

“Seditionaries”

By
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Abstract

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Abstract: What has fashion to do with gender studies? This is a reasonable question to ask. How the body is constrained, decorated and presented has been a central enterprise in human culture, and continues to be so today.

This thesis will explore the world of 1970s UK Punk beyond Malcolm McLaren, intentionally shifting focus to Vivienne Westwood and the larger cultural landscape. It will explain the context within which a normative hyper masculine narrative has been drawn in the past and will lift up other equally rich and important aspects of Punk through the medium of sartorial language. The young women and men of the Bromley Contingent will serve as a key example of how the clothing Vivienne Westwood designed was used and incorporated within an existing Mod and Teddy-boy aesthetic to express their identity and create a subcultural aesthetic in the UK.

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Table of Contents

Introduction (p5)

Theoretical framework (p8) Scholars of culture will agree that context is of utmost importance. One of the points this thesis will argue is that dominant perspectives on the context have been truncated, in two significant ways: first, through a singular focus on a particular masculinized form of Punk, arising out of the intellectual and theoretical interests of the predominantly male scholarly community that became the movement's academic voice; and second, on a dominant, sometimes even exclusive focus on the music emerging out of Punk, to the exclusion of other important cultural manifestations, e.g., fashion and fashion culture. Yet even a primary focus on Punk's music raises important questions about who is making that music, and which forms of musical expression have been enshrined as iconic. Both these gaps in the narrative raise serious questions about the arguably underexplored area of gender in Punk.

Historical Background (p12) will undertake to illustrate the diversity and range of some of the cultural forces that laid the groundwork for what has become recognized as "Punk". Both gender and race will figure significantly here.

Recent Ideas on the Subculture of Punk (p27) will provide some alternate theoretical possibilities for framing this important cultural phenomenon.

What Difference Do Bodies Make? (p37) Looks into how the performativity of gender and how the body interacts with clothing and fashion.

The Bromley Factor (p43) introduces a different perspective on Punk looking at considerations of both material culture and gender-fluid cultural identities. Specifically, it will engage a group of artists, performers and social misfits whose transformative agenda does not fit easily into the violent, class-war, masculinized stereotype that has come to epitomize Punk.

The Punk Aesthetic (p52) will explore how the fashion of Punk developed on both sides of the Atlantic. What gender normatives are at play here? How do we understand the aesthetic of Punk?

The Disruptive Style of Vivienne Westwood (p56) will illustrate what bringing this new gender-critical and gender-fluid approach has to offer through an analysis of the work of Vivienne Westwood. My analysis of Westwood's career will provide another way of understanding how protest and political resistance might be manifested. I will conclude with her ongoing influence on the fashion industry and young designers who have identified as Punk.

The Fashion Project (p61) is an exploration of my own creative desires using fashion as language. Based on the requirements for Central Saint Martin's college MFA program, alma mater of Alexander McQueen and John Galliano, I designed and created my own fashion collection based on the research undertaken for this thesis.

Conclusion (p80)

Appendix A (p86)

Introduction

It would seem that one youth subculture has endured through the last half of the twentieth century to continue through the opening decades of this century. Drawing from and yet rebelling against the youth subcultures of the 1960s, Punk now claims members from various class levels and age groups, making it no longer the purview of the young.

The account of Punk has been predominantly masculine in its perspective through both the participants and who has been writing about the subject. My thesis proposes to investigate the landscape and players of Punk as a social aesthetic and a musical movement in the UK, with a primary focus on representation and the aesthetic. While I will refer to the North American Punk scene, it will not be my primary focus. Important linkages between figures such as Andy Warhol's Factory and British icons such as David Bowie and then later the style differences between Punk icons the Ramones and street fashion in the UK will be discussed. This will further demonstrate that the North American definition and representation of Punk obscures the realities of the social phenomenon in the UK. I hope to show, through an explanation and exploration of the British Punk scene focusing on Vivienne Westwood, and by extension Malcolm McLaren, that the Punk landscape can be properly understood as having broader aesthetic boundaries. Most notably, the British Punk scene was deeply influenced by the visible presence of women, homosexual men and the celebration of gender fluidities which speak against the dominant masculine narrative.

It has been said that Guy Debord and the Situationalist International played an influential role in Westwood's partner Malcolm McLaren's politics (Szeman 2010, 280). McLaren is quoted "I learned all my politics and understanding of the world through the history of art" (Savage 2005, 24). He was particularly drawn to Guy Debord's *Societe du Spectacle*, the book that may have provided the language of Punk (Wilcox 2004, 10). Actor John Cusack when speaking about *the Clash* in the documentary *The Future is Unwritten* is quoted, "Politics can't be separated from Art!" (Cusack, in Temple 2007). Vivienne Westwood's partnership with Malcolm McLaren pushed boundaries of taste, modesty, gender, and consumer culture. McLaren often played the role of impresario, as well as what Baudelaire might refer to as a dandy, making his very existence a work of art (Foucault 1992). Westwood has often embodied her political commitments in the clothing she designed and wore.

This thesis will explore Westwood's design aesthetic and how it was then adopted by the youth culture that was her clientele. I will look at Westwood's early influences, how the uniform of Punk was developed from early American Punk bands such as the Ramones and the New York Dolls and how this look was adopted and recreated by members of the British subculture. Developing out of the Mod and Ted subcultures, it is important to examine musical influences as well as the art projects that contributed to the overall zeitgeist of Punk and that guided McLaren's and Westwood's shaping of the UK subculture, influences that could be seen as reaching back to the early decades of the 20th century with the Surrealists. In appendix A I will question *Lipstick Traces* by Greil Marcus. Marcus' seminal work follows the dominant masculine narrative of

Malcolm McLaren as the key influence on UK Punk and leaves Vivienne Westwood out completely. Who was Situationist International founder Guy Debord and how was his Marxist message developed in the 1960s? What was the message Marcus believes that McLaren took from the Situationist International and incorporated into the aesthetic of Punk? It is my understanding that both McLaren and Westwood used the sloganistic style of Debord's theory of the *Spectacle* as a method to shock their audience. This may have also influenced Vivienne Westwood's later ideas on consumerism.

How was it that Westwood came to create the look for such an apparently masculine subculture? I will discuss how this look influenced the aesthetic of its subculture partner the re-vamped, 1970s Teddy-boy. I will look at the 'Bromley Contingent', those young people who worked and gathered at Westwood's and McLaren's shop. They wore the clothes designed by the pair and formed what could be thought of as a major founding influence of British Punk. Who were the 'Bromley Contingent'? What music were they listening to, who were they hanging out with? How did the clothing they wore influence the look that is widely thought of as the Punk standard? I will also question the blurring of normative stereotypes of class and gender that occur through Westwood's multifaceted aesthetic. This thesis will take an analytical approach to the fashion of Punk, exploring the look of British Punk to explain the intense reactions this subculture still garners.

Theoretical Framework and Methodological Issues

My research will begin with an archival approach, examining the many varied texts on the politics and music to weave together the narrative of the zeitgeist of the 1970s Punk. By exploring underexplored notions of gender identity with regard to the visual culture of Punk, I hope to provide a focus to that seemingly masculine subculture that otherwise may not be readily apparent. In keeping with the context of the department of Women's and Gender Studies, my approach will consistently be gender critical, allowing for a discussion of otherness that may not have previously been discussed.

Clothing that has been used as a performative part of identity is a concept that has been with us almost as long as we have been dressed bodies. As Joanne Entwistle argues in *The Fashioned Body*, "human bodies are *dressed* bodies. The social world is a world of dressed bodies; dress is both an intimate experience of the body and a public presentation of it. Operating on the boundary between self and other is the interface between the individual and the social world" (Entwistle 2000, 6). Our clothes are a reflection of who we are, or even more so, who we wish to be. The nature of dress and adornment is the means by which bodies are made social and given meaning and identity (Entwistle 2000, 7). Our class status is now blurred with mass consumption of cheap, fast fashion such as H&M, Winners, and Joe Fresh. Our choice of work dress is now divided between blue collar trades wearing Carhartts and work boots and the white collar office worker wearing chinos, dress shirts and blazers. There is a homogenizing of gender at play in the clothes we wear. Leisure activities in the post 20th century are reflected in the sports team logos we wear and Harry Potter style school scarves are a

statement of who we are in our personal lives. There is money to be made by the licensing and manufacture of clothing.

Looking back at the post WWII era, trends emerge that can be followed through both music and fashion. Where previous fashion was concerned with social status, providing a 'top down' model where the elite dictated what was fashionable to be emulated by the lower classes, the early twentieth century saw a shift towards a bottom up model for what was considered fashionable (Entwistle 2000, 44). It is this change from top down to bottom up that some fashion theorists also compare to the shift from modernism to postmodernism in art theory (Miller 1993, Tseelon 1992). Cultural theorist Effrat Tseelon has explored how Baudrillard has written extensively on how 'fashion' changes throughout the early twentieth century through its use of signatory, oppositional signatory and then 'post fashion' meanings as the mode of dress enters the post-structuralist period (cited in Tseelon 2005). Fashion in the beginning of the century followed a certain set of rules laid out by the couture houses in France and Italy. By mid century, women's seasonal collections were influenced by street fashion in opposition to what the couture houses previously dictated as proper for a woman to wear. By the end of the third quarter of the century, many people, both men and women, thought of themselves as 'post fashion', wearing what they chose to wear based on lifestyle and body image. Tseelon states that "postmodernism denotes a radical break with the dominant culture and aesthetics, leaving a mark on the fashion world through the rejection of tradition, relaxation of norms, emphasis on individual diversity, and

variability of styles” (Tseelon 2005, 3). It is this shift that opens the door for the possibility of Punk and the re-vamped Teddy-boy.

As the study of art history changed methodologically in the early 1970s to include social and political contexts, this framework introduced a new method of studying fashion history. As cultural historian Christopher Breward notes, design history was “able to take on board the complexities of social considerations, economic implications and cultural problems, the relationship between production, consumption and the designed artefact demands an investigation of cultural context” (Breward 1998, 302). Breward then goes on to state “fashion requires a method of analysis that takes account of multiple meanings and interpretations, allowing for the cultural studies student to present a more questioning framework which allows for explanations that are multi-layered and open-ended” (Breward 1998, 304). Breward proposes that there are key areas in which cultural considerations have affected the writing of fashion history under categories of textual analysis, consideration of audience and consumption, the role of ideology and the political question of identity (Breward 1998, 305). Foucault (1979) would have us look at the problem within wider historical and social structures. Feminism would utilize the power of oral and non-traditional historical sources to position fashion in a discussion of cultural studies (Breward 1998, 310). Novelist and critic John Harvey (1995) would have us shatter the protective barriers between academic disciplines, and be less concerned with fitting into one or another category, but reading and learning from everything, social, cultural and political available (cited in Breward 1998, 311).

Fashion historian Aileen Ribeiro would have us take a multidisciplinary approach to studying fashion, never looking at just one aspect of the subject. Documentary material – inventories, invoices, wills, and accounts help to understand the mechanics of expenditure and consumption. Information in literary sources can explain how people felt about their clothes on an often emotional level. We can look at the garments themselves, learning about construction techniques and materials used. How the clothes were worn and with what layers often come from the printed image, in historical contexts paintings, in the modern context photographs, advertizing images and fashion magazines (Ribeiro 1998, 316-7). Ribeiro calls clothing an important part of a woman's life and self adornment the most personal and intimate of the applied arts (Ribeiro 1998, 318). She also suggests "that a study of home dress-making would be more illuminating if informed by an understanding of the part played by the great designers in establishing contemporary aesthetics and aspirational goals" (Ribeiro 1998, 319). Feminist theorist Alison Jaggar notes that "[i]n an influential 1959 lecture 'The Two Cultures', British scientist and novelist C.P. Snow drew a sharp contrast between the humanities and the sciences based on their methodologies" (Jaggar "The Humanities" 2008, 3). As this subject is very much a humanities based research topic, a qualitative approach to research will be focused upon rather than a strictly quantitative one. This thesis will take an interdisciplinary and multi method approach to research, looking at the experiences of the individual within the subcultural group.

Jaggar raises the question of 'male gaze' as applied to artistic works created by women in a male dominated field and how the consumer then may view the object created. She

uses Charlotte Bunch's often-quoted phrase "Feminist scholarship is not just a matter of adding women and stirring" (Jaggar "The Humanities" 2008, 4). Westwood it seems has added herself to the mixture of the male dominated field of fashion and encouraged a subcultural group that upset the gender dynamic. In this instance we are able to view this woman's life in the same regard that historians have viewed men's lives for centuries. We can in fact, look at all the key players in the early UK Punk scene to determine the stylistic normative at play between male and female participants as well as those participants who fall between the binary of gender. Fashion historians Carolina Evans and Minna Thornton would suggest that "the practices which a culture insists are meaningless or trivial; the places where ideology has succeeded in becoming invisible are practices in need of investigation" (Evans and Thornton 1991).

Historical background

The many incarnations of the UK Teddy-boy and the 1970s UK Punk aesthetic can trace their roots back to the notion of fashion being used as a means of resistance as exemplified by the American Zoot suit. The Zoot suit arose out of underprivileged Chicano and Black youth's desire to rebel against the American Establishment and dress restrictions of wartime Los Angeles. These young Latin Americans, according to Stuart Cosgrove "were a disinherited generation within a disadvantaged sector of North American society. The Pachuca subculture was defined not only by ostentatious fashion, but by petty crime, delinquency and drug taking, they developed an arrogant posture towards the dominant society" (Cosgrove 1985, 138). As new patterns of social mobility emerged, young people found themselves falling into the divide between childhood and

working adults. People were moving about the country either as enlisted military, or moving to the industrial centres to find employment which “put unforeseen pressure on housing and welfare” (Cosgrove 1985, 138). Sartorial differences caused friction between these young, disenfranchised minorities and the often white enlisted men who in their off hours wore clothing that reflected wartime rationing of cloth. This caused rioting in Los Angeles, other small cities in California and as far away as Detroit, New York and Philadelphia. Despite a call to “suppress every discordant activity which is designed to stir up strife” the style prevailed. It was adopted by musicians and the dancers known as lindy-hoppers, by both minority youth and whites alike despite racial tensions, as a “public and spectacular enactment of social disaffection” (Cosgrove 1985, 142).

Social historian Ralph Willett in *Hot Swing and the Dissolute Life: Youth, Style and Popular Music in Europe 1939-49* tells us that the “syncopated rhythms of American Jazz [had] swept through Europe in the late 30’s; Swing [music] symbolized resistance to authority and non-cooperation with the Third Reich” (Willett 1989, 157). At the same time, the German political propaganda machine also used Swing to poke fun at British Prime Minister Churchill, American President Roosevelt and the Allies, promoting their own “diluted form of Swing as sufficiently Aryan and non-American” (Willett 1989, 157). Some German youth, in resistance to the clean cut Hitler youth, adopted the unconventional styles similar to the pre-war era American Zoot, adopting “brightly checked shirts, long English sports jackets, crepe soles shoes known as ‘creepers’ in the US and England, showy scarves instead of straight-laced neckties. The style reflected the

'languid demeanour' of British and American film stars in contrast to the aggressively masculine appearance of the Hitler Youth" (Willett 1989, 159). In his view, this resistance through the use of fashion and music was a rebellion by the non-elite youth against a nationalistic and traditionally conservative majority.

As young Hispanic and black men were drafted into the war effort and found themselves posted to England in the early 1940s, their American bravado and machismo inspired the youth of Britain. Steve Chibnall notes, the Zoot suit was then "mediated through 'Englishness' which *Modified* and transformed its original meanings and its forms, taking on a class connotation quite absent in the States" (Chibnall 1985, 65). The drape shape was adopted by a small minority of young working class white men from larger metropolitan areas. The term 'Zoot' was replaced with the handle 'Spiv', referring to the wearer's occupation as an entrepreneur of the black market, dealing in rationed and restricted goods and services (Chibnall 1985, 65). The Spiv used clothing to advertize his occupation as the front man of organized crime. Chibnall believes "the whole ensemble stood for the casual ostentation of the successful man on the make, the bravado of the resourceful knave" (Chibnall 1985, 66). He notes that cartoonist Carl Giles depicted the Spiv as "mean [and] menacing, using clothes to conceal the over-blown bodies of thugs, less sympathetic than other depictions that placed the Spiv at the forefront of sharp dressing" (Chibnall 1985, 66).

