From Punk to the Hijab:
British women's embodied dress as performative resistance, 1970s to the present

Volume I

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the Royal College of Art for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

January 2013
Royal College of Art

For my most special agents: Salman, Sophie and Jasmine

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Abstract

This thesis investigates how British women since the 1970s have used dress to resist dominant ideals of femininity and womanhood. I focus on examples of subcultural and alternative style as anti-fashion, as a rebuke to and also as the manipulation of the fashion system. The research is based on oral interviews with women in four case studies: punks in the 1970s, women who lived at Greenham Common Peace Camp in the 1980s, black women in hip-hop in the 1980s and 1990s, and Muslim women in the hijab since 2001. Participants were found using a combination of opportunity or volunteer sampling and snowball sampling techniques to gather a sample of approximately five interviewees per case study.

The case studies are deliberately disparate, but they have been chosen because each one represents an important turn in British gendered identity politics of the last forty years, since punk style was interpreted by subcultural theory as resistance. They offer a wide range—from subcultural to religious dress—of cross-cultural examples to explore gender in terms of ethnicity, class, and nation, and to explain the ways in which these notions interact and overlap within contemporary British culture and history. Through my juxtapositions I provide an alternative narrative, a 'new' analysis of style as gendered to challenge any empiricist logic of conventional scholarship and to expose the fashion system as cyclical.

This is a post-postmodern interdisciplinary investigation. I analyse the postmodern techniques of collage, bricolage, mixing and sampling in women's style, where appropriation and customisation act as revolutionary practices of deconstruction of

meaning and interrupt grand historical narratives, However, I move beyond any postmodern focus purely on image and spectacle, or on simulacra and representation to locate women's behaviour in situated bodily practice, and within their extended biographies. My interviews focus on women's material and experiential views of their dress and style with an emphasis on their interpretations of style as lived experience. In this way I offer a turning out of fashion history; one that analyses the agentive action of each group's style which I define as the punk 'cut', the Greenham Common 'layer', the hip hop 'break' and the 'fold' of the hijab. My emphasis is on the analytics of construction as displays that reveal the structures behind the fashioning of gender and identity, and I explore how these create new temporal and spatial subjective positions for women such as deterritorialisation for punks, utopianism for women at Greenham, reality for women in hip-hop, or a heterotopia in the case of British women in hijab.

This study throws into crisis essentialist ideas: about the body, gender, a fashion object or the fashion system and its ideals to question the performativity of identity and history. Through its multi-layered discussion and interdisciplinary breadth, the thesis pushes at the boundaries of conventional design and fashion history scholarship in its exploration of embodied style as intertextual, and women's fashion histories as shifting and mutating.

Table of contents

List of illustrations

The Punk Cut: 1975-79

The Greenham Layer: 1981-86

Acknowledgements

Author's Declaration

During the period of registered study in which this thesis was prepared the author has not been registered for any other academic award or qualification. The material included in this thesis has not been submitted wholly or in part for any academic award or qualification other than that for which it is now submitted.

Signature   _____

Date   _____

Introduction

> Create glitches, gashes, ruptures, punctures, gaps, edges.
> Disrupt the smooth operation that creates linear narrative.
> Stop the smooth flow of history.
> Revel in the fracture.
> Tear at the seams.
> Stare at the seam.
> Fetishize the seam. Become fascinated with the seam.
> Rosetta Brooks, *Rip It Up, Cut it Off, Rend It Asunder*.[1]

It is 2011 in London, and Muneera Rashida and Sukina Abdul Noor release the video for their political anthem 'Silence is Consent'.[2] The pair, known as Poetic Pilgrimage, are a British-born Muslim female hip-hop duo from Bristol. Both share an African-Caribbean background, born to Jamaican parents; both graduated from London universities; both converted to Islam in 2005. In the video the women both wear hijab. In one case it is a black scarf draped over the head and tied at the neck; in the other it is a patterned, coloured cloth worn as a turban, tied around and at the back of the head. The women sport large CND earrings and conspicuous hip-hop-style bangles. Both women wear layers, slogan t-shirts and mismatched jewellery—all reminiscent of punk clothing of the 1970s. African prints are merged with contemporary high-street style. Halfway through, the video cuts to show the women wearing kaftans with hip-hop medallions, black hijabs firmly in place while their bodies remain covered in floor-length dresses and skirts. Constructed to match the political message of their song, Poetic Pilgrimage's style articulates a self-aware identity that is multifarious, non-conformist, mutating, Other. This is their stage and street style, a set of shifting symbols and signs that exemplifies style in the twenty-first century: 'personal,

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[1] Rosetta Brooks, 'Rip It Up, Cut It Off, Rend It Asunder', in *Panic Attack: Art in the Punk Years*, ed. by Mark Sladen and Ariella Yedgar (London; New York: Merrell, 2007), p.44.
[2] Poetic Pilgrimage (Sukina Abdul Noor and Muneera Rashida), and Mohammed Yahya, 'Silence is Consent' <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z1orCqZg4SA> [accessed 8 January 2012].

bubbling up from individual experience and creativity, extraordinarily eclectic, based upon the juxtaposition of unexpected, often contrary components', as anthropologist Ted Polhemus noted in 2010.[3] Almost ten years earlier, Polhemus had coined the phrase 'the supermarket of style'[4] to describe his conceptualisations of dress in a postmodern world, where style was achieved through sampling and mixing by what he saw as a new breed of creative consumers. In this way he sought to distinguish style from fashion, in order to accentuate it as an expression of individuality and agency.

The focus of this thesis is style as anti-fashion, as both a rebuke to, and the manipulation of, the fashion system. Unlike Polhemus, however, I interpret style in the postmodern world not as creative consumption but as creative action, the subjective productions of actors expressing embodied difference. While fashion is a cultural industry, a social and economic force, a political statement as much as a global powerhouse, at its heart are transformations and effects that can be appropriated and subverted towards new ends. Style, for this study, refers to the limitless ways in which dress and adornment are constructed as countercultural or alternative subject positions that reflect individual temporalities and spatialities. Throughout this study, style can be seen to incorporate multiple connotations of dress as embodied agency and resistance against fashion and the fashion system's normative ideals.

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[3] Ted Polhemus, 'Style Today and Tomorrow', in Photographic Music Culture Archive, 2010
http://www.pymca.com/index.php?59032162842680653806.00001299287774788616272270620121259386
[accessed 17 May 2012].
[4] Ted Polhemus, *Streetstyle: From Sidewalk to Catwalk* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1994).

Since the countercultural anti-fashions of the 1960s, style has refashioned the

personal and the political, as well as the personal *as* the political.[5] Under the rubric of

style, oppositional dress has challenged power hierarchies and conventional narratives

of class, race and gender, of history itself.[6] Subcultural dress has prompted cultural

change by creating rifts in our assumptions about the smooth operation of the body in

time and space. The way in which alternative or oppositional style has subverted

traditional identities and politics has been heavily theorised,[7] yet its meanings remain

ever open to interpretation, to contradiction.

This study examines the style of British women who since the 1970s have used dress

to resist or challenge conventional ideas about femininity and womanhood. The

research is based on four case studies that relate to subcultural or alternative dress

practice: women punks from 1975-1979; women at Greenham Common Peace Camp

from 1981-1986; black women in hip-hop from 1984-1997 and British Muslim

women who have adopted the hijab, or Muslim headscarf, since 2001. I explore how

these groups articulate gender through subjective acts of style, how the women's

styles are expressions of their embodied and situated bodily practice, and how women

use dress and style as spatial, temporal and psychic processes of subversion. Though I

borrow from traditional subcultural theory I depart from its Marxist approach (which

emphasises class and semiotics), instead embracing a feminist one focusing on

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[5] I paraphrase 'The personal is political', a phrase popularised by Carol Hanisch, a member of New York Radical Women and Redstockings, in her essay of the same name published in: *Notes from the Second Year*, ed. by Shulamith Firestone and Anne Koedt (Radical Feminists, 1970). Reprinted in: *Public Women, Public Words: A Documentary History of American Feminism*, ed. by Dawn Keetley and John Pettegrew (Madison: Madison House, 2005). This phrase was adapted widely as a focal slogan in second-wave feminism throughout the 1970s.
[6] *Resistance Through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-war Britain*, ed. by Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson (London: Hutchinson, in association with the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, University of Birmingham, 1976); John Styles, 'Dress in History: Reflections on a Contested Terrain', *Fashion Theory; the Journal of Dress, Body & Culture* 2(4) (1988), 381-389; Angela Partington, 'Popular Fashion and Working Class Affluence', in: *Chic Thrills: a Fashion Reader,* ed. by Juliet Ash and Elizabeth Wilson (London: Pandora, 1992), pp. 145-161.
[7] See *Resistance Through Rituals;* Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: the Meaning of Style* (London: Methuen, 1979).

embodiment, performativity and temporality. My case studies have been chosen because each represents an important turn in British gendered identity politics in the forty years since subcultural theory interpreted punk style in terms of resistance. Thus they provide a wide range of cross-cultural examples—from subcultural to religious dress—to explore gender in terms of class, sexuality, nationhood, and, in the case of hip-hop and the hijab, within the matrix of race. In fact it is worth pointing out that while the issue of race is noticeably absent in my first two case studies, about women punks and women at Greenham Common, it becomes central in the latter two and therefore broadens the theoretical framework of this analysis as the thesis progresses, weaving together the different interactive factors that have overlapped within British culture and history over the last four decades.

Refashioning histories

The relationship between British identity and style has been a major preoccupation of cultural studies since its emergence in postwar Britain in response to the rise in youth cultures. Within this strand, in the 1970s, subcultural theory developed from the work of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at Birmingham University. Its cultural studies methodology was based on sociological and semiotic frameworks to decipher the codes of youth behaviour by analysing subcultural style. Despite its groundbreaking scholarship, the CCCS soon drew heavy criticism for its anti-materialist position and tendency to ignore subjectivity. When the key text *Resistance Through Rituals* was published as a 'work-in-progress' account of subcultures,[8] its aim was to examine youth cultures and connect them to social and historical analysis. The overarching method of this scholarship was limited by the fact that it relied on

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[8] *Resistance Through Rituals.*

matching stylistic, or signifying, practices with symbolic meanings within wider social relations—what subcultural theorist Paul Willis has called the 'homologies' between lived experience and culture;[9] hence the emphasis on subcultures *and* style as Dick Hebdige outlines.[10] Drawing on Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony, Louis Althusser's notions of relative autonomy and the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence, and Roland Barthes' and Claude Lévi-Strauss's bricolage, *Resistance Through Rituals* was a product of its theoretical time. Few of the case studies were based on sustained ethnographic study, justifying the complaint of sociologist Stan Cohen that 'In one way or another, most of the problems in the *Resistance through Rituals* framework are to be found in the theory's third level: how the subculture is actually lived out by its bearers. The nagging sense here is that these lives, selves and identities do not always coincide with what they are supposed to stand for'.[11]

This was certainly true in terms of subcultural theory's gender-blindness. In early writing, women were seen as marginal to youth subcultures.[12] Theorists therefore did not attempt to deploy gender or sexuality as the structuring dimension in analysis. Angela McRobbie has demonstrated that within teenage femininity of the period, which she explores through close analysis of *Jackie* magazine, the discourse of 'romantic individualism' remained the overarching aspect of women's motivations and desires.[13] By this she meant that for girls at the time it was very important to secure and retain the love of a good boy, even when part of a 'resisting' subculture.

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[9] Paul E. Willis, *Profane Culture* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), p.191.
[10] Hebdige, *Subculture: the Meaning of Style.*
[11] Stan Cohen, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics: the Creation of the Mods and Rockers* (Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1980), p.167.
[12] Angela McRobbie and Jenny Garber, 'Girls and Subcultures: An Exploration', in: *Resistance Through Rituals,* pp. 209-222.
[13] Angela McRobbie, *Feminism and Youth Culture* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), p.107.

As a result, McRobbie argued, the 'culture' of girls tended towards a celebration of just those aspects of femininity—romance, fashion, beauty—which were also a source of their oppression.

McRobbie's work, which has been frequently referenced by other scholars, started to provide some new coordinates for a gender-focused approach to subcultural identity and style. It corresponded with strides in other disciplines towards a gender-sensitive view of experience and history. Since the 1970s, feminist scholars have argued that to make full sense of the lives of women it is imperative to take account of their family relationships, childcare responsibilities, the world of domestic consumption and public work. Sociologist Ann Oakley, for example, argued that women's choices had to be placed within the wider context of their lives, relationships, jobs and social interactions in order to make sense,[14] while Christine Griffin,[15] and later Beverley Skeggs,[16] explored the constructions of class-based femininities.

These works have put subcultural theory in its place. In fact, Steve Redhead has claimed that at some point between the advent of punk in the 1970s and the emergence of rave culture in the 1980s the moment of subculture itself passed into history.[17] The new neo-liberal, individualist political environment inaugurated by Thatcherism, he argued, required the replacement of what he called the Marxist project of the CCCS with new, postmodern theorisation. The unfixing of fixities, the breaching of boundaries and the collapsing of categories became the new methods of uncovering new truths.

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[14] Anne Oakley, *Housewife* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976).
[15] Christine Griffin,*Young Women and Work: the Transition from School to the Labour Market for Young Working Class Women* (Birmingham: Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, University of Birmingham, 1984).
[16] Beverley Skeggs, *Formations of Class and Gender: Becoming Respectable* (London: SAGE, 1997).
[17] Steve Redhead, *Subculture to Clubcultures: an Introduction to Popular Cultural Studies* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997).

Contemporary cultural theorists have followed in this vein. They reject homogeneous interpretations of groups, instead prioritising the participant's view in subcultural quests for authenticity and paying attention to the individualistic, fragmented, and heterogeneous natures of subcultures.[18] They also review the essentialist nature of subcultural theory and call for grounded empirical research.[19] In 2000, David Muggleton's neo-Weberian, interview-based study *Inside Subculture: The Postmodern Meaning of Style* concluded that subcultures were manifestations of self-expression, individual autonomy and cultural diversity; that 'subculturalists' were merely groups of people who share the same sensibility, whether postmodern, working-class or something else.[20] However, the work of Muggleton and other like-minded methodological revisionists, such as Paul Hodkinson, who was writing on goths,[21] focused so heavily on empirically grounded analysis that it over-privileged lived experience as a level of enquiry without making connections between lived experience and structural realities. For these scholars the postmodern view highlighted individualism as opposed to group affiliation, and they critiqued subcultural theory for its focus on *style,* involving the fetishisation and consumption of material culture as indispensible dimensions of youth culture. My emphasis, however, is particularly on style within the context of lived experience and women's politics of location.

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[18] Lawrence Grossberg, *We Gotta Get Out of This Place: Popular Conservatism and Postmodern Culture* (London: Routledge, 1992); Tricia Rose, *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1994); David Muggleton, *Inside Subculture: the Postmodern Meaning of Style* (Oxford: Berg, 2000).

[19] David Muggleton, 'Crossover Counterculture: Postmodernism and Spectacular Style', (Unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Lancaster, 1997).

[20] Since the 1980s, scholars from disciplines other than cultural studies have also been concerned with similar analysis of group behaviour. French sociologist Michel Maffesoli has identified groups in postmodernity as 'tribes' which he sees as based on informal and temporary alliances based on lifestyle choices rather than deeply-held ideological beliefs. See Michel Maffesoli, *The Time of the Tribes: the Decline of Individualism in Mass Society* (London: SAGE, 1996).

[21] Paul Hodkinson, *Goth: Identity, Style and Subculture* (Oxford: Berg, 2002).

Style experience

In this study I willingly build on subcultural style's postmodern techniques of do-it-yourself, cut-and-paste, bricolage, appropriation, parody and sign entropy, the raiding of fashion history. However I present a post-postmodern analysis that moves beyond postmodern theory's focus on image and spectacle, on surface, on hyper-reality in commercial culture and mass media to locate behaviour in situated bodily practice. The theory of the 1980s determined postmodernism in terms of 'a whole pornography of information and communication',[22] postulating a world that is over-saturated with images. Reality and representation had therefore become impossible to tell apart. In postmodernism's cut-and-paste techniques that layered image upon image, reality had become, according to Hebdige, 'as thin as the paper it is printed on'.[23] Within this situation the subject, in Jean Baudrillard's view, 'becomes a pure screen, a pure absorption and re-absorption surface of the influent networks'.[24] In other words, an individual in a postmodern world becomes merely an entity influenced by media, technology and the hyper-real.

The crux of my discussion is embodiment: how style is embodied to articulate gendered difference. I consider women's style as agentive tactics in everyday practice, viewing them in terms of 'clever tricks of the "weak" within the order established by the "strong"', to quote Michel de Certeau; as 'an art of putting one over on the

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[22] Jean Baudrillard, 'The Ecstasy of Communication' (1983) in: *Postmodern Culture*, ed. by Hal Foster (London: Pluto, 1985), p.130.
[23] Dick Hebdige, 'The Bottom Line on Planet One: Squaring up to *The Face*', in: *Hiding in the Light: On Images and Things* (London and New York: Routledge, 1988), p.159.
[24] Jean Baudrillard, *America* (London: Verso, 1989, 1988), p.27.

adversary on his own turf'.[25] I see women's dress practice as a repertoire of inventive ruses and refusals.

Embodiment and situated bodily practice have been critical to revisionist analysis of fashion history and theory since the industrial period in Europe. Elizabeth Wilson's *Adorned in Dreams* began to address the cultural meaning and history of fashion to highlight the role of clothing in the formation of normative understandings of culture, status and gender, and its capabilities in terms of dissent and deviance.[26] Since then, theorists have discussed how the experience of style and the agentive impulses of the wearer are not static, but rather performative: temporally and spatially constructed.[27] Fashion studies, traditionally rooted in art history, object analysis, socio-anthropological or cultural studies, had until then fallen short of studying dress as a 'fleshy practice involving the body'.[28] Alternative and oppositional style had most typically been understood as discrete, as in 'a' punk look, for example, that fixed not only the style but also the experiences of its agents, often reducing style identity to tropes.[29] Furthermore, the shifting experiences of fashion were not accounted for, nor the agentive impulses of the wearer that may well be different from those commonly associated with fashion as a technique of modernity. Wilson has written that 'Fashion is commonly held to be a crucial medium for the construction of signs for changing desires and consumption patterns…[it] articulate[s] the endlessly changing notions of beauty characteristic of culture in modernity'.[30] Yet she also points out that in fact since the industrial revolution in the West women's fashionable dress has expressed a

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[25] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), p.40.

[26] Elizabeth Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity* (London: Virago, 1985).

[27] Joanne Entwistle, *The Fashioned Body: Fashion, Dress and Modern Social Theory* (Malden, Mass.: Polity Press, 2000).

[28] *Body Dressing,* ed. by Joanne Entwistle and Elizabeth Wilson (Oxford: Berg, 2001), p.4.

[29] See *Resistance Through Rituals;* Hebdige, *Subculture: the Meaning of Style.*

[30] Elizabeth Wilson, 'Fashion and Modernity', in: *Fashion and Modernity,* ed. by Christopher Breward and Caroline Evans (Oxford: Berg, 2005), p.12.

longing for the past, as well as an enthusiasm for the new. 'Retro' fashions recycled since the 1970s, for example, illustrate that fashion is not necessarily about a chronologically progressive modernity.[31] This perspective complicates our understanding of fashion, making the interchange between modern and postmodern practice more complex.

Drawing on these complexities, my analysis is a turning-out of fashion history; it focuses on the agentive action of each group's style, which I define as the punk 'cut', the Greenham Common 'layer', the hip-hop 'break' and the hijab's 'fold'. Emphasis is on a mode of construction that reveals the looping and intricate structures behind the fashioning of gendered identity. In my approach I challenge both the constraints of conventional history-making, which marginalises women's history in teleological, masculinist narratives, and standard, disembodied histories of dress. As such, this study sits at the threshold between contemporary fashion theory and history and post-subcultural theory. Yet, housed within the discipline of history of design, it is equally concerned with theorising the mechanics and analytics of subversive and alternative style. Of particular interest is 'anti-style's' disruptive force, its simultaneous undoing of the structure of specific garments and displacements on the body. Through an interdisciplinary approach I offer a fertile reflection on the differences between fashion and style, contextualising and historicising processes of style to show how it is dismantled, repeated or reinterpreted to correspond with individual expressions.

In fact, design history's interdisciplinary breadth, which covers the relationship between production, consumption and the designed artefact within investigations of cultural contexts, means that clothing offers much potential for a design-historical

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[31] Ulrich Lehmann, *Tigersprung: Fashion in Modernity* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: MIT Press, 2000).

approach. A decade ago, design historian Christopher Breward commented that 'design history as originally taught in art and design colleges tended to prioritize production in the professional "masculine" sphere, re-enforcing notions of a subordinate "feminine" area of interest, into which fashion has generally been relegated'.[32] Since then there has been a proliferation of studies, emerging from many different strands, that have focused on providing a rich analysis of clothing, fashion and style, creating a platform for complex, interdisciplinary analyses of dress.

In *Fashion Zeitgeist*,[33] Barbara Vinken explores clothes performatively, in a 'poetological manner', by which she means 'reading clothes the way one would read a poem for example'. Her methodology involves focusing on 'clothes and their relation to time, to gender clichés, and to class roles…'.[34] Vinken's poetics of clothing creates a 'post-fashion' framework which exposes the fashion system as cyclical. In anthropology a focus on the materiality of clothing has emerged, developed by theorists such as Daniel Miller and others. Pattern, fabric and form have been discussed and considered as 'an aspect of human and cosmological engagement'.[35] Similarly, gendered identity has been explored by anthropologists such as Sophie Woodward, who has investigated everyday embodied acts of dress within social practice and performative constraints.[36] Issues of materiality have shaped the discussion in books such as *Fashioning the Frame* in terms of the dressed body. Presenting a psychoanalytical view of the body as both 'a *boundary* and *not a*

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[32] *The Fashion Business: Theory, Practice, Image,* ed. by Nicola White (Oxford: Berg, 2000*)*, p.24.
[33] Barbara Vinken, *Fashion Zeitgeist: Trends and Cycles in the Fashion System* (Oxford: Berg, 2004).
[34] Ibid., p.79.
[35] Susanne Küchler and Daniel Miller, *Clothing as Material Culture* (Oxford: Berg, 2005), p.1.
[36] Sophie Woodward, *Why Women Wear What They Wear* (Oxford: Berg, 2007).

boundary',[37] in other words as fluid, the book raises questions about how 'dress acts as a daily reminder of our dependence on margins and boundaries for the purpose of self-construction'.[38] An interdisciplinary focus on materiality, embodiment and identity have been themes in publications such as *Textile: the Journal of Cloth and Culture*, launched in 2003, which explores the notion of cloth within disparate criss-crossing discourses.

As broader and more nuanced methods of approaching fashion history and theory have taken root, analysis of the fashion system has also developed to address themes such as second-hand clothing, for example.[39] Meanwhile, contemporary shifts in design studies have certainly helped to make significant historical, theoretical and methodological contributions to the analysis of contemporary consumption in terms of subjective agency. Louise Purbrick's book *The Wedding Present* weaves together anthropological, historical and materialist perspectives to interrogate everyday objects and designs in the British home, reviewing the relationship between consumption, self-construction and identity, and showing how particular sites of consumption can either engender or limit notions of selfhood.[40] The darker side of fashion and capitalism, and the anxieties created by the articulation of fashion in modern life have been themes in recent works by fashion historians such as Rebecca Arnold[41] and Caroline Evans, whose *Fashion at the Edge: Spectacle, Modernity and Deathliness* explores fashion and consumption in terms of these anxieties.[42] Over the last 15 years

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[37] Dani Cavallaro and Alexandra Warwick, *Fashioning the Frame: Boundaries, Dress and Body* (Oxford; New York: Berg, 1998), p.xv.
[38] Ibid., p.xvi.
[39] See Nicky Gregson and Louise Crewe, *Second-Hand Cultures* (Oxford; New York, NY: Berg, 2003).
[40] Louise Purbrick, *The Wedding Present: Domestic Life Beyond Consumption* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).
[41] Rebecca Arnold, *Fashion, Desire and Anxiety: Image and Morality in the 20th Century* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2001).
[42] Caroline Evans, *Fashion at the Edge: Spectacle, Modernity and Deathliness* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2003).

Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body and Culture has encouraged a breadth of analysis that incorporates a design-historical context to its exploration of the culture of fashion in material, as well as socio-political, terms. Writing about diaspora, dress and identity and the everyday,[43] issues such as the practice and politics of the body, or fashion and representation in the digital age,[44] is now as prevalent in the journal as analysis of high fashion.

Despite these advances there is still much need for experience-led research. Breward's comment, made thirteen years ago, that even within the new historicism there needs to be an emphasis on subjectivity and other 'practices of the self' that reveal 'the difficulties inherent in simple and closed explanations of power and its material representation',[45] still rings true. His own work on masculine fashion subjects in London has challenged the hegemony of an ideology of separate gender spheres to make the case for more nuanced understandings of fashion subjectivity. Such understandings need to be wide-ranging in their simultaneous incorporation of multiple positions, taking into account race, class and age as well as gender.

This thesis follows Breward's direction, placing its emphasis not only on formerly muted intersections between dress as lived experience within particular locales, but also on the interconnectivity of styles and experiences within different groups.

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[43] For a recent example see 'Dress and the African Diaspora', special issue of *Fashion Theory: the Journal of Dress, Body & Culture,* 14(3) (2012).

[44] Natalie Khan,'Cutting the Fashion Body: Why the Fashion Image Is No Longer Still', *Fashion Theory: the Journal of Dress, Body & Culture,* 16(2) (2012), 235-250.

[45] Christopher Breward, *The Hidden Consumer: Masculinities, Fashion and City Life, 1860-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p.15.

Method: oral history

Despite the turn in fashion history towards a focus on embodiment, dress historian Lou Taylor has observed that of those methodologies employed in the historical study of fashion, oral history is the least developed and practised.[46] The primary research for this study is based on oral interviews that I conducted with women from each of my case study groups. To find participants, I used a combination of opportunity or volunteer sampling with snowball sampling techniques.

Opportunity or volunteer sampling, which refers to a nonrandom sampling technique where the researcher selects subjects from whoever is available, at a given place, at a given time, was how I formed groups of participants using the Internet. In particular I used social networking sites to find both individuals and communities of women who had been part of a case study scene. This process involved researching online the names of key participants that I had identified from secondary sources, and then ascertaining whether they were connected to broader online communities. To make contact I either left a message on online sites or I would post a call to participation on contact pages. I also used Facebook as a notice board, posting an open request to women that I did not know to volunteer for the study. For example, for my Greenham Common case study (Chapter 2), I put a notice on the Greenham Common Facebook page. In this I included an introduction of myself as a PhD researcher, I briefly outlined my research interests, and I asked to interview women who had lived at the camp during my period of study. When women replied showing interest, I asked them for their personal details such as email addresses and phone numbers so that I could speak to them in more detail about their connection with a case study, and in most

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[46] Lou Taylor, *The Study of Dress History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), p.245.

cases to set up an interview. This sampling technique was both cost and time effective and enabled me to quickly make contact with women. The technique also had the potential of reaching a wide variety of participants who self-identified with different case studies. Through Facebook I connected with three women who had lived at Greenham, two women who had been in the hip-hop scene in the 1980s and 1990s, and three British women who wore the hijab. My aim was to interview about five women per chapter; this seemed an appropriate number for the scope and depth of each case study and to allow for diversity to emerge.[47]

My interviews represent only a small sample of volunteers, and their own select view; nevertheless it is the women's individual experiences and insights that I am concerned with in my exploration of subjectivity. Since I was not able to, nor was it my objective to identify everyone in a target group, and then select participants, or to classify participants into categories and then choose a sample, or to do a comprehensive survey of women in my case studies, this method seemed most appropriate. Moreover through this sampling technique volunteer interviewees were not selected from any pre-determined social categories, such as social class, ethnicity, or sexuality. Instead, I worked with women who associated themselves with case studies and who, as a result, came from diverse backgrounds of class, age, sexuality, ethnicity and religious belief. In fact through this approach I was able to investigate the multiple intersecting identities of gender within the matrix of class, race, and sexuality.

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[47] The sample size for each case study varied depending on the number of volunteers that materialized, and the number of interviews finally conducted. A full list of participants for each case study is in Appendix 1, Volume II.

As the research progressed, I realised the value of 'word of mouth' as a means of finding women to interview. Therefore in addition to opportunity or volunteer sampling I also used snowball sampling as a key method. Snowball sampling is another nonrandom sampling technique where the researcher identifies one person for the sample, and then at the end of the interview asks them to recommend others. This technique proved particularly valuable when participants were not easy to find and it led me to a number of women. For example I met Caroline Coon (Chapter 1), Paula Allen and Elizabeth Spring (Chapter 2), and Jihan Jamal (Chapter 4), through this method. In some instances, especially hip-hop, where initially trying to find participants who were willing to be interviewed was proving incredibly slow and unsuccessful, I approached high profile artists such as Kym Mazelle (from Soul II Soul) and Debbie Pryce (from Cookie Crew, see Chapter 4). Although I was aware that their experiences would be different to 'ordinary' women who had not had international music careers, I nonetheless included them for their perspectives. In addition to interviewing women who were active in a scene, I have also interviewed academics and journalists to enrich the analysis and to help to contextualise participant narratives.[48]

The interviews involved talking to women and reviewing their photographs, clothes, accessories and ephemera from the period. My priority was to hear women describe their style histories and choices in their own words. This study is therefore experience-led, offering a view of how some women felt in each case study. Quotes from my interviews are presented in the manner in which they were spoken, in the participant's language and style of speech, as conversation rather than composed text,

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[48] For information about interviews, for a list of participants and for a sample of interview transcripts see Appendices, Volume II.

to reflect most accurately their own interpretations of events. I then mine the primary source material analytically in my theorization of style and embodiment. This method corresponds with techniques in more recent oral history and feminist methodologies that seek to prioritise emotions, desires and feelings within analysis of subjectivity.[49]

The history that I relate, especially of case studies that are now more than thirty years old, such as punk and Greenham Common Peace Camp, is refracted through my interviewees' memories of particular occasions and their recollections of the time. This involves the older self remembering the younger self. I recognize that within this process the self-reflexive perspectives of the older self can romanticise the younger self, and that as one grows older the tendency to over-invest or over-connect with particular experiences of youth can become stronger, creating a web of deeply subjective emotional memories. I am aware that this is the case for some of my respondents, and that romanticisation can be implicit in their accounts of times that they remember fondly and dearly. Issues of unreliability, subjective narrative conjecture and the essential fallibility of individual personal memory are therefore a concern for me, as for oral history researchers generally.[50] For this reason, primary research is integrated with a broad range of corroborating secondary material that includes academic sources, general histories, periodicals and fanzines, film and music, dress, style objects and ephemera. Conflicting accounts are acknowledged where they arise, in order to show the subjectivity inherent in such studies.

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[49] See 'Appendices: Introduction', in Volume II of this thesis for a more detailed discussion of how I approached the interviews and how I have used quotes from transcripts in this study.
[50] *The Oral History Reader*, ed, by Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (London: Routledge, 2006); Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory* (London: Routledge, 2010).

At times there were obstacles that hindered or altered the progress of the project. Initially, not only was it difficult to find interviewees for the hip-hop case study (Chapter 3) but in the case of the hijab (Chapter 4) I encountered some suspicion surrounding my identity as an objective academic researcher. Some of the women I contacted commented on the fact that I have a Muslim name and they wanted to know about my background and my religious identity. I am of Gujarati-Indian origin, though born in Britain, and I come from a Shia community that has its roots in the Yemen. Two of the women that I contacted at the beginning of my research were Sunni Muslims, and they hesitated about being interviewed by me because they felt they were going to be judged for wearing the headscarf, fearing that I would interpret it as regressive because I do not veil, and because I did not come from the same religious communities as them. These individuals eventually refused to be interviewed, and I had to look for other participants.

Another unanticipated problem was my own discomfort in interviewing some of the women for this case study. At times, especially at the beginning of an interview, before we had established a rapport of mutual understanding, I felt self-conscious about my own British Muslim identity vis à vis that of my participants, and the fact that we were from different strands of the religion (Shia/Sunni). Rather than sharing a sense of communality and community on account of our similar 'ethnic identities', I found the fact that one of us veiled and the other did not embarrassing and voyeuristic, and feared that my questions would sound patronising. I also worried that I might be judged for not veiling. In the end these fears proved unfounded, although at times I did find it difficult not to interfere in the replies of the participants because of my own 'insider' knowledge of British Muslim identity. I state these issues reflexively, as part of a conscious acknowledgment of my own involvement in the research process. I

also note that in the flow of conversation women sometimes shared confidential information, or feelings that they wanted to keep private, and this has not been included.

Structure

In Chapter 1, entitled 'The Punk Cut: 1975-79', I discuss women's punk style during the first wave of the movement. The focus is on style in terms of everyday subversions that destabilise static socio-gendered identities. At the same time I discuss the generative potential of punk style for women to create new subjectivities within the context of 1970s feminism. By theorising the creative possibilities of the punk 'cut' I explore how it slashes through meaning and representation to trouble fixed categories of femininity. I examine the way that, through punk style, women ruptured the unity of material and social objects to re-articulate their own subjectivities. In this analysis, resistance is not merely framed as a working-class response to disenfranchisement, as in the classic subcultural view;[51] it is presented as agentive expression of new gendered positions.

In Chapter 2, 'The Greenham Layer, 1981-86', I develop my argument by analysing 'style' at Greenham Common Peace Camp from its inception in 1981. In this chapter I consider the legacy of the punk cut, and explore how it evolved and merged with other techniques to shape a countercultural style for women who lived at the camp for the first five years of its existence, at its zenith. In this chapter I theorise the Greenham 'layer' as embodied style tactics that express gendered difference through the defamiliarisation of meaning. Processes of bricolage and reappropriation are re-presented in an analysis of recycling, and I also explore the idea of the 'new-old': that

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[51] See Hebdige, *Subculture: the Meaning of Style*.

is, the merging of old objects to create new meaning and representation, a technique that challenges not only traditional femininity but also the notion of fashion in modern life as restricted to an association with the brand-new. I focus on the emergence of hybrid identity and the opportunities this offered women to develop new modes of agency.

Chapter 3, 'The Hip-hop Break, 1984-1997', explores style as gendered difference within the matrix of race. Running in chronological parallel with the Greenham Common Peace Camp, and closely associated with punk, the hip-hop scene in Britain developed quickly, especially after 1984 when Run-DMC's MTV debut gave rap music a recognisable style identity. Hip-hop style in Britain drew on the techniques of bricolage, translation and hybridisation that were present in both the punk cut and the Greenham layer, and developed both into a style that allowed women to break with essentialising black narratives. Focusing on the diasporic experience and the instability of fixed identity, in this chapter I discuss the potential for new subject positions through a theorisation of the hip-hop 'break'. As a critical tactic I explore its relevance to subjective difference in terms of 'postmodern blackness'.[52] I argue that the break as embodied style enabled black women to create in-between positions, in both gendered and racial terms, that can be interpreted as loci of disruption of hegemonic cultural narratives and structures.

Chapter 4, 'The Fold of the Hijab, 2001 to the present', connects my previous case studies to a contemporary manifestation of alternative style on the British street today. The inclusion of this case study may initially appear counterintuitive. The British

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[52] bell hooks, 'Postmodern Blackness', *Postmodern Culture*, 1 (1990)
http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/postmodern_culture/toc/pmc1.1.html [accessed 24 February 2009].

Muslim hijab is generally considered to be religious dress, and has become an over-determined signifier of political difference that fixes women into gendered tropes. What potential can it hold to express gendered subjective difference and agency? I explore this question through examples of the contemporary hijab, constructed using high-street scarves and other mainstream fashion accessories that are styled in order to deliberately Other the Muslim woman on the British street. I show how the merging, embodiment, and hybridization of different fashion objects creates a third space of alterity that engenders subjective difference as agentive. I also theorise the fold from a philosophical perspective, showing how the physical shaping of the headscarf relates to an ontology of becomingness and a multiplicity of identity. This in turn corresponds with debates about British multiculturalism and multi-identity politics in the twenty-first century. Methodologically, many of the technologies of critical style—in particular, bricolage, reappropriation and hybridisation—that are present in my other case studies are present in this analysis of the contemporary British hijab. In this way all four case studies are connected both materially and theoretically.

Exploring subjectivity

Analysis of subjectivity needs to be set within the framework of an individual perspective; it demands an exploration of the desires, emotions, memories, fears and fantasies that shape women's standpoint. Traditionally these have been written out of formal historical accounts,[53] and perhaps this is why oral history is so welcome as part of the cultural turn in fashion and design scholarship. During the course of the interviews, however, I was aware that by prioritising gendered experience above other

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[53] *The Myths We Live By*, ed. by Raphael Samuel and Paul Thompson (London: Routledge, 1990).

structural and discursive processes I was running the risk of creating my own totalising frame, and failing to recognise, as had some scholars before me, the fact that 'experience' itself is a construction. In her essay 'The evidence of experience', historian Joan Scott highlights the value of experience-led analysis in terms of the insights it affords to the historical record and the way in which it complicates orthodox histories through an enlargement of the picture; however, she also warns of its limitations.[54] Scott suggests that in experience-led research the 'experience' is presented as 'uncontestable [*sic*] evidence and as an originary point of explanation— as a foundation on which analysis is based'. This, she claims, 'weakens the critical thrust of histories of difference', because in her view 'difference' continues to be analysed within the epistemological frames of orthodox ideologies; it is rarely reconceptualised, and categories remain ahistorical.[55]

The methodological flaw here is that 'They [orthodox histories] locate resistance outside its discursive construction and reify agency as an inherent attribute of individuals, thus decontextualizing it'.[56] In order to maintain methodological potency, then, any experience-led study of this kind must prioritise experience and resistance alike as constructed. How subjects are constituted as different, and how their vision is structured, must be critically evaluated and historicised. In order to do this, in this research I draw on the work of feminist theory of the last thirty years as a central methodological base from which to dismantle static or totalising categories and explore the production or expression of new ones. In particular, discussion is positioned within poststructuralist thinking that has deconstructed transparent or

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[54] Joan Wallach Scott, 'The evidence of experience', *Critical Enquiry*, 17 (1991), 773-797.
[55] Scott, 'The evidence of experience', p.777.
[56] Ibid.

neutral interpretations of ideological systems. These theoretical techniques enable me to examine the *plurality* of what it means to be a woman, including the embodied hybridity of experience within situated knowledge, or, in other words, through located epistemologies that express the multiplicity of self-definitions and modes of knowing. These ideas have been the preoccupation of feminist standpoint theorists who, in order to complicate gender-neutral epistemological views, have drawn attention to the intersubjective discourses that frame individual knowledge within particular embodied experiences.[57]

By analysing women's politics of location, feminist theorists have been able to formulate a model of resistance. For example, in bell hooks's conceptualization of feminist politics, she refers to the politics of location as both a theoretical space and a space of oppositional agency that she calls 'the margin'. The margin is both a site of oppression and a 'site of radical possibility, a space of resistance'.[58] My exploration of cuts, breaks and other interruptions in representational systems of gender is intended to complicate both the category of gender itself and its articulations in material objects and garments. Through this method I also explore, following hooks, how the notion of sites refers to women's psychic geographies, where physical spaces—such as the street or the campsite, for example—are also the margins or borders where freedoms are expressed.

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[57] Nancy C.M. Hartsock, *The Feminist Standpoint Revisited and Other Essays* (Boulder, CO.; Oxford: Westview, 1998); *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader: Intellectual and Political Controversies*, ed. by Sandra G. Harding (New York; London: Routledge, 2004); Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York: Routledge, 2009).
[58] bell hooks, *Yearning: Race, Gender and Cultural Politics* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1990), p.149.

Troubling gender

The main theme throughout the thesis is the performativity of gender, and in this context I critically evaluate techniques of cross-dressing, androgyny and hypersexuality as technologies that 'trouble' gender norms. Judith Butler's theory of gender as performative stripped notions of fixity bare. She showed how clothes form part of the structural constraints within which gender is performed, written on the body in what she calls 'the corporeal stylization of gender, the fantasied [*sic*] and fantastic figuration of the body'.[59] As Butler says, 'that the gendered body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality'.[60] Butler's examples of parody and drag illustrate how gender can be subverted and exposed as mere fabrication: 'in imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself—as well as its contingency'.[61]

My focus on androgyny and hypersexuality follows Butler's approach. However, I try to overcome the limitations of Butler's theoretical abstraction by combining my analysis of agentive strategies *with* situated bodily practice, locating style strategies materially and as embodied opportunities to make visible the experience of different women *and* to expose the existence of repressive mechanisms that, through discourse, position subjects and produce their experiences.

Everyday style and new gendered positions

Essential to the analysis, therefore, is the dismantling of culture as a neutral descriptive category. Hence another focus of this study is the everyday, as both a

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[59] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, 10th anniversary ed. (New York; London: Routledge, 1999), p.172.
[60] Ibid., p.173.
[61] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p.175.

historical and a theoretical concept. The introduction of the concept of the everyday in

British cultural studies since the 1960s has implied the contestation of a 'high' culture,

or culture as a whole way of life.[62] Founding cultural theorists incorporated the idea

that culture is political as well as aesthetic in its forms and effects,[63] and the

discipline's focus on the quotidian has spurred an understanding of history as a

process of daily appropriation. Concurrently, feminist activism and theory since the

1970s has rooted itself in analysis of the everyday as an object of enquiry as well as a

field of political struggle.[64] In short, feminism has conceived itself as a politics of

everyday life.[65]

The everyday, therefore, has become the 'place' to complicate histories and to reveal,

in the present or the past, the intricacies within the lives of 'ordinary' people, and in

particular those who may have been denied attention or acknowledgement within the

traditional structures of academic knowledge. Sociologist Ben Highmore says that 'to

invoke everyday life can be to invoke precisely those practices and lives that have

traditionally been left out of historical accounts, swept aside by the onslaught of

events instigated by elites. It becomes shorthand for voices "from below": women,

children, migrants and so on'.[66]

Objects, which include dress, are connected to the materiality of everyday routines.

Sociologist Elizabeth Shove has analysed how the form of everyday objects can

redefine the meaning of routines and the actual functions they serve. 'Ordinary

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[62] Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society, 1780-1950* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1958).
[63] Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy: Aspects of Working-Class Life with Special Reference to Publications and Entertainments* (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1957); Raymond Williams; E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Gollancz, 1963).
[64] See, for example, Dorothy Smith, *The Everyday World as Problematic: a Feminist Sociology* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1987).
[65] I refer again to the slogan 'The personal is political', common in second-wave feminism throughout the 1970s (see note 5).
[66] *The Everyday Life Reader*, ed. by Ben Highmore (London: Routledge, 2002), p.1.

objects are extraordinarily important in sustaining and transforming the details and the design of everyday life.'[67] By bringing the materiality of objects and practice firmly into view, Shove suggests that consumer culture and social relations can be re-evaluated in terms of agency, in terms of the 'accomplishment of daily routine'.[68] Shove's focus is on objects such as domestic appliances, and in her investigations she highlights how traditional scholarship about the sociology of consumption can move beyond material objects as semiotic intermediaries of collective or individual identities.[69] Instead, the ordering and reorganizing of possessions in the everyday 'can be analysed as an expression of gender, age, identity and power'.[70] Such a view prioritises both the agency of objects and the agency of the everyday.

From a specifically gendered perspective, feminists have invested the everyday with value and significance, concentrating on the repetitive and recurring nature of the day-to-day to theorise women's connection with the cyclical patterns of nature, emotion and sensuality. Feminist theorist Rita Felski has reconceptualised everyday life in her own temporal frame to suggest that everyday rituals are ways in which women are able to safeguard a sense of personal autonomy and dignity against the 'maelstrom of contemporary life'.[71] Felski argues that 'acts of innovation and creativity are not opposed to, but rather made possible by, the mundane cycles of the quotidian'.[72]

Felski thus presents the everyday as a critical concept that is politically and historically situated, rather than an unchanging and distinct social sphere. Her assessment of its empowering potential runs in parallel with those of other cultural

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[67] Elizabeth Shove, *The Design of Everyday Life* (Oxford: Berg, 2007), p.2.
[68] Ibid.
[69] See for example Mike Featherstone, *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism* (London: Sage, 1990).
[70] Shove, p.5.
[71] Rita Felski, 'The Invention of Everyday Life', *New Formations* 39 (1999), 15-31 (p. 21).
[72] Ibid.

theorists who have identified the everyday as the site of resistance and subversion, as the locus of ambivalence, the place for inventiveness and tactics that can challenge power structures.[73]

In fact, these processes of resistance in the everyday echo more longstanding practices from within the historical avant-garde. Guy Debord's strategy of *détournement*, for example, relied on reusing pre-existing artistic elements and turning them into new ensembles in everyday social life in order to negate their value. *Détournement* for Debord and the Situationist International (SI) consisted of everyday subversive political pranks that turned expressions of the capitalist system against itself. According to the SI, *détournement* derived its efficacy from 'the double meaning, from the enrichment of most of the terms by the co-existence within them of their old senses and their new immediate senses . . . *Détournement* is thus first of all a negation of the value of the previous organization of expression . . . But at the same time, the attempts to reuse the "détournable bloc" [*sic*] as material for other ensembles express the search for a vaster construction'.[74]

Parody was a critical tool in Situationist practice, adopted to expose alienation in modern everyday life. Others were the 'cut': collage, assemblage, montage; recycling and the manipulation of found objects to engender spatial and temporal distance; defamiliarisation, to break logical continuity. In terms of subcultural and alternative style, then, it comes as no surprise that punk is often closely related to the historical avant-garde[75] in the way that it acts as a revolutionary practice, creating a space for

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[73] de Certeau.
[74] Anonymous, 'Détournement as Negation and Prelude' (1959) in *Situationist International Anthology*, ed.by Ken Knabb (Berkeley, Calif: Bureau of Public Secrets, 1981), p.55.
[75] Greil Marcus, *Lipstick Traces: a Secret History of the Twentieth Century* (London: Faber, 2011).

disenfranchised voices to be heard. This explains why Hebdige's *Subculture: The Meaning Of Style* is considered a contribution to avant-garde theory, situated at a point of junction between an avant-garde belief in the aesthetics of shock and the ideology of self-realisation of the youth protest movements of the 1960s and 1970s.

