand operates many sub-labels at significantly different price points, and that often, its message is not simply to sell products, but to communicate an overall artistic vision. Furthermore, a critique from a high-fashion perspective that its clothes are simply a commodification of subcultural style will be rebutted by its direct, live engagement with artists such as Cindy Sherman and Jean-Michel Basquiat. Thus, it maintains an ambivalent position in nearly all aspects of the company, which I argue make it not only resilient to critiques, but is perhaps part of the reason for its global success as well.

Chapter 6.   Case Study, Wave 2: Undercover

If Comme des Garçons represents the high fashion adaptation of punk, then invariably, Undercover covers the vernacular, street culture adaptation of punk style. Founded in 1990 by Jun Takashi (Anaya, 2015), Takahashi's punk influence is immediately palpable by virtue of the fact that he played in a punk music band called the Tokyo Sex Pistols and directly cites Vivienne Westwood as a "role model" (Rabkin, 2015). This chapter will examine Undercover to describe the formative role it played not just in the development of punk subculture, but a multiplicity of street (sub)cultures in Tokyo in particular.

6.1.   The Social Network of Japanese punk subcultural style

At the heart of the social network (Figure 6.1) of the menswear street fashion cluster of punk subcultural style in Japan are three individuals and their respective companies: Nigo and A Bathing Ape, Jun Takahashi and Undercover, and Hiroshi Fujiwara and Fragment Design. Together, these three individuals represent the trifecta of Japanese street fashion and together, they laid the foundation for the Ura-Harajuku neighborhood to become the nexus of Japanese street fashion for decades to come.
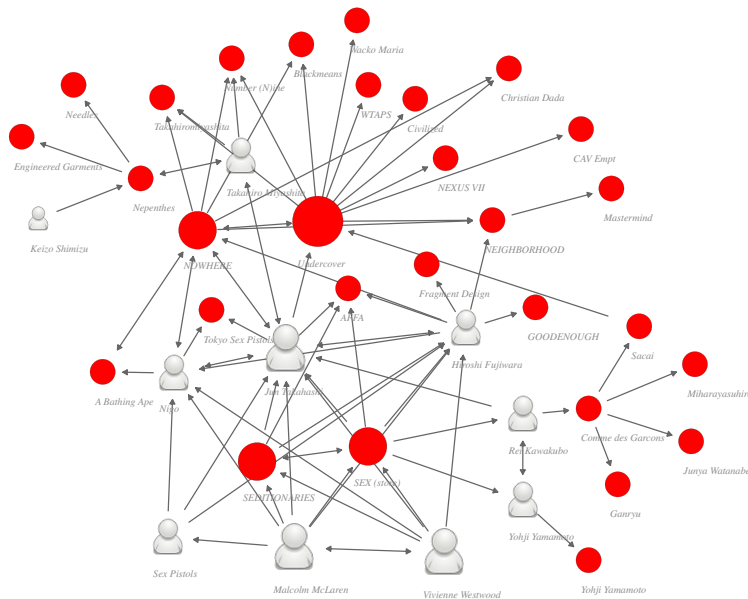
Figure 6.1 Social network graph of Japanese punk subcultural style

As part of the research for this study, I created a social network graph showing the interrelationships between the different actors in the Japanese street culture scene. The graph is not weighted, and the figures represent individual persons, whereas the red dots represent companies or brands. Ties indicate relationship. For example, Sacai's unidirectional tie with Undercover represents the fact that for Sacai's Fall/Winter 2020 collection, it collaborated with Undercover to produce a bomber jacket (Willson, 2020). By far, the most densely connected section of the network is between Nigo, Jun Takahashi and Hiroshi Fujiwara, each of which will be mentioned in further detail. Within these three individuals come a myriad of solo ventures as well as collaborations. For example, Takahashi's short-lived venture with Fujiwara, AFFA (Anarchy Forever Forever Anarchy), creates a bidirectional tie between them (Yeung, 2016), in the same way that Takahashi's store NOWHERE creates a bidirectional relationship between him and Nigo (Li, 2016).

Interestingly, this graph bears a striking resemblance to a similar graph produced by Park (2011; figure 6.2), who provides a more schematic description of the Japanese street fashion environment:
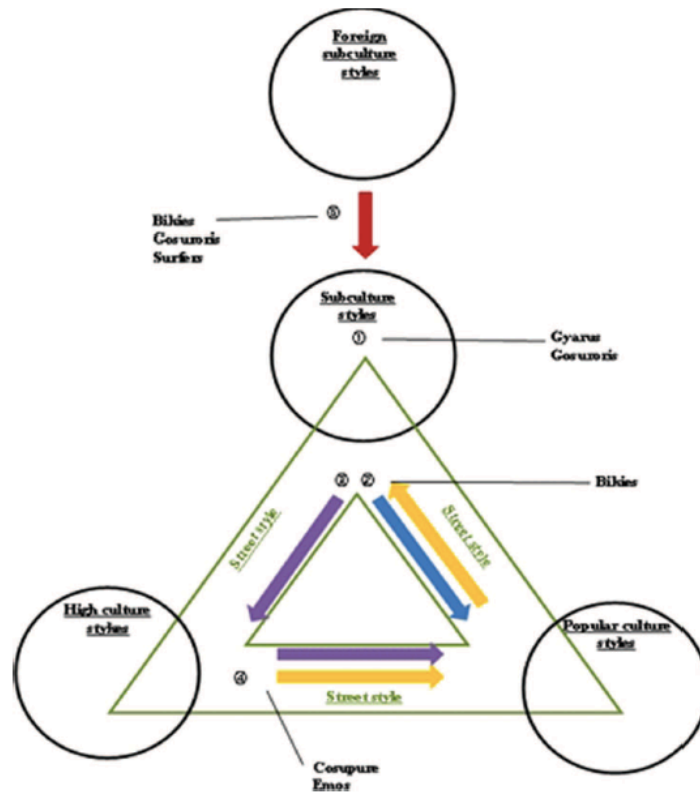
**Figure 6.2 Park (2011). Relationship between Japanese high culture, popular
culture and subculture styles, and foreign subculture styles**