As peacetime brought a change in attitude towards wartime restrictions of dress, the style came to be associated with the now fashionable East End of London. Jane Dorner in *Fashion in the Forties and Fifties* states that "by 1946 familiarity with the language of

economic beleaguerment – ‘Austerity Now for Stability later’, ‘Equality of Sacrifice’, ‘Economic Dunkirk’ – was beginning to jar on the nerves of the British public” (Dorner 1975, 9). Chibnall continues this analysis in relation to the British fashion scene stating, “[w]hile the glamour-starved British women turned to Paris for their salvation, their male counterparts looked across the Atlantic and found the swagger of the drape” (Chibnall 1985, 68). *The Tailor and Cutter* magazine in 1948 was already making connections between Jazz, the Zoot suit and youth culture (Willett 1989, 162), and advertizing ‘How to cut an American styled wide shouldered jacket.’ The president of the International Association of Clothing Designers, in a speech given in Montreal, declared “that the new look in men’s wear was to feature squarer shouldered, longer, draped jackets with fuller chests to give an aggressive look to the American male” (cited in Chibnall 1985, 61). Wartime restrictions which had been accepted in Britain as part of the necessary sacrifices of the war effort quickly became meaningless shackles on a liberty earned by victory (Chibnall 1985, 67). By 1950 many Savile Row tailors had created their own draped style.

The English version of the draped shape reflected back on better economic times of the Edwardian era. Tired of wartime civilian ‘utility’ clothing of the Civilian Clothing Order Act CC41, Englishmen opted “for a swaggering return to the panache of the early twentieth-century sartorial style that paid conscious homage to the Regency London of Beau Brummell” (Breward 2004, 2). Leonard Sims, a young ‘New Edwardian’ in 1953 is quoted

I just like to look good nothing 'flash'. I am eighteen. I wear Edwardian Suits. I love bop music and jive dancing. I am particular about my hair. But if anybody thinks that makes me a spiv, here is where he learns different. I am not a spiv, a layabout or troublemaker. Neither are my friends. So I don't know what all the fuss is about (cited in Nidge 1999, np).

The American styled Zoot had lost favour as being 'un-British' and reflected the glamour of criminal behaviour depicted in American *film noir*. The connotations suggested by its association with the Spiv undermined traditional respect for law and order (Chibnall 1985, 72). The style had not been helped by the fact that many young people wearing it were petty criminals encouraged by the bravado, as Chibnall states, "born of a romance with an alien culture" (Chibnall 1985, 69). Referred to as 'Teds' in the press, the name was a shortened form of Teddy-Boy which referred to the style of dress adopted by British youth through a pirating of the sophisticated Edwardian look from Savile row and superimposing it on to the draped shape of the Zoot suit. These young white men enacted a rough urban machismo displayed in the minority subcultures during the early war years in America (Chibnall 1985, 74). As Christopher Breward notices, these new styles lead to a "re-writing of the dandy code along new class-lines and reconstructed territories in the transformed and transforming London of the 1950s" (Beward 2004, 4).

By 1965 Colin MacInnes, an essayist on youth culture had declared the Teddy-boy style dead, found only in the absurd dated stereotypes of caricaturists and in "outlying holes and corners" (MacInnes 1966, 151). As the number of Teddy-boys dwindled, the Ted style began to adopt brighter colours with narrower velvet lapels and stovepipe trouser legs. Youth subculture changed to reflect differing teen attitudes as well, with hipster

and beat styles influenced from the American Jazz scene (Steele 2000, 40). Influential cultural analyst Dick Hebdige tells us that whereas “the beatnik grew out of a literate, verbal culture, professed an interest in the *avant-garde* and affected a bemused cosmopolitan air of bohemian tolerance, the Ted was uncompromisingly proletarian and xenophobic and figured prominently in the 1958 race riots in Britain” (Hebdige 1979, 51).

The 1960s are widely thought of as the decade of youth, due in no small part to the post war baby boom. Fashion historian Valerie Steele has written that the “early appearance and ubiquity of youth fashions in post war Britain set the stage for the emergence of London as a major fashion capital in the 1960’s, unhampered by an established couture industry, London spawned a host of young designers who catered specifically to the girls [and boys] in the street” (Steele 2000, 50). As early as 1955 Mary Quant, famous for inventing the mini-skirt, opened a store on King’s Road. Her clothing reflected the simple, inexpensive styles that Quant noticed the ‘Chelsea-girl’ or young art student wore, so different than the “stilted, confined and ugly” styles she noticed being worn by adults in Britain (Steele 2000, 51). In Paris, Yves Saint Laurent was also looking to youth culture for inspiration, designing his ‘Beat Look’ collection in 1960 for both women and men, with black crocodile skin jackets, trimmed in mink. Saint Laurent was inspired by Marlon Brando’s 1954 film *The Wild One*, a look that had been widely popular with working-class male rockers. In London John Stephan created Modish, colourful and body conscious clothing for the young man about town, reflective of earlier Teddy-boy styles.

Hebdige tells us that “unlike the defiantly obtrusive Teddy-boys, the Mods were more subtle and subdued in appearance: they wore apparently conservative suits in respectable colours, they were fastidiously neat and tidy. Hair was generally short and clean, and the Mods preferred to maintain the stylish contours of an impeccable ‘French crew’ with invisible lacquer rather than with the obvious grease favoured by the more overtly masculine rockers” (Hebdige 1979, 52). As the Mod also seemed to be more gainfully employed than the Ted, it was required that he blend in with proper society more than his earlier youth counterparts. The Mod lived “between the leaves of the calendar”, looking forward to his off hours, the weekend and the bank holiday (Hebdige 1979, 53). Chibnall notices that “the ‘democratization’ of fashion and the role of youth in this process during the 1960s are of significance as are the roles of art colleges and popular music in forming a bridge between creative members of the working class and the traditional enclaves of high society, design has greatly expanded as a route of individual upward mobility” (Chibnall 1985, 78).

Fashion and music went hand in hand in this new revolution, where the new musical idiom, Rock and Roll, was all about sex and it seemed none were sexier than rock and roll musicians. Valerie Steele writes “musicians such as Rod ‘the Mod’ Stewart, the Beatles, the Rolling Stones and Pete Townsend of The Who, famous for the line ‘hope I die before I get old’ (Who, My Generation, 1965) epitomized the new look and sound. The Mod style that was reflected in the clothes worn by Rod Stewart and the Beatles were based on traditional styles of Savile Row but sharpened by an Italian edge” (Steele 2000, 56). Sir Mark Palmer, one of the more extroverted members of the 1960s fashion

scene is quoted, “There was a time when men wouldn’t wear coloured clothes for fear of being thought queer” (cited in Steele 2000, 58). After the 1967 decriminalization of homosexuality, whether they were gay or not, Mods felt little need to restrict their sense of style. The new sexual morality for gays, straights, men and women alike, exerted an influence on fashion (Steele 2000, 58).

By 1966, the Mod style was beginning to break apart. According to Hebdige, those more interested in the fashion of the culture merged with the Hippies, embracing the “fancy arabesques of acid rock” whereas the ‘hard Mod’ looked to Ska, rocksteady and reggae music influences and took to wearing jeans with braces and heavy boots (Hebdige 1979, 55). The ‘skinhead’ grew out of this latter group. They lived in close proximity to the West Indian immigrants that had been at the centre of racial tensions a decade earlier. The two groups listened to the same music, drank in the same pubs and shared a common, working class culture. The skinhead borrowed items of dress as well as musical tastes from their West Indian neighbours, composing themselves on the cusp of two worlds, black and white, and the beginnings of a new subculture were formed. This iconic black and white look would, by the early 1980s become what is now known as ‘Two-tone’, merging out of Mod, Punk and Ska subcultures.

By the late 1960s, a young Vivienne Westwood emerged as a strong influence in the creation of personal style. Working with her partner in business as well as in life, Malcolm McLaren, she pushed the boundaries of what was acceptable in fashion. Westwood was always interested in fashion, believing that “you have a much better life if you wear impressive clothes” (cited in Wilcox 2004, 13). The new-Edwardian style was

about to resurface and McLaren was looking for new, Modish, Teddy-boy clothes to wear, for himself, but also for his music industry friends and colleagues. Together they explored the world of personal street fashion and eventually opened their first shop on 'the King's Road' in 1971 called *Let it Rock*, which combined their love of fashion and McLaren's love of music. McLaren described rock and roll as the "jungle beat that threatened white civilization" (cited in Wilcox 2004, 11). This highly racial quote could be seen as challenging the dominant stereotype of a strong England, when in fact society was fraying at the seams in the post WWII era.

Until the late 1960s, youth subcultures seem to have been focused on a male dynamic. Both Mary Quant and Vivienne Westwood noticed an opening for young women to express themselves subculturally. They developed looks for both the Mod and Teddy-boy inspired young women that equalled the quality of the Savile row clothing created for the young men. Quant and Westwood, through their sartorial choices, opened up a new perspective to the traditionally masculine narrative.

Westwood shared in Malcolm McLaren's interest in the subversive potential of rock and roll and street fashion. In *Fashion and Music*, Janice Miller notes that "subcultural identity created a sense of fearful fascination for mainstream culture, tinged as it was with a frisson of danger, transgression and rebellion, establishing ideas about how generations work to define and understand themselves" (Miller 2011, 97). No longer were these young women's clothes being made at home, or bought cheaply at the department stores. Alongside their masculine subcultural counterpart, young women

were determining what was fashionable to wear instead of the clothing deemed appropriate by the established fashion houses.

In her biography on Vivienne Westwood, Claire Wilcox quotes Westwood in an interview with UK Punk scholar Jon Savage, stating that “McLaren’s anti-authoritarianism was a guiding principle but he effortlessly combined this with his love of fashion, saying ‘It’s the thing that makes my heart beat.’ Malcolm has always been totally fascinated by clothes. They’re the most important thing in his life, really” (cited in Wilcox 2004, 11).

The pair were drawn to the hard, tailored Teddy-boy look, with Westwood buying a pair of tight leopard-print trousers from a former 430 Kings Road shop ‘Mr Freedom’ and making herself full and pencil skirts, which she wore with short socks and stilettos.

Westwood cut her hair short and had it razored in a proto-Punk look influenced by Glam rocker David Bowie. McLaren called her a ‘bright peacock, a walking traffic light’ (cited in Wilcox 2004, 11). The tenuous relationship between the Punk and the Ted was formed.



McLaren wearing typical Teddy-boy styled clothing. Westwood with razored hair. Photographer unknown.

The pair came from a wealthier background than the majority of their subcultural followers. Westwood biographer Jane Mulvagh quotes William English, film maker and radio broadcaster, stating “McLaren donned a single breasted drape jacket with velvet trim and crepe soled brothel creepers for the opening of *Let it Rock* at 430 King’s Road in 1971. He looked ‘home-grown and working class, not adapted, just like a real old Ted” (cited in Mulvagh 2003, 53). The pair began their retail business selling original ‘78’ records, radios, Brylcreem and rock fanzines. Westwood added second hand 1950’s clothing found in suburban thrift stores, and copied the drainpipe trousers and vintage dresses to understand the cut and construction. Local East End tailor Sid Green made up drape shaped coats in bright colours. Westwood borrowed the Beatnik idea of wearing an oversized boyfriend sweater with tights and created mohair jumpers for the girls which later evolved into the matted and unravelling sweaters associated with Punk (Wilcox 2004, 11).

Let it Rock proved to be so successful that Westwood and McLaren were asked to provide the clothes for the revivalist film *That’ll Be The Day* starring Ringo Starr and David Essex. By the time of its release, the pair had turned their sights to another form of sub-culture clothing, biker gear. The shop was rebranded with skull and crossbones and renamed *Too Fast to Live, Too Young to Die* (1972) after comments made about actor James Dean (Wilcox 2004, 11). It was at this time that second hand jeans, leather jackets and sloganed T-shirts joined the collection. By 1974, the pair had rebranded and renamed the shop on King’s Road for a third time. With *SEX*, Westwood added to the

growing fashion collection pieces of fetish clothing and included further experiments with T-shirt slogans, distressed clothing and studded pieces.

In May 1975, Westwood and McLaren took their collection to New York, hoping to break into the fashion scene there. Westwood “wore a stretch tweed catsuit, knitted mohair bra with diamante straps and a pair of ‘principal-boy’ boots from Freed’s ballet shop and although the collection didn’t sell, the pair met the group New York Dolls who were to inspire McLaren to focus more on music and leave the fashion to Westwood” (Wilcox 2004, 11). Back in London, Steve Jones, Paul Cook and Glen Matlock had begun hanging around the shop and were on board when McLaren suggested that instead of playing covers of ‘Faces’ and ‘Bad Company’ songs, that they turn their ear to the Punk scene coming out of New York. McLaren was interested in what the transgressive New York Dolls, and Lou Reed’s Velvet Underground, both products of Andy Warhol’s Factory, were doing musically. McLaren found this newly re-formed band a lead singer. John Lydon was a sneering North London kid; McLaren re-christened him Johnny Rotten and named the band the ‘Sex Pistols’ (Gent 2012, 25). Punk in England was beginning to make its presence felt. “I felt unclean for about 48 hours,” noted a G.L.C. councillor after seeing a concert by the Sex Pistols, as reported by the *New Musical Express*, 18 July 1977 (cited in Hebdige 1979, 90).



The Sex Pistols with Johnny Rotten wearing a Teddy-boy styled drape jacket and frilled shirt. Photographer unknown.

Subcultural stylistic innovations are often the first to attract media attention, after which comes the antisocial behaviour that attracts the attention of police and the courts. With the case of the Punk scene in England, the media sighting virtually coincided with the noticing of its antisocial deviance. Hebdige tells us “The *Daily Mirror* ran its first series of alarmist centrespreads on the subculture, concentrating on the bizarre clothing and jewellery during the week of 29 Nov – 3 Dec 1977, that same week in which the Sex Pistols exploded into the public eye on the Thames *Today* programme” (Hebdige 1979, 93). Westwood pushed the boundaries of what was acceptable fashion ‘taste’, printing T-shirts with images of women’s anatomy, using offensive and threatening elements of Nazi culture, pushing an idea of perversity and violence (Steele 2000, 97). Bob Gruen, a New York city photographer, explains,

It was a reaction against Mum and Dad talking about World War II, a perceived reaction to a right-wing thing”, he explains that “Vivienne’s Anarchy shirts looked like concentration camp shirts with their badly painted stripes which she then stuck an upside-down swastika armband to, and festooned them with every political slogan you could have (cited in Lydon 1994, 217).

In 1977, the shop went through yet another re-branding and re-naming as *Seditionaries* which firmly ensconced Westwood and McLaren in subcultural identity. By 1978, many of society's misfits and outsiders had entered the realm of Punk. Punk biographer Julien Temple tells us that "the great thing about the Sex Pistols was the people they attracted" (cited in Savage 2005, 190). The young people who were at the forefront of this pack of misfits were from suburbia themselves, the Borough of London named Bromley. Looking to negotiate their own identities, they felt constrained by their suburban upbringing and thought the suburban communities were small and narrow minded. Performer and Bromley native Siouxi Sioux explains that the group that was made up of "waifs, male gays, female gays, bisexuals, non-sexuals, everything. No one was criticized for their sexual preferences. The only thing that was looked down on was suburbia" (cited in Savage 2005, 183). It was this Bromley contingent that introduced the Sex Pistols to underground society (Savage 2005, 183). The Bromley contingent will be discussed further in this thesis.

As the decade of the 1970s closed, it was thought that perhaps Punk had run its course, becoming too mainstream to be considered still subcultural. Some of the key participants still had issues they wanted to address though. Jon Savage tells us that "England's crisis had become what cultural historian Stuart Hall called 'the articulation of a fully fledged capitalist recession' that 'savaged living standards and sacrificed the middle class to capital'" (Savage 2005, 229). Elvis Costello was booked on *Saturday Night Live* in early December 1977 as a replacement to the rapidly imploding Sex Pistols. He had been encouraged by his record company to perform 'Less Than Zero' but broke off

after a few bars to play 'Radio Radio' instead. The song was inspired by the Sex Pistols own 'God Save the Queen', and spoke of the control record companies and radio stations had over the kind of music to which people could listen (Gent 2012, 136). On April 30, 1978 the Clash headlined a festival type concert against racial tensions featuring a new song entitled "English Civil War" about the dangers of right wing politics. The *Rock Against Racism* concert featured many prominent Punk bands. The Clash headlined a lineup that included Generation X, Bromley native Billy Idol's band, and X-Ray Spex, an early Two-tone group. The concert is thought to have been a defining moment in anti fascist thought¹, a game changer for the skinheads and marked the decline of the National Front (Gent 2012, 129). The Police song 'Roxanne' made it to number 12 on the UK top 40 in April of 1979, with its overt message about the problems faced by sex workers resonating with young people who had to turn to selling their bodies to survive (Gent 2012, 137). The Sex Pistols themselves were disintegrating under pressure from McLaren and the media frenzy which they had originally exploited. Sid Vicious spent much of his last days under suspicion of the murder of his girlfriend Nancy Spurgeon, finally succumbing to a drug overdose. After the breakup of the remaining band members, John Lydon went on to form the band Public Image Ltd, releasing an album that featured a mash-up of dub, progressive rock and composed noise (Gent 2012, 142).