Hebdige showed convincingly how key aesthetic practices of the historical avant-garde, such as the assemblages of Surrealism or the bricolages of Dada, are at work in punk style, initiating a cultural revolution of everyday life. Hebdige says, 'Cut-ups and collages, no matter how bizarre, do not change as much as rearrange things (…): no amount of stylistic incantation can alter the oppressive mode in which commodities used in subculture have been produced. Nonetheless, style does have its moments, its brief outrageous spectacle'.[76]

Hebdige's use of the word 'spectacle' can be read as a deliberate echo of Debord, for whom spectacle is the inverted image of society in which relations between commodities have supplanted relations between people, in which passive identification with the spectacle supplants genuine activity. Debord does not mean spectacle as a collection of images, but rather as 'a social relation among people, mediated by images'.[77] In Hebdige's conception of spectacle he is referring to the way in which the punk subculture is able to symptomatise the socio-political ills of the period, and how punk style acts as subversion. He says:

> Punk style is in a constant state of assemblage, of flux…It invites the reader
> to slip into 'significance' to lose the sense of direction, the direction of sense.
> Cut adrift from meaning, the punk style thus comes to approximate the state
> which Barthes has described as 'a floating (the very form of the signifier): a

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[76] Hebdige, *Subculture: the Meaning of Style*, p.130.
[77] Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle* (New York: Zone Books, 1994), p.12.

floating which would not destroy anything but would be content simply to disorientate Law'.[78]

The floating signifier that makes play out of the social text, destabilising meaning and unfixing identities, thus becomes an assault on everyday life.

Rejecting 'femininity'

Situationist practice—and in turn subcultural theory—may be summed up as the desire for groups to seek out 'the loose threads in the fabric of spectacular society…so as to pull that fabric apart'.[79] In terms of gender politics, feminists have claimed that it is idealised femininity that has been constructed as the spectacle within post-industrial Britain, where 'femininity' has been reduced to the image. The image, in turn, has historically colonised the female experience so that the embodied realities of women have been subsumed in culture. This has created the 'to-be-looked-at-ness' of women, or the 'scopophilic gaze', which, according to feminist film theorist Laura Mulvey, is a highly gendered visual dynamic in which women are 'simultaneously looked at and displayed'.[80] In Jane Gaines's summing-up of the cultural gaze of femininity she notes that

> We are trained into clothes, and early become practised in presentational postures, learning, in the age of mechanical reproduction, to carry the mirror's eye within the mind, as though one might at any moment be photographed. And this is a sense a woman in western culture has learned, not only from feeling the constant surveillance of her public self, but also from studying the publicity images of other women, on screen, certainly, but also in the pages of fashion magazines.[81]

[78] Hebdige, *Subculture: the Meaning of Style*, p.126.
[79] *The Everyday Life Reader*, p.237.
[80] Laura Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989), p.18.
[81] *Fabrications: Costume and the Female Body,* ed. by Jane Gaines and Charlotte Herzog (New York; London: Routledge, 1990), p.3.

The way in which ideological representations of femininity have actively produced, limited or devalued various forms of female self-identification has been a political issue since the early days of the Women's Liberation Movement. One of the first protests carried out by second-wave feminists in Britain was the disruption of the 1970 Miss World beauty pageant in opposition to the objectification of women by the media and consumer culture. At the same time, early issues of *Spare Rib*, the second-wave feminist magazine, interrogated the social construction of female identity. Rosie Boycott's article 'The Price of Beauty',[82] which appeared in 1973, a year after the magazine was founded, concentrated on the role of the interdependent relationship between the cosmetics industry and capitalism in women's objectification, while other issues of the magazine consistently explored the topic of women's pleasure without ascribing to them an innate femininity.[83] This approach confronted the tone of young women's mainstream magazines of the 1960s and early 1970s, such as *Cosmopolitan,* that focused commonly on the young, mobile working girl but never dared to address sex and sexuality.

At the same time, within academia there was a theoretical turn occurring, as feminists reconfigured the category of 'femininity' away from essentialism. Emerging from the psychoanalytical strand, writers such as Luce Irigaray declared femininity as a mask, a masquerade donned for social performance. She writes that

> [M]asquerade has to be understood as what women do in order to recuperate some element of desire, to participate in man's desire, but at the price of renouncing their own…What do I mean by masquerade? In particular, [...] 'femininity'. The belief that it is necessary to become a woman, a 'normal'

[82] Rosie Boycott, 'The Price of Beauty', *Spare Rib*, 16 (1973), pp.33-36.
[83] See for example Angela Carter, 'Interception', *Spare Rib,* 20 (1974), p.10.

one at that, whereas a man is a man from the outset. [...] a woman has to become a normal woman, that is, has to enter the masquerade of femininity.[84]

Poststructuralist feminists such as Butler later continued and reconceptualised the notion of masquerade in terms of a performative production.

Debates about the structural limitations of constructed femininity have thus dominated feminist scholarship over the last 30 years, and have deliberately drawn on the experience of the everyday to unmask the many disguises in which femininity is imposed upon women. In 1988 Sandra Bartky classified into three types the variety of disciplinary practices dedicated to producing a recognizably feminine body: 'those that aim to produce a body of a certain size and general configuration; those that bring forth from this body a specific repertoire of gestures, postures and movements; and those that are directed towards the display of the body as an ornamented surface'.[85] Earlier, in 1985, Elizabeth Wilson had described how fashion 'display', particularly as it is laid out in the fashion magazine, is 'obsessed with gender'.[86] Such arguments were already asserting the view that fashion ideals reproduce ideals of normative gender. More recently, theoreticians have maintained that femininity continues to be contextualised around omnipresent images of fashionable bodies in various media, which construct and perpetuate ideals of beauty and femininity within these structures.[87]

[84] Luce Irigaray, *The Sex Which is Not One* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985) pp.133-4.
[85] *Feminism & Foucault: Reflections on Resistance*, ed. by Irene Diamond and Lee Quinby (Boston, Mass.: Northeastern University Press, 1988), p.64.
[86] Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams*, p.117.
[87] Naomi Wolf, *The Beauty Myth* (London: Chatto & Windus,1990); Susan Bordo, *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body* (1993) (Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press, 2003); Maggie Wykes and Barrie Gunter, *The Media and Body Image: If Looks Could Kill* (1993) (London; Thousand Oaks, Calif.: SAGE, 2004).

In this study of style as resistance, I maintain as central to my discussion the view that totalising images and narratives of women might differ from how they see their bodies and themselves. As early as 1949 Simone de Beauvoir highlighted the way that the body is not merely a passive object on which social norms are imposed, but rather a situation which incorporates women's embodied intentions and agency, as well as social constructs.[88] Toril Moi contends that 'Just as the world constantly makes me, I constantly make myself the woman I am'.[89] The embodied relationship women have with their clothes affects how they are able to move: getting dressed and wearing clothes are embodied competences.[90] The tactile relationship that clothing has to women's skin and how they feel in clothes affect the identities women are able to construct-perform. Embodiment is a crucial factor in dismantling hegemonic femininity.

Style as praxis

In this study borders, thresholds, in-betweenness and the potential of the liminal spaces of gendered difference are explored not only in terms of theoretical abstraction but also as praxis. In other words, ideas are not abstracted from their social and historical context. Antonio Gramsci, whose theory of hegemony is critical to subcultural theory, had already highlighted the revolutionary appeal of a 'philosophy of praxis' when he discussed the notion that (Marxist) thought needed to be explicated and applied to material conditions. The aim of his discussion was to suggest that theory and practice are not disjointed, that together they can lead to a degree of self-understanding, consciousness and awareness. 'Every man, in as much as he is active, i.e. living, contributes to modifying the social environment in which he develops [...];

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[88] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (1949), tr. and ed. by H.M. Parshley (London: Vintage, 1997).
[89] Toril Moi, *Sex, Gender and the Body* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p.74.
[90] See *Body Dressing*.

in other words, he tends to establish "norms", rules of living and of behavior.'[91]

Gramsci intended to bridge the gap, through praxis, between intellectuals and the 'simple' people[92] by leading the latter to a higher conception of life, an approach that leads towards a form of conscious human progress where individuals are not passive in society but actors in the process of change.

Gramsci advocated a position of 'absolute historicism' or an 'absolute humanism' in which (Marxist) ideas are time-bound and subject to alteration and eventual dispersal. As he says,

> [E]ven the philosophy of praxis is an expression of historical contradictions, and indeed their most complete, because most conscious, expression; this means that it too is tied to 'necessity' and not to a 'freedom' which does not exist and, historically, cannot yet exist. If, therefore, it is demonstrated that contradictions will disappear, it is also demonstrated implicitly that the philosophy of praxis too will disappear, or be superseded.[93]

Gramsci rejected any account of historical process based on transcendent metaphysics, and in this way his ideas resonate with feminist theory that has also drawn on ideas of praxis to review and re-present women's knowledge, interests and history. Praxis (that is, theory-practice) has been incorporated into feminist social sciences as a means to critique dominant forms of knowledge that privilege linear reasoning in favour of diverse ways of knowing, and to expand methodologies to bring to the fore women's epistemologies. It is precisely the material realities of women's lives that feminist standpoint theorists, as mentioned earlier, reference when they articulate gendered difference both personally and politically.

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[91] Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and tr. by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971), p.265.
[92] Ibid., p.332.
[93] Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.405.

For example, in her analysis of how the material realities of women dictate standpoints that are different from gender-neutral or totalising interpretations, Sandra Harding has drawn on Gloria Anzaldúa's concept of 'borderlands'[94] to characterise the way that women's epistemologies, as marginal, exist in spaces in between dominant epistemologies, and therefore can be understood as sites of discovery.[95] She has stressed how it is through embodied practice that individuals can explore borderland epistemologies, recognising them as sites under construction, sites that are liminal or hybrid, in-between positions that give rise to expressions of difference. Such sites are similar to what Trinh T. Minh-ha has called the 'interval', or interim space between truth and meaning, a space without which 'meaning would be fixed and truth congealed'.[96]

The significance of these perspectives is that they allow for analysis of the intersubjectivity of lived experience within shared community values and meaning. As my own contribution to ideas of praxis, I have deliberately chosen to apply theories that were contemporaneous with each case study, and, where possible, to historicise them. I prioritise the issues that have been important to my interviewees within their personal biographies, as highlighted by them. This approach enables me to explore subjectivity and bodily knowledge as collages. I purposefully mix metaphors to indicate the complexity of identity, rejecting any single narrative. Furthermore, my analysis of style as praxis brings to the surface women's identities at a given cultural moment, within looping histories. In this way we begin to see conceptualisations of the self that approach Rosi Braidotti's concept of nomadic

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[94] Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands: the New Mestiza = La frontera* (San Francisco, CA.: Aunt Lute Books, 1987).
[95] Sandra G. Harding, *Is Science Multicultural?: Postcolonialisms, Feminisms, and Epistemologies* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1998).
[96] Trinh T. Minh-Ha, *When the Moon Waxes Red: Representation, Gender and Cultural Politics* (New York: Routledge, 1991), p.92.

subjectivity.[97] This is a figuration that expresses 'the desire for an identity made of transitions, successive shifts, and coordinated changes, without and against an essential unity'.[98]

Restyling narratives

In thinking about concepts of nomadism, this thesis discusses how connections and movement within styles exposes an allegorical type of history. Craig Owens, writing about postmodernism, described allegory as the 'epitome of counter-narrative, for it arrests narrative in place, substituting a principle of syntagmatic disjunction for one of diegetic combination'.[99] The intertextuality that results from combinations of bricolage, appropriation, layering, mixing and sampling, present in all of my case studies, represents an allegory of history, a montage of memory traces. The complex relationship these styles have to real experience opens up very different means of representing culture: in the intertexuality of women's subcultural and alternative dress styles the body is both a signifier and medium of lived experience, which is itself a process, a multiple praxis. By connecting my case studies to one another, and drawing links between the extended biographies of my interviewees, I explore similarities across periods, and plot historical time not as something that flows smoothly from past to present but as a more complex relay of turns and returns in which the past is activated by injecting the present into it, and vice versa. In thinking about identity, I consider not only the way that alternative style is used to decentre the gendered body but also how, through situated bodily practice, women reconfigure a new 'centred' identity that is ongoing; one that feels constant, tangible and real. Through these

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[97] Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).
[98] Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects*, p.22.
[99] Craig Owens, 'The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism', *October*, 12 (1980), 67-86 (p.72).

methods the wearers' gestural manipulation of clothes and objects reveals the

subjective structuring of self and identity, challenging the relationship between

memory and modernity, the enduring and the ephemeral. As a result this thesis offers

a new perspective which challenges previous assumptions by producing a reflexive,

rather than heroic, analysis of British women's style experience.

Chapter 1 The Punk Cut: 1975-79

Figure 1 Black t-shirt, customised by Christine Powell, 1976-77, V&A Collections.

Some time between 1976 and 1977, Christine Powell, a London-based art-school punk who was then sixteen, asked one of her friends to cut up an old black cotton t-shirt. (Figure 1) They sliced through the right-hand shoulder and drew the material from the back and the front together with three safety pins. They also cut out the manufacturer's label, because this was now their design. Powell used the t-shirt as part of her punk look. She could not afford to wear Vivienne Westwood and Malcolm McLaren's punk fashion items, so she devised her own low-cost version. She wore this t-shirt as part of both her day and her evening look, and remembers that 'it was fun and positive; if you met another punk you'd talk about the clothes you were wearing'.[1] This t-shirt is now in the Victoria and Albert Museum's collection; it is

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[1] Christine Powell, in Paul Rambali and Sarah Callard, 'The British supermarket of style', *The Independent*, Fashion supplement, 25 September 1994 [unpaginated] http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/fashion/news/fashion--the-british-supermarket-of-style-street-style-has-been-our-biggest-fashion-export-now-neatly-divided-into-tribes-its-become-a-museum-exhibit-at-the-va-paul-rambali-mourns-its-fate-sarah-callard-talks-to-those-who-gave-seminal-pieces-to-the-show-1450938.html [accessed 19 January 2013].

stored with examples of Vivienne Westwood's iconic punk fashion design. The fact that Powell's t-shirt has become an important historical fashion object stresses the significance of do-it-yourself, customisation, appropriation and street style in both the fashion history of the period and the subsequent analysis of punk.

During punk's explosion on the British cultural scene in the mid-1970s the cutting-up of clothes to create new styles based on crude construction techniques was critical to the subculture's political aesthetics. Punks constantly changed their look, so that torn material, frayed edges and defaced prints maintained a shock value that was part of punk's antagonistic approach. Punks made a visual statement through dress, spurred on by the tabloid-led moral panic that was unfolding around them. Stanley Cohen, in his important study about media controversies concerning Mods and Rockers in the 1960s, entitled *Folk Devils and Moral Panics*, used cultural theory and critical sociology to show how the mass media was one of the primary sources responsible for framing ideas of deviance. In his view it did this by setting the agenda, transmitting images and exposing particular facets of youth culture precisely to provoke 'moral panics'. He says a moral panic occurs when 'condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests'.[2] The Sex Pistols' irreverent appearance on the *Today* show, hosted by Bill Grundy in 1976, where they were not only dressed in punk style but also where they appeared drunk and swore on television, was such an episode.[3]

However even away from the mainstream media glare, images from the period show

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[2] Stanley Cohen, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The Creation of the Mods and Rockers*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987), p. 9.
[3] *Today*, Thames Television, 1 December 1976, broadcast at 6.15pm.

punk musicians in torn and dirty jumpers and trousers,[4] or young girls at gigs

smirking or spitting, in laddered tights or with suspenders showing. (Figure 2)
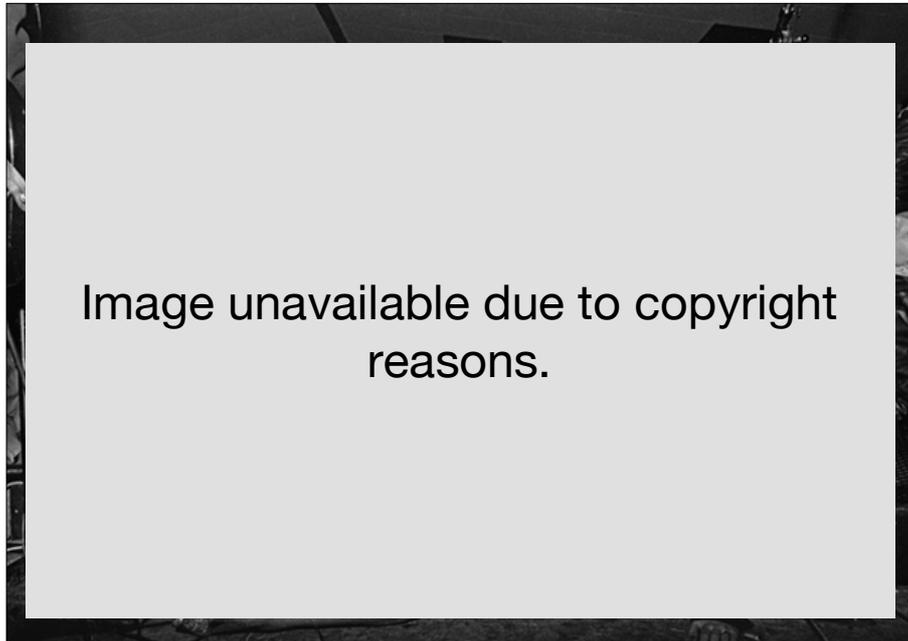
Figure 2 Rock Against Racism gig, West Runton Pavilion, Cromer, Norfolk, 1979 © Syd Shelton.

Punks are photographed loitering in the street in heavy, utilitarian Dr. Martens

footwear, looking as though they had nowhere to go and nothing to do. (Figure 3)

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[4] See, for example, images from the period by Ray Stevenson, http://www.raystevenson.co.uk/page1.htm
[accessed May 2010].

Figure 3 Punks, London 1978 © Janette Beckman.

Safety pins and chains hold bits of fabric together and, together with mohawk hairstyles, are constructed to represent an outward expression of the social, class, racial and gendered conflicts that they feel. Symbolic of punk, then, was the act of cutting and destroying, constituting a critical element of punk activity. Yet the interpretation of this embodied style as a reflection of punk women's individual subjectivities in the 1970s has until recently remained under-theorised.

Histories of women in punk from the perspective of the participants themselves were rarely documented during the early period of the subculture. In the 1980s Caroline Coon, a music journalist and an interviewee for this study (see Appendices, Volume II) wrote *1988: the New Wave Punk Rock Explosion*, featuring interviews with women punk musicians such as The Slits.[5] Hers was a lone voice documenting the movement during the 1970s and 1980s and even into the early 1990s, when the most

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[5] Coon, Caroline, *1988: the New Wave Punk Rock Explosion* (London: Omnibus, 1982).

widely referenced texts about punk were produced by male writers with a London-specific focus; a key work of this period was *England's Dreaming* by Jon Savage.[6] [7] However, studies of women punk musicians were eventually undertaken by biographers[8] and academics who adopted a more interdisciplinary approach, and at the start of the new millennium punk was being addressed in terms of issues such as gender and sexuality. The focus, however, remained predominantly on the world of music and rock discourse rather than on punk style.[9]

Angela McRobbie's gender-based revisionist analysis has been critical in calling for more interdisciplinary and nuanced scholarship on punk style. In 1976 she and Jenny Garber had lamented the fact that gendered difference was not accounted for in subcultural analysis: 'Female invisibility in youth subcultures then becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, a vicious cycle…the emphases in the documentation of these phenomena, on the male and masculine, reinforce and amplify our conception of the subcultures as predominantly male'.[10] Their observations created fertile ground for new research, methodologies and interview-based work. Roger Sabin's *Punk Rock: So What? The Cultural Legacy of Punk*, for example, has taken a multi-faceted approach to situate and examine punk in a broad historical context, challenging the homogeneous interpretations common in subcultural analysis.[11] Meanwhile, *Pretty in Punk: Girls' Gender Resistance in a Boys' Subculture* directly addresses the complex

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[6] Jon Savage, *England's Dreaming: Sex Pistols and Punk Rock* (London: Faber, 1991).

[7] For films see *Jubilee*, dir. by Derek Jarman, (Megalovision; Whaley-Malin,1978); *The Punk Rock Movie,* dir. by Don Letts (Sun Video, 1978); *The Great Rock 'n' Roll Swindle*, dir. by Julien Temple (Virgin Films, 1980).

[8] Gillian G. Gaar, *She's a Rebel: the History of Women in Rock & Roll* (London: Blandford, 1993); Lucy O'Brien, *She Bop II: the Definitive History of Women in Rock, Pop and Soul* (London: Continuum, 2002).

[9] Sheila Whiteley, *Women and Popular Music: Sexuality, Identity, and Subjectivity* (London; New York: Routledge, 2000); Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* with a new introduction (Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press, 2002); Helen Reddington *The Lost Women of Rock Music: Female Musicians of the Punk Era* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).

[10] *Resistance Through Rituals*, p.212.

[11] Roger Sabin, *Punk Rock: So What? The Cultural Legacy of Punk* (London: Routledge, 1999).

issue of gender in punk by highlighting—as the title suggests—the way that dominant views conceived the culture as male. In this work the author uses a broad framework to discuss the motivations behind women punks' actions and desires, patterns of resistance and processes of individualisation.[12] Similarly, a recent work on punk and race has helped to demystify white totalising narratives of the subculture through a far-reaching analytical review,[13] while books such as *Punk Rock: an Oral History*[14] have allowed the opportunity for personal, intimate accounts of punk, including those of female participants, to be communicated.[15] Likewise, in 2012 the journal *Punk and Post Punk* emerged, offering a new forum to review both the first wave of punk and post-punk expressions. The legacy of punk, and the continued and varied interest in it, highlights how complex and far-reaching the subculture was and continues to be. In his most recent publication, Michael Bracewell muses that

> Most people who went through punk tend to remember it anecdotally; they have an incredible recall of those 18 months – of where they were, who with and what they wore. Punk bred a generation of self-archivists—many of whom are even now still sifting through the wreckage trying to piece together what exactly happened. And all of this from a movement that decreed 'no future'.[16]

In this chapter I build on this scholarship with my own interdisciplinary investigation of the way in which punk style between 1975 and 1979 shaped and expressed women's subjectivities and lived realities. The chapter reviews and revises the

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[12] Lauraine Leblanc, *Pretty in Punk: Girls' Gender Resistance in a Boys' Subculture* (New Brunswick, NJ; London: Rutgers University Press, 1999).
[13] *White Riot: Punk Rock and the Politics of Race*, ed. by Stephen Duncombe and Maxwell Tremblay (London: Verso, 2011).
[14] John Robb, *Punk Rock: an Oral History* (London: Ebury, 2006).
[15] For example, in 2009 Jon Savage published *The England's Dreaming Tapes* (London: Faber, 2009), in which he echoes the title of his earlier study but this time recreates, in original interview form, the personalities who emerged as part of the 1970s punk scene.
[16] Michael Bracewell, 'Cut Me and I Bleed Scott Fitzgerald', in *The Space Between: Selected Writings on Art* (London: Ridinghouse, 2012), p.27.

traditional understanding of punk during its early period, involving those referred to by Dick Hebdige as the 'first wave of self-conscious innovators',[17] the 'authentic' punks, before commodification took place. Through oral history and the contextualisation of images I discuss punk style in the everyday, challenging stereotypes of a single 'punk look'. Hebdige claimed that 'the [punk] subculture was nothing if not consistent'.[18] I argue the opposite view, focusing on gendered punk style as an expression of individuality as well as belongingness, and in terms of the way it changed and mutated according to the values of a particular punk community.[19] I am also concerned with the way in which punk style continued to shape women's personal biographies beyond the 1970s.

Furthermore, Hebdige claimed that punk style was '…pregnant with significance', and he explains that 'its transformations go "against nature", interrupting the process of "normalisation". As such, they are gestures, movements towards a speech which offends the "silent majority", which challenges the principle of unity and cohesion, which contradicts the myth of consensus'.[20] Despite referring to gestures and movements, which are embodied acts, Hebdige treats punk style as a code. His technique, like that of other subcultural theorists,[21] was to base analysis on a hierarchical ontology that privileged the idea of interpreting this code as a subversion against a coherent 'mainstream'. In this way he positions punk style as an 'authentic' other, in opposition to the hegemonic order. Resistance through style was thus confined within a parent/subculture binary where other variables, such as temporality and spatiality, were ignored.