Although a bit difficult to read, Park's (2011) graph is similar insofar as she has
four distinct nexuses: foreign subcultural style, high culture styles, subculture styles, and
popular culture styles (p. 17). In the graph I have created, although not labelled as such,
the cluster around Comme des Garçons is precisely this high culture style, with all of the
companies and individuals around it representing this aspect of Japanese fashion. The
bottom portion of my network with Vivienne Westwood and Malcolm McLaren is
completely analogous to Park's foreign subculture style- both of us identify foreign
cultures as being the source for later, domestic fashion developments. Finally, Park's
(2011) popular culture and subculture style, in my graph, are represented as one in the
same, and can be seen in the gatekeeper node of Undercover and Jun Takahashi.

Although I created my graph independently from Park's, it is telling that our
graphs bear so much in common. In particular, the delineations between subcultural
style, high culture, and foreign subcultural style are found in both of our graphs and

function in virtually identical positions, even in topography (the high culture cluster is horizontal to the subcultural cluster whereas the foreign subcultural style is vertically aligned to domestic outputs of subcultural style).

6.1.1. Nigo

Nigo, born Tomoaki Nagao, adopted the nickname 'nigo' which means 'number two' in Japanese. This name was chosen out of reverence and respect for Hiroshi Fujiwara, whom he considered to be number one (Li, 2016). Nigo originally met Jun Takahashi in the late 1980's when both were attending Bunka Fashion College (Park, 2017). Together, they were especially involved in the Tokyo music scene; Takahashi played in the band Tokyo Sex Pistols and Nigo "sometimes stepped in as their drummer" (Thomas, 2020). In 1993, Nigo and Takahashi opened the NOWHERE store in the Ura-Harajuku neighborhood of Tokyo, which, at the time, had been "badly hit by an economic downturn" and "specialized in vintage clothing or items that catered to hip-hop and punk collectors" (Li, 2016). NOWHERE stocked a variety of items including being the first stockist for Takahashi's solo venture, Undercover, as well as the first stockist for Nigo's solo venture, A Bathing Ape (Li, 2016). Thus, the store functioned as a kind of testing ground for both individuals, not only in terms of design but also in terms of retail strategy. The latter point is particularly relevant as the store's modest budget created "limited, sporadic releases which inadvertently created a frenzy among Takahashi fans hungry for the next product." (Rabkin, 2020). This model would be heavily used by Nigo in his solo venture, A Bathing Ape, and would later influence American brand Supreme to follow a similar business model of intentional scarcity (Highsnobiey, 2016; Fowler, 2018).

Nigo preferred hip-hop to punk, and although he does cite Vivienne Westwood as an influence (Ghon, 2011), both his music tastes and clothing designs eventually skewed more towards hip-hop inspired by the U.S. than punk inspired by the UK. Despite this, he is an important figure in the early Ura-Harajuku development as well as for supporting Takahashi and Fujiwara in their ventures.

6.1.2. Hiroshi Fujiwara

Hiroshi Fujiwara, often referred to as the "Godfather of Streetwear" (Li, 2019) is important firstly because he was one of the first Japanese punk enthusiasts to travel to the UK and USA to discover punk and hip-hop subcultures respectively.

> While [in London], he got the chance to meet the legendary Malcolm McLaren, manager of The Sex Pistols and co-founder (alongside Vivienne Westwood) of SEDITIONARIES. McClaren told Fujiwara that he found London boring at the moment and that he should instead visit New York. Fujiwara soon made the trip across the pond where he was introduced to hip-hop. (Li, 2019).

Thus, Fujiwara in many ways acts as a local gatekeeper node in this social network because of how he connects Nigo to Takahashi by virtue of his dual interest in hip-hop and punk (Li, 2019). Furthermore, he connects punk from the UK with punk in Japan by virtue of his editorial "Last Orgy" in *Takarajima* (Tuzio, 2020)*.* Finally, and contemporaneously, he connects high-fashion with street culture through collaborations with companies such as Louis Vuitton and Moncler (Leach, 2017; Leitch, 2020).

6.1.3. Jun Takahashi

If Hiroshi Fujiwara acts like a local gatekeeper in this social network, then, invariably, Jun Takahashi is the gatekeeper for the entire network. Takahashi directly cites influence from all of the sources of punk subcultural style in the UK, and is the only node to have bidirectional relationships with both Hiroshi Fujiwara and Nigo. Importantly, these are not just nodes of influence, Takahashi has material, business connections with Nigo with the opening of their NOWHERE store, and as well with Hiroshi Fujiwara with their clothing line (now defunct) AFFA (Anarchy Forever Forever Anarchy) (Yeung, 2016).

This is not altogether strange; of all of the nodes/actors in this network, apart from those in the UK, Takahashi is the one who is most committed to a holistic vision of punk subculture Nigo was more interested in the music side of punk, and later drifted towards hi-hop, and Fujiwara was more interested in the trend-forecasting aspect of punk, and his career has shifted more towards creative direction and the management of aesthetics.

6.1.4. All Together

Taken together, it is difficult to overestimate the influence that Jun Takahashi, Hiroshi Fujiwara and Nigo collectively had not just on the development of street fashion culture in Japan, but globally as well. Supreme's Logo, which has been considered the most powerful logo in the world (Lyst, 2018), would doubtfully be where it is today were it not for the pioneering efforts of the three aforementioned individuals who not only paved the way in clothing design, but also retail strategy.