¹ In the late 1970s, there was a rise in Nationalism with calls for the National Front party to remove minority cultures from England, most notably persons of colour, "wishing to stop all immigration and start phased repatriation" (Sabin 2011, 61). The National Front party also adopted the punk aesthetic of wearing the swastika to their benefit and tried to claim leading punk figures as their own (Sabin 2011, 63). The Clash debuted "English Civil War", a song about the dangers of right wing politics (Gent 2012, 129).

Recent ideas on the subculture of Punk

How do McLaren and, more importantly, Westwood fit into the concept of Punk? From outward appearances, it would seem that McLaren was along for the fun, fame, and for the money. Westwood certainly dressed the part far more than McLaren with his distinct teddy-boy style. Westwood and McLaren's contemporaries explain the aesthetic. Bob Gruen, a photographer of fashion and music icons, tells us "McLaren really was a menswear obsessive" (cited in Lydon 1994, 217). McLaren's interests were entrepreneurial, the fine tailored clothes that were created by the first wave of teddy-boy were now being picked up in the second hand shops and helped to create a second wave of the style. McLaren used these pieces of clothing along with record singles he could order from warehoused supplies left over from the 1950s to stock his first retail spaces. Paul Stahl, an advertising executive in London informs us that "people started looking fifties again as a reaction against the long-haired hippie thing" (cited in Lydon 1994, 212).

Westwood explains that McLaren acted as her muse, inspiring her with his ideas and encouraging her to look at the world slightly differently, looking at history, the street culture and the anti-establishment for inspiration for the clothing she designed.

Westwood biographer Claire Wilcox believes that "one of the most significant factors of Punk is that it gave license for women to dress assertively, unlike the predominantly male clothing styles of the [concurrent] Teds and Rockers" whose female counterparts wore clothing that expressed a heightened femininity. Cultural theorist Helen Reddington explains that "there was an understanding among those in the Punk

subculture that sexualized clothing was worn as an ironic statement, but also that it was actually more comfortable for female musicians to wear 'male' clothing, particularly when setting up the gear, which one was not excused from on account of one's gender" (Reddington 2007, 102). She continues at great length how the ironic statement could backfire and lead to unwanted sexual overtures. She also states that it was Punk journalist Caroline Coon who claimed that sexual clothing was empowering (Reddington 2007, 124). In contrast, Reddington dismisses the "enduring tabloid version of the female Punk, consisting of young women in fishnet tights with spiky hair and extreme black eye make-up, focusing on the music world and not the Punk style" (Reddington 2007, 9). I would add that not all Punks adhered to this 'uniform'. Fishnet tights are uncomfortable to wear and the whole idea of wearing a short skirt left me always worrying if my underwear were showing.

Wilcox also contends that Westwood had always been an activist, with her own politics (Wilcox 2004, 14). John Lydon tells us that the "Cambridge rapist T-shirts, the cowboy T-shirts had a lot to do with Vivienne Westwood. Malcolm McLaren took a lot of the praise, but she did most of the designs" (Lydon 1994, 70). Chrissie Hynde informs us that "the bondage gear wasn't supposed to stimulate you in the sexual sense. It was more of a statement; two fingers up at the Establishment. They would have T-shirts with pictures of rapists wearing rubber masks as if they were reflecting something from the culture back at us. They were extremely anti-Establishment" (cited in Lydon 1994, 71). John Gray, friend of John Lydon and an early punk also refers to the T-shirts as

belonging to Vivienne Westwood, not McLaren, when he explains how he put together his first punk outfits,

we wore jumble sales clothes, not leather jackets or straight-legged trousers. Either they weren't being made or we couldn't afford them. We were coming out of the flared trousers scene, which we felt looked quite ridiculous. Sol'd have big loons on; pants that John gave me. I had no money for clothes, so I'd wear his old gear – black platform boots four inches thick, completely cropped hair, and a Vivienne Westwood top! (cited in Lydon 1994, 72).

Cultural sociologist David Muggleton speaks of Punk as a feeling, more than just the clothes you wear. In his book *Inside Subculture: the Postmodern Meaning of Style*, he interviews various people that self identify as members of UK Punk. He quotes his informant Geoff as saying, “the possession of underlying attributes such as feelings of inner difference are valued more highly than the wearing of subculture style, that inner difference will ‘show through’ no matter what one is wearing” (cited in Muggleton 2000, 90). Geoff believes “there’s no such thing as Punk, no basis for distinction between real and pretend. Punk is what you make it” (cited in Muggleton 2000, 2). It is more about the attitude one possesses than how one might dress. Muggleton also writes that the concept of a subculture ‘uniform’ is more an effect of labelling from the outside. This idea is reinforced when one looks through the visual archive of what is considered ‘Punk’. Rarely do we see images of McLaren or the Sex Pistols wearing the quintessential Punk uniform of black clothes and spiked hair, and even Westwood herself is limited in that Punk look. What society believes to be the uniform of Punk was developed later through the media and fed back to younger members of the subculture. Helen Reddington reminds us that there have always been arguments of authenticity in

subcultural worlds. She brings up the notion of who was the authentic Punk? “The person who bought clothes from the King’s Road, the London epicentre of Punk style, or the person who played in a Punk band, inspired by the Sex Pistols and The Clash, whose exhortations were encouraging bands all over Britain?” (Reddington 2007, 90) She tells us of one instance, where a large Punk girl came up to the band she was playing in and “started slagging us. She picked on me particularly, saying what a poseur I was in my leather jacket and sunglasses. I pulled the tag out from her T-shirt and the label read ‘BOY’, which was a sub-Seditionaries shop on the King’s Road” (Reddington 2007, 91). Reddington quotes Shanne Bradley, speaking of the fashion of the time and the zeitgeist in general around 1975;

It wasn’t called Punk. We were wearing the same sort of thing; I had short spiky hair after a peroxide accident with henna, and a lot of piercings, and holsters and ripped-up fishnets and ice-skating boots and stuff from Oxfam shops.

And McLaren was there and they were just like yeah, you gotta come to the shop and [they] just started inviting me to everything, it was synchronicity or something (cited in Reddington 2007, 46).

Reddington asserts that the image of the “young woman in fishnets stockings with panda eyes, stilettos and spiky blonde hair was just a stereotype. There *were* some Punk women like this, but for many the ideology counted for more than, or as much as the fashion. [She] felt indignant that the image of Punk that had been set in stone was not what [she] had experienced firsthand” (Reddington 2007, 2). John Lydon confirms that “at that time there was no Punk cliché uniform. It wasn’t wall-to-wall studded leather jackets and Mohawks. That came a long time later” (Lydon 1994, 101).

In order to understand this disconnect between the common dominant stereotype of Punk and its own, arguably more varied, complex history, it may be helpful to make a brief excursion back into theory. Ken Gelder, an Australian cultural theorist and academic whose recent work, *Subcultures* provides an overview of what he calls “six ways of identifying subcultures²”, that is six different ways in which subcultures have been understood (Gelder 2007, 3). While each is interesting in its own right, what is important for the purposes of this thesis is Gelder’s attention to the construction of cultural identities and with it the agendas, assumptions and perspectives of those responsible for their formulation. In particular, this thesis is intent on questioning the normative masculine representation of Punk, with all the overtones of violence and mayhem that image connotes. Where one can determine similarities to Gelder is in the “excess or exaggeration of behaviour, [clothing] style, noise and language” and certainly in its “opposition to the banalities of mass cultural forms and [Punk’s] identity being pitched against the conformist pressures of mass society and massification” (Gelder 2007, 4).

Reddington states that “there was no preconception about what a band would sound like or look like, as long as they could provide an experience for the audience. Musical

² First, subcultures have been understood and evaluated negatively in terms of their relationship to labour or work. Notions of idleness, members are unproductive or at leisure, pleasure seeking, hedonistic and self-indulgent; parasitical or even criminal. Second, subcultures are often understood ambivalently at best in relation to class. Karl Marx understands subcultures to be seen as the *lumpenproletariat*, or below class-based identity and without class consciousness and self interested rather than class affiliated. Thirdly, subcultures are usually located at one remove from property ownership. They territorialise rather than own spaces. Fourth, subcultures come together outside the domestic sphere, away from home and family. Fifth, cultural logic tends to equate subcultures with excess or exaggeration, a registration of deviance through excessive attributes. Sixth, cultural logic develops out of the late nineteenth century and cast modern subcultures in opposition to the banalities of mass cultural forms, pitched against conformist pressures of mass society and massification.

competence, gender, style and content were arbitrary; the audience was expected to be open-minded. This was very much a feature of the early Punk and allowed unusual bands to take to the stage” (Reddington 2007, 41). She denounces the “assumption made by rock critics that all girls liked pop and did not like rock, and all boys liked rock and did not like pop, [as being] too simplistic” (Reddington 2007, 113). Caroline Coon explains

During the Punk movement, the atmosphere for women was glorious! For the first time in the working art environment, apart from ballet, where there was a good percentage of women. Apart from Siouxi, there were the fans like Jordan, musicians, and poets like Patti Smith. It was such fun. I loved it. You could feel the power. The balance was coming. It was still tough, and we were all fighting in different ways, but I loved it. The playing field was leveling in the sense that the theatre of rock ‘n’ roll art had always been an arena that was slightly looser than straight culture. Although the misogyny in the rock ‘n’ roll culture was bad, it sure wasn’t as bad as the orthodox corporate world, the overground (cited in Lydon 1994, 221).

Reddington believes that “Punk subculture itself was supposed to change the environment for girls and young women” but feels that it was not always the case. She cited John Lydon

I don’t think anybody actually looked down on women. They were equal, and everybody was as stupid as each other. You would sort of hit women the same way you would a guy if she was taking a piss at you or spilled your drink. But it wasn’t an antisex attitude or a matter of acting puritanical. People just didn’t give it the same importance as it had before. It was a rebellion against the lad ethic – get drunk, pull a bird, and get around the back, wherever. The Punks believed they had some kind of intellectual capacity – each and every one of them – and they didn’t want to slip back into that rock thing (Lydon 1994, 222).

Music historian Greil Marcus reminds us of the influence mass media had on the introduction of the Sex Pistols to the mainstream public. “The press contrived a moral panic to sell papers, but the panic seemed real soon enough: the Sex Pistols were denounced in Parliament as a threat to the British way of life, by socialists as fascist, by fascists as communist” (Marcus 1989, 9). The mass media seemed to be working to create a divide between working and middle classes, what Stanley Cohen and others have referred to as a ‘moral panic’ (S. Cohen 1972). Gelder looks to cultural theorist Richard Hoggart to explain the perceived differences in class. Hoggart has noticed a dislike of those who leave the working class, moving upwards, above the working class community, referring to them as ‘scholarship boys’. On the other hand Hoggart believes that the ‘jukebox boy’ is rejecting the working class community for their subculture, sliding downwards, below their class community. Hoggart regards them both as *lumpenproletariat*³ (cited in Gelder 2007, 87). Both the scholarship boy (Mod) and the jukebox boy (Rocker) are seen to leave the parent community and are described as “deviant, non-conformist, and less constrained than their parents were” (Gelder 2007, 88-89). These two stereotypes are characterised in the subcultures of Mods (scholarship boys) and the Rockers (jukebox boys) of the Who’s *Quadrophenia* (Roddam 1979).

³ For Hoggart, the ‘Juke-box boys’ are “‘symptomatic of the general trend’, utterly under the influence of mass cultural forms, spending their evenings ‘listening in harshly lighted milk-bars to the nickelodeons’” (cited in Gelder 2007, 87). Hoggart sees the juke-box boy as “rather less intelligent than the average, and are therefore even more exposed than others to the debilitating mass-trends of the day” (cited in Gelder 2007, 87). It is this theory that I understand to be a contributing factor to the racist skinhead thread that appears in Punk narratives.

As the Mods and Rockers became the Punks they asked their community to ‘wake up, stand up’ as Bob Marley would say. In 1970s England, where unemployment was reaching staggering heights it could be understood that “the world could not be fixed by handing out flowers” as the Hippie generation a decade earlier had believed (Joe Strummer cited in Temple 2007). Gelder uses ethnographer Paul Willis to explain that the hippies of the 1960s appear as nonconformists who created a shared sense of community through their radical lifestyle (Willis 1978, 125). Like Hoggart, Willis casts them as *lumpenproletariat* “enclosed in their own world, unreflective of their own morality and having a limited ability to imaginatively explore other possibilities for organizing their world” (Willis 1978, 49) Gelder then references Hebdige’s essay in the *Resistance Through Rituals* collection entitled ‘The Meaning of Mod’ (Hebdige 1993). Hebdige explains that, in contrast to the counter-culture Hippie, the Mod wanted to rise above his working class origins, living vicariously through American movies, and avoiding the “less glamorous reality around them” (cited in Gelder 2007, 91). Gelder considers Hebdige’s essay to be about “the end of the Mod and their re-absorption back into the dominant culture” (Gelder 2007, 91).

In his sub-chapter “Punk and Semiotics”, Gelder reflects that Punks are still seen (rightly or wrongly) as a working class subculture, or at the least, as the ‘performance’ of a working class subculture (Gelder 2007, 92). Gelder calls on Norman Mailer’s notion of the ‘white negro’, but sees the Mods, Skinheads and Teddy-boys all positioned in relation to Black British subcultural identity and found wanting. Mailer calls the Mod, Skinhead and Ted all racist, hostile and retreating back to their working class whiteness.

Gelder describes this notion of the Punk as a 'white translation of black ethnicity' or more simply put 'white ethnicity' following Mailer's view of the American Hipster or Beat (Gelder 2007, 92).

Punks engaged with Jamaican reggae forms because of their proximity to that community; they shared neighbourhoods. Early Punk nightclub the Roxy featured resident DJ Don Letts who played reggae between sets of live music because in the early days, there were no Punk albums to play. Subcultural historian Dick Hebdige tells us that there is a problem with "this cross-cultural identification: White British Punks have a different cultural language" and he states that this language remains a "frozen dialectic between black and white cultures, trapped within its own history" (Hebdige 2011, 38). The Punks heard in the reggae music of their neighbours a message of alienation and found positive meaning for their own notion of anarchy. Hebdige also sees the "Punk aesthetic as a white translation of black ethnicity" (Hebdige 2011, 39). Hebdige also notices an uneasy relationship between the Punk and reggae music and with music and subcultures throughout the post war era. He explains that each time that themes imported from contemporary black music become mainstream in the dominant or white musical structure they force elements into new configurations. Hebdige explains that when rock stabilized in the early 1960s, the Mods looked to soul music and ska. Similarly, when glam rock hit its extreme in the early 1970s, the Punk looked to the past and the more vigorous forms of rock from the '50s and early '60s, what Hebdige understands as "when black influences had been strongest" (Hebdige

2011, 42). It is this relationship with the past that I notice influencing the Punk aesthetic in the UK throughout its history.

Elizabeth Guffey in her book *Retro* mentions an evocation of War Era fashion gaining popularity in the 1970s. Through French genre films such as Louis Maille's *Lacombe Lucien* (1974) that examined themes of resistance to, as well as collaboration with, the Nazis of World War II, they offered up moodily atmospheric and romantic ideals for an audience that was too young to remember the war themselves (Guffey 2006, 14). Gelder mentions Raymond Williams' study *Culture and Society* (1958) using the "modern conditions in the late 1950s as a kind of epilogue to [his] survey of the historical past" (cited in Gelder 2007, 85). As Williams looked at Industrialization affecting the culture of the working class, he concluded that industrialization fragmented working class cultural forms and that mass communication and mass culture expedited things with their "low taste and habit" message (Gelder 2007, 85).