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[17] Hebdige, *Subculture: the Meaning of Style*, p.122.
[18] Ibid., p.114.
[19] See Frank Cartledge in Sabin, *Punk Rock: So What*? p.143.
[20] Hebdige, *Subculture: the Meaning of Style*, p.18.
[21] See *Resistance Through Rituals*.

In fact, Hebdige characterizes punk style as a social rupture grounded in nihilism, where its currency is its power to break meaning and location: '…the punks dislocated themselves from the parent culture and were positioned instead on the outside…this was only possible because punk style had made a decisive break not only with the parent culture but with its own *location in experience* [*sic*]'.[22]

This claim denies any embodied politics of location. In fact, Hebdige's analysis is disembodied to the extent that he admits that the punks he refers to would neither recognise themselves in his book nor welcome his attempts to explain their subculture.[23] My research rejects the notion that punk was solely about what Hebdige identifies as 'symbolic resistance'. I do not dismiss any mainstream aspect of punk as inauthentic or compromised, but rather focus on punk style as a series of negotiations within the gendered economies of punk women's embodied lives. I discuss the way that punk style engendered performative identities that challenge the idea that punk's nihilistic impulse was merely about creating a nowhere, a negative space. I argue that from women's gendered perspective punk was generative.

The 'cut'

'Punk was not just about what you looked like, it was about what you did,' explains interviewee Helen Reddington, a bass player in the punk band Joby and the Hooligans that was based in Brighton in 1977. (Reddington, interview)[24] For both men and women this involved customising clothes: the punk cut epitomised the style's creative tactics. It was through cutting, slashing, poking and pinning that objects were

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[22] Hebdige, *Subculture: the Meaning of Style*, p.121.
[23] Ibid., p.139.
[24] Helen Reddington formed the band The Chefs in 1979, and is the author of *The Lost Women of Rock Music: Female Musicians of the Punk Era* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).

rendered strange, personal stories were expressed, new histories exposed.

The punk cut did not refer to any single technique, but to a limitless repertoire of cuts. Images from the period show the eclecticism of customisation. In photographs of the Bromley Contingent, a high-profile group of Sex Pistols fans, for example, we see unique outfits and hairstyles composed of various materials that have been manipulated and individualised. (Figure 4)

Image unavailable due to copyright reasons.

Figure 4 The Bromley Contingent, 1976 © Ray Stevenson.

The cut is similarly present in the creation of a style of destruction and rupture, as items of clothing such as jackets are customised with tears, zips, chains and pins. (Figure 5)

Figure 5 Punks at the Roxy, London, April 1977 © Richard Braine.

The cut has a mediatory function where it breaks the continuity, flow or cogency of material, of structure, of any conventional 'look'. Through material metamorphosis punks could express a conceptual and metaphysical message about their everyday social and political life. The cut is therefore productive, as well as destructive; it is also ambivalent, in that while it breaks apart it also offers the opportunity for joining together, via safety pins or badges, which provides closure across the cut or cutting.

Caroline Coon, a music journalist at *New Musical Express* and *Melody Maker* during this period, was interviewed for this study; she provided an interesting comparison between tears and rips in the punk cut and hippie embroidery, locating tears in social, economic and class deprivation. She says,

> [T]earing and ripping is to do with poverty. These were kids that are living in squats. What is happening is not that there is tearing and ripping, but the clothes are torn and ripped already. You are only going to tear and rip something which becomes then a kind of a fetish…But the initial… their clothes were already torn and ripped. One of the differences for me was why

punk was so liberating was because what was happening in the hippies' era…
that women were having to sew up all the holes in jeans …

Countercultures of …working class people can participate in counterculture
because it is not elite…What the hippies were doing… they had girlfriends
who were embroidering the holes in their jeans. What was liberating about
punk was that you didn't have to embroider them anymore; you just left the
holes there. So it freed up women to become punks. You don't have to sew
up all the holes in your second-hand clothes. You just can safety-pin them up.
Which is one of the iconic contrasts between hippie jeans and punk trousers.

Punk trousers…you let the poverty show with safety pins. With hippie jeans
you embroidered it in a very ethnic beautiful kind of embroidery. (Coon,
interview)[25]

A key point is raised as Coon identifies how the hippie scene preserved a gendered
expectation about girlfriends. Punk's immediacy does away with this: the punk cut
can therefore be understood as a slash through the social order, not only during punk's
first wave but also of the previous counterculture. It connects with a rupturing of
symbolic systems set up by the media and the mainstream establishment, the fashion
system or the dominant political institutions through the 1960s and 1970s.[26] 'And I
think for a lot of people that I knew…making it yourself and taking yourself outside
anybody's ability to define what you were doing with your clothes was a really, really
important thing.' (Reddington, interview) The effects of the cut are far-reaching:
symbolically, the different actions and effects of the cut relate not only to tearing and
slashing but also to elements of punk style, such as laddered tights. An etymological
point is relevant here. A 'ladder' refers to movement up and down, which can be
extended to ideas of social mobility. While it suggests notions of being 'down at
heel', at the same time it conjures a message of active motion.

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[25] See Volume II, Appendices, for information about interviews, participants and for a sample of transcripts.
[26] George Melly provides a first-hand account of this countercultural turn in the 1960s in his critical review of pop
arts in the decade. See George Melly, *Revolt into Style: The Pop Arts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

Hebdige himself identified in 1979 the fact that 'although it was often directly offensive (t-shirts covered in swear words) and threatening (terrorist guerrilla outfits), punk style was defined principally through the violence of its "cut ups"'.[27] Hebdige confined its purpose in terms of severing meaning to leave a series of dead-ends, rendering cultural critique impossible. In this way the punk cut, played out with the body itself, connects with what Theodor Adorno was describing when he noted, in 1944, that cultural critique is dominated by the ideas of the lie and imposture, of the mask laid over reality. But it opens onto another moment, onto a crisis of signification or meaning, the moment when meanings revolve endlessly around the hub because there is no longer anything to stop them.[28] Following this view, punk politics were all about piercing the artifice of the social edifice. After all, subcultures existed to expose the way in which the 'parent' culture was failing to provide meaningful narratives with which young people could identify.

However, in my view the ambivalence of the punk cut also relates to subjective and agentive revolt in punk style. This was aimed at all aspects of daily life, bringing into sharp relief the way in which cutting, mixing, and stitching together could provide for different, generative subjective realities. The critical strategies of customization and bricolage were productive techniques that enabled and empowered punks to relish in the extirpation of identity and meaning while at the same time exposing their creativity and possibility and the opportunity they offered for individual expression. This is why notions of copying in punk were frowned upon: 'Yes, [the point of punk

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[27] Hebdige, *Subculture: the Meaning of Style*, p.106.
[28] Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life*, trans. by E.F.N. Jephcott (London: Verso, 1978); Adorno's writings on montage, which are presented in his book *Aesthetic Theory*, also reflect how the cut, in the process of montage, disrupts meaning. 'Montage is the inner-aesthetic capitulation of art to what stands heterogeneously opposed to it. The negation of synthesis becomes a principle form', in: Theodor W. Adorno, Gretel Adorno, and Rolf Tiedemann, *Aesthetic Theory*, (London: Continuum, 1997 (2004 printing)), p.203.

was] to be uncopiable. I mean Joby ended up on stage wearing no underwear and a pair of women's tights. Of course nobody copied that because they didn't dare. You know, and I mean it's like how far can you go to prevent people from copying you?' (Reddington, interview) By 1991, even Hebdige had to accept that 'The key to punk style remains elusive'.[29]

Thus the punk cut demonstrates a break towards radical autonomy. The cutting-up of clothes on the body, and the cutting and piercing of skin that was common in punk style, was a rejection of the discursive social and moral regimes that control the body and sit on the skin, and gave rise therefore to the possibility of new subject positions.

Cutting and shaping new gendered subjectivities

The opportunities created by punk style were gender-dependent, however, and I contend that they were gender-specific in meaning and outcome. Certainly there were commonalities in the fact that punk clothes for both the sexes were torn, worn, dirty, provocative, self-styled as sexually deviant, bizarre and shocking: for example, Siouxsie Sioux wore a t-shirt with a swastika, designed by Vivienne Westwood and Malcolm McLaren in 1977.[30] Meanwhile, the razor blade was commonly associated with punk, and mutilation became a leitmotif of the style, as seen in images of The Sex Pistols or The Clash,[31] as well as their fans. According to interviewee Coon, who was present at many gigs, fans would often appear at concerts covered in cuts and bloody shirts.

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[29] Hebdige, *Subculture: the Meaning of Style*, p.117.
[30] This 'Destroy' t-shirt, from Vivienne Westwood and Malcolm McLaren's 'Seditionaries' label, is in the Victoria & Albert Museum's permanent collection; an image can be seen here: http://www.vam.ac.uk/vastatic/microsites/1231_vivienne_westwood/changing_styles_3.html [accessed June 2009].
[31] Images of Sex Pistols gigs by photographer Ray Stevenson can be seen at http://www.raystevenson.co.uk/ [accessed 2010].

There were kids coming with their shirts covered with splashes of blood. So the kind of - the self-mutilation where there were kids who were using their self – the cigarette burns – as a kind of badge of pride. Kind of the–how heroic youth is trying to negotiate how to have some purchase on the adult world. This kind of trauma that teenagers repeatedly…have to go through. So that was the razor blade. (Coon, interview)

Punk style customised hypersexuality and cross-dressing for both sexes. Men wore make-up and frilly shirts with their macho biker jackets; women adopted masculine suits and biker jackets, too, with Dr. Martens boots and unisex clothes, as well as provocative dress. As Coon says, '…the boys were wearing those kind of kilty kind of like skirty things and the girly kind of maybe the sort of frilly blouses…the girls were wearing Doc Marten boots with their skirts. So there was a real kind of gender blur by the crossing over of gender-specific articles of clothing. Like the make-up, the hair dye'. (Coon, interview) (Figure 6)
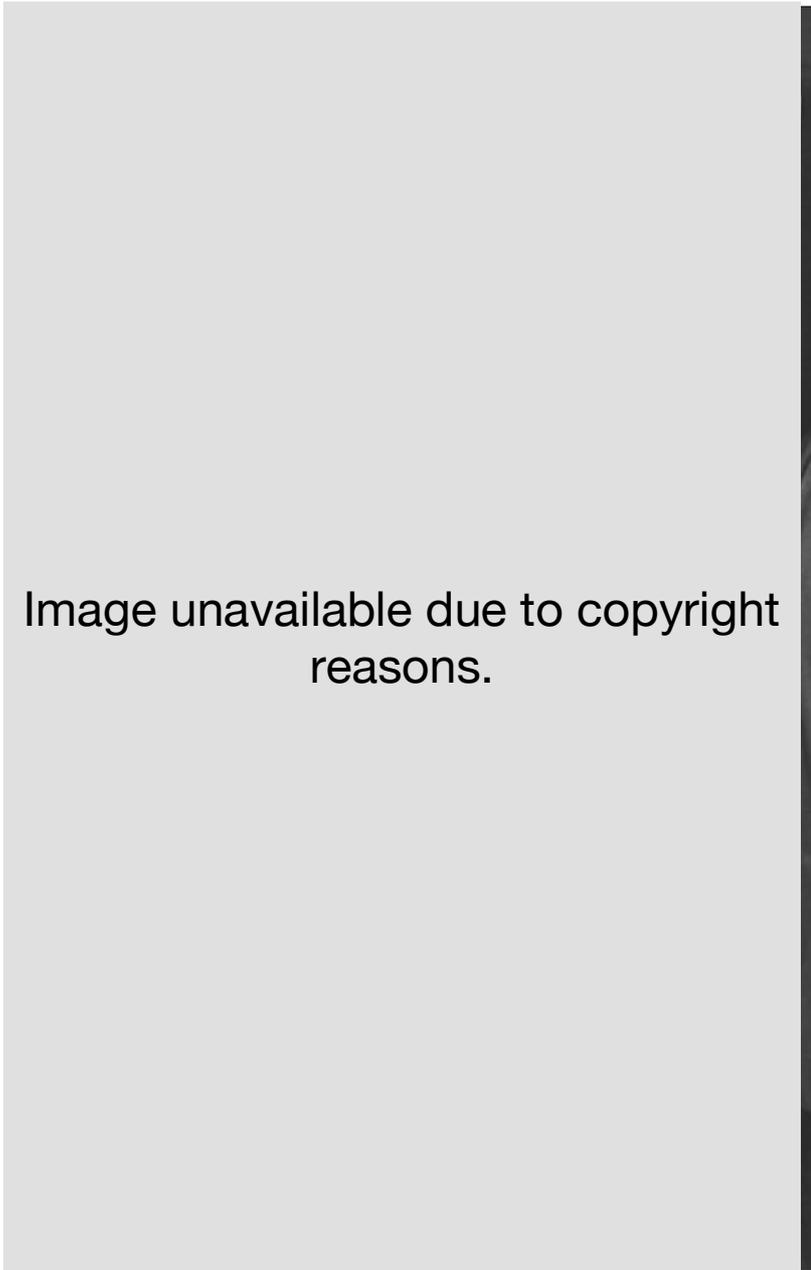
Image unavailable due to copyright reasons.

Figure 6 Punks at the Roxy, London, April 1977 © Richard Braine.

For punk men, this style built on the transgressive trends that had been part of the

counterculture associated with the progressive politics of the period, including

'hippiedom's long hair and effeminate velvet dressing that punk then morphed into

mohawks and leather-clad aggressive, harsh, anti-social style'. (Coon, interview) In

this way punk men were both challenging the 'straight' and traditional style of

success—from which many were disenfranchised in 1970s Britain[32]—and pushing at the boundaries of sexual taboos within the patriarchal social climate of the period. Thus male punks used cosmetics, pornography and fetish wear not only for their shock value but also to disorientate the usual ways in which these items were used by situating them within a new bricolage of style and attitude. In this way the male 'punk look' also played with the boundaries between heterosexuality and homosexuality.[33]

In the case of women a different set of complex subversions were at play, ones that sometimes involved the mirroring of male attire and behaviour, but which actually reflected different subjectivities and motivations. Cross-dressing was a common theme in punk women's dress. One of my interviewees, Michele Sedgwick, who was a punk in the late 1970s while she was a student in Leeds, emailed me a photograph of women punks taken on the first day of the 1980 Sexual Violence Against Women conference in the city. (Figure 7) Sedgwick showed me the photograph to illustrate what in her view was the 'typical' look of punks at this time. In fact, she dressed in a similar fashion. As the image shows, the 'typical' style was jeans or men's trousers, men's jackets and blazers, trainers, Dr Martens or monkey boots. Hair was cut short, often cropped, and make-up was almost never worn. Sedgwick recalls how she used to wear what she describes as 'granddad shirts', which she says were 'white collar-less dress shirts. These I bought for about 10p at jumble sales and wore with ripped jeans'. She also states that in the summer of 1977 she remembers her mother telling her that

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[32] The British economy had been in a downward spiral since the end of the 1960s, and by 1978 there were some 1.5 million unemployed workers, nationally. See 'Whatever happened to full employment?' http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-15276765, 13 October 2011, BBC News [accessed 23 November 2012]. During this period new waves of xenophobia and vicious scapegoating swept through the country as the neofascist National Front made significant gains among the electorate. During the summer of 1976, the Notting Hill Carnival provided the setting for Britain's most serious rioting in two decades as police officers fought with impoverished young blacks. See '1976: Notting Hill Carnival ends in riot' http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/august/30/newsid_2511000/2511059.stm, 30 August 1976, BBC News [accessed 23 November 2012].

[33] Shaun Cole, *Don We Now Our Gay Apparel: Gay Men's Dress in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Berg, 2000).

she looked 'a bit disgusting'.[34]

Figure 7 Sexual Violence Against Women Conference, Leeds, 22 November 1980 © Pam Bloor.

For Sedgwick, and in her opinion many other women punks generally, the style was directly related to the feminist politics of the 1970s. A major aspect of the discourse of second-wave feminism focused on women's rejection of make-up and high heels, in order to challenge conventional models of femininity. In the second-wave and radical feminist magazines and journals of the period, such as *Spare Rib* and the *London Women's Liberation Newsletter*, or the posters and prints produced by women's collectives, for example the See Red Women's Workshop[35] posters, (Figure 8) there were often direct calls for women to question all aspects of their lives, including the wearing of make-up.

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[34] Text sent via email from Michele Sedgwick to Shehnaz Suterwalla, 1 December 2008.
[35] See Red Women's Workshop was a screenprinting workshop run as a women's collective and set up around 1974. It was a radical campaigning organisation dedicated to the second-wave feminist movement. See Red designed and printed their own posters and calendars, and developed a range of feminist posters on issues concerning women's equality and struggles.

Figure 8 'Sisters! Question Every Aspect of Our Lives', 1975 © See Red Women's Workshop.

Sedgwick's dress examples emphasise the trend for cross-dressing in punk that was born of the wider political climate of emancipation for women at the time. Androgyny is generally understood as the mixing of male and female genders, or the lack of coherent gender identification, and these examples of cross-dressed bodies in punk prompt questions about what constitutes male or female, and the way in which these categories are presented. Punk cross-dressing also dismantles any binary limitation of gender performance to make room for subjective expressions of difference, of Other; it is an embodied example of Judith Butler's theorization of gender politics as subversion, which came later, in 1990: 'Even if the sexes appear to be unproblematically binary in their morphology and constitution (which will become a question), there is no reason to assume that genders ought to remain as two'.[36]

Similarly, gender subversion was also performed through hypersexualised dress, and irony and the exaggeration of sexual taboos were used in dress to expose the inequalities of sexuality and female objectification in the 1970s. Coon stresses that 'This was the beginning of the second-wave feminist movement…Because of the '60s

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[36] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p.10.

one of the things that shockingly happened to women is that we wanted to be sexually liberated but had no idea what the private sexual life of men was'. (Coon, interview) In Coon's view,

> A tactic is to say "Right. If you men are going to want us to dress in this hypersexualised way in sadomasochism–we are going to bring it out of the closet. You can't do this in the privacy of the brothel, or in the privacy of your own bedroom. We are going to own it. We are going to wear it on stage and we are going to drag it into the open." So it is a very…punks wearing that sadomasochistic, S&M gear, it is a very complex game to play.

> But I maintain that women had very little choice. There was… the scope for argument was so narrow … so feminism had a lot of narratives. You did have the "earth mothers". You did have feminists – you had the puritan feminists, you had the sadomasochistic feminists. You know. So there is a whole lot of different tacks against the double standards of sexuality. So within Siouxsie [Sioux] wearing – you know a lot of women wearing – owning that sadomasochistic abasing–so-called abasing…to enter that abasement area, that perversion area–was one of the narratives that had to occur. It is only when you brought it out into the open and wore it that you can then decide what to do about it. (Coon, interview)

This aspect of punk style—stilettos, fishnets and extreme make-up—most commonly formed part of the tactics of the high-profile punk musicians and fans on whom Hebdige and Savage have focused.[37] London-based punks, such as Jordan,[38] or the Bromley Contingent, did wear fishnets, fetish gear, rubber leggings, latex shorts and bondage boots, as well as men's shirts and ties. They sported carnivalesque make-up, and wore their hair short, dyed and partly shaved. (Figure 4) For women such as these the consistent and flagrant use of cross-dressing, mixed with sado-masochism and the carnivalesque, flaunted traditionally hidden or unmentionable aspects of the female body. Notions of horror or the freak-show were being consciously applied to style as a

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[37] Hebdige, *Subculture: the Meaning of Style*; Savage, *England's Dreaming*.
[38] Born Pamela Rooke. Jordan was a model and actress who worked with Vivienne Westwood in SEX in the King's Road, London in the mid-1970s. She was a regular at Sex Pistols concerts.

politics of resistance to conventional gender tropes. Gaye Advert, bassist in the punk band the Adverts, recalls: 'I think the clothes that most female punks wore – e.g. black laddered tights, PVC, etc. - were not worn in a sexual way, more rebelliously. People did think clothes should make a statement. I've never been into fashion particularly, and probably spent less on clothes than anyone else in Britain, but it was good fun wearing yards of toilet chain as bracelets!'[39]

Themes of abjection were common in the dress styles of both sexes. Men and women referenced brutality, obscenity and perversion in both their clothes and their behaviour, spitting (gobbing), swearing, and showing violence to their own bodies as well as to others, and through promiscuity. 'And so there was a lot of this very nasty stuff going on but it didn't seem, it wasn't like something you could opt out of. I mean there was a sort of trend at one time in the pub for people, for the guys, they'd drink their pint and then they'd eat the glass. And they'd sit there with blood pouring down.' (Reddington, interview) Julia Kristeva has argued that the abject does not describe anything inherent, but rather refers to a situation imposed upon a being or material body by rational society in order for that society to maintain a semblance of civility. In Kristeva's theorization abject acts constitute all that is excluded or rejected by the social order in its attempt to maintain notions of integrated self-identity prescribed within the symbolic order of paternalism. To this society, the abject body offends or disgusts, and gives reason for shame. To perform abjection, then, is to stage the abject body for an audience, potentially eliciting embarrassment, shock or confusion, in order to express alternative meaning: 'It is thus not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect

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[39] Interview at http://www.punk77.co.uk/groups/advertsinterviewwithgayeadvert.htm [accessed 23 November 2011].

borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite'.[40] Angela

Carter, in her 1979 work *The Sadeian Woman*, had also presented an interpretation of

the way that violence could form a politics of radical autonomy from structural

constraints. She developed a late twentieth-century interpretation of the problems that

Marquis de Sade raised about the culturally determined nature of women. Carter

wrote that de Sade's heroines healed themselves of their socially inflicted wounds

through sexual violence, for 'a repressive society turns all eroticism into violence'.[41]

A photograph of Siouxsie Sioux in 1976 at the Screen on the Green cinema in London

(Figure 9) shows her wearing black underpants in wet-look vinyl, a harness bra, one

thigh-high black boot and one high-heeled shoe with an ankle strap saying 'Bondage',

along with a Nazi armband. Her face is painted 'with the obsessive skill of the truly

possessed'.[42]

Figure 9 Siouxsie Sioux, Screen on the Green, 1976 © Ray Stevenson.[43]

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[40] Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: an Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p.4.
[41] Angela Carter, *The Sadeian Woman: an Exercise in Cultural History* (London: Virago, 1979), p.26.
[42] Quote from an eyewitness at the time, stated at http://www.punk77.co.uk/groups/banshees.htm [accessed 3 March 2010].
[43] Efforts were made to get a higher resolution copy of this image, however this was not possible. Nevertheless, this image has been included at this size to facilitate the analysis.

The image reflects the female body not as smooth perfection but as asymmetrical: legs and arms are rendered differently, and parts that are usually hidden, such as bare breasts, are distorted and exaggerated. The conventional body is made alien by evoking fake limbs—the leg in the latex boot—and fractured or disassembled bodily identity. Interviewee Coon remembers seeing Siouxsie walk on stage in outfits like these.

> Suterwalla: When she walked on to stage in those clothes, could you describe atmospherically what the reaction was?
>
> Coon: It was thrilling. The reaction was thrilling.
>
> Suterwalla: For her?
>
> Coon: To her. But remember when she first went on stage she had to have an absolutely ferocious attitude. At that point she didn't know how to sing. She had never stood on stage. So she is acting a strong persona.
>
> Suterwalla: Isn't that punk...?
>
> Coon: Yes. Exactly. That is it.