This group of tightly-connected individuals also represents a dissonance between punk subculture in the U.K. which was a far more heterogenous, grass-roots movement. Part of this dissonance is due to class; Takahashi, Fujiwara, Nigo, Kawakubo, and Yamamoto all are known to have physically visited the U.K., and as such, exhibit a shared level of economic privilege and interest in a foreign subculture. In contrast to this, punks in the U.K. rallied over shared ideological struggles. For example, Hebdige (1979) describes Teddy Boys as "effectively excluded and temperamentally detached from the respectable working class, condemned in all probability to a lifetime of unskilled work" (p.50). This shared experience of disenfranchisement is diametrically opposed to the shared privilege enjoyed by the Japanese early adopters of punk subculture.

6.2.   Undercover's vision of punk

Within the landscape of Japanese punk subcultural style, there exists a heterogeneity of divergent expressions of punk. These include cyber-punk, gothic-punk, biker-punk, as well as crossovers which blend two or more styles. However, the style which can be most attributed to Undercover is post-punk. This theme will be explored as it relates to three cultural mediums: films, music, and art. The question this section seeks to answer is *how* Undercover (re)presents punk in its clothing.

6.2.1. Media

One of the biggest film influences for Takahashi is *2001: A Space Odyssey* by Stanley Kubrick. Such is this influence that Takahashi dedicated an entire collection to it (Figure 6.3). *2001: A Space Odyssey* was produced in 1968, right around the time which Hebdige describes as being formative for punk subculture in the U.K. However, it is not

traditionally thought of being a product of punk subculture. Undercover's 2018 collection challenges this notion and puts the film in conversation with discourses of dissent (hence the collection name *ORDER-DISORDER*). In particular, the aspect of the film which is perhaps most applicable to punk subculture is the apocalyptic, teleological nature of the film. Hebdige (1979) describes the environment of London at the time: "Apocalypse was in the air and the rhetoric of punk was drenched in apocalypse: in the stock imagery of crisis and sudden change" (p.27). This aspect of teleology, of a certain, apocalyptic finality is precisely what is shown in the first (and last) scenes of the film where human's usage of technology and tools becomes the catalyst for the eventual simultaneous processes of deconstruction/transcendence.

Takahashi's usage of the film brings these questions back into popular discourse through a process of recontextualization and translation. The film changes medium when it becomes three-dimensional clothes, and so too is the messaging ideologically shifted according to Takahashi's worldview.

Figure 6.3 Undercover. (Fall/Winter 2018-2019). *ORDER-DISORDER.*

6.2.2. Music

As a subculture with an origin in music, it is natural that Takahashi's punk inspired brand makes reference to music; notwithstanding the fact that Takahashi himself played in a band called the Tokyo Sex Pistols (Foley, 2019). One of Takahashi's longstanding collaborations is with post-punk band Joy Division, whose graphic designed by Peter Seville has also been used in the past by Raf Simons (Harwood, 2019).

6.2.3. Deconstruction

Since its inception, one of the hallmarks of Undercover has been its use of deconstruction. Several of its most iconic pieces (6.8) feature deconstruction details such as exposed seams, intentional rips, and unfinished edges. One collection in particular, Fall/Winter 2005-2006 *Arts and Crafts,* stands out as containing many of the clothing pieces which would eventually obtain cult status. This collection introduced the now coveted Undercover 85 jeans, as well as the melton wool rider jacket (Figure 6.8), both of which would later attain iconic status among Undercover fans (Rocky, 2012; Zhou, 2012). This aspect of deconstructionism lies at the foundation of punk subculture in the UK which sought to ideologically deconstruct constructs of class and gender, and also aesthetically deconstruct standards of beauty. Hebdige (1979) writes:

> Safety pins were taken out of their domestic 'utility' context and worn as gruesome ornaments through the cheek, ear or lip. 'Cheap' trashy fabrics (PVC, plastic, lurex, etc.) in vulgar designs (e.g. mock leopard skin) and 'nasty' colours, long discarded by the quality end of the fashion industry as obsolete kitsch, were salvaged by the punks and turned into garments…Conventional ideas of prettiness were jettisoned along with the traditional feminine lore of cosmetics. (p.107).

The important difference between the punk style which Hebdige describes and that which is performed by Undercover is that while the former is a movement against capitalism, the latter is a form of hyper-capitalism. Indeed, it is truly a Baudrillardian simulacrum where with Undercover, not only are individuals *paying* for a company to rip up their jeans for them, to expose their edges and apply safety pins, but they are *paying a lot*. Undercover occupies a luxury position in the streetwear industry and some of its clothes can be more expensive than the avant-garde designs of Comme des Garçons.

The option, for someone to rip up their clothes is of course always available to them, but it remains interesting to see how popular Undercover has become by relying on an aesthetic of commodified DIY and deconstruction.

Figure 6.4 Undercover. (Fall/Winter 2005-2006). *Arts and Crafts*

Chapter 7.   Case Study, Wave 3: Sub-subcultures

As demonstrated by the social network graph, it is the pioneering work of first Rei Kawakubo and Comme des Garçons and then the trifecta of Jun Takahashi, Nigo and Hiroshi Fujiwara that paves the way for the proliferation of punk-inspired street culture brands in Japan. These brands are often based in the Ura-Harajuku neighborhood in Tokyo and share the primary commonality of being sub-subcultural. Unlike Comme des Garçons and Undercover, who both present generalized visions of punk, these newer companies are dialectically more specific and can be considered sub-subcultures insofar as they exist as unique and distinct spaces within the umbrella of punk subculture.

7.1. Takahiro Miyashita & music sub-subculture

Takahiro Miyashita founded his first fashion brand, Number (N)ine in 1997 (Rabkin, 2017a. He is a colleague of Jun Takahashi who described their relationship as "What sets [Takahiro Miyashita and myself] apart from older Japanese designers like Rei Kawakubo and Yohji Yamamoto is that we are much more influenced by youth culture and, especially, music" (DeLeon, 2016). Although it is true that both Number (N)ine and Undercover are both influenced by music, Number (N)ine remains more committed to this pursuit such that his clothes become representative of a sub-subculture, music punk.