Certainly this 'low culture' normative can be seen in the use of second hand clothing worn by the UK Punk, which was then modified by deconstructing it to create the iconic look. Both the Sex Pistols and the Clash were known to purposely tear and stain their stage clothes, and Westwood's early 'T' shirts were stripped back to the basic form and constructed with frayed edges and worn without the care of pressing seen in mainstream fashion. These pieces were sometimes worn with items of dress taken from their Teddy-boy counterpart in striking contrast. Westwood's fine tailoring, evident even in her earliest collections, blended the 'low culture' with the 'high culture' of Saville

row attention to detail. The 'low taste and habit' message is blurred in the aesthetic of UK Punk. Both the Sex Pistols and their fans used the Teddy-boy retro pieces, the items Westwood designed and the iconic leather biker gear to create an aesthetic that can be seen as distinct from their American counterparts.

What difference do Bodies make?

Punk music has at its roots the early rock and roll musical aesthetic of the 1950s. So too does the early Punk fashion, on both sides of the Atlantic. This section will go back and explore how Punk style developed, comparing and contrasting the looks and how they each relate to the minority Chicano and Black cultures of the United States. There are stylistic differences between the UK and American Punk looks, as well as differences in gender and society politics at play. American Punk Legs McNeil tells us that what was considered pushing boundaries in the UK fell flat in America. When McLaren dressed the NY Dolls all in red and had them play in front of a communist flag, the message did not work (McCain and McNeil 1996, 191). America was still battling a political cold war with communist Soviet Union. The New York Dolls originally dressed in the bricolage of women to attract girls, but more importantly, they were a binary response to the clean cut image put forth by the Beach Boys. New York City in the 1970s was as 'bombed out' by poverty as London had been by the Blitz. Growing up in this economic and social decay, brought about by the suburbanization of the city in the post war era, it is easy to understand how disconnected the Dolls, Velvet Underground, and the Ramones must have felt compared to their California counterparts. The oppressive Soviet message

could be appreciated by the Dolls as the city faced a decline in the quality of life reminiscent of communist Moscow. New York was notorious for high crime rates, prostitutes and pimps took over Times Square and the homeless and drug dealers occupied the boarded up and abandoned buildings. In England, Punk could still rely on the high quality fashion of Savile Row working its way through to the second hand market. In New York, there was seemingly nothing left of quality, and the look created by the Dolls and Ramones more closely resembled that of the prostitute and the drug addict.

Recently, Monika Sklar has written about how the fashion of Punk has been overlooked in favour of music, which receives the most attention. She raises the question of 'norms', one being that "it is commonly unacceptable for a woman to embrace traditional notions of femininity and still be whole heartedly Punk", but then she also states that "Punk's at times overt masculinity thematically is an awkward match with the iconic style's attention-grabbing look that indicates an obvious preference for self-attention to grooming and colourful appearances" (Sklar 2013, 15-16). In this section I will discuss how fashion theorists mediate gender and the body and how these mediations relate to Punk style. I will also look into the role media played in the creation of the street Punk style and how that differed from Westwood's envisioned look. I will then question women's empowerment with regard to early Punk fashion and how modern influences of pin-up culture and burlesque are affecting the look today.

Fashion historian and sociologist Joanne Entwistle notes the complex relationship that fashion and dress have with identity. She explains that "the clothes we choose to wear

can be expressive of identity, telling others something about our gender, class, status, and so on; on the other hand, our clothes cannot be 'read', since they do not straightforwardly 'speak' and can therefore be open to misinterpretation. Tension between clothes as revealing and clothes as concealing of identity are also at play" (Entwistle 2000, 112). She discusses the idea that clothing can represent a compromise between society standards of acceptable dress, and the social groups to which we belong and our own personal preferences (Entwistle 2000, 114). Fashion historian Joanne Finklestein states "fashions are bonds that link individuals in a mutual act of conformity to social conventions" (Finklestein 1991, 122). Entwistle also discusses Foucault's theories in *Technologies of the Self* (1988) as "ways we are called upon to make ourselves particular sorts of human beings" (Entwistle 2000, 113). Unfortunately, many early costume historians have neglected the body altogether when discussing fashion and dress.

Early costume historians consider the garment as an object, and are concerned with the construction and detail of decoration only. Entwistle notes that Hebdige (1979) would have us look at fashion semiotically, looking at what the clothes themselves tell us about society, Tseelon (1992) looks at "the meanings and intentions of dress in social interactions" (Entwistle 2000, 9), all of which neglect the issue of the body and its gender. Entwistle understands that "bodies which do not conform, bodies which flout the conventions of their culture and go without the appropriate clothes are subversive of the most basic social codes and risk exclusion, scorn and ridicule" (Entwistle 2000, 7). This, to me, sounds exactly what Vivienne Westwood desired. UK Punks took the

bricolage of society and put it together into new outfits that broke notions of gender normativity. Women had again begun to wear men's work clothes as their own in the form of jeans, button-downs, and neckties, different from the 'little girl' image of Mary Quant. We are reminded that it was far more practical when loading in your own gear for a performance (Reddington 2007, 102). Christine Robertson, manager of the Slits also informs us that "a lot of stereotypes for [gender] roles had been broken down" (cited in Reddington 2007, 23).

Joanne Entwistle would have us turn away from the "consideration of dress as an object, looking instead at the way in which dress is an embodied activity, embedded within social relations" (Entwistle 2000, 10). Susan Willis in *Hardcore: Subculture American Style* asks "why a particular style gets adopted out of the cultural memory reservoir and, further, how the adoption of style gives expression to a group's notion of its social reality" (S. Willis 1993, 366). Hebdige asserts that "Punks, Mods, Teds etc- were constituted through the aggressive assertion of musical and sartorial preferences, marking out identity and difference from competing subcultures and the parent culture" (Hebdige 1983, 11). All the clothing items that were sourced by the young Punk through second hand shops were seen as pieces of acceptable dress by the parent culture. What made the aesthetic different was in how they were worn and by whom.

Elizabeth Guffey quotes Jed Perl when explaining what may have been happening in the early 70s with regards to Teddy-boy and Greaser styles being worn by young adults. Perl notes that when "treated reverently, 50s style can suggest second thoughts about the youth revolt of the 1960s. Treated irreverently, the same design elements are an

announcement that the insurrection is alive and well” (Guffey 2006, 131). Entwistle cites Hebdige’s notions that this dandyism that developed out of the 60s Mod was a “celebration of artifice and performance that ran through a variety of popular cultural styles of the time, straight through to Punk” (Entwistle 2000, 133). These revivals of the 1950s atomic dream expressed conflict with the economic instability felt worldwide. The young 1970s Punks were noticing the dark edges around the dreams of equality and prosperity put forth by the dominant society.

The Teddy-boy can be seen as being similar to the nineteenth century dandy, a “self styled, fashioned individual who was concerned with self-promotion, and who employed clothing and various items of fashion and consumption to celebrate his new status” (Finklestein 1991, 114). According to Hebdige, the Mods out of which the Teddy-boy developed were typically working class dandies, who exhibited an obsessive interest in the finer details of dress (Hebdige 1979). Both the Mod and later the Ted would spend entire paychecks on individually tailored garments. Westwood herself worked closely with local Kings Road tailors to develop the clothing sold in her early shops. The notion of having one’s garments hand tailored to one’s own body is a very European thing to do. This is in sharp contrast to the ‘off the rack’ culture that exists in the United States, and as the body is “a socially constructed object” (Entwistle 2000, 12), one must look at the society within which each ‘Punk’ developed. Entwistle states that “women are more likely to be identified with the body than men, that it could be argued that women are more likely to develop greater body consciousness than men whose identity is less situated in the body” (Entwistle 2000, 30). Entwistle quotes Maurice Merleau-Ponty

“the experience of dress is a subjective act of attending to one’s body and making the body an object of consciousness and is also an act of attention with the body” (cited in Entwistle 2000, 30). But, Merleau-Ponty also neglects the notion of the gendered body. Entwistle then introduces John Berger’s *Ways of Seeing* (1972) and his criticism that “women more than men view their bodies as objects ‘to be looked at’” (Entwistle 2000, 31).

This concept may not hold water if we are looking strictly at British Teds and Punks, as both subcultures featured young men who were very much conscious of their bodies and how they would appear to society. The UK Punk scene and with it, its accompanying Teddy-boy are aesthetically different than their American counterparts. Not only is how one obtains their clothing important, but also who is doing the shopping and creating the subculture. From extensive reading and looking at photographic evidence, I have noticed that the American Punk scene is strictly a masculine narrative, with the female and ‘other’ characters distinctly left out or marginalized as ‘groupies’ to the very male music scene (McNeil and McCain 1996). On the other hand, with UK Punk, I would argue that there is a difference in the gender narrative as both the music (Reddington 2007, 103) and the fashion aesthetic is created by women and homosexuals as much as it is by straight young men. It is this difference in gender that is the underlying theme for this thesis. Many of these early UK Punks came out of the middle class suburb of Bromley.

The Bromley Factor

The Borough of Bromley is in the south east of London. Formally incorporated on April 1, 1965, it was an amalgamation of rural communities that had grown in population in the post WWII era of urban expansion. It is important to this thesis due to its diverse population and for it being the childhood home to David Bowie, as many young UK Punks were also early fans of his music and aesthetic. It is also important to note that key female and homosexual figures of the early Punk scene also came from this borough.

Bromley native Bertie Marshall describes the borough: “Bromley High Street in the late 70s was a hangover from the 50s and 60s, like an expanding village, with only two narrow streets. It had a Little Theatre; a Tudor fronted building. Marianne Faithfull had played there once in *The Three Sisters*, and Cliff Richard in *Panto*. He played ‘Buttons’ to Lulu’s Prince Charming and Clodah Rodgers, Good Queen” (Marshall 2006, 5). Bertie Marshall was just 15 in 1975 when he met a ‘shimmering’ David Bowie on Plaistow grove (Marshall 2006, 2). It seems that Marshall was at the point of self creation of his gay identity. He was in love with the movie *Cabaret*, listening to its show tunes along with hits from 1960s Marilyn Munroe, 1970s Nico, and Patti Smith and late 1960s Yoko Ono (Marshall 2006, 2-3). He created his look from finds at jumble sales and charity shops, what he referred to as ‘theatrical fascist’, with knee high black leatherette, lace up boots, black stirrup pants, white cotton shirt, black tie, black V-necked sweater. He dyed his hair blue-black. Marshall read subcultural philosophers William Burroughs’s *Wild*

Boys, Jean Genet's *The Thief's Journal* and Christopher Isherwood's *Goodbye to Berlin* (Marshall 2006, 4). Due in large measure to their influence, he recreated himself as 'Berlin', later saying that "clothes, records, drugs and books, not necessarily in that order, were the essential accoutrements of my adolescence" (Marshall 2006, 7). In an interview with Andrew Gallix, Marshall tells us he felt isolated and bored in Bromley and had, on his own account left school at thirteen due to constant bullying (Marshall 2001, np). The sense of 'otherness' is felt in his description of meeting David Bowie on the street, referring to Bowie as "a shining thing in light blue and primrose, red glitter boots." Marshall noticeably refers to Bowie as "she/he/it" (Marshall 2006, 2).

Throughout his career, music and fashion historian Janice Miller tells us that David Bowie has toyed with "the artifice of gendered dressing" (Miller 2011, 76), and that "Bowie used clothing as a challenge to existing forms of countercultural signification" (Miller 2011, 137). Simon Firth describes Bowie as placing the emphasis of art on the invention of self (Firth 1988, 132). Millar goes on to state that early in his career Bowie "provided a model for resistance on the grounds of sexuality via representations of the self that dealt in ambiguities of gender" (Miller 2011, 138). Michael Bronski felt that "Bowie's image and message was that imagination and sexual desire mattered more than gender and sexual orientation" (Bronski 2007). It is these representations of the self that I understand to be important to the early Punk from Bromley.

England's Dreaming author Jon Savage observed that "Bowie paid explicit homage to the Velvet Underground, Andy Warhol, William Burroughs and Iggy Stooze[sic]" (Savage

2005, 76), all early influences on the American Punk scene. Gender bending actor and musician, Jayne [Wayne] County states that “without Andy Warhol’s movie *Pork* there never would have been a Ziggy Stardust” (cited in McCain and McNeil 1996, 120). Photographer Lee Childers remembers that “Bowie’s infatuation with Iggy had to do with Bowie wanting to tap into the rock and roll reality that Iggy lived, the reality that Iggy was born into, Detroit” (cited in McCain and McNeil 1996, 122). To David Bowie, America was a land of changing attitudes, especially where it came to sexuality. David’s wife, Angela Bowie, tells us that David Bowie never would have come out as being bisexual if it hadn’t been for Iggy Pop and Lou Reed, since “they represented this place across the ocean where things were changing” (cited in McCain and McNeil 1996, 125). Angela Bowie remembers David coming “back to England talking about Iggy Pop, Lou Reed and the Velvet Underground. You’ve got to understand where David was coming from, so when Lou Reed would talk about the New York drag queens, for David that meant America was the most wide open, wonderful place” (cited in McCain and McNeil 1996, 124-125).

Bowie was not the only performer to push gender stereotypes. The New York Dolls were bending the gender rules in America at the same time, for different reasons. According to front man David Johansen, they figured that to be in rock and roll, one needed to be flamboyant (cited in McCain and McNeil 1996, 116). Drummer Jerry Nolan replaced Billy Murcia after the latter died of a drug overdose on the Dolls first trip to England in 1972. Nolan remembers “the Dolls were not what you’d call great technical musicians, but that wasn’t the point, they were bringing back the three minute song”

(cited in McCain and McNeil 1996, 118). Lee Childers talks about the scene in New York at the time, surrounding the Dolls as being a 'participatory thing'. Not only was it extremely fashionable to go and see them play, everybody in the audience was as outlandish as the people on stage. He goes on to add that David Bowie came to see the New York Dolls a lot (cited in McCain and McNeil 1996, 118). In an era of the ten minute drum solo, David Johansen states "we were these kids who spit and fart in public, were raunchy and just debunked everything. It was just so obvious what we were doing was rock and roll – we were bringing it back to the street" (cited in McCain and McNeil 1996, 119). Both Nolan and Childers thought the boys in the band were homosexual at first, mainly because of the image the Dolls portrayed. The Dolls wore women's clothing and make up, borrowing the outrageousness from Charles Ludlam's Ridiculous Theatre, mostly to attract attention (cited in McCain and McNeil 1996, 116). Malcolm McLaren thought Iggy Pop to be an "incredibly vain, incredibly handsome character" but he wasn't "taken with Iggy in the same way as [he] was with the Dolls". McLaren "didn't see the fashion about Iggy", and thought the Dolls "just looked more attractive" (cited in McCain and McNeil 1996, 126-27).

In restyling himself as Berlin, Bertie Marshall perhaps wished for that otherness he saw in David Bowie for himself. In his biography *Three Piece Suite* (Marshall 2006), Marshall tells us that he met Simone Thomas by following her down High street, "a black girl with platinum blonde hair, wearing a plastic Mac and smoking multi-coloured Russian cigarettes. She looked so original, all black and gold, a huge painted red smile that cracked her face" (Marshall 2006, 6). He met her boyfriend Simon Barker, a "small and

square shouldered Bowie clone with blond hair at the front, red in the back, wearing a 50s bum freezer jacket and baggy pants” (Marshall 2006, 7). Marshall, in repositioning himself as Berlin Bromley, became one of the first members of the Bromley Contingent, and in an interview with Andrew Gallix he says that the remaining key figures of the Bromley Contingent met at a party he threw (Marshall 2001, np). This group also included Jordan and Debbie Juvenile, who both worked at Westwood and McLaren’s shop *SEX*, Siouxi Sioux and Steve Severin, who went on to form ‘Siouxi and the Banshees’, Billy Idol (first of ‘Generation X’ before striking out on a solo career) as well as lesser known Linda Ashby, Philip Salon, Alan Salisbury, Tracie O’Keefe, and Sharon Hayman. The name Bromley Contingent came from journalist and fellow Punk Caroline Coon in an article written at the birth of the Punk scene in the UK (Coon 1976).

The group used the clothes from Westwood’s shop as a means to shock the mainstream, blending vintage finds with Westwood’s early collections to form the ‘uniform’ of Punk. Siouxi Sioux was wearing the bondage gear and creating a make-up style using eyeliner to exaggerate her eyes that would become her trademark. *SEX* manager Jordan was combining vintage pieces with full vinyl bodysuits and wearing the outfits on the tube⁴, on her way to work. She too created a make-up look that would be adopted by other young Punks. Known as the Mondrian, it was reflective of the artist’s colour blocked paintings. Both Debbie Juvenile and John Lydon were photographed wearing Westwood’s ‘bondage’ trousers and ‘hangman’ sweaters, the two pieces that would become quintessential elements of the unisex UK Punk look. Coming out of Westwood’s

⁴ London slang for the subway.