According to Coon, the purpose behind this type of dress was the desire for some punk women to present themselves as sexual subjects, rather than objects of desire and pleasure. Subversive techniques concerning dress and sexual desire have a long history, and David Kunzle's work on the way in which Victorian tightlacers embodied the corset as sexual assertion, and for sexual pleasure, certainly adds an interesting historical perspective.[44] It is no wonder, then, that punk musician Poly Styrene from

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[44] David Kunzle, *Fashion and Fetishism: a Social History of the Corset, Tight-lacing and Other Forms of Body-sculpture in the West* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1982). See also Valerie Steele, *The Corset: A Cultural History*, (New Haven, CT ; London: Yale University Press, 2001).

the band X-Ray Spex shouted, 'Oh Bondage! Up Yours!' in 1977[45]: this can be seen

as part of the irony in punk women's appropriation of bondage and sadomasochistic

wear to subvert its hold on women's sexuality and bring it out of the closet. In their

reclaiming of sexual paraphernalia women like this were no longer ashamed to be

actively seeking sex. The catalysts for sexual excess were arguably Vivienne

Westwood and Malcolm McLaren, and their inner circle of punk performers—

including Sioux—who dressed in their clothes. Certainly in their shops SEX (opened

in 1974) and Seditionaries (1977), Westwood and McLaren popularised sex as

brutalism, deliberately using paraphernalia from pornography to devise

confrontational rubberwear, ripped, slogan-daubed T-shirts and bondage trousers,

believing that 'bondage clothes were ostensibly restrictive but when you put them on

they gave you a feeling of freedom. They make you want to move your arms

around'.[46] Westwood claimed that her designs were about confrontation: 'Sex is the

thing that bugs English people more than anything else so that's where I attack'.[47]

According to Coon, sometimes there were pragmatic reasons why punk women wore

Westwood and McLaren's shocking designs. Coon recalled in our interview how

Sioux would wear shocking items such as swastika armbands by McLaren in

exchange for the promise of rehearsal space or a new drum set. (Coon, interview) In

the context of punk such objects represented the subversion of Nazism; they were

about rupturing any taken-for-granted symbolism and turning it on its head.

For female punks, abjection in style and behaviour was a way in which women could

also challenge the symbolic order of patriarchy. Historically, femininity has been

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[45] X-Ray Spex, *Oh Bondage! Up Yours* [record] (Virgin Records, 1977).
[46] Quoted by Valerie Steele, in *Fashion Encyclopaedia* http://www.fashionencyclopedia.com/Vi-Z/Westwood-Vivienne.html#b [accessed 27 October 2012].
[47] 'Sex is Fashion, Fashion is Sex', Interview by Juliet Ash with Vivienne Westwood, *ZG* 80. 2 (1980) ed. Rosetta Brooks (no page number).

associated with viscous and polluting fluids. As Elizabeth Grosz points out, 'In the West, in our time, the female body has been constructed not only as lack or absence but with more complexity, as a leaking, uncontrollable, seeping liquid; as formless flow; a disorder that threatens all order'.[48] Vomit, saliva, pus, sweat and blood all threaten the solidity of things. Although both sexes 'gobbed', in the case of women punks their bodily fluids are particularly pertinent to a subjective politics because their bodies act as sickly revenge to the repressive regimes of constructed femininity. As Coon recalls, 'But as I remember it, the actual gig was a very liberating space'. She adds, 'Yes, impolite behaviour. Which is breaking the rules of what the good [female] teenager is meant to do. Very liberating. Getting drunk, spitting, gobbing. It was just – it is what all human beings should actually go through'. (Coon, interview)

Traditional subcultural theory from the 1970s, in its anti-materialist position—as discussed in my introduction—ignored bodily fluids or the epidermal as a discursive domain. However, feminist scholars of embodied subjectivity bring to the fore the tensions between bodily knowledge, as inscribed in discursive regimes of social law and structure, and phenomenological and experiential subjective agency.[49] Elizabeth Grosz has highlighted two forms of bodily knowledge:

> The first concerns the body as a surface on which social law, morality and values are inscribed; the second refers largely to the lived experience of the body, the body's internal or psychic inscription. Where the first analyses a *social*, public body, the second takes the body-schema or imaginary anatomy as its object(s)…Whereas psychoanalysis and phenomenology focus on the body as it is experienced and rendered meaningful, the inscriptive model is more concerned with the processes by which the subject is marked, scarred, transformed, and written upon or constructed by the various regimes of

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[48] Elizabeth A. Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), p.194.
[49] *Feminist Studies, Critical Studies,* ed. by Teresa de Lauretis (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988); Elizabeth A. Grosz, *Space, Time, and Perversion: Essays on the Politics of Bodies* (New York; London: Routledge,1995).

institutional, discursive, and nondiscursive power as a particular kind of body.[50]

Through this lens, any assault on the bodily surface can be interpreted as a slash through dominant discursive regimes. The motif of the cut can be seen again here as connected with ontology of becomingness, as realising the interior self that is experiential and subjective. Though some men pierced their skin too, as a response, according to interviewee Coon, against the blankness, numbness and boredom of their daily life, (Coon, interview) for some punk women the action also represented an agentive tactic, where, in the manner of de Certeau's analysis their slashing might be understood as both individualising and at the same time undermining governing strategies of control. For de Certeau tactics take place in the fissures, they 'make use of the cracks that particular conjunctions open in the surveillance of the proprietary powers'.[51] The poetics of the slash or cut fit with de Certeau's notion of rupture as subversion in the everyday.

Skin- and body-piercing are processes of self-determination. It is not surprising, then, that the punk emblem par excellence was the safety pin, which fast became a ubiquitous and iconic punk object. While it was used to hold together different pieces of clothing styles in a way that showed makeshift handiwork and its possible reversal, at the same time it was pushed through ears and faces. (Figure 10)

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[50] Grosz, *Space, Time and Perversion*, p. 33.
[51] de Certeau, p. 37.
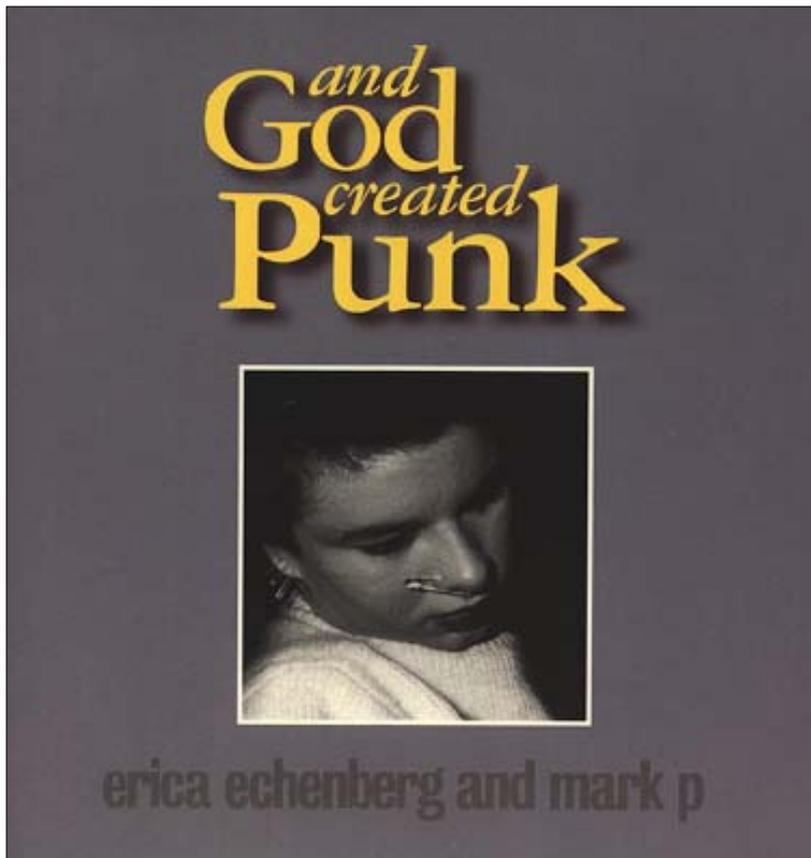
Figure 10 Cover, *And God Created Punk* by Erica Echenberg and Mark P. (London: Virgin, 1996).

The safety pin is therefore symbolic in terms of pinpointing the possibility for autonomy and individuality while at the same time pinning together new subjective expressions. Meanwhile, the act of pinning disturbs the smoothness or blankness of fabric in clothing. It links with abjection, for pins can connect with pain and physical cuts. Here, then, there is an interesting double articulation of the use of safety pins: although blankness has been identified, particularly by subcultural theorists, as part of punk's tactics of the blanking out of society,[52] the blank uniformity of clothes is made more interesting, and striking, through the act of pinning, whether with the safety pin or punk badges. In fashion design, pinning is the construction of the prototype (the toile), not the finished garment; pinning in punk stresses style as a work-in-progress,

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[52] Hebdige, *Subculture: the Meaning of Style*.

pinpointing do-it-yourself as the critical tactic.

The importance of the body in punk's processes of abjection also related to the music that was created and performed by female punks. Abject themes were not restricted to the manipulation of women's bodily surfaces through stylistic techniques. They referred at the same time to the bodily expressions that women made with their punk sounds. While the howl and wail in male punk music has been construed as the sound of frustration,[53] women could use it also to express the sound of the female subject coming into view, claiming her voice, expressing agency and desire. It was the rallying cry for her presence next to man, spurred by the general mood inspired by feminism.

Hissing and screaming became expressions of a new sound: the unfettered woman raising her voice in public. It is therefore not surprising that Siouxsie Sioux named her 1978 album *The Scream*.[54] The title and music undermined the robotic, blank, frozen and restricted look created by her rubberwear and bondage outfits. Siouxsie's aggressive songs, often full of brutality, were described by Jon Savage as 'controlled hysteria'.[55] Music theorist Sheila Whiteley suggests that Siouxsie Sioux's 'repetition, and intensive vocal energy breaks through and distorts the *symbolic* metric flow of the 4/4 beat to effect a *semiotic* deconstruction of rock which forces the listener into a different way of listening'.[56]

Both of these responses point to the language of the semiotic and pre-symbolic as

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[53] Savage, *England's Dreaming*; Simon Reynolds, *Rip it Up and Start Again: Post-punk 1978-1984* (London: Faber, 2005).
[54] Siouxsie and the Banshees, *The Scream* [record] (Polydor / Geffen, 1978).
[55] Savage, *England's Dreaming*, p.486.
[56] Whiteley, p.113.

adopted by French feminists and proponents of *l'ecriture feminine*.[57] This strand of

feminist literary theory, conceptualized in the 1970s, focused attention on language to

analyse the way the semiotic, or pre-Symbolic, imaginary order can be identified as

the site of bisexual/androgynous/polymorphous sexuality. It identified the semiotic as

the stage prior to the subject's entry into the male-centred Symbolic Order where,

among other things, sexuality undergoes a process of normativity towards

heterosexuality. The way in which these theories problematised sexuality suggested a

departure from a fixed, imposed binary heteronormativity (man/woman) in favour of

a model of sexuality as constructed by such variables as social norms and exigencies,

ideology, culture, and history. Punk women's vocal and stylistic expressions using

exaggeration and irony—and especially the carnivalesque—can be interpreted,

drawing on the words of Hélène Cixous, as strategically 'break[ing] up the "truth"

with laughter'.[58] The idea of the *break* is important here, for it connects with the break

in hip-hop, discussed in Chapter 3. Through their sound and style punk women

disrupt the 'proper' syntax of the symbolic to speak the female body. The effect is

potentially revolutionary: in Donna Haraway's terms, these voices represent 'not the

dream of a common language, but of a powerful infidel heteroglossia'.[59]

This play on multiple meanings and voices is exemplified by the work of The Slits,

the first British all-women punk band of the late 1970s, whose musical performances

often demonstrated the projection of the female body and sexuality as Other. The Slits

adopted punk's shock-effect fashions of underwear-as-outerwear, originally inspired

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[57] I refer to theorists such as Luce Irigaray, Hélène Cixous, Monique Wittig, and Julia Kristeva. See: Kelly Ives, *Cixous, Irigaray, Kristeva: the Jouissance of French Feminism* (Kidderminster, Crescent Moon, 1996); *French Feminism Reader*, ed. by Kelly Oliver (Lanham, MD ; Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000).
[58] *New French Feminisms: an Anthology*, ed. by Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron (Brighton: Harvester, 1981), p.258.
[59] Donna Haraway, 'Manifesto for cyborgs: science, technology and socialist feminism in the 1980s, *Socialist Review,* 80 (1985), 65-108 (p. 106). Also quoted in Donna Jeanne Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (London: Free Association, 1991), p.181.

by Westwood, and merged it with tangled, tied-up dreadlocks. What was more unnerving, however, was the band's name itself. The abject impact of the name 'The Slits' is twofold: firstly, it refers to the slang for female genitalia; secondly, a slit is a tear through established boundaries, an opening onto absence.

The infamous cover of The Slits' album *Cut* (1979)[60] showed a photograph of the band caked head-to-toe in mud, topless and wearing only loincloths, looking straight to camera, standing in front of a rose-covered English cottage. (Figure 11)
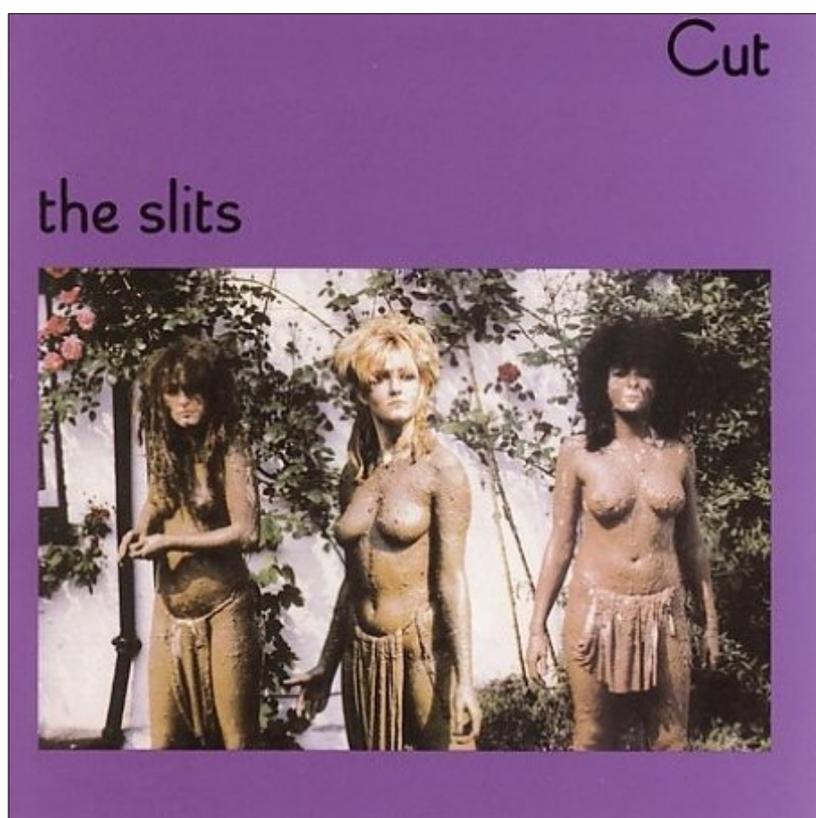
Figure 11 The Slits, *Cut*, Island Records, ILPS 9573 (1979).

The juxtaposition in this photograph is unsettling. The women appear as a parody of Greco-Roman goddesses, and yet they are dirty, unruly, messy. They are also coloured black. The image reminds us of the minstrel mask, especially when looking at the woman on the right with her mouth painted white. It is like a shameful reminder

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[60] The Slits, *Cut,* Island Records, ILPS 9573 (1979).

of techniques of appropriation in the game of white hegemony. The image of naked women playing in the mud is also a sly dig at the male gaze. Meanwhile, the English cottage seems like a wry reference to England's dream of its glorious past. Yet these are no ladies of the manor. Their abject tribalness—primitivism, even—undermines classic notions of British heritage defined around ideas of 'civilisation' and 'civility'. All that is marginal is brought centre-stage, including the direct gaze of the women, no longer shy and subservient. Lead singer Viv Albertine later insisted that 'nobody could see the strength, the joke, the little twist that we were all a bit fat'.[61]

The Slits presented their unmistakably female bodies with a masculine lack of self-consciousness. For them, and others, gender was exposed as a performance, a stylized embodiment of acts, imbricated with the realms of class and sometimes race; this performative gender, in Butler's terms, 'is an "act", as it were, that is open to splittings, self-parody, self-criticism, and those hyperbolic exhibitions of "the natural" that, in their very exaggeration, reveal its fundamentally phantasmatic status'.[62]

It is no coincidence, then, that the album is named *Cut*. Both the 'slit' and the 'cut' can refer to the destructive impulse of punk that destabilizes conventional notions of woman or femininity. Yet at the same time the cut expresses a vitality associated with agency and expression: the cut creates fragments from the whole. A fragment, in Glenn Most's view, is 'wounded, incomplete, crying out for help',[63] and this matches the existential desolation of punk. Yet at the same time the cut leaves a space, a gap, a gap suggests a new opening, and, within the context of 1970s feminism, for women

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[61] Sue Steward and Sheryl Garratt, *Signed, Sealed, and Delivered: True Life Stories of Women in Pop* (London: Pluto, 1984), p.55.
[62] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p.187.
[63] Glenn Most, 'On Fragments', in: *The Fragment: an Incomplete History*, ed. by William Tronzo (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2009), pp.9-23 (p.18).

this construed a new space of visibility, either on the stage or in the street.

Deterritorialisation

The Slits' self-presentation suggests a desire not only to erode racial and gender boundaries but also to confuse chronological sequence by mixing up details from different historical periods: the contemporary with the classical, for example. It therefore presents a different paradigm for thinking about embodied alternative style within different historical perspectives, a theme that is important for the rest of this chapter, as well as for the thesis as a whole. The idea of disjuncture and dislocation in punk was relevant at multiple levels, as discussed at length by both Hebdige and other postmodern theorists of punk, including David Muggleton.[64] However, in these analyses issues of temporality and spatiality are often glossed over. Hebdige discusses punk style as local, saying that it 'emanated from the recognizable locales of British inner cities. It spoke in city accents. And yet it was predicated upon a denial of place'.[65] Continuing to eradicate any notion of place, Hebdige states that 'It [punk style] issued out of nameless housing estates, anonymous dole queues, slums-in-the-abstract. It was blank, expressionless, rootless'.[66] Hebdige ignores any embodied or situated bodily practice of punk; his view bypasses women's experience of punk within their lived contexts, and it also ignores how they might have used ideas of space and place as 'punk' to facilitate a change in their ideological frameworks, or to express subjective agency.

Reddington told me that for many of the young women punks that she knew, locating

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[64] Muggleton, *Inside Subculture: the Postmodern Meaning of Style.*
[65] Hebdige, *Subculture: the Meaning of Style*, p.65.
[66] Ibid.

themselves in a dirty and decrepit physical environment was all part of living the subculture.

> Reddington: [T]he way [punk] happened wasn't a conscious thing. And it was to do with buildings, it was to do with streets. And the derelict buildings matched what was happening.
>
> You know, even before punk I was at Sunderland Art College and I remember just seeing lots and lots of derelict houses. And the whole link with squatting, of sort of identifying with derelict buildings and making derelict buildings come to life.
>
> Suterwalla: It's almost like part of the embodiment actually.
>
> Reddington: I think it was, yes, sort of utilising dead space and making it.

She claims that many put themselves at the crossing between recognizable urban landscapes and wasteland, quite literally, as a means of escaping repressive family and social structures, to weaken ties with their backgrounds. Reddington says, 'But the thing that I really hated, especially coming from quite a strict background, was people telling me what I was. And worse still telling me what I was going to do next'. She adds, 'I think there were some sort of rural type punks. But for me it was definitely to do with some city living...But the parts of Brighton where it actually happened were the central parts. And it was, you know, we weren't exactly gardening. It was about hanging out in buildings and squatting buildings and that kind of thing'. (Reddington, interview)

While Reddington describes her experience of punk life in derelict pockets of central Brighton, Savage, meanwhile, draws attention to how elements of punk in London during the mid-seventies was connected to decrepit locations and squats in abandoned buildings. In *The England's Dreaming Tapes*, which was published in 2009 and

contains interviews that provided the raw material for the original book,[67] he has a chapter entitled, 'The City'. In this he makes reference to how inner-city areas that had become near derelict because of the economic recession were paradoxically the sites of 'freedom and possibility'.[68] He says that, 'Young people without means could squat or rent very close the city centre, an ease of access that fostered the rapid urban transits of the punk period.' In this chapter Savage interviews various musicians for whom the cultural life of punk was often rooted in squats. Joe Strummer, from The Clash, for example, mentions squatting in Elgin Avenue and Shirland Road in west London.[69] He was also the co-writer of songs fittingly entitled *London's Burning* and *City of the Dead*. The motif of wasteland is also paramount in Derek Jarman's film *Jubilee*; in this example Jarman portrays an apocalyptic wasteland where punks and police fight running battles in the streets of London. The film gives a stark account of just how derelict and desolate large areas of the city were in the late 1970s; a grey world of bombsites, council blocks, graffiti and grime. Decayed urban spaces in punk also provided a punk-type of glamour to the inner city for outsiders looking in, particularly punks living in the suburbs. Debbie Wilson, a member of the Bromley Contingent who grew up in Edgware, a north London suburb, says she hated where she lived, and recalls that, 'I used to go out, "up to town" [London] as they used to call it'. She also remembers that she, 'started going out a lot, not going to school, and stopped going home half the time, and sort of floated back now and then'.[70]

Themes of dereliction, wasteland and disused spaces conjure ideas of living at the border, or in an in-between space at the margin. Feminist theory has been preoccupied

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[67] Savage, *England's Dreaming*.
[68] Savage, *The England's Dreaming Tapes*, p. 238.
[69] Ibid., p.248.
[70] Jon Savage interview with Debbie Wilson in *The England's Dreaming Tapes*, pp.381-82.

with ideas of borders and margins, particularly since the late 1980s and 1990s, as ways to conceptualise women's epistemologies. Feminist theorist Gloria Anzaldúa, for example, in her book *Borderlands,* explores issues of double consciousness arising from her dual identity as Mexican and American. As a result she presents ideas of border thinking as 'a change in the way we perceive reality, the way we see ourselves, and the ways we behave'.[71] From the border, Anzaldúa creates another culture, 'a new story to explain the world and our participation in it, a new value system with images and symbols that connect us to each other and to the planet'.[72] As such, Anzaldúa connects the border with gendered epistemological resistance to hegemonic narratives and ideals. Similarly, feminist theorist bell hooks names marginality as a site of transformation, emphasising that there is a 'definite difference between that marginality which is imposed by oppressive structures and that marginality one chooses as [a] site of resistance as [a] location of radical openness and possibility'.[73] Though squats and urban wastelands were inhabited by both male and female punks, this conceptualisation of the gendered view helps us to understand the impact of these choices specifically on women's subjectivities.

Borders and margins also connect with the processes of deterritorialisation, to echo Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's term,[74] that some women were adopting as they uprooted themselves from familiar times and places. These tactics were critical to the way in which punk inverted the conventions of social mobility in the modern city. For example, in Reddington's view, the cultural life of punk, whether in squats or in disused rooms, encouraged the dismantling of control and order from a place or space

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[71] Anzaldúa, p.102.
[72] Ibid., p.103.
[73] hooks, *Yearning*, p.209.
[74] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, (1983) *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. by Robert Hurley, Mark Seem and Helen R. Lane (London: Athlone, 1984).