The inspiration behind the name Number (N)ine, comes from the experimental Beatles track "Revolution 9" (Rabkin, 2017a). Throughout his collections, Miyashita draws on Beatles' musical and fashion aesthetics as influences. In particular, Fall/Winter 2009-2010 A Closed Feeling (Figure 7.1) was particularly significant, both in terms of the clothes and also the fact that it would come to be the last collection which Miyashita designed with Number (N)ine. As can be seen from the clothes, there are obvious music references to the Beatles as well as a general motif of the juxtaposition of a punk (de)construction with an 18th century aesthetic.

Figure 7.1 Number (N)ine Fall/Winter 2009-2010 *A Closed Feeling*.

After Number (N)ine, Miyashita founded his eponymous label, Takahiromiyashita The Soloist in 2010 (DeLeon, 2016). This brand was named because of how he wanted to reject the trappings of being part of a company; an experience which he likened to John Lennon leaving the Beatles and starting a solo career (Rabkin, 2017b). This further reinforces the sub-subcultural element of the new wave of Japanese fashion designers because here, the business model becomes an important site of negotiation. Unlike Comme des Garçons and Undercover, both of which are commercially successful (to different extents), brands like Takahiromiyashita The Soloist occupy a more precarious position in the fashion marketplace, due in part to the ambivalence of their owners when it comes to pricing products. Miyashita himself has said that "I'm a type of person who desires a true appreciation from one person, instead of nine people out of ten" (Rabkin, 2017a). This is not surprising considering the range of products offered by Takahiromiyshita The Soloist, such as theatrical masks being sold for $1000 and jeans for upwards of $1500 (Rotman, 2017). The pricing of these items place them in a product category more resembling that of art, where the cost comes not from the raw materials and labour cost, but the symbolic associations and artist behind the work. This

marks a point of connection with punk subculture in the U.K. which likewise, was originally ambivalent about market capitalism. Thus, the ambivalence, around, at once, an aesthetic which is the rejection of market capitalism and also a form of hypercapitalism, is an ambivalence which can be observed both in the case of Takahiromiyashita The Soloist and punk in the U.K.

7.2. WACKO MARIA & Grunge sub-subculture

WACKO MARIA, alternatively known as "GUILTY PARTIES" and "PARADISE TOKYO" is a street fashion brand started in 2005 by former soccer players Keiji Ishizuka and Atsuhiko Mori (Estiler, 2017). Almost as if acting as a synthesis of Undercover and Takahiromiyashita The Soloist, Wacko Maria cites musical and film influences, but instead of the relatively mainstream Joy Division and *2001: A Space Odyssey*, they cite fringe filmmakers Larry Clark and Jim Jarmush (Wacko Maria, 2020). This serves as a reflection of the brand's aesthetic and ideological move away from hardcore punk and towards grunge subculture (figure 7.4).

Grunge, as a term, does not appear in Hebdige's (1979) book which is entirely normal considering that grunge is identified as existing primarily in the "the late 1980s and early 1990s" (Strong, 2011, p.16). Grunge's emergence is disputed but can be considered as originating from a dialectic relationship with previously existing musical currents, in particular American rock groups (such as Metallica) and British punk groups (such as The Sex Pistols). In terms of themes, "grunge was also very different to other successful music of the time…[it] did not have explicit political lyrical content to the same extent as punk, nor the hedonistic ('sex, drugs and rock and roll') or apocalyptic vision of metal lyricists" (Strong, 2011, p.19). Instead, "Overwhelmingly, though, the main themes of these albums are alienation and depression, but with an ironic sneer" (Strong, 2011, p.19).Importantly, the clothes for grunge marked a return to the anti-consumerist ideas of the early punk movement, in which "the less you spent on your clothes, the more credibility (or 'coolness') you had" (Strong, 2011, p.19). Thus, the aesthetic of grunge mirrors its name, it is dirty, oversized, careless, cheap, bought from a thrift shop. This can be seen in perhaps the most iconic model of grunge, Kurt Cobain, and his signature oversized sweater (Figure 7.5), which, interestingly, recently sold for over $300,000 at auction (BBC, 2019).

Figure 7.2 [Left] Wacko Maria (Fall/Winter 2019-2020). *Heaven Tokyo Murder Music Broadcasting Station*.
Figure 7.3 [Right] Kurt Cobain 'Unplugged' Sweater (Kreps, 2019).

The aesthetic similarities between the two images are obvious, to the point that even the model bears a resemblance to Cobain. Although Wacko Maria's *décontracté* aesthetic certainly draws inspiration from American grunge subculture, the difference between the two is the lack of ideological critique in the former. As was previously mentioned, grunge subculture lyrically represented themes of struggle with mental health, and was a distinctly anti-capitalist movement. By contrast, Wacko Maria makes no qualms about selling its clothes at a luxury price point. For example, a similar jacket currently retails for over $1000, and a similar sweater, over $300 (Wacko Maria 2020A; Wacko Maria 2020B). This should not be simply reduced to a label of commodification, as indeed, Wacko Maria, like Takahiromiyashita The Soloist, remains committed to pursuing an identity beyond simply clothes and also involve itself in the realms of music and film.

7.3. CIVILIZED & cyberpunk sub-subculture

CIVILIZED is a brand started in 2010 by designers Satoshi Okugawa and Kazuhiro Nomura (Eng, 2015). The brand's aesthetic can be described as cyberpunk, a genre which blends the pessimism and nihilism of punk subculture, with a McLuhan-like technological optimism. The result of this bipolar combination is a genre which crosses mediums and is marked by the experience of *living-in* science fiction rather than solely experiencing this through literature (Cavallaro, 2000, p.xi). In terms of clothing, the genre has recently attained global reach, with brands like Guerilla Group (from Taiwan), Nike Gyakusou (from the U.S; a collaboration with Jun Takahashi), and enfin levé (from Germany). Invariably though, all of these brands are somewhat derivative of ACRONYM and the pioneering work of Errolson Hugh and Michaela Sachenbacher. who have been working in the genre since 1994 (Marshall, 2012). The aesthetics of the genre often feature monochromatic colour schemes, technical fabrics, as well as heavy usage of pockets, straps, and zippers (Figure 7.6).