Bondage collection developed in 1976, both the trousers and the accompanying jackets featured straps and buckles that limited mobility. There were zippers that could separate the two legs entirely and a bum flap reminiscent of the Native American loincloth. The 'hangman' sweater developed out of Westwood's Mod style wearing of the boyfriend sweater with tights. The sweaters were designed in mohair, but she had them knit up with large runs in the knitting that created holes in an otherwise seemingly expensive garment.

Jordan was born Pamela Rooke in 1955, and brought up just outside a seaside resort in Sussex. She studied ballet for most of her early life, noting "It gives you a sense of physical confidence when you've done a tight discipline like that" (cited in Savage 2005, 93). Rooke moved up to London in her teens, changed her name and joined the staff at 430 King's Road just as it was rebranded *SEX*. She was considered to be McLaren's first Sex Pistol, she became his muse and learned quickly that to gain access to the best dance clubs, those frequented by the gay male population, one needed to look "crazy and outrageous" (cited in Savage 2005, 93). Jon Savage quotes her as saying, "When I started at the shop, not many people were wearing the stuff out. That was the great thing; you could go out and not see anyone with the same outfit. There were still lots of drapes, a few lame things, creepers, penny loafers. There was also the vinyl wear, the rubber-wear and some leather trousers. I used to take real pride in the way I looked when I went to work. I kept the job because of the way I looked and because I could do the job" (Savage 2005, 93-4). Jordan was able to fill the role of walking billboard for the shop, since she was sexy and threatening (Savage 2005, 92). Through Jordan, McLaren

was able to run with his experiments in shock that had formed early in his art school days but which he had been too frightened to carry out by himself (Savage 2005, 103).



Jordan, *SEX* shop manager, Punk muse.

Photographer unknown.

Jordan's overt sexuality and her wearing of bondage gear as part of her daily fashion wardrobe became the abstract artform of sex, with Jordan herself becoming the Dominatrix (Savage 2005, 100-101). Linda Ashby was also attracted to the shock value and influence of *SEX*. A dominatrix maitresse by trade, she found that the shop carried off-the-rack pieces that she could wear professionally. The fact that Jordan was wearing the clothes on the streets emboldened Ashby to do the same (Savage 2005, 100). Bertie Marshall described Ashby and her environment as being "decorated with heels and velvet curtains, his first touch with glamour (Marshall 2001).

In late 1975, Vivienne Westwood began to surround herself with the young people she could sculpt into her own Sex Pistols, feeling that McLaren's young boy band was not 'sexy' enough (Savage 2005, 183). According to Jon Savage "the women and men that Vivienne [Westwood] collected acted out their wildest fantasies. By doing so, they gave Punk its Warholian edge" (Savage 2005, 183).



Debbie Juvenile, *Seditionaries* shop

assistant. Photographer unknown.

For Debbie Juvenile it meant being able to fully immerse herself in the LGBT community, claiming that "it was the Bromley Contingent who introduced the Pistols to the gay scene" (cited in Savage 2005, 183). Siouxi Sioux remarked that "before it got a label, [Punk] was club for misfits, waifs, male gays, female gays, bisexuals, non-sexuals, everything. No one was criticized for their sexual preferences" (cited in Savage 2005, 183). Bertie Marshall noted "Malcolm [McLaren] had the notion of creating a scene around the Pistols like The Factory around [Andy] Warhol and the Velvets. For me, having some kind of group identity at the time wasn't a problem: I was glad there were other freaks out there I could be friends with" (Marshall 2001). That party that Berlin Bromley threw in May of 1976 and brought together the members of the Bromley

Contingent was known as “Berlin’s Baby Bondage Party’, where you had to ‘come as your kink’. It was all dare and finding your adolescent self” remarked Marshall (Savage 2005, 184).

As noted previously, the Bromley Punks took the reappropriated clothes that Westwood redesigned and combined them with biker, bondage, and vintage pieces and created the look of the British Punk. It was the Bromley teenagers that introduced the spiked hair and fantastically, art inspired make-up creating the look that would attract British media to come down to the Kings Rd shop and photograph Steve Severine of the Banshees and publish the tabloid style headline ‘This is Punk’. According to Marco Pirroni of ‘Adam and the Ants’, what we think of as the Punk look came from the mainstream media telling kids what Punk fashion was (cited in Sklar 2013, 7). Monika Sklar repeats this, telling us that “outsiders learned about Punk primarily through the media, and the new converts had an aesthetic shaped by what was presented to them, thus creating a cyclical truth with the power to endure” (Sklar 2013, 7). Each generation of Punk takes from the previous generation the elements that they think are relevant. The iconic Punk look seems to remain in the realm of the young, and as Punks age, the symbols that mark Punk style tend to go by the wayside. The notion of Punk can remain in the heart and mind as one grows older, and one’s style can include markers that are much less overt. With this current generation of Punk style (2000s), it has been noticed that more age groups are included. This renegotiation of the style blends that of the Punk and Teddy-boy even further and allows for Punks of all ages to dress with an edge that is

finely crafted and sartorial. Styles that could be viewed as gender normative are pushed to retain the aggressive stance of the early UK Punks.



The Bromley contingent: Debbie Juvenile, Siouxsie Sioux, Steve Severin, Linda Ashby, Soo Catwoman, Sharon Hayman, Simon Barker, Philip Salon and 'Berlin' Bertie Marshall at Linda Ashby's flat, Oct 1976 – Photo Ray Stevenson.

The Punk Aesthetic

With the earlier *Let it Rock* collection (1971), Westwood had begun to include appliqués and screen-prints of women's and men's nude bodies, and subversive slogans reminiscent of the Situationist International. Westwood's combination of vintage 1950s pieces with leather biker gear has proven to be a mainstay in Punk fashion. When one thinks of the Punk image, the self painted, leather biker jacket is one that immediately springs to mind. Sklar explains that "self-identified Punks across the globe continue to wear their own variations of [this] Punk style, dressing in garments and accessories imbued with subcultural cues" (Sklar 2013, 2). She would have us look at how Punk style

can change with the levels of personal commitment, the time period when one discovered Punk and individual experience as all having an impact on how Punk one may appear to the outsider (Sklar 2013, 4). I would also add age and gender as being important factors in one's appearance of Punk. Sklar asks "Is dressing like a Punk enough to be Punk? Maybe. Maybe not" (Sklar 2013, 3).

Richard [Meyers] Hell, through his visioning for the US band Television he had formed with Tom [Millar] Verlaine and drummer Billy Ficca, expressed the look that would become iconic in the United States: large 1950s sunglasses, leather jackets, torn T-shirts and short messy hair. It carried the messages of the existential '50s Beat, the self destruction of the *poete maudit* of the Situationist International and the sharpness of the '60s Mod (Savage 2005, 89). Debbie Harry of Blondie notes that "there were no other girls to hang out with [in the American Punk scene], believe me. It was mostly guys, and the few women that were there didn't really know that they were women" (cited in McCain and McNeil 1996, 283). This could explain why there is not much gender-specifically female material culture coming through the later American Punk scene and why it appears to be so overtly masculine. There is very little mention of the gay scene with regards to later American Punk. What the predominantly masculine, American Punk adherents were doing was to simply attract girls. In fact much of the female storyline in *Please Kill Me: the Uncensored Oral History of Punk* by Legs McNeil and Gillian McCain is about how the girls were viewed as groupies, and more importantly, who was having sex with whom, not how the girls were contributing to the feminine visual culture of the American Punk scene. That iconic Punk look developed by

members of Television was taken up by other American bands such as the Ramones and continues to this day. It has at its roots, more of a connection with working class, 1950s Chicano grease monkeys than with their Zoot suit wearing forefathers a generation earlier. The Zoot became counter-bricolage, adopted by mainstream culture after the War and spoke of the propaganda of the 1950s nuclear family, solid jobs and suburban neighbourhoods. The look adopted by the later 1970s, hyper-masculine American Punk was more a reflection of laid back attitude, urban, underclass worker and getting by the best way one could, given the circumstances. Entwistle explains that “the social situation thus imposes itself upon the body and constrains it to act in particular ways. Indeed, the body becomes a symbol of the situation” (Entwistle 2000, 15). The gender normative comes back into play in the later American Punk scene.

This is in sharp contrast to what has been recently written about the UK scene. It appears that persons of all gender groups were represented in the UK Punk, right from the beginning. Not only is our key figure of Vivienne Westwood a strong influence on how the UK look developed, but women such as Jordan, Debbie Juvenile, Siouxi Sioux, as well as non-Bromley figures Sue Catwoman, Poly Styrene, and Chrissie Hynde (who had gone to the UK, from the United States, to further her own music career) all can be seen as playing major roles in how the UK Punk look was expressed. Reddington reminds us again that “histories of Punk are often metrocentric” (Reddington 2007, 1). This is certainly true for McLaren’s own *Great Rock ‘n’ Roll Swindle* and Greil Marcus’ *Lipstick*

*Traces*⁵, both of which are narratives in the masculine domain with the first having McLaren “as the star and everyone else supporting players” (Reddington 2007, 1), and Marcus’ work leaving out Westwood’s narrative altogether. Reddington also brings up the stereotype of the young Punk woman in “fishnet stockings with panda-eyes, stilettos and spiky blonde hair” as media constructed and one that requires debunking (Reddington 2007, 1).



The women of Punk, Chrissie Hynde of the Pretenders (American who recorded mostly in the UK), Deborah Harry of Blondie (American adopted extensively by UK fans), Viv Albertine of the Slits, Siouxsie Sioux of the Banshees; (front) Poly Styrene of X-Ray Spex, and Pauline Black of The Selecters (an early Two-Tone band). Photo by Chris Stein.

Instead, she would have us look at Punk entirely from the female perspective, citing Punk journalist Caroline Coon, “It would be possible to write the whole history of Punk music without mentioning any male bands at all” (cited in Reddington 2007, 2).

Reddington herself has come across stumbling blocks to this strictly female narrative though, citing social psychologist Christine Griffin and sociologist Jenny Garber, who tell us that “there is no such thing as a typically deviant young woman” and that “adolescence is a ‘masculine’ construct” (cited in Reddington 2007, 3). Both writers

⁵ For more on Marcus’ work, please see appendix A

have discussed girls and subcultures in their own books published since the major works of Hebdige, Marcus and even Savage, and challenge the hegemonic conventions of the male gaze. Caroline Coon tells us that “during the Punk movement, the atmosphere for women was glorious! For the first time in the working art environment, apart from ballet, where there was a good percentage of women” (cited in Lydon 1994, 221). Johnny Rotten reminds us that “during the Pistols era, women were out there playing with the men, taking us on in equal terms. Sexy became not the old cliché of long, blonde luxurious hair, mild mannered and sitting in the corner. Quite the opposite. Punk women were hounds from hell. Excellent. It wasn’t combative, but compatible” (Lydon 1994, 319).

The Disruptive Style of Vivienne Westwood

In this section of the thesis, I will once again explore the Bromley contingent and their interaction with Vivienne Westwood and the King’s Road shop *SEX*. I will also ‘read between the lines’ so to speak, to determine Westwood’s narrative, as viewed through the eyes of Johnny ‘Rotten’ Lydon, Steve Severin, Caroline Coon and others.

Steve Severin introduces the Bromley contingent as being a “rare collection of people from several different outlying towns in and around the south of London” (cited in Lydon 1994, 173). He explains the borough as being quite drug infested, due to it being one of the entry points for drugs coming into England and believes that this may have been the catalyst for youth culture in the area. Severin informs us that in the early 1970s, the contingent had already formed as a group and that by the time the Sex Pistol’s had been

formed, they were not acolytes, as the media would have us believe. Rather the Pistols were their friends who happened to play in a group (cited in Lydon 1994, 173). Severin admired Johnny Rotten's style, telling us that Rotten reinvented the Sex Pistol's sartorial side each night (cited in Lydon 1994, 175). He tells us that when the King's Road shop became *Seditionaries*, Westwood would give Rotten bondage gear to see how he would style it (cited in Lydon 1994, 176). Artist and repertoire executive Howard Thompson explains that "the idea was not to dress up or down, but out. Provocative. Shocking. Apart from everything else, this whole movement brought fetish wear – leather, vinyl, and latex – out from the sex clubs right onto the street. A lot of it was extremely sexy" (cited in Lydon 1994, 180). Marco Pirroni of 'Adam and the Ants' explains,

I didn't go down to *SEX* with thirty bob and buy my whole Punk outfit. I picked up bits and pieces every week. The 1976 Punk look was a mixture of absolutely everything. A lot of Ted, a lot of rocker, a lot of fetish stuff, transvestite sort of stuff, a bit of Mod, and a lot of glam (cited in Lydon 1994, 216).

Pirroni feels that the mohair sweaters came from the soul boys, a gang from Aylesbury. Their look also included Teddy-boy pieces such as brothel creepers and tight legged trousers and that the brightly coloured hair and multiple piercings also came out of the soul boy aesthetic (cited in Lydon 1994, 215). Pirroni does describe the 'Anarchy' shirts to be Westwood's, not McLaren's in styling, that they "looked like concentration camp shirts with their badly painted stripes", and that he said, "Only Anarchists Are Pretty", which Westwood would add an upside-down swastika armband to it and festoon it with every political slogan you could have" (cited in Lydon 1994, 217). Billy Idol informs us that Punk was "oriented around art work, T-shirts, and clothes, a lot of it had shock

appeal. That was the point of wearing a picture of Karl Marx – it was the politics of outrage” (cited in Lydon 1994, 224). Filmmaker Don Letts explains that it was Vivienne Westwood who taught him about the Velvet Underground and the New York dolls, “white culture he hadn’t been tuned into before” (cited in Lydon 1994, 266).

Returning to John Savage’s *England’s Dreaming*, Savage makes the statement early on that it was Westwood who put theory into practice (Savage 2005, 11). “I have an in-built perversity,” Westwood tells us, “a kind of in-built clock which always reacts against anything orthodox” (cited in Savage 2005, 19). Savage goes on to explain that Westwood has a “very definite view of the world and is confused when people do not share it” (Savage 2005, 19). Musician and friend Robin Scott explains Westwood’s relationship with McLaren: “little did [Westwood] know that Malcolm wasn’t committed to the revolution, he was committed to himself and it took her a long time to realize that” (cited in Savage 2005, 39). She wished for the Punk to adopt an air of richness and of being in control. Westwood said of Punk, “You don’t make people want to change things by making them realize how poor and humiliated they are...you have to make people feel great before you get change” (cited in Wilcox 2004, 17). Caroline Coon explains,

The Punk movement was the first time that women played an equal role as partners in a subcultural group. It was even more interesting seeing women standing side by side with men in the context of patriarchy. It was a huge step forward. For me, one of the most liberating things was the death of the horrible archetype of this Hippie chick sitting at home embroidering (cited in Lydon 1994, 72).

By 1980 the McLaren-Westwood design team were moving away from both each other and the subculture they brought to London. The shop at 430 Kings Road had undergone two more name changes after *SEX*. First, *Seditionaries* (1976), where the title of this thesis comes from, and then finally *World's End* (1979), the name it holds today.

Westwood took the final name from a pub in Chelsea and “enjoyed the fact that red London buses often had ‘World’s End’ as their destination” (Wilcox 2004, 15). At this time Westwood had met Canadian painter Gary Ness who introduced her to European painting and taught her to look back to the “golden-ness of past culture” (Wilcox 2004, 17). Westwood finally thought of herself as a fashion designer (Wilcox 2004, 17).

McLaren stayed on as part of the creative team, mostly to edit the collections. Ness developed the titles of the collections, wrote artist statements and assisted with the creation of Westwood’s first perfume, *Boudoir* (Wilcox 2004, 17).

Westwood’s historical revivalism came out of the street scene and inspired the designer to “pillage world history of cults and images that she felt had ‘power’, first creating her *Pirate* collection (1981), followed by *Savages* (1981), *Witches* (1983) and then in 1983 the *Buffalo* collection that featured underwear as outerwear” (Steele 2000, 135).