(territory) to engender activity and creativity outside of conventional education, jobs, or domestic roles. 'I mean mostly things happened in some really ugly places that had sort of been rejected by society, that weren't where usual daily life was taking place anymore, and it was a great chance for us to do our stuff.' (Reddington, interview)

The tactics also reflect the methods of subversion of the historical avant-garde—subversions that scholarship on subculture and postmodernism commonly associates with punk. For example, Greil Marcus's analysis of punk's genealogy charts it through twentieth-century revolutionary movements such as Dadaism and Situationism.[75] In the late 1950s the Situationists identified the way that micro-resistance towards the process of urban spectacularization could be found in the everyday use of the city. It was through deviating experiences of public spaces, and through non-consensual uses of the city, that resistance to capitalist and consumption-driven structures could take place. Separation, as Guy Debord writes, is 'the alpha and the omega of the spectacle', an alienating condition of capitalism.[76] In the case of punk, separation engendered by living in urban wasteland—at the margin, rather than in the centre—was akin to an anti-spectacular tactic, to acts of micro-resistance. Within their own social formations, punks earned status by living in these types of environments, since it made them tougher, and made them go 'lower'.

Austere living, with its aggressive and decaying assault on the body and the senses, was configured as virtuous because it was a sign of honesty and devotion to the values of the subculture. For example, The Vault, in the Resources Centre in Brighton, was a run-down rehearsal space that was popular with Brighton punk bands, according to

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[75] Marcus.
[76] Debord, p.20.

Reddington. She says that up to 52 local bands would share this space and the equipment in it. It was where her band, Joby and the Hooligans, rehearsed in 1977. (Figure 12)

Figure 12 Helen Reddington with Joby and the Hooligans, The Vault, Brighton, 1977 © Ray Renolds.

The room (Figure 12) was a burial vault filled with boarded-up Huguenot graves lining the walls. The space was covered in graffiti, and Reddington remembers that 'with all the jumping and the vibrations during punk rehearsals, the hardboard started to dismantle'. (Reddington, interview) She also adds that 'there is no doubt that the grim aesthetics of performing in an environment such as The Vault had an effect on the type of music and behaviour that emanated from it'. (Reddington, interview)

The recession in Britain in the late 1970s saw a rapid decay in the built environment in Britain, resulting in disused wasteland and boarded-up houses: as a result, wastelands became marginal places that operated as both cause and effect for creative spontaneity, experimentation and diversity within the alternative practice and

lifestyles emerging in London at the time.

Squatters and punks opportunistically engaged with the urban debris as material for design and use. Punks therefore manipulated urban spaces as a deviational tactic. This is a tactic that does not obey the law of the place, and is not defined by it. In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Michel de Certeau explains that the tactic is movement 'within the enemy's field of vision…and within enemy territory'. He adds, 'It operates in isolated action, blow by blow. It takes advantage "of opportunities" and depends on them... It must vigilantly make use of the cracks that particular conjunctions open in the surveillance of the proprietary powers. It poaches in them. It creates surprises in them. It can be where it is less expected. It is a guileful ruse'.[77]

Punks' tactics of squatting or using spaces of urban decay were creative ways in which they could subvert from within, ways they could vulgarise culture or degrade the city. For punk women, in particular, squatting was doubly subversive because it set them free from the conventions of traditional domesticity. Keeping clean did not seem a priority, according to my interviewees; instead, dirt, including smudged make-up from the night before, was a key part of their look. Reddington described how full-time punk women did not have a morning routine of getting dressed: 'they would wake up late, because taking speed meant that you never went to bed early, and typically they would stay in some of the garments that they had slept in'. (Reddington interview) A further pragmatic consideration was that many unemployed punks were living in squats without running water. Though this had its inconveniences, at the same time it was compatible with the themes of dirt, dishevelment and filth that were

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[77] de Certeau, p.37.

embodied as punk politics and aesthetics during this period. It also meant that women were free during the day, to be visible on the street, strolling into record shops or charity shops, visiting the pub, or on their way to rehearsals.

> I mean that's what you'd do, you kind of circulate…You'd get up late morning/lunchtime… You'd go [to the pub] and meet up with everybody. And then you'd sort of wander around…And there will be places that you'd call in, certain places where you could go and hang out...There would be punk-friendly shops and things where you'd just go in and you'd talk to people… Some of the clothes shops used to have punks working in there, you used to go in and talk to them… So you would spend a lot of time just wandering around winter or summer. (Reddington, interview)

This in itself was subversive because, as McRobbie described in her gendered analysis of subcultures, when girls are actively involved in street subcultures they may be positioned as dangerous delinquents, in part because their behaviour is considered unfeminine, and they are not in their rightful place.[78] Yet it was precisely within a series of urban encounters—even in run-down and disused places—that some punk women created and developed their dress styles. In this way for them punk grew and mutated through a performative and dynamic network of communication. For full-time punks such as Reddington, punk style was worn all through the day as a critical part of their street identity. Despite the dirt and poverty of her squat environment, Reddington remembers that she would spend a large part of her quotidian routine thinking about what she would wear to a gig. For some getting dressed before going out in the evening was a big event because this was when punks could perform themselves more explicitly. Reddington remembers that, 'chatting about clothes and about what we are wearing, and looking at each other and exchanging items and helping each other with make-up, this would happen as well

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[78] McRobbie, *Feminism and Youth Culture.*

regularly and it was time-consuming'. (Reddington, interview) Though this was not

necessarily the case for all punks, Reddington does recall that it was fairly typical for

the women who either lived in or visited her squat.

The range of subjectivities in punk did not fit into a binary model of pure/authentic

versus impure/inauthentic, as subcultural theory postulates. John Robb, in his *Punk*

Rock: An Oral History, which interviews more than fifty participants, reminds us that

punk was 'a lot more complex than that'; in addition to the high profile bands and

sensationalised styles, he stresses that punk was made up also of 'the legions of spotty

kids up and down the UK […] delirious with excitement in their rough-hewn punk-

rock outfits—inside out school blazers and home-made badges. […] It's the DIY

brigade fumbling with musical instruments […] It's battered prose bashed out on

battered typewriters'.[79] Robb says, 'But the best thing about it was that we were not

just passive consumers: we owned it as well. We were all involved. It wasn't just the

superstar groups controlling the debate. We all were! Everyone had their own version

of punk. Everyone decided what punk was *for them* [*sic*]'.[80]

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[79] Robb, p. 2.
[80] Ibid., p. 3.

Creativity, authenticity

Figure 13 'Destroy' shirt, Vivienne Westwood, 1976 © V&A Collections.

In 1976 Vivienne Westwood designed the 'Destroy' shirt. (Figure 13) It was cheesecloth muslin, with extended sleeves, screen-printed with a red and black design showing an inverted crucifixion, a large swastika, and the words 'DESTROY'. In the bottom corner were lyrics by the Sex Pistols: 'I am an antichrist/I am an anarchist,/don't know what I want/but I know how to get it/I wanna destroy the passer by/I wanna be anarchy'.[81]

A few years later, Westwood said that 'The only reason I'm in fashion is to destroy the word "conformity". Nothing's interesting to me unless it's got that element'.[82] Westwood's words echo the sentiments of anarchy in the Sex Pistols' lyrics quoted on the 'Destroy' shirt. However, her notion of destruction entails re-creating, re-presenting and reconceptualising conformity. In her destructive wake is the energy

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[81] John Lydon, *Anarchy in the UK* [Sex Pistols] [record] (EMI, 1976).
[82] Jon Savage, interview with Vivienne Westwood, *The Face* (9 January 1981), p.25.

and creativity associated with the building of punk style.

Westwood presents a gendered difference between her motivations for destruction and those of many others, including the Sex Pistols, who were calling for anarchy, in response to a world with 'no future'.[83] Even Hebdige refers to punk style as a 'terminal aesthetic'.[84] However, building on Westwood's statement, from the point of view of women in the 1970s punk gave rise to unprecedented opportunities. In fact, the sense of amateurism and creative transgression surrounding punk inspired both young men and women to play in their own band, create or write their own fanzine, such as *Sniffin' Glue*, an early example,[85] and develop their own dress style. A culture of doing and (re)making was, in the view of my participants, developed alongside punk's spirit of negation and destruction. This was true for Lucy Whitman, an interviewee, who, as Lucy Toothpaste, created the punk feminist fanzine *Jolt*. (Figure 14) Whitman, who says she was a middle-class punk, remembers that it was punk's energy that motivated her to be in a band, The Neons, and to create a fanzine in 1977 while she was at university. (Whitman, interview)

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[83] *No Future* was a song title by the Sex Pistols, retitled *God Save the Queen* by manager Malcolm McLaren in 1977.
[84] Hebdige, *Subculture: the Meaning of Style*, p.27
[85] Mark Perry's *Sniffin' Glue* (1976–1977) is credited by punk historians such as Jon Savage as being the first British punk fanzine. See Jon Savage, '*Sniffin' Glue*: the essential punk accessory', *Mojo,* 81 (2000), p.129.

Figure 14 *Jolt*, Issue 2 (Jubilee Issue 1977) created by Lucy Whitman (Lucy Toothpaste).

Whitman emphasises in particular the excitement of punk: 'To put a fanzine together…you just had to have a bit of energy, creativity, good sense of humour'. (Whitman, interview) She also stresses its generative nature. For example, referencing punk's music and the fanzine culture, Whitman comments on punk as an egalitarian scene:

I can't say it was a non-sexist movement but it was very egalitarian. And partly the fact that boys who couldn't play their instruments were starting bands meant that girls who couldn't play instruments could also start bands. And…so there was that egalitarianism because it was very much a do-it - yourself type of thing. (Whitman, interview)

Whitman created *Jolt* using the collage techniques that were key to the punk aesthetic and adopted by her friends at art school, even though she had had no formal design training herself. 'When I started to put *Jolt* together I sort of was interested in the visuals but also the words were always really important so it was never random, it was always, you know, words which were meaningful to me which I put into those collages.' (Whitman, interview) Her work returns us to the motif of the cut once again. The cut in punk was not confined just to the body or to dress. Cut-and-paste was the central postmodern technique of punk's do-it-yourself fanzine culture,[86] where the cut was used deliberately to create 'chaotic design'[87] from fragments, visible crossings-out and graffiti.

The creative and agentive processes of fanzine production and the generative use of the cut were both important to Whitman's subjective expression. In issue 3 of *Jolt,* which she refers to as a 'Huge Bumper Holiday Issue', she put a naked drawing of the right-wing cultural commentator Mary Whitehouse on the cover, locked in an embrace with another naked woman. (Figure 15)

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[86] Roger Sabin and Teal Triggs, *Below Critical Radar: Fanzines and Alternative Comics from 1976 to Now* (Hove: Slab-o-Concrete, 2000).
[87] Stephen Duncombe, *Notes from Underground: Zines and the Politics of Alternative Culture,* (London: Verso, 1997), p.1.

Figure 15 *Jolt*, Issue 3, Huge Bumper Holiday Issue, 1977.

In her explanation of this cover image, Whitman commented:

> Now this was quite an ambiguous cover: it wasn't meant to be ambiguous, it was only after that I realised that not everybody got the joke. Some people thought that by putting Mary Whitehouse into a lesbian scene that was saying "Oh she's probably queer herself." Which was absolutely not the message it's supposed to be.

> Because actually she looks as if she's quite enjoying it and this person, this woman here is in complete ecstasy. So it was just…it's just a juxtaposition really that's… And that's what punk was all about, was about juxtaposing opposing things. So that was just supposed to make people think, really. (Whitman, interview)

At the time of producing the fanzine, Whitman was confronting issues concerning her own sexuality. Therefore she was interested in exploring questions such as 'why was the idea of lesbian sex so scary, so frightening, basically?' (Whitman, interview) These issues were not only addressed in the fanzine, but in Whitman's punk dress style too. 'Yes, for me it was the androgyny which was, you know, perfectly possible. So that was exciting and thrilling for me. I think for any young woman who was uncertain about their sexuality it was a good cover as well because you could look quite dykey but you could just say you were a punk. So, you know you didn't have…you could be making a statement without making yourself vulnerable.' (Whitman, interview) Whitman explains that she would go to charity shops, recalling having a coat that 'definitely comes from the '60s, and I must have got it in the charity shop. I wasn't actually wearing it in 1976 but I did wear it to Greenham Common in 1981'. (Whitman, interview)

Whitman adds:

> What I…the thing I remember most wearing which I don't have anymore was a horrible… It was a black plastic jacket, it wasn't leather. I wouldn't wear a leather jacket because I'm vegetarian…But it was black plastic and…
>
> Suterwalla: Where did you get it from?
>
> Whitman: Do you know I can't remember. That must have come from a charity shop, you know that was where I got it…One of my favourite things was very much the Poly Styrene look…It's like a two piece…it was my Granny's and it came from Marks and Spencer's. So she must have bought it in the '60s in Marks and Spencer's.

Whitman highlights the fact that for her punk clothes were about second-hand acquisitions, about using fashion items from the mainstream and defamiliarising them by wearing them as 'punk'. In her interview for this study, Whitman says 'the thing

was that for me Poly Styrene's way of dressing was my, you know, chosen way of dressing. And I loved…I just loved wearing…like a parody of a middle-aged woman'. (Whitman, interview) These themes of the appropriation of mainstream fashion objects, and their recontexualisation through embodiment and style, is continued in the rest of the thesis, linking the strategies of punk with other style groups.

Whitman also discusses the fact that issues of race were central to the politics of many women punks, despite the totalising narratives within early subcultural theory that suggested that punk concerned only the white working class.[88] In fact it was punk's links with fascism[89] that prompted Whitman to create *Jolt*: 'I want to do lots of things on girl punks, especially, who play the guitar. Yes and the other thing I want to do is take up the question of punk and fascism'. (Whitman, interview) She adds, 'So the thing was, I thought it was really important to challenge the whole, you know, association between punk and fascism, and actually argue about it…[*Jolt*] was polemical, basically, but trying to do it in street language'. (Whitman, interview) In issue 3 of *Jolt*, Whitman conducts a long interview with Poly Styrene from X-Ray Spex. Poly Styrene was half-Somali, and Whitman writes: 'Here's an interview with Poly Styrene…she's a girl and she's half-black. HOW OPPRESSED CAN YOU GET? Doesn't seem to keep her down, though'.[90] Poly Styrene's punk style often relied on flamboyant bubblegum colours that rebuked punk's themes of

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[88] See, for example Hebdige's chapter 'Bleached Roots: Punks and White Ethnicity' in *Subculture: the Meaning of Style*, p.62.

[89] Siouxsie Sioux had worn an armband with a swastika in September 1976. Roger Sabin has discussed the incidents and issues of racism in the first wave of British punk, see Roger Sabin, '"I won't let that dago by": rethinking punk and racism' (1999), in Stephen Duncombe and Maxwell Tremblay, *White Riot: Punk Rock and the Politics of Race*, (London: Verso, 2011) pp. 57-69. As a result of racial tensions some punks took a firm anti-racist position by participating in the Rock Against Racism movement that started in 1976.

[90] Lucy Toothpaste (Whitman), 'X-Ray Spex Intervwxyz [*sic*]', *Jolt,* Issue 3 (1977), unpaginated.

blankness and emphasised her visibility as Other, in both gendered and racial terms.

For Whitman, the creative and do-it-yourself element of punk was critical to her sense of fulfilment in the culture. She equates this with the ability to reject traditional femininity through punk style. 'What I was resisting…I always have hated, and I still hate, feminine attire. I cannot stand the fact if you go to any shop now all the t-shirts have got frills or puffed sleeves or embroidery or little bows and ties and everything. I just want something plain, I hate it.' She also adds,

> Yes, so yes for me my personal take on it was an androgynous look, very ambiguous as to whether, you know male/female, gay/straight, you know: what is this creature? And then the Poly Styrene ironic kitsch, twinset and pearls type of look, which I just thought was hilarious. But I also find it quite attractive aesthetically, you know. And I think it was…was because I'd been through it, you know I wore these long floppy dresses before…you know in the early '70s, you know I sewed. I actually made these long paisley dresses and flopped about and had my hair…my hair was long and permed. And you just looked like this kind of really soft feminine thing. And I just rejected that completely and just wanted a much more crisp edgy look, you know. And the kind of…that '60s look of sort of fluorescent colours and sharp lines, I've just found so much more appealing basically. (Whitman, interview)

Whitman therefore created her punk look by appropriating parts of 1960s style, using vintage dresses and jewellery from her grandmother's attic. What this interview shows is the eclectic and diverse nature of punk as part of, and from *within*, the everyday. The heterogeneity in the style, and the fact that women like Whitman recycled found objects or the fashion items around them, meant that punk was about a constantly shifting series of styles and expressions based on individual circumstances and peer groups. While subcultural theory assumes that when a subculture 'sells out'

it is exhausted,[91] from the perspective of lived experience it becomes clear that punk identity was an incomplete, ambivalent process, involving a mix of people, experiences and expectations. From the point of view of lived reality, it is not possible to contain punk as a single, homogeneous episode, with 'no future'. Punk continued well after 1979. It has had a sustained and significant impact not only on my interview participants, but also on other subcultural dress as well as high fashion and mainstream trends that have followed, as will be illustrated in the following chapters of this thesis. 'I still dress in a punky way, it hasn't left me. My hair is still short.' (Whitman, interview)

Fashion historians have tended to employ a binary structure in their analysis of punk style, locating it within what they consider radical or oppositional dress practices. In this way they have sometimes overlooked other forms of punk expression, ones that are more ambiguous and ambivalent, that may not fit neatly into these categories. For example, Caroline Evans and Minna Thornton use terms such as 'radical, demanding or critical' in their discussion of oppositional dress, including punk style.[92] Like Hebdige, and also Elizabeth Wilson,[93] they celebrate the 'anti-naturalism' of punk, drawing attention to the way that punk style disrupts 'conventional' notions of femininity. They argue that punk girls 'jettisoned conventional prettiness and sought instead to look tough, menacing and threatening. In doing so they pinpointed the masquerade of femininity, the unholy alliance of femininity, naturalness, good taste and good behavior'.[94] To a large extent the view of my interviewees corresponds with that of these writers, as discussed above. However, punk could be as much about the

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[91] Notions of 'selling out' are connected with the emphasis on authenticity in subcultural theory, see Hebdige, *Subculture: the Meaning of Style*; *Resistance Through Rituals*.
[92] Caroline Evans and Minna Thornton, *Women & Fashion: a New Look* (London: Quartet, 1989), p.xiv.
[93] Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams*; *Chic Thrills*.
[94] Evans and Thornton, p.18.

humorous subversion of Marks and Spencer.[95]

Furthermore, according to Evans and Thornton, punks used the 'bad-girl look' to constitute a form of deviance. In their view female punks' challenge to the ways femininity is naturalised through conformist fashion and beauty practices is about questioning what constitutes 'the feminine'. Yet they do this within conventional paradigms of femininity that assume the subject position of 'woman' as fixed or stable. Westwood, they say, avoids the 'conventional' trappings of feminine clothing as a way of escaping patriarchy. They suggest she uses a 'feminine sexuality…outside the constraints of male definition and which is, crucially, linked to our experience of our bodies'.[96] This perhaps runs the risk of essentialism: the 'feminine' sexuality that Westwood expresses through her clothes which is 'outside' of patriarchal logic is hard to distinguish from a notion of an 'essential' femaleness, one that is ontologically grounded. Thus while Evans and Thornton provided important insights to punk fashion analysis in the late 1980s, it is now worth extending their views to acknowledge more contemporary debates about performative constructions of womanhood and femininity. My interviewees did not subscribe to a common experience of the female body in punk. Instead, they each stressed their own standpoint in the performative act of creating punk style as individual, within their own specific corporeal and embodied experiences, located, performatively, within their own temporal and spatial frames, within their own knowledge and desire. Punk was therefore the complex merging of individual and collective impulses.

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[95] Marks and Spencer clothing as subversive is also mentioned in Chapter 2 about Greenham Common Peace Camp.
[96] Evans and Thornton, p.154.

Everyday

Even in London, the epicentre of many high-profile punk styles, the audience at punk gigs was not, as the stereotypical view would have it, made up exclusively of young men with mohawks and safety pins through their faces and women in rubber and fishnets.[97] Photographs of punk gigs[98] show that both performers and the audience were diverse, in terms of ethnic, cultural and demographic backgrounds. Oral narratives also highlight the fact that although the majority of punks were youths, there were older people involved in the scene. Reddington says she knew women punks as old as forty. (Reddington, interview) Others, such as Whitman, have shown how some of the subcultural tree has been decidedly middle-class, and this was particularly true in the punk activity in art schools.[99] Moreover, the crowds at gigs were also surprisingly mixed: Reddington, in her book about women punk musicians, remembers that in Brighton

> there were possibly two hundred people who regularly attended punk gigs…Of these, around fifty were 'full-timers'; around fifty were in bands; around twenty-five worked in 'alternative' professions. A further fifty were students…the rest were mainly shop assistants, nurses and technicians. Some of the remainder were slightly odd people who sensed an accepting community. Visually extraordinary-looking people rubbed shoulders at gigs with relatively conservative-looking people.[100]

Style followed local bands and the editorial content of local fanzines.[101] There was a marked difference between provincial punks and their metropolitan counterparts. Bill Osgerby has emphasized that it was the art-school and middle-class punks from

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[97] The film *The Filth and Fury* is also evidence of the fact that this was not the case. *The Filth and the Fury*, dir. by Julien Temple (London: FilmFour [et al.], 2000).

[98] See, for example, photographs by Jill Furmanovsky; H.T. Murlowski (photographer for *Sniffin' Glue*), Erica Echenberg (fanzine and *Sounds* photographer), Syd Shelton http://www.graphicsi.com/ [accessed 2010].

[99] Simon Frith and Howard Horne, *Art into Pop* (London: Methuen, 1987).

[100] Reddington, p.72.

[101] See for example local fanzines such as *48 Thrills*, by Adrian Thrills, 1976-77, Essex or *Negative Reaction*, Issue 1 February 1977, Cambridge.

London and the commuter belt that created the style at clubs like The Roxy and The Vortex. The 'outsider' posture of this small coterie relied on extreme and hypersexualised dressing to create the radical theatre element of punk, calculated to inflame and outrage establishment sensibilities.[102] The punk culture that existed in the provinces, however, did not have to work so hard to provoke onlookers. As a result it tended to engage with bricolage and do-it-yourself style out of necessity, and often more for private reasons than for the purposes of 'confrontation dressing'.[103] In this context, 'part-time' punks would often get changed and made-up in the toilets of pubs before a gig in order to avoid being beaten up on the bus on the way there. Meanwhile, full-timers completely absorbed in the punk lifestyle found that while trawling the streets for punk records, which took you across any town or city, word of mouth would lead you to fifty-pence bargain bins in department stores. At this level punk style operated within a wider commodity culture, driven, to different degrees, by profit, even during its first wave.