This particular sub-subculture's relationship with punk in the U.K. is difficult to pinpoint, as it primarily engages with the technological aesthetic and imagination emblematised by cyberpunk of the 1980's (*Blade Runner* was released in 1982; *Neuromancer* was released in 1984) rather than anything more contemporaneous with early punk, such as 1960's and 70's New Wave science-fiction genre. This can be seen in the clothes where the 'performance' aspect of the garments are often held to an unreasonable standard. For example, ACRONYM's (2013-2014) Acronymjutsu, is a system of pockets, zippers, and straps, which are truly over-engineered insofar as they provide features which are of marginal and questionable actual function (EscapeZip allows one to take off a jacket without undoing the zipper; Gravity Pocket allows one to access a phone without having to undo the zipper).

Figure 7.4 CIVILIZED (Fall/Winter 2019-2020)

In this analysis, the most relevant aspect of cyberpunk is that it represents a novel subculture which, despite having its origins in punk, by definition succeeds it. This helps further understand the process of recontextualization and translation which occurs with the development of new subcultures. In this case, the novel cyberpunk subculture is produced out of a dialectical relationship, combining elements of pre-existing punk subculture with elements of pre-existing science fiction literature.

7.4.   Japanese subcultures (subcultural style)

What these examples reveal is that more so than punk brands like Undercover and Comme des Garçons, the brands which most clearly fit the descriptor of a subculture are those brands which come afterwards, and are post-punk such as

Takahiromiyashita The Soloist, Wacko Maria, and CVILIZED. In each case, the brands in some way, evolve from punk subculture in the U.K. but break the tradition established by earlier brands such as Undercover and Comme des Garçons. In the case of Takahiromiyashita The Soloist, the brand shows an irreverence for traditional retail practices, such as those (re)produced by Comme des Garçons and Undercover. Wacko Maria on the other hand, manifests subcultural identity through its aesthetic choices and obscure references, both of which serve to create that alternate and non-hegemonic set of goals, expectations and values which are constitutive of a subculture. Finally, cyberpunk as represented by CIVILIZED, is an aesthetic genre which, by is created through a dialectical absorption of elements from the original U.K. movement and the sci-fi literary genre. . As such, it not only demonstrates an alternate set of values and goals, it also demonstrates an aesthetic evolution of the nihilistic and deconstructionist themes of punk.

Chapter 8. Analysis: Hegemonic recontextualization & Psychoanalytic translation

After having described the nature of the Japanese recontextualization of punk subculture, this chapter has the primary purpose of describing the processes of recontextualization and translation. In particular, recontextualization is described as occurring along the axis of hegemony whereas translation is described as occurring in negotiation with psychoanalytic conceptions of the self.

8.1. Homogeneity & hegemony in the Japanese street culture network

Understood in terms of Gramscian hegemony, a subculture is in many ways defined by its subversive and often oppositional relation to a certain societal homogeneity. In that sense, One of the noticeable aspects found in the social network graph of Japanese menswear street culture is that there is considerable homogeneity in that all of the actors in the network are Japanese and, despite the fact that many do design for women, most are men. Not only are they men, but there is a generational homogeneity in that they are often individuals who were born in the late 1960's to mid 1970's and who went to the same elite institutions at around the same time, such as Jun Takahashi and Nigo who both attended Bunka Fashion College. Furthermore, in terms of the clothes themselves, the reliance on the same set of signifiers –tartan print, safety pins, deconstruction, all originating in the U.K. – is a point of homogeneity as the references for all of the brands in the social network graph have significant overlap in terms of references to British punk subculture.

However, there are also elements of heterogeneity which can be observed from the case studies this research has examined. Punk being a hegemonic, non-subculture inherently creates a vacuum for sub-cultures, some of which this research has identified, such as music-punk, cyberpunk, and grunge. These become the spaces with a truly alternate set of values, goals, and expectations as norms of retail practices and acceptable media references become challenged by brands such as Takahiromiyashita The Soloist and WACKO MARIA. Although not the direct subject of this study, Lolita subculture in particular negotiates identities of racial homogeneity/heterogeneity through the sub-subcultures of *ganguro*, *gyaru,* and *yamamba* (Kinsella, 2005).

Seen through the lens of translation, there is a certain consistency between the semiological system employed by punks in the U.K. and the ideological tensions which were being negotiated at the time. For example, Ska, Mods, and Reggae heavily borrow from black culture in music and style. However, Skinheads, in responding to the first wave of immigration from the West Indies, are precisely defined by their violence towards ethnic minorities (Hebdige, 1979, p.56-57). What is interesting to compare here is that in Japan, despite the hegemonic presence of an aesthetics of punk subculture, there is not the equivalent wave of immigration which provoked these cultural exchanges in the U.K. context.

The way in which this research understands this dissonance, between Japan adopting the aesthetics of punk but not having an ideological context for doing so, is through psychoanalysis. In particular, the mirror phase describes the misidentification, *méconaissance*, between the self-as-ego and the self-as-object. Japan, during the periods of punk culture's adoption in the 1970's, as well as the rise in punk culture's popularity in the 1990's and 2000's, did not experience a wave of immigration similar to that which was observed in the U.K. Thus, although in Japan there is not the same sort of visual demarcation of heterogeneity which was at play in the U.K., there is still a group which affectively feels heterogenous, and it is out of this affective feeling of being Other, that this then becomes represented through clothing. This represents a shift from the U.K. situation in terms of topographic orientation. The instance of punk subculture in the U.K. is one which is marked by physical events making their way to become systems of representation. In the case of punk culture in Japan, the opposite is true, and it is the aesthetic system of representation which first is adopted, followed by an ideological association.