Westwood drew on corsetry techniques used as outerwear developed by 1950s era designer Charles James and was being further developed by fashion’s *enfant terrible* Jean Paul Gaultier (Wilcox 2004, 18). The *Pirate* collection (Fall/Winter 1981-2) laid the groundwork for the New Romantics. The collection itself featured unisex clothes that eschewed the masculine. The look was promoted by McLaren’s latest band *Bow Wow Wow* featuring Boy George and Adam Ant who “wore World’s End clothing and ‘Apache’

make-up suggested by McLaren for his 1981 video *Stand and Deliver*” (Wilcox 2004, 16).

Fashion Designer John Galliano tells us that “It’s impossible to think of the bands, the music and the spirit of Punk and the New Romantics without Vivienne’s work” (cited in Mulvagh 2003, 142).

Dick Hebdige in *Subculture* argues that “while subcultures use commodity in a recycled and redefined way, their practices don’t change capitalism as a mode of production” (Hebdige 1979, 95). It could be thought that Guy DeBord’s theories on the Spectacle played a role in what would become Westwood’s later, outspoken voice on consumer culture. She has often been quoted as saying “Buy Less, Choose Well!” She has also not cared much for the commercialization of her clothing, saying “Chanel probably designed for the same reasons that I do, really: a certain perversity and irritation with orthodox ways of thinking” and “I think my clothes allow someone to be truly an individual” (Wilcox 2004, 32-3).

Vivienne Westwood’s business has remained quite small compared to those of her couturier counterparts. She still has a shop at 430 Kings Road, where you can purchase pieces from her ready to wear collection for a reasonable price. As Andy Czezowski, one of Westwood’s early accountants informs us, “even though a lot of money would be going through the shop, Westwood’s whole viewpoint was non-business – she wanted to do things, create things, instigate things – there was no sense of profit margin or growth. That wasn’t the point” (cited in Savage 2005, 97). For example, her T-shirts sell today for £50 and her Bondage jacket retails for £420. It is still very much a family run organization, with her son Ben (from her first marriage to Derek Westwood) running the

shop *World's End*. Through her fashion collections, from the early Punk days to today, Westwood has often looked backwards for inspiration. These inspirations have come from 18th century corsetry, 16th century tailored menswear that has interesting surface decoration of slashing to reveal other fabrics underneath the outermost layers and of course, her own Punk ideas. She also uses the platform of the Worlds End website to promote her political ideas. It features blog entries and video segments of interviews she has given in the press on topics ranging from consumerism, to fracking, to the recent Scottish vote for independence. Westwood has also offered her fans a free PDF of her 'drape shirt' and encourages people to make their own and send pictures of their creations.

The Fashion Project

As part of this thesis project, to serve my own creative desires as well as fulfill portfolio requirements for the next step in my education, I decided to design and create a fashion collection based on my research. I looked to Central Saint Martin's MA program in Fashion, a school that was the incubator for many of my fashion icons including John Galliano and the late Alexander McQueen. Their program emphasis is placed on research, extensive activity that includes visual, social, cultural and factual information gathering as well as technical experimentation. The philosophy of this course is that truly relevant, innovative design is not purely a creative activity involving designers in the artistic process, and that designers need to analyse markets, the industry and society in general to create fashion collections to meet market demand. Their requirements for the final project include: 1,000 word rationale for the major project; a portfolio that

include extensive research and development work, materials and a collection line-up; and at the time of McQueen's graduation, a collection of six outfits that were shown during London's Fashion Week.

My own collection hopes to reflect my research project and challenge my skills as a fashion designer. I completed nine outfits in keeping with the themes of a retro wearing Punk. It will also reflect my requirements as a 40 year old woman in fit and modesty, my body does not conform to today's ideal body shape or size, I am fuller figured and rather rectangular through the waistline. My strict military upbringing caused me to be fairly conservative in my style of dress; I learned early on that people would pay more attention to what I had to say if my breasts were covered up.

The inspiration fabric I began with was a piece of Indian cotton in black with red poppies printed as a border print. With this fabric, I created the first full skirted, 1950s inspired shirtwaist dress. The full skirt gives the appearance of a narrow waist and curvy figure that I desired, allowing the wearer to feel more feminine. The pattern for this style of dress was also used to create the "graffiti" outfit of the collection. I had also wanted to create a 'moto' style jacket for the collection, but while shopping one evening, I found a 'pleather' jacket in the exact style for less than I could have purchased the fabric to create it. In true Punk style, I bought it and then modified the jacket by adding a pleated grosgrain ribbon frill around the neckline. This first outfit would provide both the colourway and style inspiration for the rest of the collection.



With each of these outfits, my original intent was to push my own skill development, trying techniques in pattern drafting and garment construction that were new to me. Each piece provided challenges; two 'failed attempts' have either been addressed, or will be in the very near future.

Right from the beginning, these challenges presented themselves. With the modified 'Moto' jacket, I learned that I could not easily insert the pleated ribbon ruffle using a machine to restitch in the original stitching holes. In the end, I found myself hand stitching the ruffle in place using heavyweight red rayon thread in the original stitching holes. This allowed me to evenly place the ribbon frill and follow the original stitching lines so that the frill looked as if it had always been there. This process took almost an entire day. I wanted to add this feminine touch to an otherwise masculine garment in order to soften the hard edge of the tailoring and materials used in its construction.

There is more to the Punk aesthetic than wearing old clothes that have seen better days.

Sartorial choices are purposely curated by the wearer to create an identity, be it hyper masculine or feminine, or to shock the viewer.

1. *'Camp'*: Navy denim skirt featuring raw edges and rickrack trim, cotton plaid blouse cut with kimono sleeves.

This outfit is an exploration of the use of second hand and vintage clothing by the early UK Punks and Teddy-boys. By creating new, vintage inspired pieces, I hoped to recreate my own use of clothing pieces from my grandmothers wardrobe, but sized to fit my current, plus-sized body.

The blouse for *'Camp'* was drafted using a technique that I had not tried before, the kimono sleeve. Not as simple as moving the style lines of the sleeve and body to appear correct, this drafting method has incorporated underarm gussets that must be precisely drafted in place. Otherwise, the garment will not sit correctly on the body and will prove impossible to wear comfortably as improperly placed kimono sleeves will constrict the arms. I created the pattern using a 1950s era drafting method developed by Nathalie Bray (cited in Haggard 2003), a theatre and fashion designer of the era. For the garment, I utilized a remnant of cloth found in the *'Free Love'* recycling bin at NSCAD, and cut the garment very conservatively so that I would have enough fabric. The collar and cuffs were cut from white shirting, also found in the remnant bins in the fashion studio there. The denim skirt was created from new denim and trimmed out in vintage red rickrack and bias tape from my grandmother's fabric collection.

2. *'Bondage'*: Black denim bondage skirt, black and red sweater.

This outfit was inspired by Westwood's own exploration of bondage clothing and her designs incorporating bondage straps and zippers in various pieces of clothing. The denim skirt for this outfit was also created using new denim. The challenges that were presented focused on my own use of zippers. I wished to utilize exposed zippers throughout the project. This technique required the 'facing out' of pocket openings so to prevent raw edges of cloth and stress points. The back zip also extended down to the hemline, forming the back vent. With this, I considered how to stop the zip from working its way open while the garment was being worn. My solution was to use metal waistband bars to cover the thread bar tacks that I made to keep the zipper shut. This skirt also features bondage straps encircling the knees with buckles.

The knit sweater I created for this outfit was the first I had ever attempted, and I did not want to simply recreate a sweater for which someone had written a pattern. I had picked a polyester boucle yarn to create the garment, and used several pattern instructions to create my own original sweater. A number of problems presented themselves upon completion of the knitting process. When I went to wash and block the sweater, all of the softness of the original, unwashed yarn completely disappeared. The yarn felt as if it had been dipped in a bath of crude oil and stuck to every little blemish on the skin of my hands. The yarn also proved impossible to block properly, as the yarn was completely dry when I removed it from the wash. I will recreate this sweater, making minor adjustments to my own pattern, but using much better yarn in

the future, hopefully in a wool boucle. This project alone reiterated to me the importance of using quality materials when creating a garment, and made me appreciate how the qualities of materials have changed between the time my grandmother was purchasing them and today.

3. *'Pagan Also'*: Plaid suit in Harris Tweed with exaggerated shoulder line, three pieces, with silk blouse.

The title of this outfit comes from Westwood's own collection *Pagan* and her explorations with the relationship between England and Scotland and the use of British made wools in high end tailoring. This outfit was created using polyester suiting purchased on the bargain wall at my local fabric store. I did not have high hopes for the fabric after the problems with the sweater from 'Bondage'. The fabric surprised me though and tailored beautifully, as well as a good wool suiting would. I created three pieces for this suit, first of which was a tailored suit jacket with wide lapels, exaggerated shoulder line and three quarter sleeves with 'V' shaped vents. The lapels were left with raw edges that I frayed, I then trimmed out the lapels and sleeve vents with top-stitched narrow grosgrain ribbon in black. With this jacket, I also tailored a shawl lapelled waistcoat with red cotton back and linings, and created an 'A' line skirt that was unlined. The interior of the skirt waistband was trimmed out with red bias tape, and the hemline was finished in vintage red hem lace. To complete the outfit, a men's wear inspired silk shirt was created with fluffy bishop's style sleeves and an exaggerated collar. The buttons used were a mixture of artist created, and vintage.

These three outfits and the original inspiration outfit were all created in time for the proposal defense in the Spring of 2014. The remaining outfits were created over the course of the following year, while working on the written portion of my thesis.

4. *'Pleather'*: Red, heavyweight jersey, long sleeved, cowl necked T-shirt. Pleather cutwork skirt with red peachskin lining.

The material for the skirt for this outfit was inspired by the elbow and pocket material from the purchased 'Moto' jacket. Almost an exact match, the pleather fabric featured circular openings that were slightly larger than those in the original fabric. I used the larger openings to feature a red lining for the skirt. This was done using polyester peachskin for its ability to skim over a pair of cotton tights, but also be heavier than regular fashion linings to allow for a bit more modesty for the wearer. This was the first time that I had sewn a leather style fabric before. I used a machine leather needle and lengthened the stitch length on the machine to prevent tearing of the seam later. With this fabric, every seam line is permanent, so no mistakes were allowed. I considered each step carefully before sewing and used bulldog clips to hold the seams together while I sewed instead of traditional pins. I also made samples of seamlines, hems, and zipper tests before constructing the final garment.

The cowl necked T-shirt also proved challenging from the drafting standpoint. Many fashion designers will drape a cowl shape and add it to a regular T-shirt pattern. I prefer

to flat pattern draft so that I have precise cutting lines and can balance the symmetry of the pattern rather than dealing with the asymmetry of the body. With this project I drafted using a new method for drafting the cowl in Winifred Aldrich's Book on women's wear (Aldrich 2008). I had sewn knitwear before, but took the time to consider the finishes of the garment carefully, including double rows of stitching at the hems and stay stitching the back neck so that it stayed tight to the body and supports the deep cowl in the front. The sleeves flare out over the hands and are meant to be worn covering the fingers.

5. *'Runs with Scissors'*: Navy denim, asymmetrical skirt with embroidered denim 'jean' jacket and red cotton blouse with smocking detail.

This outfit was inspired by the wearing of the classic cut of 'jean jacket' by Punks and their own decoration of jackets featuring band symbols and political slogans. The denim used for this outfit was new; the cotton for the blouse was a vintage piece from my grandmother's fabric collection. The skirt features a deep V cut for the vent, with the asymmetrical line continuing up into the waistline. The back zip was placed on this bias line and proved almost impossible to stitch in neatly. I accomplished this by stabilizing one side of the fabric with twill tape to prevent the bias from stretching out as I stitched the zipper in. I wanted a lapped zipper, and so used this first side as the narrow side of the lap. This side was machined in place. The wider side of the lap was hand picked using the heavyweight red rayon thread I used to stitch in the ribbon frill on the 'Moto' jacket. I used a large vintage button at the top of the zip. The hemline featured a

shaped facing, also in denim, that I then edged out in red cotton bias tape. The hem was hand stitched so the stitching line would not be visible on either the inside or outside of the garment.

The blouse was cut using an original 1950s blouse as inspiration. It featured a smocked shoulder line, bloused bustline and tailored body. I taught myself how to smock for this project, creating many samples to help define which style of smocking to be used. The neckline was hand stitched using a rolled hem to reduce bulk. The neckline resembles a sweetheart style popular in the mid 20th century. The bust line was gathered into a tailored body section that features a false button front. The under bust is created with a curved line to accentuate the curves of the wearer and is also reminiscent of the 1950s. The sleeves are cut from the eyelet border edge of the cloth and the blouse has a side zip. The fabric for this garment was also a remnant, and so careful cutting had to be undertaken here too.

The denim jacket for this outfit was inspired by the many denim jackets worn and modified by Punks throughout the past 40 years. Many will paint slogans or band symbols on the back, cover with slogan printed buttons and really make the garment original to the wearer. With this piece, I wanted a traditionally cut 'jean jacket' style. I also wanted my own, individual decoration. As I am an embroiderer, I felt that the use of embroidery would better suit my own style. I knew that I did not want to do this embroidery by hand, as it would not give me the look I desired. I considered using the

embroidery machine at NSCAD to accomplish this task, but knew that my time could be better spent than babysitting a diva domestic machine while it embroidered for me. I created the design and then took the piece of fabric to a local industrial embroiderer to be stitched while I continued on with writing and the construction of the remaining garments. This jacket was constructed using the blouse fabric scraps and red cotton bias tape to finish out pockets, interior waistband, and piping details. I used new buttons for this project that were bold and inspired by vintage pieces.

6. *'Graffiti'*: Linen dress, machine embroidered with graffiti lettering "Eat, Sleep, Create, Repeat".

'Graffiti' turned out to be the most challenging garment to create. Inspired by urban street art created by the subculture in places where participants congregate and communicate with each other, and also by images of New York City from the 1970s. With this dress, I had originally considered using a border print created by a fellow student using graffiti found in our own city. This project did not result in a suitable fabric for my needs and so I went back to the drawing board. At first, I thought I would use the first, disappointing, fabric as the under dress and then use a much nicer fabric, possibly a sheer, as an overlay that I would then embroider. Then, I considered buying a new cotton piece and dip dyeing to ombre the fabric in gray tones which I would then embroider over. This second consideration was constructed and I accomplished the ombre effect I had hoped for. I was still not happy with the fabric I chose and so scrapped this dress idea as well. I made a trip back to the fabric store to pick up supplies

for finishing up another project just as the new summer fabrics were arriving in the store. A lightweight black linen was then chosen for the project, with contrasting red linen for the inside of the collar band, cuffs, and hem facing. I considered the style and type of graffiti I would do on this dress and used as inspiration a rave song that my son had sent me. I drafted out the words Eat, Sleep, Create, Repeat in traditional graffiti lettering. The words would repeat twice around the hemline of the skirt of the dress. I thread traced the words on to the finished hemline of the skirt and machine embroidered using the available stitches on my domestic machine and free motion techniques. I then cut out small bits of the lettering to allow for the fluffy under petticoat to show through. I then constructed the dress, using similar men's wear inspired collar and sleeve finishes found on an earlier blouse. Instead of buttons, for this project, I used safety pins, creating eyelets for the safety pins to rest in. The sleeves also featured French cuffs with safety pin cufflinks. The dress has a side zip, so the front 'buttons' need never be undone.

With this dress, I had originally wanted to recreate a military style 'battle dress' jacket that I had owned in high school. I had hoped to recreate the jacket in wool with metal buttons. The wool was sourced from my grandmother's fabric collection, but I did not have enough yardage to create the project. I will use this piece later to make a skirt, and keep looking for wool jacket material. For the collection, I switched gears, returned to my own collection of fabrics and found a piece of heavy weight red linen to create a summer weight jacket. For this garment, I took WWII era Utility clothes as inspiration. I

created a bomber style jacket with the black linen from the dress used as contrast on the collar stand facing, pockets, and bias piping. I used new, artist created buttons in black.

7. *'How can we be postcolonial?'*: wool skirt constructed out of a repurposed Union Jack, wool bomber jacket, blue silk/cotton blouse.