This is not to suggest that the postmodern critiques of punk, that stress its politics solely as radical autonomy, and that focus predominantly on its culture of deconstruction through do-it-yourself, bricolage and appropriation, are entirely inaccurate.[104] Even within any revisionist analysis of punk there is a large component of the discussion that remains in line with these theories. For example, it remains true that the individualism and autonomy that punk women experienced did hold significant emancipatory value, both politically and aesthetically. Punk's do-it-yourself element, which gave women the opportunity to break away from totalizing

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[102] Bill Osgerby, *Youth in Britain Since 1945* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998).
[103] Hebdige, *Subculture: the Meaning of Style*, p.107.
[104] Hebdige, *Subculture: the Meaning of Style*; Marcus; Grossberg, *We Gotta Get Out of This Place*; Lawrence Grossberg, *Dancing in Spite of Myself: Essays on Popular Culture* (Durham, NC; London: Duke University Press, 1997).

gender tropes, meant that they could focus on their own subjectivities and desires. The

pogo-ing in punk, the single, linear dancing by men and women that does not demand

a partner, is a fitting symbol for this individuality and the way in which it signalled

self-sufficiency. The customisation that happened through the 'cutting' of clothes, of

hairstyles, through the piercing of skin or fabric, through pinning and accessorizing

with badges, through fanzines, created a collage effect. The punk cut ruptured integral

narrative, and therefore enabled punks to reject and refuse the ruling ideology that

Louis Althusser describes as 'a (sometimes teeth-gritting) "harmony" between the

repressive State apparatus and the Ideological State Apparatuses, and between the

different State Ideological Apparatuses'.[105] After all, the collage aesthetic was

resonant of the revolutionary processes associated with Dadaism and the Surrealist

movement, dedicated to creating crisis in the static definitions of objects and

conventional meanings.[106] Whitman's collages are fitting examples, as they are

explicitly humorous, ironic and anti-authoritarian—the image in Figure 14 of the

Queen in punk clothes, with a guitar, is a case in point. Additionally, the use of cut-

and-paste and montage in punk style, and in its fractured image-making, was a

persistent assault on any form of coherence, including that of the body. Take, for

example, the way that Jordan used an eye pencil to draw jagged lines on her face,

creating a broken-mirror image. (Figure 16)

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[105] Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy, and Other Essays* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972), p.150.
[106] Andre Breton, *What is Surrealism?* trans. by David Gascoyne (London: Faber & Faber, 1936).
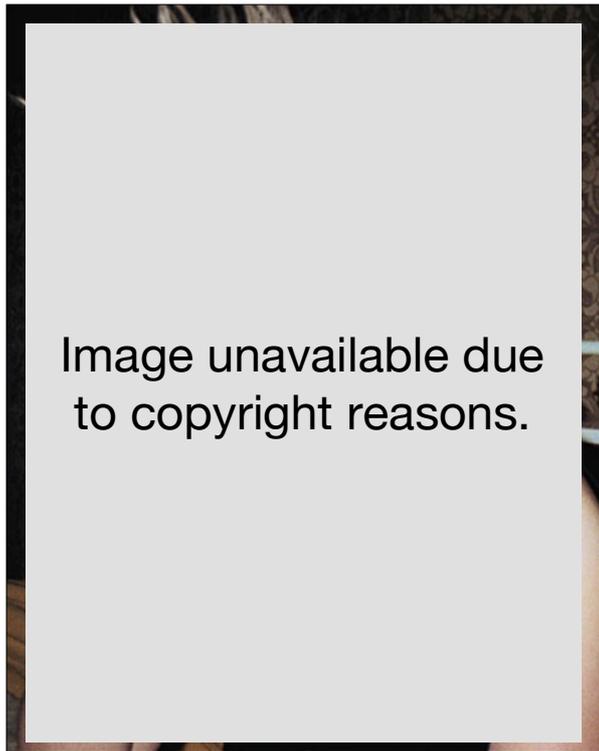
Figure 16 Jordan,1976-77 © Simon Barker.

The decentred pillaging of fragments of cultural detritus; the pilfering of objects and the trashing of them and the refusal to 'play the game' of gendered conventionality were all methods that drew on those of the historical avant-garde. Punk's amalgamation of aesthetics and everyday life, its use of shock and defamiliarisation, its deliberate provocation, reflect the ways in which Guy Debord outlined resistance to the hegemony of advanced capitalism and the mass media—the 'spectacle'—by radical action in the form of the construction of 'situations', which bring a revolutionary reordering of life, politics, and, certainly in the view of Greil Marcus, art.[107]

The revolutionary violence of the cut in aspects of the modality of punks in daily life was doubly subversive because of the way in which, as an active gesture, it

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[107] Debord; Marcus.

transformed 'negative' feelings of profound boredom and disenfranchisement into opportunities. Jon Savage has claimed that punks were 'bored shitless',[108] living in empty time. This is why scorched-earth, year-zero attitudes to tradition and the past was a central thread in punk's semiotic and ideological repertoires: as the Sex Pistols famously put it in 1977, 'There is no future in England's dreaming'.[109] It is perhaps worth noting that the etymology of 'boredom' includes 'to bore', or 'to pierce', slowly; boring through something slowly is, in fact, boring. To declare oneself bored, however, is to express a desire for desire, and, particularly in the case of women, this produced a motivation towards enjoyment. '[T]here was a lot of promiscuity…It was not exactly a joke but ….' (Reddington, interview) In punk, for some, having sex was associated with the extreme, because it was meant to happen without depth or feeling. In Derek Jarman's film *Jubilee*,[110] for example, sex scenes are played out without much plot or discourse between the characters. Extreme sex, with multiple partners represented by countless interchangeable faces, is characterised by a guilt-free, trouble-free nonchalance. If there was 'no future', then there was no point in holding out for romance. Instead, the emphasis was on living free of responsibility.

Punk therefore made room for a new kind of female, one who was selfishly subjective. Punk was the mental and physical machinery for manufacturing a series of new moral choices and standoffs. For women, punk was a watershed in that it opened up a space for spontaneity, discovery, change and outrage as crucial ingredients in style, image and behaviour. In punk, through styles of cross-dressing and hypersexuality, gender parody suggested asexuality, homosexuality and

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[108] Savage, *England's Dreaming*, p. 61.
[109] Johnny Rotten in *God save the Queen*, 1977.
[110] Derek Jarman, *Jubilee* (1977).

heterosexuality in a constantly mutating discourse. Furthermore, styles of abjection and dislocation 'became a sort of voluntary therapy', invented and undertaken to create the scenario of 'having a good time'. (Reddington, interview) This view highlights the complexity involved in some punk women's image and identity construction.

It is in this way that punk's culture of deconstruction and destruction had the simultaneous effect of allowing feelings of triumph to emerge. However, this libertarianism was by no means universal, and did not always live up to its reputation on an everyday level. Instead, for many punks, whether in the metropolis or the provinces, there were rules and restrictions concerning style and behaviour that were conditioned by group politics and particular locations. In these contexts, choices about what punks wore, how they behaved, how much speed they took and which gigs they went to were all conditioned by peer group opinion. As with all groups, the stronger personalities often dictated the behaviour of others. In practice, this often meant that male punks set the tone for female punks. Coon describes the way that the London music press, for example, where she worked, responded to female punks:

> [T]he backlash against those [punk] women [in bands] was ferocious. So that group of…that vanguard of women musicians, lady writers and everything else, that came up in the '60s they were really…the classic thing that happens to women. They were silenced. Have you read the classic thesis on silencing women? Generation of women after generation of women get silenced. Anyway so the punk women weren't given any valorisation within the music press. Were treated as sex objects in a very horrendous way by the record industry.
>
> After four or five years of trying they kind of dropped out. If you read what was said about Debbie Harry or – you know we were terrorised out of the workplace.
>
> Suterwalla: So you writing about those women at that time –

Coon: We were terrorised.

Suterwalla: You were obviously trying to write about women and about the –

Coon: That was my mission in *Melody Maker*. I was writing about the women. But we were all terrorised.

Suterwalla: By your editors? By who?

Coon: Well for instance there was just a common-or-garden sexual harassment at work, in the workplace. You couldn't walk into the workplace without getting booed, jeered.

This meant that in certain cases, although the subculture was supposed to change the environment for girls and young women, it did not always do this in a positive way. Johnny Rotten recalls, '…you sort of hit women the same way you would a guy if she was taking the piss at you [*sic*] or spilled your drink'.[111]

Some women felt that they could not be as outrageous as many of the male punks, especially in the way they dressed, because it exposed them to threats of violence and abuse. Depending on the location and the realities of particular punk communities, when some women punks dressed in a hypersexualised fashion it was often believed that 'they were up for it', and they suffered physical and mental abuse. (Reddington, interview) In fact the frequency with which women encountered violence and harassment made some give up their careers as punk musicians, or leave the punk scene altogether. Ari Up from The Slits was once stabbed for the way that she looked,

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[111] Lydon, p.259.

the perpetrator saying, 'Here's a Slit for YOU!'[112] Women were not excused from

being the targets of 'gobbing'. Incidents of rape were fairly high, according to some

of the women who have spoken openly about sexual crime in punk.[113] This can be

seen as a backlash, a way for punk men to retaliate in the gender war.

Accounts of women punks' gendered subjectivity as embodied, temporal and spatial

experiences therefore dismantle any heroic or homogeneous history of punk

representation. Even agentive acts of style such as abject punk dress or cross-dressing

were often subtly constructed according to the perceptions and frameworks of

women's politics of location. For some punks, hypersexual style was confined to the

dress of the punk 'elite'—in other words, shoppers at SEX and the Bromley

Contingent. It was rarely encountered elsewhere, and there were certainly significant

differences between their own styles and the images of punk that were circulated in

the media. For these women, punk style was rooted more in ambiguity—which

returns us again to the importance of androgyny and cross-dressing as a practical and

manageable everyday dress tactic that often allowed for easy group and community

affinity.

Reddington describes how while she was part of the band Joby and the Hooligans she

wore only items that she found lying around in the squat where she lived. She

shopped for clothes very rarely. Photographs of Reddington at this time show her

wearing men's trousers and jacket, a fake raccoon tie and a white shirt, all found by

Reddington in the squat. (Figure 17)

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[112] Quote by Ari Up in Alex Mar, 'The return of the Slits', *Rolling Stone*, 1 Feb 2005,
http://www.rollingstone.com/music/news/the-return-of-the-slits-20050201 [accessed 30 December 2012].
[113] Some testimony is in Reddington, *The Lost Women of Rock Music*, 2007.

Figure 17 Helen Reddington with Joby and the Hooligans, Brighton, 1976 © Ray Renolds.

Reddington could not dye her hair because the 'Crazy Colour' hair dye that was popular at the time did not suit her hair texture, so she would wear it as 'flat and shapeless as I could'. (Reddington interview) For Reddington, this look was the extent of her fashion disruptiveness as a punk. She did not wear fishnets or fetish, unlike her male bandmates, because she found that wearing men's clothes was more powerful: it was disruptive because it deviated from traditional feminine dress, but it did not make her feel vulnerable or leave her open to abuse or attack. Also it was comfortable, it kept her warm, and above all it was practical. Reddington felt that she could 'live this look' (Reddington interview); it was something real that could be sustained every day, and hence it became a core part of her punk identity. She also felt that wearing men's clothes reaffirmed her status as an equal member of an otherwise all-male band. 'So there were people wearing something which is really common but not really documented, which was women wearing dark men's jackets, white men's shirts and men's ties. Pre-The Jam, actually. And it was a semi-lesbian thing but it also wasn't, you know.' (Reddington, interview) Hebdige might have

termed punk style 'profane articulations',[114] but in this example of everyday style it is subversion, rather than profanity, that is evident in Reddington's dress.

Reddington's example also highlights some of the difficulties and contradictions within the definition of the politics of punk as feminist. While androgyny and its associations with ambivalence reflected the new freedoms emanating from second-wave feminism and the Women's Liberation Movement, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, the sexism and misogyny within punk culture often countered or restricted the liberatory possibilities for women, and this is reflected in Reddington's style choices. It is true that to a certain extent the parody and ambiguity in the breadth of punk style played out a rejection of historical constructions of gender and femininity and demonstrated how the concept of 'woman' could include multiple subject positions. However, in the realities of the everyday the rhetoric of sexual liberation and equality that was postulated by second-wave feminism was for many, including women punks, an uphill struggle. Whitman comments on what she considered some of the incompatibilities between punk and other types of feminism in the 1970s, and also stresses the influence of punk on the Women's Liberation Movement, and on second-wave feminist publications, such as *Spare Rib*, over time.

> Feminism in the 1970s before punk was…the uniform that was dungarees…And music was acoustic folk from America- all very gentle, nothing macho, nothing aggressive… there wasn't any kind of diversity, so it was all terribly wholesome and very, you know anti-capitalist, anti… you know eau natural…and this thing about sort of not wearing clothes to attract men which is probably why people started wearing dungarees. Anyway I have to say I never wore a pair of dungarees in my life and I found out it aesthetically very unpleasing, this kind of thing. But that was the norm.

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[114] Hebdige, *Subculture: the Meaning of Style*, p.92.

> The women at *Spare Rib* well I don't know if they were all wearing
> dungarees but certainly some of the collective were and certainly no make-up.
> The appearance was, 'We are not trying to attract men and we won't sort of
> have our hair done in a hairdressers things and so forth'.
>
> So when I got to *Spare Rib* I had to really explain punk to the older
> generation of feminists. And when I say older generation they were only
> about five years older than me. But actually…then what happened was within
> a year or two punk fashion completely took over the women's movement.
> (Whitman, interview)

In the everyday the critical and agentive acts of individually assembling and creating punk styles using a range of crude construction techniques, as well as all sorts of found objects, offered potential for subjective freedom. Since the emphasis in punk was on originality, objects and garments were rarely repeated in the same order— hence the disdain for copying, mentioned earlier. As much as possible, 'looks' were formed anew each time by the wearer. In this way female punk style can be seen as 'writerly' rather than 'readerly', using Roland Barthes's terms,[115] functioning to make the subject no longer a consumer, but a producer of the text. Walter Benjamin also theorised the shift from consumption to production in his concept of the 'mimetic faculty',[116] referring to the way in which certain artefacts are imbued with the power to 'stimulate' and 'awaken' the mimetic faculty that lies dormant in a group of potential producers. The do-it-yourself element in punk style gave women the opportunity to infuse their own medium with an imperative so that any woman could become the producer of her own life while still maintaining continuity with her lived experience and situated bodily reality. From an embodied perspective, punk style

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[115] Roland Barthes, Honore de Single Works Balzac, and Richard Translator Miller, *S/Z: An essay*, Translated by Richard Miller (London: Cape, 1975), p.x.
[116] Walter Benjamin: *Selected Writings, Vol. 2. Pt.2, 1931-1934*, tr. by Rodney Livingstone [et al.]; ed. by Michael W.Jennings, Howard Eiland and Gary Smith (Cambridge,Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2005), p.720.

should therefore be understood in terms of the hybridity and intertextuality of everyday processes and transactions, rather than as a pure or discrete style.

Punk cannot, therefore, merely be equated with the overthrow of the metaphysics of the fashion system. In the everyday it can more accurately be identified as a set of performative and dynamic practices. This implies that punk was about more than an antagonistic relationship with a broader culture: it was also about an internal construction of identity that was proactive rather than reactive. Hebdige recognised this when he wrote that 'it was fitting that the punks should present themselves as "degenerates", as signs of the highly publicised decay which perfectly represented the atrophied condition of Great Britain. However, the subjective experience is about productivity'.[117] Similarly, Reddington remembers that 'The amount of talking we did was incredible; this must have been due partly to the amount of speed we took, but a considerable amount of this talk was productive, leading to fanzines, records, political demonstrations'. (Reddington interview)

The punk community

Thus, while punks tried to set themselves at a distance from the mainstream they relied simultaneously on the flow of community to sustain their identity and lifestyle. The high rates of unemployment of the 1970s had affected both genders: on the ground and 'on the street' there was a reassessment of women's as well as men's roles, as both felt excluded and at the same time freed from the conventional routines of work. With nothing to do and time to kill, both sexes used the punk lifestyle as a form of voluntary social activity, or self-administered occupational therapy. Within a

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[117] Hebdige, *Subculture: the Meaning of Style*, p.87.

relatively short period, the boundaries of leisure and work time for punks often became blurred.

Before the recession, those involved in the counterculture had had to take an active stance in 'dropping out' of the mainstream. The counterculture's rejection of work involved 'a rejection of the division between work and leisure, as well as a rejection of the concept of leisure as something earned by the worker in compensation for the loss of freedom caused by work'.[118] In some respects, this provided a blueprint for what followed with the emergence of punk. In general, punk's rejection of the ideological structures of mainstream culture and its attempts to create an 'outside' or 'other' existence was a common factor. It is hardly surprising, then, that a certain bohemian element developed in the lifestyles of unemployed punks, certainly in the way that they passed their days. Simon Frith, in a discussion on Marx's view of leisure, has remarked that '…bohemians articulate a leisure critique of the work ethic. They are cultural radicals not just as the source of the formalist avant-garde, but also in institutional terms'.[119]

Certain sociological readings suggest that a consequence of the fact that punks were unable—and sometimes unwilling—to get jobs meant that they became infantilised by their unemployment, for the adult world of work was a rite of passage. Sociologist Sue Glyptis writes that 'One of the main confirmations that adulthood had been reached was the attainment of full-time employment, which signalled the beginning of "real" adult life'.[120] She suggests that to avoid feelings of deviance and stigmatisation,

[118] Elizabeth Nelson, *The British Counter-culture, 1966-73: a Study of the Underground Press* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989), p.86
[119] Simon Frith, *Sound Effects: Youth, Leisure and the Politics of Rock* (London: Constable, 1983), p.266.
[120] Sue Glyptis, *Leisure and Unemployment* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1989), p.21.

punks relied on each other to create their own equivalent to the social and financial rewards of work through the technologies of production within the subculture.

My interviewees concur that the collective or community element within punk groups was important for them in validating their identity and valorising their activities. Women found freedom in their liminal punk state, lodged between a childlike lack of responsibility and the adult world of work and motherhood. In this state, the relative importance of the informal activities and relations of 'the street', of leisure and the youth club, was increased, as Angela McRobbie has investigated.[121]

On a practical level this liminal state meant that in the 1970s and into the early 1980s punks could 'work at' the subculture twenty-four hours a day, while avoiding the pressures of 'growing up'. This created a culture of creative enablement that went on to shape the lives of many women punks as they grew older. Reddington says,

> So everybody was doing something. There was another girl downstairs who was a print worker at the resource centre. And she was always really very involved in political things, demos and stuff like that. So she was quite interesting to talk to. I mean a lot of people went on to do really quite interesting things, you know…You know, sometimes people write to me and tell me what their doing and things. And I think bloody hell you've got a really high-powered job and you sort of originated in that kind of punk thing.

From the perspective of women's histories, it is therefore important to consider punk not solely as a subcultural escapade confined to a specific period, but rather as an ongoing life concept. The fact that the scene was for some women a full-time lifestyle, with activity and action that ranged from playing in a band, producing fanzines, attending marches and demonstrations (for example the Rock Against Racism carnivals from 1978 to 1979) and the daily customising of punk style, meant

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[121] Angela McRobbie and Mica Nava, *Gender and Generation*. (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1982), p.3.

that it had huge significance on their lives as they grew older. For my interviewees, punk affiliations have not disappeared from their lives. They all claim to carry on espousing punk ideas in the way that they live today, more than thirty years on. Though in interviews they laughed at photos of themselves in their punk clothing of the late 1970s, they confirmed unanimously that punk was the cornerstone of their identity and an influence on the way they dress now.

It is therefore evident that while punk style was a process through which women could construct new and alternative identities, it was also an expression of embodied location and subjective temporality. The gendered agency in women punks' style was not about the end of history. Rather, it was about new futures that manifested opportunity and creativity. The gendered dimension of punk laid foundations that became critical to women's liberatory style and politics in subsequent subcultural and alternative groups. In my next chapter, about Greenham Common Peace Camp, I explore the relevance of the punk cut and its impact and its legacy, and reflect upon the way it evolved in new temporal and spatial contexts. The relevance of the punk cut also runs through all the subsequent chapters of this thesis.

Chapter 2 The Greenham Layer: 1981-86

Greenham Common Peace Camp was established in September 1981 to protest against the

siting of nuclear weapons at RAF Greenham Common in Berkshire, in southern England. The

protest formed after thirty-six men and women from the Welsh group Women for Life on

Earth marched to Greenham Common and chained themselves, suffragette-style, to the

perimeter fence.[1] Despite there being no facilities, many of the marchers decided to set up

camp, lighting a fire and sleeping in the open air.[2] Over time, as publicity about the camp

grew in the mainstream media, other peace protestors joined them, and Greenham Common

Peace Camp as an entity came into being. As an indication of its success, the camp lasted for

nineteen years, closing in 2000. The missiles had been removed in 1991, but many protestors

stayed until the perimeter fences of the old base were taken down.[3] The commitment of many

of the campers was steadfast during this period, with some women living full-time at the

camp for more than a decade, their protest focusing not only on the rejection of nuclear

weapons, but also on rallying against the developing military-industrial complex and the

tensions of the Cold War, and on campaigning against the government's rhetoric of increased

militarization.[4]

The peace camp at Greenham Common consisted of several sites, centred on the gates around

the base. Yellow Gate, the only site with running water, was the first camp to be established

and the last to close, in 2000.[5] It was situated at the main gate of the base where the United

States Air Force headquarters was stationed, and therefore initially called 'Main Gate'.

However, over time, as more people arrived to protest at the site, new encampments were

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[1] David Cortright, *Peace: a History of Movements and* Ideas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).
[2] Ann Pettitt, *Walking to Greenham: [How the Peace-Camp Began and the Cold War Ended]* (Dinas Powys: Honno, 2006).
[3] For a news report about the camp's closure see '19-year Greenham Common campaign to end',
http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2000/sep/05/1 [accessed 30 May 2009].
[4] Barbara Harford and Sarah Hopkins, *Greenham Common: Women at the Wire* (London: Women's Press, 1984), p.171.
[5] Records of Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp (Yellow Gate), 1982-2002, London Metropolitan University, The Women's Library, reference 5GCW.

formed around the perimeter fence, named after the colours of the rainbow: Green, Blue,

Orange, Red, Indigo and Violet Gates, for example, all developed in 1983. Each gate evolved

its own character and focus: Turquoise Gate was vegan, for example, and Orange Gate was

'music gate'.[6] (Figure 1)

Figure 1 Map of Greenham Common Peace Camp gates in *The Greenham Factor 1981-83*, published by Greenham Print Prop.

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[6] Caroline Blackwood, *On the Perimeter* (London: Heinemann, 1984).

After February 1982, women who were living at the camp declared it a women-only space.[7]

From this point on, the camp, with its specific ethos and behaviour, also became a site for alternative political and philosophical debates about femininity and womanhood, while continuing its focus on challenging the positioning of cruise missiles at the base. It attracted hundreds of thousands of visitors, 'campers' and 'stayers'[8] from all over the country, and indeed the world, who, while opposing nuclear weapons, at the same time celebrated the opportunity to participate in a feminist project. This is not to suggest that everyone who came to Greenham was a feminist, nor that there was any single form of women's politics or feminism at the camp. However, as an all-women community Greenham soon began to represent a spatial and temporal site for women-centred expression and practice.