In summary, in Japan, punk subculture was recontextualized along the axis of hegemony. It ceased being a subculture in this context, and adopted the market practices, social orientation, and visual dominance of hegemonic culture. This is confirmed both by brands such as Comme des Garçons which are hegemonic, but also by subcultural brand such as WACKO MARIA, Takahiromiyashita The Soloist, and CIVILIZED which represent an alternate set of values, norms, goals, and aspirations in regard to market practices, social orientation, and visual aesthetics.

8.2. In-group homophily

Related to the finding on homogeneity is the organized and connected nature of the social network graph. As previously mentioned, Nigo chose his name (meaning number two) out of deference for Hiroshi Fujiwara, whom he identified as being number one (Li, 2016). Furthermore, throughout the graph, there are numerous instances of mentor/mentee relationships such as Rei Kawakubo advising Jun Takahashi to exhibit in Paris (Rabkin, 2015) and Takahashi in turn, advising the next generation of Japanese street fashion brands such as Takahiromiyashita (Rabkin, 2018). In fact, these relationships are so close that Takahashi and Miyashita are often considered to be "brothers" (Rabkin, 2018) and they themselves likewise consider many of the actors in the Japanese street culture scene to have these kinds of close, familial bonds:

"Isn't that what it comes down to?" Takahashi asks rhetorically. "As the elder you have Nobu [Nobuhiko Kitamura, of Hysteric Glamour]. Then as the younger brother you have Aizawa [Yosuke Aizawa, White Mountaineering] or Obana [Daisuke Obana, N. Hoolywood]—you tend to have these sets of designer brothers. (Jiang & Ishida, 2018)

What this suggests is that, punk culture in Japan follows a strict social structure marked by hegemony and homophily. This kind of social structure is described by Sarah Ahmed (2000), who describes the paradox of the known stranger: "strangers are not simply those who are not known in this dwelling, but those who are, in their very proximity, already recognised as not belonging, as being out of place" (p.21). Building off this framework of hospitality, there is an interesting relationship between axes of hegemony and in-group homophily. To cite one illustrative example, Yamamoto (2010) explores this relationship by attempting to explain the instance of "Japanese police [who] want to concentrate their resources on foreign criminals who consist of only two percent of all penal code offenders (p.321). What Yamamoto (2010) finds is that the "sensibilities of law enforcement interpret characteristics of migrants as indicators of high crime risk" and that "In the eyes of law enforcers, the social, economic and cultural marginality of migrants appear to be reasons to commit crimes, and thus they create mental linkages between immigration and crime" (p.321).

Relating this to subcultural style, what is a noticeable feature within the axes of hegemony and in-group homophily is that in Japan, subcultural styles such as Lolita and punk can become sites of social resistance and negotiation. Punk in particular with its

myriad subcultures allows for specific aesthetic challenges, which can be considered social critiques in and of themselves due to the visual homogeneity of Japanese hegemonic culture.

The psychoanalytic aspect of this homophily is closely tied to Durkheim's conception of the functional role of crime in society. Durkheim (1995) controversially argued that "[the criminal] plays a definite role in social life" (p.41). He further explains the need for a demarcation of criminality- "Imagine a society of saints, a perfect cloister of exemplary individuals. Crimes, properly so called will there be unknown, but faults which appear venial to the layman will create there the same scandal that the ordinary offense does in ordinary consciousness" (Durkheim, 1995, p.39). What this framework explains is that a certain amount of crime is necessary, and that in instances where crime is low, society will organize new ways to (re)establish a social boundary of deviance.

This demarcation of deviance is related to Lacan's conception of the *objet petit a* which describes the object-cause of desire which can be manifested in a physical object. In this case, I argue that punk clothes in Japan constitute this *objet petit a* insofar as they represent an object-cause of deviance. These objects (jackets, sweaters, etc.) allow individuals to performatively "drift" (Matza, 1964) into delinquency while not actually committing any crime. This reconciles the apparently contradictory nature of Durkheim's requirement for the perception of crime to be present in any given social system, with the reality of Japan's low crime rate.

8.3. Commodification & Contradiction

All of the brands mentioned in this study contribute to the contradictions surrounding the commodification of punk (sub)culture. The most basic contradiction is that a subculture rooted in subversion to capitalism should find itself become a fetish commodity, and a luxury one at that. Although this has been explored as a possible site of resistance and of social critique (such as in the cases of Comme des Garçons and Takahiromiyashita The Soloist), by and large, it is a function of neoliberalism that it is able to withstand and commodify critiques made against it. This is precisely what happened when Comme des Garçons hired Cindy Sherman to be part of their advertisement campaign; what was once a legitimate social critique becomes an advertisement for the brand in just a few years' time.

The contradictions around commodification can most clearly be seen in those brands which, in the middle of carrying over punk subculture from the U.K. and subculture brands in Japan, have adopted the characteristics of hegemonic Japanese culture, especially Comme des Garçons and Undercover. These two companies, in terms of sales and international distribution, are by far the most commercially successful of those mentioned in the social network graph, and Comme des Garçons especially has managed to create a fashion empire both domestically in Japan and internationally. Undercover too, promulgates the contradictory nature of neoliberalism through its development of a retail strategy focused on exclusivity and of *not* giving consumers what they want- a strategy now made famous by companies such as Supreme (Fowler, 2018).

This style of retail strategy is not only contradictory, it also is psychoanalytic insofar as *jouissance* is precisely that moment of pleasure/pain which is obtained from going beyond the pleasure principle. In the case of punk subculture in the U.K., there is virtually no *jouissance* between the clothes and the individuals. However, in the case of punk culture in the Japan, *jouissance* is manifested in two primary ways. Firstly, there is *jouissance* in the retail price of many of the brands mentioned. Kapital's denim jacket for example (Figure 2.1) has a retail price of over $6000 despite not coming from a well-known brand or having any obvious logos. Despite this, or rather, because of this, there is a heightened sense of *jouissance* which comes from paying $6000 for a distressed denim jacket, an act which by all accounts goes beyond the rational pleasure principle. The second way in which *jouissance* is manifested is through the pleasure/pain experienced by not only the retail strategy of brands like Undercover which under-produce their garments, but also Comme des Garçons which often mocks its consumers. As was previously mentioned, phenomenon such as the brand's purposely difficult to understand perfume descriptions, and collaborations with Cindy Sherman both directly mock the very people purchasing these clothes. Rather than be offended at this, it appears as if this has turned out to be a successful strategy for Comme des Garçons as the brand continues to enjoy global success. The reason for this contradiction, I argue, lies in *jouissance* and the pleasure/pain which results from consuming from a brand which shows irreverence and ambivalence towards its customer base.