Inspired by philosophical and political discussions I have had with various professors and friends and family, this outfit proved personally challenging. I had wished to use a vintage flag for the skirt of this project, taking inspiration from Vivienne Westwood's own explorations with vintage Union Jacks. I began the hunt for a vintage flag of my own early on in the project, almost at the beginning of my MA program. This proved problematic in that most flags are destroyed at the end of their lifecycle. I did manage to find a semi-vintage Union Jack in good shape, but the fabric was a poly-nylon of some kind and not suitable for the project. I had my heart set on wool bunting. I then sourced new wool bunting so that I could create my own flag for the purpose. The new fabric was very expensive, and much heavier than original wool bunting, so that idea was scrapped as well. I was about to scrap this outfit from the collection altogether when a friend dropped by with a vintage find for me, a Canada Customs flag in pretty rough shape. This flag has a red body with the Union Jack in the upper left corner and a white crown appliquéd on the lower right. In my mind's eye, I began to figure out how I could utilize this flag to the greatest extent. I bought royal blue linen and fashion linings for the body of the skirt, and constructed an A-line shaped skirt with a side pocket opening.

The hemline of the linen skirt featured red cotton piping. I then cut a skirt shape from the flag, using the Union Jack portion to create a wide side drape which would become the front of the skirt. The crown side of the flag was used to create the back of the skirt. This side of the flag was in really rough shape, and so I carefully cut around the crown and created a new appliqué which I then stitched on to another piece of the red bunting. The waistband was constructed with a layer of the flag bunting and a layer of the interior linen skirt, and the inside was finished with red cotton piping. The blouse for this outfit was also constructed in silk shirting, similar to the red shirting used in 'Pagan Also', and using the same pattern. To distinguish this piece, I added a faux French cuff and placed the buttons regularly on the front edge, instead of in pairs as on the red blouse.

The jacket for this outfit was cut in the same style as the jacket for 'Graffiti'. I sourced the fabric from a garment that had lived several different lives in my wardrobe. The beautiful navy blue suiting was originally constructed as a 17thC gown for re-enacting. It had been dry cleaned and had shrunk terribly. I then reconstructed the material into a petticoat that I wore for several years. When considering the fabric for this outfit though, I knew that the petticoat fabric was the one I wanted for the accent pieces for two reasons; I did not like the drape of the fabric as a petticoat and I had no other 17thC garments that would work with the material in that iteration. I knew that I would get far more wear out of the fabric as a modern garment, as my re-enacting was shifting away from the 17thC and into other areas and I did not have enough of the fabric left to

create suitable outfits for the new periods. In the end, I had enough fabric for the bomber style jacket with enough left over for another A-line skirt using the same pattern as the others in the collection. The jacket features contrasting details using a black and red fat quarter quilting cotton with skulls and crossed bones and vintage buttons.

8. *'Pinstripe'*: Gray pinstripe suiting was used to create a 'Mod' style shift dress and draped front jacket.

The last outfit of the collection came from finding a similar suiting to that used in 'Pagan Also', this time in dark charcoal gray with a pinstripe. Several years ago, as part of my undergraduate explorations in fashion, I created a Mod style tunic or shift dress. This dress, in brown linen had become a staple in my wardrobe and I had created similar dresses for other women. I knew I wanted more of this dress, and had often mentioned that I needed one in black suiting, to really dress up, power-suit style. This dress features a pointed stand collar similar to that of the men's wear inspired shirts in the collection. I made it up quickly using red topstitching as the only decoration. With this dress, I wanted to try creating a draped front jacket to complete the outfit. The jacket is unlined save for the back shoulders and used the same red top stitching as the dress. While several people love the jacket, I personally hate it. It did not fit with what I had imagined in my mind's eye and does not suit my personal style. I have enough fabric left to recreate the over garment, and have decided to continue with the Mod theme and create a tailored knee length coat to wear with the dress. It will be lined in red satin and if possible I will use vintage buttons.

With this collection, I wanted to reflect what I had been noticing in my peer group. Growing up in the late 1970s and early 80s, I constantly raided my grandmother's closet, finding garments that I could wear as-is, or with very little modification. I also wore vintage pieces that I found in thrift and army surplus stores. My sartorial choices were distinctive for someone growing up in small town Nova Scotia. When the Internet became widely used, I found that I had an entire peer group of vintage wearing, historical costumers and clothing historians. The 'Big Three' pattern companies had begun to reissue vintage patterns that my peer group were using to create individual wardrobes that stood out from the mainstream. I wanted this collection to reflect my research on Punk, taking inspiration from Vivienne Westwood's own explorations of the vintage as well as that of the men and women in my own peer group's use of vintage, Punk and modern clothes. With that, I have created the foundations of a wardrobe that will be further developed, with more pieces in both style and colourway.

At the end of the MA project, I was invited to participate in the NSCAD Fashion department's fashion show. The annual event showcases senior student work in a true to life runway fashion. For the event, I was permitted to present five outfits from the collection, *'Pleather'*, *'How Can We Be Post-Colonial'*, *'Runs with Scissors'*, *'Graffiti'*, and *'Pinstripe'*, all of which had been created in the last year of my research. I wore a sixth for my walk on at the end, *'Pagan Also'*. I chose 'models' from my own group of friends and inspiring women as I knew that I wanted a look that both suited the collection and thesis, but also was not the standard 'runway model' embodiment. The models aged in

range from 68 years to 35, and for the most part were what the fashion industry considers plus sized. The hair and make-up we accomplished ourselves, looking at avant-garde club wear, punk classics and David Bowie himself as inspiration. The music I chose for the models to walk to came from a piece of newly produced Rave music entitled "Eat, Sleep, Rave, Repeat" which was also the inspiration for the graffiti lettering on the hemline of *'Graffiti'*. The audience noticed a difference from the mainstream almost immediately, and cheered loudly as the models walked.



Photo by Alexander Chisholm



Photo by Alexander Chisholm



Photo by Alexander Chisholm



Photo by Alexander Chisholm



Photo

by Alexander Chisholm

Conclusion

Through the 1990s, it seemed that haute couture was dying out, a victim of lack of inspiration, worldwide epidemics, unemployment and recession. Bonnie English in her book *A Cultural History of Fashion in the Twentieth Century: From the catwalk to the sidewalk* tells us Western fashion “had exhausted its endless appetite for change” (English 2007, 137). Fashion designers and everyday people began to look backwards, once again, for inspiration. English reminds us “fashion is the ultimate visual spectacle” (English 2007, 146), that what we wear is the first impression and expression of self. The second half of the 20th century saw a greater chance for the individual to create their own identity through their clothes. No longer were people subjected to the fashion house’s ideal of style and its ‘trickle down’ method of emulation put forth by Veblen (Entwistle 2000, 60).

Joanne Entwistle also reminds us that “fashion imposes an external sense of time and that fashion itself is temporal. Time is socially constructed by the fashion system through the circle of collections, shows, seasons which serve to halt the flow of ‘now’ by means of projections into the future” (Entwistle 2000, 32). She would have us understand that “how individuals turn to their bodies and how dress operates between individuals is both an inter-subjective experience as well as a subjective one. Dress is both a social and an intimate activity” (Entwistle 2000, 35). Monica Sklar reminds us that “the iconic Punk style that developed in 1970s London is still in existence, but has developed into a form of caricature and few choose to utilize all of its most exaggerated elements simultaneously” (Sklar 2013, 6). As mentioned earlier, the iconic Punk style

created by media seems to be adopted by the young, and as Punks mature, the style elements are less noticeable to the outside viewer. Sociologist Lucy Gibson speaks of the aging Punk as 'becoming more civilized' in both how they interact with the music and how they dress, "that older Punks toned down their image" and that the idea of Punk is "more subtly articulated" (Gibson 2013, 89).

Punk was reborn in the mid 1980s through mainstreaming of bands such as the wildly successful U2, and later in the early '90s with Blink 182 and Green Day. The Seattle based grunge scene so popular with the Riot Grrrls gave way to a desire for dressing up again and retro was the new-found fashion style. Valerie Steele reminds us that "a key principle of contemporary postmodern art has been the juxtaposition of incongruous objects, images, and materials. Avant-garde fashion designers such as Westwood, Jean-Paul Gaultier and John Galliano used retro in this spirit" (Steele 2000, 152).

The Teddy-boy and the Zoot suit saw a revival with young people discovering the music of their grandparents. In the 1980s, August Darnell and his group *Kid Creole and the Coconuts* became a walking advertisement for the Zoot. Its meaning was transformed from a context of violence and gangsterism to chic couture due to the price of their custom made suits (Chibnall 1985, 77). Brian Setzer and his band *the Stray Cats* helped to revive the Teddy-boy style, also in the early 1980s under the new name, Rockabilly. Wanting to keep his music and career on the top of the charts, Setzer moved the band and their families to England where the Ted was still fashionable. Brian Setzer has held true to his Teddy-boy roots and after the breakup of *the Stray Cats*. He regrouped with a larger sound provided by his modern version of the Big Band called *the Brian Setzer*

Orchestra and have released their latest album in September 2014. Hollywood had also taken notice of the well dressed, 1950s retro fashion. Movies such as *Mona Lisa Style* (Newell 2003), *Sylvia* (Jeffs 2003), and a Broadway production of *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (Williams 2003) brought the retro look to the mainstream. Vogue Patterns began to reprint patterns that had been widely popular from the '30s to '60s of the century before. This time they were redrafted to fit a modern body not used to wearing the restrictive undergarments of the previous periods. The other 'Big 3' pattern companies, Simplicity, McCalls and Butterick, followed this lead. Undergarment manufacturers brought back lines of girdles, bullet bras, and garter belts that had not been in production in decades. *Vogue Magazine* began to run articles about the well dressed subculture, explaining "if they're going to buy a CD, if they're going to buy a bag of chips, they're dressed to the nines" (Singer 2003, 341). These well dressed women were wearing a blending of retro clothing and Punk, taking the time to style their hair in 'Victory Rolls' or after actresses Jane Mansfield and Betty Page and were re-creating the make-up of their mothers and grandmothers youth.

The styles were not only taken up by young people, teenagers, as in past decades. They had a mass appeal for women who wanted to look great in their curves. My peer group today have found it increasingly difficult to find clothes that fit properly at their local shopping mall, with stores that catered to teenagers who wanted to emulate mass culture found on MTV. They have also found it difficult to find stylish clothes that weren't either club wear or something grandmothers would supposedly wear, with elastic waists and polyester fabrics. Many of these same women had grown up with

Punk and so wear the retro styles with a noticeable twist. The new retro wearing, femme grrl is decidedly Punk, with her blending of full-skirted 1950s styled dresses, fishnets, tattoos and wildly coloured hair. The more masculine of the scene are either wearing classic Punk styles, or are spiffed up in waistcoats, button down shirts, neckties (often hand-painted silk) and bowler hats with their jeans and creepers or Doc Martens. The two genres of music have coalesced as well, with psychobilly music bringing together the best of the old Punk stylings and messages, but with a stand-up bass instead of a screaming guitar. Sally Singer's *Vogue* article introduces us to Jacquelynn Davis,

who works at Sephora in South Coast Plaza and plays electric bass in a Punk girl band called Civet, came as an intriguing mix of Kim Novak and Debbie Harry: ice white up-do with a black streak and a jewelled skull and crossbones hairpin; pin striped skirt beneath a black, sexy secretary blouse; fishnets; an assortment of bondage straps and chains; and, of course, tattoos: a spiderwebbed elbow; her band's name; neat, skinny seams up the backs of her legs, sporting false eyelashes, liquid eyeliner and red, red lips (Singer 2003, 340).

The precision is part of the aesthetic, there is nothing left to chance. Followers look to fashion magazines of the 1940s and 50s for inspiration for their looks. They scout second hand shops and markets for choice vintage, original pieces. They are creating new, retro styled clothes from patterns bought from *Vogue*, or trading vintage patterns that they redraft to fit their own, newly re-girdled bodies. Through this self production of clothing, they have a greater ability to build a wardrobe that flatters their own bodies and sense of style, redefining themselves and democratizing their lives within the greater social and cultural world.

Monika Sklar states “as Punks age they may no longer blatantly express that visually as they did in their youth, but often subtle cues stick with them for the long haul. The goal is to be different from the norm and therefore confrontational to the viewer while proving thought provoking” (Sklar 2013, 17). Though, it would seem instead, that Vivienne Westwood enjoys going back to her Punk roots to recreate the aesthetic all over again for the next generation, or perhaps for us ‘old Punks’ to consume anew. Style maven Jeanne Beker calls fashion a microcosm for the world at large (cited in Rent 2013, 38). If this is so, the economic downturn worldwide, as well as war in the Middle East could play a significant role in Punk’s return. Entwistle calls fashion the vocabulary of culture (Entwistle 2000, 136). Society once again feels a similar nihilism as it did in the ‘70s, there seemingly is No Future for You, No Future for Me. Clothing plays a large role in the performativity of self, as explained through Entwistle, Butler and many other recent sociological researchers. The Punk of today seems to be expressing their noncompliance with the hegemonic bodies that bring us into war and economic depression and those who refuse to accept the rights of the non-normative.

McLaren may have been involved in fashion and music to push his own artistic and financial motives, but Westwood tells us he inspired her to create clothing that challenged stereotypical notions of how people should live and dress. Vivienne Westwood and her early followers from Bromley certainly opened up doors to allow for the individual self, for that disenfranchised person to express themselves fully. Based on the body of research on Punk up to the present day, we have to break down the hetero-normative, masculine language of Punk and other youth subcultures. It is important

now to expand the narrative and include the stories of women and members of the LGBTQ community who also take up space in the often male-dominated location of Punk. Sociologists Kristen Schilt and Danielle Giffort tell us that the retro wearing Punk “retains a dedicated commitment to using DIY cultural production to express feminist ideals for themselves and for a new generation”, that the Riot Grrrl “did not ‘grow out’ of Punk but rather found a new avenue for expression” (Giffort and Schilt 2012, 158). Recently, in an interview with the BBC, Vivienne Westwood once again spoke of “choosing well, buying less, and making it last” (Westwood 2014). It is my belief that this Punk ideology could offer a method of identity creation in response to recent capitalist methodologies with regards to ‘fast fashion’ and the waste created by the industry. This Punk ideology can form a lasting identity, that Westwood herself has shown us we do not have to age out of. I believe that the message of Punk is as relevant today as it was in the 1970s.

Appendix A

Situationist International

What follows is an analysis of Greil Marcus' text *Lipstick Traces*. As this seminal work provides what many would have us understand as the true version of the story of Punk, the text is decidedly masculine in nature and leaves out the narrative of women and Westwood entirely. As McLaren is quoted, "I loved that book. It was a crazy, wild, at times almost inarticulate attempt to do something nobody else had done before" (cited in Marcus, *Lipstick Traces* 1989, frontispiece). An interviewer to John Lydon asks: "But don't you think he's completely wrong?" to which Lydon responds: "No, he's not wrong" (cited in Marcus, *Lipstick Traces* 1989, frontispiece). Unfortunately, Marcus leaves out a lot of the story of UK punk, choosing instead to focus entirely on McLaren and the Sex Pistols and their relationship to the Situationist International. While the text is important to the dominant, masculine, subcultural narrative, this analysis is featured in the first appendix as I feel it would detract from the intention of the thesis.

McLaren is quoted, "I learned all my politics and understanding of the world through the history of art" (Savage 2005, 24). Claire Wilcox tells us that McLaren was particularly drawn to Guy Debord's *Société de Spectacle*, the book that Wilcox believes would provide the language of Punk (Wilcox 2004, 10). This appendix of the thesis will go back to that text and further explore the possibility that this art movement influenced McLaren and Westwood to encourage the Punk aesthetic in England. Was Debord understood properly by McLaren, or was the philosopher a fashionable person with

whom to be associated? Westwood is quoted, “[McLaren] had a political attitude and I needed to align myself” (Wilcox 2004, 10), but did McLaren really have the political leanings or was he just putting on a show to impress? McLaren has said that the shop on the High street was “a haven for the disenfranchised” (Wilcox 2004, 13). It could be believed that McLaren’s reading of Debord’s radical tradition cemented the relationship between Punk and the UK’s capitalist decay through the use of spectacle. How did the *Situationist International* influence the disenfranchised, class conscious McLaren-Westwood team to then create the Punk aesthetic first noticed in the United Kingdom which then spread world-wide?

Historical writing of the working class in the post WWII era unpacks Marxist thought in relation to the dominant narrative of the working class giving priority to economic relations as determinants of general social processes. Cultural historian Richard Johnson tells us that “classes arise out of the requirements of the objective situation of the powers of production; they rest on an ordering of the relationships between men and things and between men and men consistent with the development of the available productive resources” (Johnson 1980, 50). The Situationist movement had resonance with the French student rioters of May 1968 as suggested by one of their slogans “The more you consume, the less you live” (Szeman 2010, 280). McLaren, Westwood and the British Punk scenographers of the 1970s were also making a critique of class, and of consumption. Punk historian Greil Marcus informs us that during this period in England’s history “Nothing [was] true except our conviction that the world we [were] asked to accept [was] false, contemporary Britain was a welfare state parody of fascism,

where people had no freedom to make their own lives – where, worse, no one had the desire” (Marcus 1989, 110).

The Situationist International split off from the post-World War II anti-art intellectual Lettrist movement in the early 1950s with Guy DeBord at its head. Situationist historian Tom McDonough tells us that they “thought of themselves as avant-garde revolutionaries, closely linked to Dada and Marx” (McDonough 2002, 4). The four founding revolutionaries of the Situationist International, theorists Guy Debord and Raoul Vaneigem, the Dutch painter Constant Nieuwenhuys and Italian writer Alexander Trocchi made their break on the 29th of October, 1952 in Paris at the final press conference of Charlie Chaplin for the premier of Chaplin’s film *Limelight*. According to Mikkel Bolt Rasmussen, another Situationist biographer, the four argued “that Chaplin and his film practised a kind of emotional blackmail, compensating for a *boring life* without the possibility of a new one filled with excitement and adventure” (Rasmussen 2004, 368). The new Situationist International believed that with World War II, artistic movements such as Dada and Surrealism had ended and so too did true artistic spirit. They believed that modern art ended up repeating itself, re-presenting already accepted ideas making it impossible for transcendence to a better life (Rasmussen 2004, 370). They wished for Surrealist favourite Chaplin to “go home”, though where that ‘home’ was they did not say. Where Chaplin had been widely celebrated across Europe, he was dealing with McCarthyism in the United States and unable to return to American soil for his pre-war voiced ideas on communism (Rasmussen 2004, 368). He had been cited by the US attorney general as a subversive (Marcus 1989, 340). The French Communist

party had been popular in the years prior to World War II, and the possibility of a people's revolution could have occurred in the final years of the war. That revolution did not materialize right away and leaders of the Communist Party instead opted instead for a nationalistic regeneration of France (Rasmussen 2004, 377).

Rasmussen believes that Debord had grown disappointed in the French Communist Party stating, "between the two world wars the revolutionary worker's movement was destroyed by the action, on the one hand, of the Stalinist bureaucracy and, on the other, of fascist totalitarianism, the latter having borrowed its organisational form from the totalitarian party as first tried out in Russia" (Rasmussen 2004, 379). The Situationists believed that the inter-war avant-garde Surrealist projects were "outdated" in the 1960s, that "the unconscious was not really able to liberate the imagination, and that automatic writing was monotone" (Rasmussen 2004, 381). Tom McDonough states that "the Situationists were bent on discovering the absolute ability to criticize anyone, anywhere – without restraint, without the pull of alliances, and without self-satisfaction. And they were bent on turning that criticism into events" (McDonough 2002, 4). This idea of turning criticism into events could be seen as being similar to the critique of England a decade later through the experience of a Sex Pistols concert.

Writer Stephen Hastings-King believes that Debord's early inspiration came from the journal *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, edited by the group of the same name led by Cornelius Castoriadis (Hastings-King 1999, 26). In the late 1950s, the *Socialisme ou Barbarie* group was considered the most 'proletarian' and sophisticated of revolutionary Marxist organizations, developing a variant of Marxist revolutionary theory notable for its

attention to the situation of the dominant theory of the working class which at that time was undergoing radical change through the implementation of Fordism and the crisis of Stalinism (Hastings-King 1999, 27). Following the end of World War II, the Parti Communiste Français and trade union Confédération Générale du Travail exerted enormous pull over Parisian students and intellectual urban culture, placing themselves in opposition to other leftist organizations all operating in a nebulous cultural Marxist environment (Hastings-King 1999, 28). According to Stephen Hastings-King, “as the leftist groups fought amongst themselves and over their versions of Marxist belief, the SB announced ‘without development of revolutionary theory, [there can be] no development of revolutionary action.’ Modern capitalism, SB argued, could be seen as a new type of socio-economic formation, as viewed in the separating of ownership from management and the rise of mass production” (Hastings-King 1999, 29). The *Socialisme ou Barbarie* publication presented a different example of how to present the avant-garde than the newly formed Situationist International, with the latter’s journal being a “politicized Pop Art artifact” in contrast to the former’s traditional proletarian style (Hastings-King 1999, 33). Hastings-King believes that Debord’s Situationist International understood that revolutionary theory could no longer simply dismiss the dominant [capitalist] culture; rather it needed to develop a subjectivist perspective to the social, political and artistic movements that grew out of the dominant [often male] culture (Hastings-King 1999, 34).

Daniel Blanchard of the *SB* recognized this new and radical group as developing parallel ideas to his parent group and began working with Debord during his roaming period,

where Debord took to living on the streets and in cafes throughout Paris (Marcus 2002, 6), participating on the film project *On the Passage of a Few People through a Rather Brief Unit of Time (1959)*. The film is seen as the beginnings of Debord's work on the spectacle as the translation of the division of intellectual labour characteristic of bureaucratic capitalism (Hastings-King 1999, 34). Hastings-King writes that the *SI* were "consistent and sympathetic observers of *SB* until 1963-64; when the latter began to stray beyond the confines of Marxism Debord considered *SB* to be excluded from the Left" (Hastings-King 1999, 43). McLaren and Westwood later developed their own ideas of the spectacle in redesigning their store décor and shop window displays, as well as the slogans and images they would screen-print on T-shirts and button-downs they would offer for sale to the young Punks. The pair were interested in more than just simple rag trade, they wished to create an environment and lifestyle that were embodied in the clothes they were designing.

The Society of the Spectacle

In early 1959, writer Alain Touraine stated in the journal *Arguments* no 12-13 that the traditional working class had ceased to exist in Continental Europe. Individuals occupied a traditional role while inside the factory, but outside they were assimilated into the bourgeoisie through consumption (Hastings-King 1999, 45). Debord believed that the working class continued to function as a class for-itself in a negative manner, through its rejection of the spectacle. Debord used Lukács new French translation of *History and Class Consciousness* to claim a crisis in the Marxist Imaginary (Hastings-King 1999, 46) which had occurred through the re-writing of histories that supported the dominant

Communist party in France, making traditional Marxist thought transcendent (Rasmussen 2004, 378). Debord felt that “the realisation of communist society was postponed and replaced by two kinds of capitalism or societies of spectacle: diffuse capitalism in the West and concentrated capitalism in the Soviet Union, both rendering Marxism banal by means of state capitalism. Mankind had been transformed into a spectator, renouncing life and developing false needs” (Rasmussen 2004, 379). The material successes of modern life superseded all questions of the quality of life. The struggle against poverty had lead instead to a society that had chosen garbage material goods over love (Marcus 2002, 4). This material success developed out of the post war capitalist ideal that “if society is organized around consumption, one participates in social life as a consumer; the spectacle produces spectators, and thus protects itself from questioning. It induces passivity rather than action, contemplation rather than thinking, and a degradation of life into materialism” (Marcus 2002, 8).

At this point, we should look more closely at what music historian Greil Marcus has to say about the nature of Malcolm McLaren’s relationship with the Situationists. In the preface Marcus wrote for Tom McDonough’s book on the Situationists he tells us that McLaren “favoured the situationist rhetoric about revolution arising out of boredom of everyday life” (Marcus in McDonough 2002, 1). The opening chapter of Marcus’ own book *Lipstick Traces* provides a seemingly commercial backdrop to Malcolm McLaren’s creation of the Sex Pistols. Marcus asks were they just another boy band, created to make money? Or were they a vehicle for change? Marcus writes, “the Sex Pistols were a commercial proposition and a cultural conspiracy, launched to change the music

business and make money off the change” (Marcus 1989, 2). Unfortunately, Marcus leaves Vivienne Westwood out of his overtly masculine narrative altogether. Marcus explains that McLaren had been inspired by the May 1968 Paris student revolt that had in turn been inspired by the Situationist International. Which, in turn, had led to a republishing of *SI* writings in English by Christopher Gray entitled *Leaving the 20th Century*, and promoted by McLaren and friend Jamie Reid in 1974 (Marcus 1989, 30). McLaren is quoted, “the good thing about it was all those slogans you could take up without being party to a movement. Being in a movement often stifles creative thinking and certainly, from the point of view of a young kid, the ability to announce yourself” (cited in Marcus 1989, 30). We are left to wonder what Westwood’s thoughts were on the *SI* and Debord. It would seem that McLaren looked at Debord’s writings more as useful product development rather than a philosophy to live by.

Unemployment in the UK had reached one million by 1977. Greil Marcus quotes Sex Pistol Johnny Rotten speaking about living conditions in England in the early 1970s:

We have architecture that is so banal and destructive to the human spirit that walking to work is in itself a depressing experience. The streets are shabby and tawdry and litter-strewn, and the concrete is rain streaked and graffiti-strewn, and the stairwells of the social engineering experiments are lined in shit and junkies and graffiti. Nobody goes out of their rooms. There is no sense of community, so old people die in despair and loneliness (cited in Marcus 1989, 7).

Contemporary British musician and activist Bob Geldof stated “We’ve had a lowering of the quality of life” when referring to Rotten’s lyrics in 1976s for Anarchy in the UK (Marcus 1989, 7). Both Geldof and Rotten were speaking of the widespread labour strikes beginning in the early 1970s. It began first with miners in the northern parts of

England, and by mid decade urban housing projects had displaced whole neighbourhoods of poor people in favour of high-rise concrete buildings that disenfranchised communities and fueled nationwide despair. Marcus writes of Punk music being a “desire to change the world, a demand to live not as an object but as a subject of history – to live as if something actually depended on one’s actions” (Marcus 1989, 6). Marcus believed that Johnny Rotten meant to take all the rage of his generation, all its intelligence and with all the strength of his being, fling it out at society, hoping that the world would take notice of its most cherished and unexamined beliefs. Rotten wished for the world to own up to its crimes and for the world to end, symbolically (Marcus 1989, 17).

It could be that Johnny Rotten was grappling with the same philosophical debates with which the leading thinkers of the time were also concerned. They wondered how the world could have gotten to the state which allowed racial genocide and permitted such an expanse between the have and have-nots. In the Sex Pistols song “God Save the Queen’ they damned the past with a curse so hard that it seemingly took the future with it: ‘No Future, No Future for You, No Future for Me” (cited in Marcus 1989, 11). The Sex Pistols could be seen as wanting to make it difficult for England to carry on with its dream of the glorious past when all around were piles of trash⁶ and mass unemployment.

⁶ The 1978 ‘Winter of Discontent’ describes the period in the second half of the decade where an accumulation of Union disputes beginning in 1974 with miners in the north of England came to a climax with the waste collection strike in the winter of 1978-9. There are many photographs taken in the streets of London with trash piled almost as high as the doorframes of buildings.

The governing Labour party was caught in a battle with the strong trade unions of the day in their hope to lower wages to fight inflation. In the end, government enforced a three day work week which caused even more unrest as these wage restrictions hit the lowest income families the hardest. Union leader Jack Jones' view was "that the rich should be expected to bear a bigger burden when governments were asking for sacrifices from other members of the community" (cited in Mathews 2009, n.p.). The Labour party lost in the spring 1979 election to Thatcher's Conservatives. She was an ardent advocate of privatizing state owned industries and utilities. The Conservatives then gutted the trade unions, stripping them of much of their earlier powers. It also lowered taxes and reduced social spending in an effort to curb the recession (*BBC History - Margaret Thatcher*, Introduction 1999). Unfortunately, unemployment continued its steady rise and government legislation had long reaching effects. The winter of 1978-9 saw the smallest difference between low and high income earners in the post war era. Thatcher's capitalist ideas of removing state funded, social programs eventually caused pensions to fall behind the cost of living. This growing financial divide between the industrial north and the wealthier, influential south and those miners strikes of the early 1970s are still reflected in the northern street-scape today. Whole cities of desperate unemployment and widespread boarded up housing have been, until recently, the norm in England.

But what of Vivienne Westwood? As mentioned earlier in this appendix, Greil Marcus makes no mention of Malcolm McLaren's business and life partner. Surely she had more influence than what Marcus would have us believe. Marcus writes of McLaren's

influence over the Sex Pistols, recruiting band members out of *his* store, giving them a ridiculously offensive name and preaching to them of the emptiness of pop culture and music. McLaren told them that they had as good a chance as anyone to make a noise. Marcus calls McLaren the Pistols' chief theorist and propagandist, a 1960s art student and had-been, and would-be anarchist provocateur (Marcus 1989, 28). It is easy to notice that McLaren was hot after the next great thing, looking to stir up trouble and make a name for himself. Marcus has framed the material to place McLaren as the icon, but if we shift the lens to focus on Westwood, something else emerges.

Through the many names and inclinations *McLaren's* storefront had undergone before settling for a while on *Seditionaries* in 1977 (Wilcox, Vivienne Westwood 2004, 13), Westwood created the interior design and clothing they would sell, saying "I've always worked through a process of research; the Punk rock thing came out of the fact that I got so intrigued..." (cited in Wilcox 2004, 13). She and McLaren were partners through all of the incarnations of the storefront. She travelled with him to New York to meet the *New York Dolls*, and it could be argued that Westwood played an influential role in bringing Sid Vicious into the Sex Pistols. Vanessa Thorpe of the *Guardian Observer*, interviewing Ian Kelly on his upcoming book (Autumn 2014), quotes, "I do come at her story from a dandy perspective, but also from the point of view of the importance of the maverick, of the eruption of caprice. It is the kind of argument Oscar Wilde puts forward, about the way of getting serious points across while apparently being frivolous" (cited in Thorpe 2013). Greil Marcus omits Vivienne Westwood entirely from the narrative he wrote, influencing the literature written on Punk to create an overtly

masculine understanding of Punk. Throughout the research undertaken for this thesis, Westwood appeared to be just as important as McLaren to developing the Sex Pistols and in creating the style that would become iconic to the UK Punk scene. I would seek to open up this one sided narrative and broaden the perspective to include intersections not widely explored to this point.

Theoretical Reflections

It may seem odd to have such an influential text, *Lipstick Traces*, on the interpretation of UK Punk relegated to an appendix. This was purposely done though. Early on in the thesis project I read *Lipstick Traces* and quickly realized how dominant the masculine narrative actually was. I was angry that Marcus made no mention of Vivienne Westwood at all, angry at the canonization of Malcolm McLaren. I knew there was more to the story, because I lived it. My peer group was full of girls and women who looked, dressed and felt Punk. They listened to Punk music and were down in the pit alongside the boys, getting just as violent in their dancing. I also knew that Vivienne Westwood had become such a role model to younger generations of important fashion designers who also self identified as Punk, such as John Galliano and the late Alexander McQueen. And as much as there were tensions between Westwood and McQueen, even he could not deny Westwood's status in the British fashion community.

However, just saying that my experience was different was not enough. I had to understand the dominant narrative on its own terms, to figure out why people found it persuasive. What needed to be taken for granted was, what seemed to me to be, this

partial telling of the tale of Punk. The political philosophy of the *Situationists* provided for Marcus a fertile ground from which Punk could possibly spring. Greil Marcus reinforces Malcolm McLaren's own interpretation of himself. This appendix is intended to illustrate my knowledge of the dominant paradigm, but it is also intended to highlight the significant contrast between that view and what my own research has uncovered.

As I see it, the key figures of UK Punk were the misfits of society, the gays, the fetish community, and for a large part, girls. Scholarly research is only now, truly shifting its focus towards the girl's story and that of the Other. This seems to be the era of Punk research, with new books on the topic published every other month. Most recently, a new biography of Vivienne Westwood has come out, and promises of a text on the Bromley contingent expected soon. I look forward to reading these new books, hopeful of new possibilities in the narrative that may explain better what I have noticed in my own identity of Punk. I believe they are necessary to allow previously subordinated and underplayed elements of the whole scene to come into focus. There is more to the story than Malcolm McLaren and the Sex Pistols.

This new perspective on the narrative allows for the opportunity to discuss other aspects of Punk that have previously been overshadowed by elements of racism, fascism and violence which is just one thread in an entire rope of strands that make up the 'sub'cultural community of Punk. Decentering that narrative allows for specific new knowledge that may lead us to ask fresh questions of this important cultural phenomenon, both in its historical manifestations, and in its implications for the cultural struggles of our own time.

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