Chapter 9.   Findings: The processes of subcultural translation and recontextualization

Although often mentioned together, what the analysis of the case studies for this research has shown is that actually, the terms 'translation' and 'recontextualization' are representative of a broad bipolarity. The bipolarity in this research comes from translation being more associated with psychoanalysis and the affective dimension of Gayatri Spivak's (2012) work, and recontextualization being more associated with hegemony and Kristeva's (1980) work on intertextuality.

The purpose of this chapter is to go beyond the respective case studies and delineate the theoretical application for this work on the recontextualization and translation of subcultures. In particular, I will specify the role of both translation and recontextualization in the communication process, both from its production and consumption.

9.1.   Recontextualization of subculture

The first finding of this research is that, in the context of punk subculture in Japan, the first step in the process of recontextualization was that punk ceased to be a subculture. Part of this finding is simply related to the definition of subcultures as being defined in opposition to a hegemonic parent culture. It logically follows that when this subculture is stripped from its hegemonic parent culture, it will cease being a subculture and morph into something else. The analysis from this case study research provides a model for this process of recontextualization.

Firstly, as is observed in both punk subculture in the U.K. and punk culture in Japan, the first step towards recontextualization in these cases was for the subculture to become a hegemonic culture. In the U.K. this was achieved by virtue of punk's integration into all aspects of hegemonic culture including music, politics, and fashion. In Japan, this was achieved through a recontextualization of punk subculture along the axis of hegemony, which, in this case, was a neoliberal, racially homogenous hegemony. In such a case, the process of recontextualization calls to mind Baudrillard's (1983) third stage of simulacrum wherein "[the sign] masks the *absence* of a basic reality" (p.13). In

the case of punk culture in Japan, the clothes mark the absence of social rebellion and ideological critique which were at the heart of punk subculture in the U.K.

The second stage of recontextualization which was observed in this case study was that the now-hegemonic culture will begin to spawn further instances of subcultures. For example, in Japan, this can be seen in the third-wave of punk where subcultures such as cyberpunk, music punk, and grunge begin to emerge. This is similar to what happened when musical punk became popular and, once it had arrived in the United States already began to evolve into musical sub-genres such as grunge and hardcore punk.

Overall, this finding is of particular importance to Internet subcultures, where echo chambers, filter bubbles, and bots, can amplify a media message and represent a once subcultural, fringe topic, as being mainstream and popular (McKelvey & Dubois, 2017, p.2; Foth, Mitchell, Estrada-Grajales, 2020, p.733). Better understanding this two-phase process of recontextualization helps to understand how peripheral and marginalized subjects become mainstream in different contexts with different audiences.

9.2. Translation of subcultures

One of the unifying facets tying together nearly all of the brands and companies mentioned throughout this study is that they all translate punk subculture with a high degree of rhetoricity. In aesthetics, this can most clearly be seen in Undercover which, for decades, has blurred the line between costume and fashion as it continues to develop the possibilities and capabilities of punk as a hegemonic culture. In spirit and attitude, this can most clearly be seen in Comme des Garçons, which collaborates with real historic and contemporary punks (Jean-Michel Basquiat and Cindy Sherman respectively) and continues to make an ideological critique of class, which targets its own consumers. However, and as will be discussed later, the context for this subculture is very different, and in this way, the translation occurs on an affective, psychoanalytic level wherein the individuals participating in this (sub)culture *feel* as though they belong to a subculture. Therefore, it is this feeling which becomes translated, rather than the entire subculture, which, in the case of punk, would involve a racialized ideological critique.

What this points to is that the process of translation occurs independently from the process of recontextualization. Instead, following Spivak's (2012) model of translation as requiring personal relationships, submission, and rhetoricity; translation can occur in any context as long as the individuals or communities translating, experience a personal relationship with the source text. This was directly observed in the case studies used in this research where there is a clear shared use of symbols between punk subculture in the U.K. and punk culture in Japan. For example, Comme des Garçons' use of tartan print, Undercover's use of deconstruction, and Takahiromiyashita The Soloist's musical references are all exhibits of a translation output, and one which maintains the rhetoricity of the source text. Importantly however, the process of translation remains one focused on inputs and outputs, of source text and translated texts. The anti-capitalist sentiment and representation of racial tensions which underpinned punk subculture in the U.K., as more intangible concepts, were not translated or adopted in Japan, and instead it was only the clothing-as-text which experienced this process of personal translation.

9.3. The "authenticity" of Japanese punk culture

This research has purposely avoided the word "authentic" to describe the processes of translation and recontextualization, in particular because of how difficult it is to apply the term given these two competing bipolarities. Is it even possible for punk to be authentic anywhere other than its original context? Because in the case of Japan, the translation outputs, the clothes, do maintain a high level of rhetoricity despite the social context being very different. As such, I do not find 'authenticity' to be particularly enlightening or useful in this research as it fails to capture the nuanced relationship between the processes of translation and recontextualization. These terms (translation and recontextualization), although perhaps more academic-sounding, more accurately describe the complexities and inner-machinations which are at work when describing something as "authentic", especially when this designation occurs from an outsider looking inwards. What the process of translation has shown is that it is a relationship with the self, a psychoanalytic relationship which will actually determine the subject's closeness and relationship with the source text.

Chapter 10. Limitations & Opportunity for further study

10.1. Limitations: Gender

Throughout this study, I did not mention gender as a point of inquiry into the subject of the recontextualization and translation of punk subculture. There are a few reasons for this. Firstly, the scope of this research project does not allow for a comprehensive comparison of menswear and womenswear subcultural style. Indeed, this was not the subject of my research which focused more on the process of recontextualization and translation. A research focused on gender could be very interesting, especially using Butler's (1990) concept of gender performativity to compare how gender ideas are (re)produced through the usage/wearing/purchasing of subcultural clothes.

Secondly, within the context Japanese subcultural style (and fashion generally), menswear is actually a minority research subject. What is more popular to examine is Lolita subculture which is exclusively for women. For example, nearly all the authors mentioned in the literature review including Park (2011), Bernal (2016), and McKnight (2010) focus on womenswear. Furthermore, this kind of research is often from a perspective of audience reception and focuses on the affect and performativity in relation to style choices. To be clear though, the gap in literature this research seeks to fill is not that menswear is not talked about enough in the academic literature on Japanese subcultural style. Instead, this research rather has sought to better understand the process of recontextualization and translation which causes punk to appear and thrive in Japan, away from its native U.K. context.

Lastly, most of the brands and companies I have examined produce clothes for men and women. In fact, Comme des Garçons and Undercover both began as womenswear companies and their menswear collections occurred later and with less importance than the womenswear collections. For example, Undercover has exhibited its womenswear collections at Paris Fashion Week since 2002 (Rabkin, 2015), but only began exhibiting a solo menswear collection in 2018. (Yamaguchi, 2019). Therefore, although a gendered analysis of punk subculture could be interesting, it was not within

the purpose or scope of this study, and I believe that not including such an analysis does not represent a serious deficiency or omission.

10.2. Opportunity for further study: Object of abjection

One of the undercurrents of this research has been the object of abjection. Abjection is a theme heavily found in Genet's work (included in the prologue) and recurs again both in Lacan and Kristeva's work. In Kristeva's (1982) work, she defined abjection as "The abject has only one quality of the object and that is being opposed to I" (p.1). This definition draws on Lacan's theory of the separation of the child from the mother as being formative for the development of the *petit objet a* and *Grand Autre* (Lacan, 1998, p.62). Taking the more vernacular definition of the word, it is interesting to think of punk clothes, as being traditionally dirty, grimy, and torn as also being objects of abjection. This scope and topic of this research unfortunately does not allow for a further examination of this relationship but I wanted to highlight it here as being a topic for further study.

10.3. Opportunity for further study: Japanese hegemonic culture

The scope of this research project did not allow for a comprehensive analysis of Japanese hegemonic culture. A future project could examine particular facets of hegemonic Japanese culture and compare these to the recontextualization of punk subculture in Japan. For example, this study has examined how punk subculture exhibits themes of homogeneity and homophily. It would be interesting for a future study to compare this instance of homogeneity with discourses of immigration in Japan such as Iwata & Nemoto (2018) who note that the "the Japanese state is indeed a racial state which actively seeks to maintain the ideology of homogeneous Japan while also responding to other stakeholders' demands such as supply of foreign labor and the necessary political alignment with the US" (p.316). Further interesting is the way in which discourses of racial hegemony intersect with discourses of law enforcement such as the study by Yamamoto (2010) this research previously alluded to. A study of this kind could then examine the role and existence of punk as a visually subversive aesthetic medium rooted in ideological subversion, yet which occupies a hegemonic presence in Japan.

10.4. Opportunity for further study: Neoliberalism and punk subculture

The primary contradiction this research has observed in the recontextualization and translation of punk subculture in Japan is that punk, a movement rooted in anti-capitalist ideas, should find itself become a luxury commodity. To this extent, a future study into the subject could look at the ways in which this commodification is actually a function of neoliberalism. Neoliberalism in Japan, has roots in the 1970's (Reitan, 2012), and in particular, is manifested in discourses of localization, such as Shibata (2008) who notes that, in Japan, policymakers encouraged citizens to "treat risks [of crumbling infrastructure] as 'specific' to some localities or certain groups who were simply 'unfortunate' (p.109). It would be interesting to see the ways in which this, and other neoliberal discourses have parallels to the ways in which neoliberalism is articulated in Japanese punk culture.

Chapter 11.   Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has conducted a case study-based analysis of the recontextualization and translation of punk (sub)culture in Japan. This research identified three waves of Japanese subcultural style, first occurring in the 1970's and 80's with Comme des Garçons, then in the 1990's and early 2000's with Undercover, and finally up until the present day with a variety of companies such as WACKO MARIA, Takahiromiyashita The Soloist and CIVILIZED. What was found by examining these cases what, in the process of recontextualization, that what was once punk subculture in the U.K. becomes recontextualized along the axis of hegemony in Japan. Thus, these brands exhibit characteristics resembling less those of a subculture and more of hegemonic, mainstream culture.

The process of translation on the other hand, has been found to involve a more personal relationship with the translator and the text. In particular, psychoanalysis becomes a useful framework in this case as the concepts of *objet petit a, jouissance,* and the mirror phase help describe the negotiations of the self which are at play in the process of translation.

This study began with three epigraphs which aimed to give a feeling of the kind of work this research wanted to undertake. The first, the quote from Oscar Wilde, is a rephrasing of the psychoanalytic element in this research- that individuals are drawn to elements missing within themselves and that the search for this missing element is a cause of both pleasure and pain. The second and third quote relate to the spectacular potential of ordinary objects to take on dramatically different meanings across time and place. Throughout this research I have attempted to do justice to these quotes by examining this process of how signs and symbols change meaning over time. Punk in particular is a fascinating inquiry into the subject because of how, even originally in the U.K., punk heavily borrowed from other cultures including aristocratic British culture. By examining this process meaning-changing transnationally, this research contributes to the literature around both the study of subcultures and the study of the processes of recontextualization and translation.

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