Just as in the case of punk, dress at the Greenham Peace Camp was not a footnote to the direct political action that took place there. It was an integral part of the way in which women at the camp embodied subjective desires and ideologies. Due to the social diversity of women at Greenham, myriad different looks existed at any one time, from the hippie 'look' to conservative and mainstream dress styles, lesbians wearing radical women's symbols and punks. However, over time, because of the physical, temporal and cultural realities of camp life, a 'Greenham look' began to develop, based on practical, utilitarian clothing—layers of jumpers, outdoor wear and boots—and styled around the influences and experiences of the women there. This 'look' made so-called 'Greenham women' easy to identify through stereotypes which were particularly prevalent in the British right-wing press, where the dress and presentation of the women was a regular focus in processes of caricature and demonization. Greenham women were described as filthy, scruffy, dishevelled, transgressive:

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[7] Sasha Roseneil, *Common Women, Uncommon Practices: The Queer Feminisms of Greenham* (London: Cassell, 2000), p.122.
[8] This term, used in the secondary literature, refers to women who lived at the camp, for either months or years. See, for example, Sasha Roseneil, *Disarming Patriarchy: Feminism and Political Action at Greenham* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1995).

in short, unfeminine. For example, in 1983 the *Daily Mirror* wrote of the 'shaved heads, combat clothes and bovver boots of the grimy-faced women who inhabit the most famous peace camp in the world',[9] paying particular attention to listing the combat fatigues, dirty boots and tattered jackets that marked Greenham campers out from conventional representations of women.

Greenham Common Peace Camp is a useful case study to explore how the embodiment of alternative dress by women created notions of 'resistance'. It also demonstrates how gender tropes and structures continued to be challenged in the wake of punk's shock waves. The punk cut and its generative potential to create alternative gendered identities, as discussed in Chapter 1, continue to be of relevance in this chapter. Punk had a powerful legacy in subcultural and alternative style in the 1980s, and played an important part in the range of critical dress and embodied techniques used by Greenham women. As in my previous chapter, in my discussion of the Greenham experience I move beyond the binary limitations of subcultural analysis, considering the heterogeneity of style through feminist methodology, principally focusing on embodiment, performativity and temporality. I theorise the way in which dress at Greenham represented diverse conceptualisations of woman through a multiplicity of subject positions.

Analysis in this chapter is confined to the period between 1981 and 1986, since this represented the high point and most radical period of the camp, when it received the most sensationalist media coverage[10] and when it was a popular destination for women from revolutionary, avant-garde and subcultural groups whose input to the camp determined its

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[9] Nicky Kirkwood, 'Inside Greenham Common: Sad truth that shattered a dream', *Daily Mirror*, 11 July 1983, pp.6-7.
[10] Alison Young, *Femininity in Dissent* (London: Routledge, 1990).

character. I discuss how the women's tactics and strategies of subversion during this period relied on appropriating and transforming everyday objects.

The crux of my theoretical discussion rests on the practice of 'layering' at Greenham. I use the 'Greenham layer' as a central motif in an analysis of style as deconstruction, and compare it to the postmodern techniques of collage and montage associated with punk. The oppositionality of layering is complicated, based on performative, dynamic constructions, processes of cross-pollination, hybridization, contamination and appropriation of different styles and representations. I examine how the Greenham 'look' evolved into a multivalent yet coherent signifier of dissent that was in itself layered in between the interaction of body, space and time, and located at the interface between structural control strategies, such as discipline and surveillance, and the women's own expressions of agency.

Embodied protest

Protest at Greenham started with performative bodily acts. The camp worked on a very clear and definite assumption, after February 1982 when it became an all-women space, that women were best placed to deal with disarmament and peace, thus drawing a cultural connection between militarism and masculinity. Cynthia Enloe's feminist analysis of militarism shows how military systems depend on particular constructions of masculinity and femininity that maintain hierarchical gender differences. In her view, women have to buy into the idea of masculine military superiority for the system to work. 'The cold war depended on a deeply militarised understanding of identity and security. Militarization relies on distinct notions about masculinity, notions that have staying power only if they are legitimised by women as well as men.'[11] The Greenham protest rejected the chivalrous discourse around

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[11] Cynthia H. Enloe, *The Morning After: Sexual Politics at the End of the Cold War* (Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 1993), p.3.

militarism in which, according to conventional assumptions, the military is seen as necessary to protect the weak, such as women and children.[12] Many at Greenham instead viewed militarism as apocalyptic. Tish Harrower, an interviewee for this study,[13] was sixteen years old in 1984 when she left London, where she had grown up, to visit the camp. Once there, Harrower felt so enthralled by, and committed to, the protest and the community at the camp that she decided to stay. She lived at Greenham for almost a year. She remembers that

> I believed that nuclear annihilation was a very real possibility. I was convinced that these mad men would have us all blown up. I really thought it could happen. (Harrower, interview)

At Greenham, the consensus was that peace was best achieved by women, and that women could stall the blind march of military destruction.[14] Another interviewee, Mandy Walker, who was also from London and was eighteen when she went to live at the camp in 1983, a year earlier than Harrower, states that

> We really did feel that it was men making all these stupid decisions that we didn't want, that we could turn things around and stop the world from destruction. (Walker, interview)

As part of the gendered discourse of peace, from the very early days of the camp's existence the figure of the mother was used as a central trope within the anti-militaristic politics at Greenham. In fact, the original marchers to the camp had come in their capacity as mothers

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[12] Nancy Hartsock, 'Masculinity, heroism and the making of war', in: *Rocking the Ship of State: Toward a Feminist Peace Politics*, ed. by Adrienne Harris and Ynestra King (Boulder, CO; London: Westview Press, 1989), pp. 133-152..
[13] See Appendices for information about interviews and a sample of transcripts.
[14] Roseneil, *Disarming Patriarchy*.

wanting to protect their children's futures from nuclear destruction,[15] (Figure 2) drawing on a long history of maternalist discourse.[16]

Figure 2 March to Greenham, 1981. Courtesy of Your Greenham website.[17]

Beeban Kidron, a film director who lived at the camp for seven months in 1982 in order to film the documentary *Carry Greenham Home,*[18] was another interviewee for this project;[19] she recalls how motherhood was a significant theme at the camp. 'It was a free space at Greenham to be a woman and to breastfeed and to look after your children in a place where people understood what that meant; and this was at a time when it just wasn't that easy for women bringing up kids.' (Kidron, interview)

From its very early days, then, valorising maternalist discourse was a critical tactic at Greenham that sprang from the dualism of maternalism versus militarism as a founding

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[15] The original march was led by the Women for Life on Earth group. Anne Pettitt records the march in Pettitt, *Walking to Greenham.*
[16] This idea is developed in Sara Ruddick, *Maternal Thinking: Towards a Politics of Peace* (London: Women's Press, 1990).
[17] See http://www.yourgreenham.co.uk/ [accessed 15 November 2012].
[18] Beeban Kidron, *Carry Greenham Home* (Contemporary Films, 1983).
[19] Beeban Kidron has also created and edited the Your Greenham website for the *Guardian* http://www.yourgreenham.co.uk [accessed 15 November 2012].

concept. This discourse shaped the initial aesthetics and values of the camp in its first few

years. It also prioritized the female body and rooted Greenham's political discourse in

embodied female practices. As a result, maternal symbols, objects and signifiers, such as

children's toys, nappies and photographs, were kept at the camp or pinned on the perimeter

fence as key to its visual culture. (Figure 3)
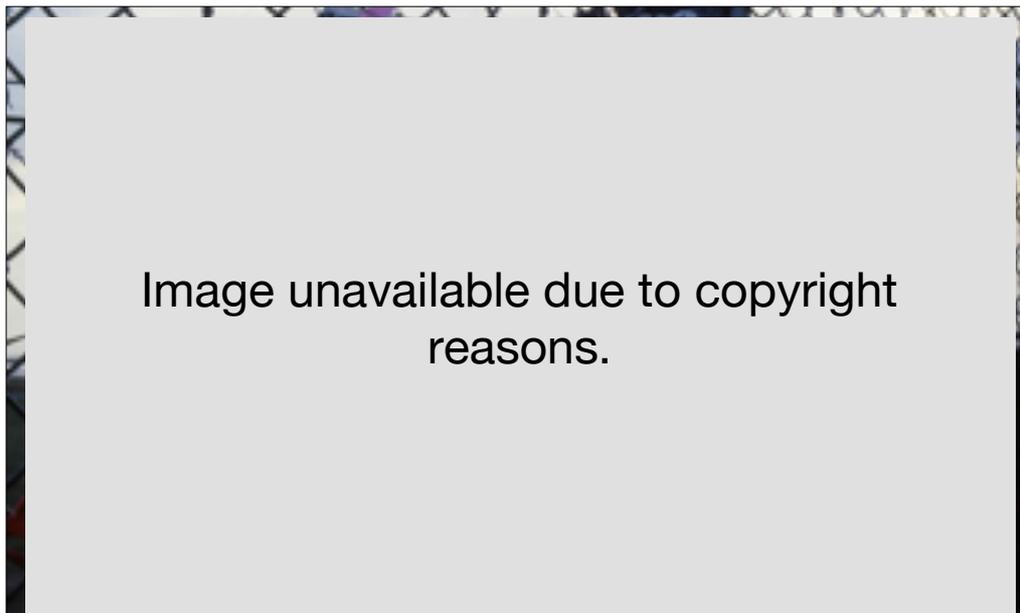
Figure 3 Baby photos and children's clothes stuck to the perimeter fence in the 1980s. Courtesy of Your Greenham website.

From the first days of the camp, materiality was presented as Other, as alternative to

mainstream political discourse, as deliberately transgressive of the dominant order, as a

political strategy. This in itself was not new, of course, since it drew on countercultural

legacies from preceding periods, particularly from the 1960s hippie movement. In this

context, notions of women as nurturing, maternal, super-intuitive, ultra-feminine, had been

central themes. Historian Gretchen Lemke-Santangelo argues that 'hippies believed that

women were essentially different from men', and thus 'more intuitive, nurturing, cooperative,

nonaggressive, present-oriented, and ruled by their emotions and bodies'.[20] Within this

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[20] Gretchen Lemke-Santangelo, *Daughters of Aquarius: Women of the Sixties Counterculture* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2009), p.59

essentialist perspective, women were construed as biologically determined to be mothers, wives, and care-givers, and profoundly and essentially feminine.[21] It is evident, therefore, that the hippie movement was problematic as a liberatory force, since it did not necessarily offer women scope to move beyond dominant tropes and roles, despite its countercultural credentials.[22] In 1970s feminism too, structural limitations had curtailed some women's liberation, particularly when certain strands of feminism took their initial motivation from the persistence of gender hierarchy within countercultural radicalism.

In the context of this study, however, the fact that the maternal body was projected and prioritised played a key role in grounding maternalist, ecological and hippie politics and style as part of the material reality of women's lives at Greenham. Hippie style, which involved the layering of clothing from alternative channels outside the 'parent', consumer-based culture, was commonly associated with folklore and homespun and ethnic motifs, style and fabrics, with items such as long peasant skirts, loose and unconstructed silhouettes, flowing ethnic garments and crocheted knitwear.[23] The influence of this style constructed a countercultural identity for the camp, one that members could draw upon to attract other women supporters. It was a critical strategy to galvanise and unify the many different types of women who were visiting or staying. 'There were loads of different looks at the camp, but there was a lot of the eco-, cosmic lot. You know, they were all cosy rainbow jumpers and long skirts and long hair.' (Walker, interview) Another interviewee, Paula Allen, a photographer who had travelled to the camp from America in her mid-twenties, recalls that 'There were a lot of hippie types there because it was from the hippies that we had learned so much. It was still an

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[21] Lemke-Santangelo, p.59.
[22] Interviewee Caroline Coon comments on some of the sexism in hippie culture and how it differed from punk. For example, she makes reference to the way that hippie women used to embroider the holes in their boyfriends' jeans (Coon, interview, see Chapter 1).
[23] Valerie Steele, *The Berg Companion to Fashion* (Oxford: Berg, 2010), p.417.

influence, and some of the older women had really engaged in that stuff so they still wore long layers and tie-dyed stuff, and made beads'. (Allen, interview)

The 'layer' versus binaries

This dress style may have shaped to a large extent the founding ethos of the camp; however, clothing at Greenham quickly had to incorporate practical outdoor wear that was weather-appropriate.

> Some things worked and some didn't. We didn't wear jeans, because they didn't keep you warm enough, and we didn't wear coats, because they took too long to dry if it had been raining and left our bodies feeling cold and damp. We wore army surplus trousers because they were practical, warm and light to wear, they were easy to move around in. This is before there was great outdoors wear, so we had to make do. We layered and layered because this was the only way we could keep warm and feel cosy. (Walker, interview)

The motif of the layer is clear here, adopted in collage-like techniques created through the assembling of different objects. Acts of collage resonate with punk style and the punk cut, as discussed in the previous chapter, and although there is no definitive record of the details of camp residents at Greenham, sources indicate that there were a significant number of punks, as well as women from other subcultural scenes.[24]

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[24] Tim Cresswell, 'Putting Women in Their Place: The Carnival at Greenham Common', *Antipode,* 26 (1994), 35-58.

'The military is the most obvious product of patriarchy. For the same social and historic reasons men have usually taken the lead in the Peace Movement, but when this leads to a confrontation situation, men confronting men, this becomes a microcosm of the original problem. At the Women's Peace Camp, with the support of both women and men, women are exploring a different way to deal with the weighty problem of disarmament . . . '

Greenham Common Newsletter

'The decision to have only women actually living in the camp is partly tactical, as they feel the authorities treat them differently when men are not present, seeing them as less provocative. The camp, however, has always been a "women's initiative". This is not because the women are hostile to men, but because they feel the need for space to develop their own ways of working. They see more hope for the future in the political processes emphasized by the women's movement – shared decision-making; non hierarchical, leaderless groups; cooperation and non-violence – than in the hierarchical and authoritarian systems that prevail in mixed groups. They want a chance also to develop skills they are not normally expected to acquire: organizational and practical ones; and to express those characteristics normally devalued in society at large: caring, compassion, trust. Human characteristics which they feel all of us should reclaim if we want to survive.'

Dr. Lynne Jones, from Keeping the Peace

' . . . women in general in British politics have been conservative with a small 'c'. On this issue they're clearly more radical than men.'

Joan Ruddock.

'Having women's actions in my view has got nothing to do with excluding men. It's got to do with, for once – *including* women. It's so women, who've been told that they can only function in one small closed-in area to do with children and nurturing, can come out of those areas and take part in politics and actually begin to affect and change the world, and that's Why Women. It's got nothing to do with excluding men.'

Katrina, Greenham Peace Camp

'We understand that men also want to demonstrate in their own way their opposition to the nuclear threat. They can do this without undermining the achievement of the Women's Peace Camp. There are very many military establishments and armament factories which need to be brought to the public eye by having Peace Camps set up outside them. The multiplication of Peace Camps around the UK would be a more fruitful way of showing the scale of the danger of war, extending public debate, and eventually achieving the aim of *all of us* who are trying to save the world from destruction. We must spread our wings.'

Aggie, Greenham Peace Camp

The bomb dropped on Hiroshima was code-named 'Little Boy' and the one on Nagasaki, 'Fat Man'. In NATO language, protective clothes for troops are called 'Noddy suits', soldiers are 'human assets', and dead civilians are 'collateral damage'.

'Mamma was bombed at noon
When getting eggplants in the field,
Short, red and crisp her hair stood,
Tender and red her skin was all over.'
Michio Ogino, 10 yrs., Hiroshima)

'The authorities, when faced with organised non-violent women, do not know how to deal with us. They are trained to react to aggressive behaviour. So far they have tried to frighten us and stifle our right to express our opinions by harrassment, evictions and token imprisonment. We want women to come here to Greenham to gather strength and learn how not to be intimidated by the authorities and unsupportive men.'

Aggie, Greenham Peace Camp

'Women have for too long provided the mirrors in which men see their aggression as a heroic quality with themselves magnified larger than life.

Nottingham WONT
from Keeping the Peace

'One of the lifts I got down here was from a guy. The whole time he argued with me about nuclear missiles. At the very end he said, I find this whole situation really bizarre, I'm giving you a lift to a demonstration against nuclear missiles and I'm a missile engineer'.

Jane 15th Feb. 1983

'What we're saying is that women are powerful: we can all come out and say *You can't do this to us.'*

Sarah, Greenham Peace Camp

Figure 4 Greenham women protesting, 15 February, 1983 © Lesley McIntyre. From *The Greenham Factor 1981-83*, published by Greenham Print Prop, p.6.

Coats and boots were some of the most common items at Greenham, uniformly worn by camp stayers, along with trousers, jackets and caps. This 'layered' style of dress was in direct contrast and dichotomous opposition to the uniform of the guards and military staff, both men and women, inside the nuclear base—who, ironically, were also in trousers, jackets and caps.

As Figure 4 shows, the juxtaposition between the straight lines of the guards, in terms of the cut of their uniform and their posture, creates a stark difference between them and the women protesters. The anonymity and uniformity of the soldiers, who appear dark and faceless, runs in opposition to the eclectic and diverse group of women sitting in front of the gate, many of whom are seen linking arms or chatting among themselves.

Nathan Joseph, in his 1986 analysis of the communicatory aspects of uniforms, asserted that when considered semiotically, uniforms can be understood as conveying information about values, beliefs and emotions; mandatory uniforms serve the further function of maintaining social control within a given environment.[25] Joseph adds that the uniform, as a sign of group membership, acts as an immediate cue, signalling who does and does not belong in a particular group or community, stressing that among community members themselves uniforms seem to act as a dramaturgical device by establishing interactional boundaries between members of separate statuses and promoting the internalization of organizational goals.

If uniforms are considered as a sign which facilitates social control, then it can be expected that those wearing uniforms will display behaviour which is consistent with the institutional goals of their organising body. In a more recent work on uniforms, Jennifer Craik noted that 'Uniforms are all about control not only of the social self but also of the inner self and its formation,'[26] and Juliet Ash's focus on the role of uniforms as punishment in her analysis of prison dress also highlights the way they have functioned as controlling strategies.[27] The clean, ordered line of the pristine soldiers in Figure 4, standing to attention, sets up a binary opposition between this abstract representation of the accepted cultural body, in their 'smart',

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[25] Nathan Joseph, *Uniforms and Nonuniforms: Communication Through Clothing* (New York; London: Greenwood, 1986).
[26] Jennifer Craik, *Uniforms Exposed: from Conformity to Transgression* (Oxford: Berg, 2005), p.4.
[27] Juliet Ash, *Dress Behind Bars: Prison Clothing as Criminality* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2010).

tailored dress, and the women at Greenham, who seem to transgress these values through their layered, mixed and improvised dress, such as the jumper worn as headcovering seen in the far right of the photograph. The contrast in the dress of the two groups, despite a certain uniformity of outdoor dress among the Greenham women, creates a sense of direct, polarised opposition. Sociologist Alison Young, in her analysis of Greenham Common Peace Camp, also emphasises the binary differences that were present at the site, noting the contrast between ideas of normative values on one side of the fence and the chaos of women's bodies on the other:

> The corpus represented by the base is the classical one, smooth, hairless, blond, elevated on high, idealised. Outside the base, there exists an altogether different image: of corporeal physicality and functionalism, a body with orifices exposed, where idealised beauty is irrelevant, replaced with grotesque realism, where the cerebral functions accede to bodily reaction.[28]

The juxtaposition of the Greenham camp to the military base, and the asymmetry of values and styles on either side of the fence, was critical in creating a dynamic daily rhythm for embodied articulations of protest. In fact, Greenham women relied on events on the other side of the fence in order to plan and execute their political 'actions', the name the women gave to their range of demonstrations, which included climbing over the perimeter fence, dancing on the silos, and verbally challenging the police.[29] Actions ranged from the playful to the destructive, from floating symbolic cobwebs on helium balloons to either decorating or pulling down the fence and carefully planned commando-style operations. (Figures 5, 6 and 7)

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[28] Young, pp.36-7.
[29] Roseneil, *Disarming Patriarchy*.

Figure 5 Dancing on the silos, 1 January 1983 © Raissa Page.

Figure 6 Greenham Common Peace Camp demonstration, November, 1983 © Pierre Perrin—Gamma/Liaison.

Figure 7 Greenham Common perimeter fence decorated by Greenham women, 1982 © Ceridwen at Geograph Britain and Ireland Project.[30]

The women who lived at the camp planned almost daily skirmishes as their protest strategy, and as a result their clothes reflected a sort of 'regulation dress' devised to be practical for their actions: tough boots, layers of jumpers, Greenham badges and feminist symbols, peace insignia. The items of clothing and objects carried semiotic value within the performative function of protest, as camper Walker describes: 'Whenever we were going to demonstrate we put on our badges and our women's symbols, we wanted to show what we represented, how we were all together, how we were united against them [the military]'. (Walker, interview) In the women's view, the perimeter fence surrounding the base came to represent a physical barrier between the sustainable, caring, thoughtful, progressive world that they were campaigning for and the destructive, apocalyptic desires of the military, which they equated with the powers of patriarchy and a global arms economy. Their very presence at the fence

[30] Geograph Britain and Ireland Project, http://www.geograph.org.uk/profile/6699 [accessed 19 May 2012].

was disruptive to the social order. As cultural geographer Tim Cresswell has suggested, 'the presence of the chaotic, unhierarchical peace camps, alongside the hierarchical, ordered airbase, constitutes an offence to the hegemonic-geographical order'.[31]

New-old

The women's clothes, particularly after an eviction when their temporary homes were removed, were often their only protection against the elements of outdoor life. As a result, dress represented not only clothing but also security and safety. It was embodied and enveloping as a form of protection. The women's tactile relationship with dress became crucial: Greenham women had to feel right, be comfortable, stay warm, move around practically, perform the camp tasks such as collecting firewood from the common and walking to collect water, sleep outdoors and take part in protests that could be protracted and violent. Driven by these considerations, the women adapted their clothes, many of which were donated by supporters, to meet their needs. Academic Sasha Roseneil, who has based some of her sociological work on her experiences of living at Greenham Common in the early 1980s, has explored life and identity at the camp from both a feminist and queer theory perspective.[32] She was interviewed for this project, and remembers that

> We were driven by practicality, not feminine clothes, not girlie stuff. Women wore what was needed, they also wore what made them feel free and liberated. Women made do with lots of old, random stuff. (Roseneil, interview)

Not only did they dress for practical needs, opposing social norms for women, they also took the items that they had and inverted their purpose by layering them together, or salvaged objects and garments and wore them in new ways. It is through these kinds of processes that analysis of 'layering' can be interpreted as tactics that not only challenge the 'look' of

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[31] Cresswell, p.36.

[32] Roseneil, *Common Women*; Roseneil, *Disarming Patriarchy*; Sasha Roseneil, *The Origins of Women's Collective Action: The Case of Greenham* (Leeds: University of Leeds, Department of Social Policy and Sociology, 1992).

traditional femininity but also critique the fashion system's own rhetoric of 'innovation'. A comment by interviewee Rebecca Johnson, who is discussed in detail later in the chapter, weaves these strands of thought together:

> So my dress was largely dictated by the practicality of it. But boots were comfortable and so on.
>
> But I did notice quite early on that there was a group of quite stylish women and they started taking to wearing long johns. Before leggings. Long johns and these big jumpers. And the long johns with the jumpers created a very different style or image from jeans. I wore jeans with jumpers…Somehow they wore long johns and jumpers. Then boots that were half undone quite often.
>
> Then suddenly Katharine Hamnett suddenly made a whole – there was her and who was this…? Now which was the fashion designer that did the T-shirt that got the slogan wrong? Vivienne Westwood. So Katharine Hamnett and Vivienne Westwood suddenly were showing catwalk displays of women with long johns or leggings and big rainbow jumpers.
>
> It was like – Greenham was there first actually. (Johnson, interview)

Layers produce an intertextual system of reference, highlighting dependency on another object. The layering of dress—jackets, jumpers, shirts, t-shirts—creates a process to trace; it distorts conventional fashion history by creating a dialogue between items that are new and old, and thus between the past and the future. Layering therefore contradicts the ever-changing nature of fashion and shows the recycling of the same, not the newness of modernity. At the same time, in this example dress becomes the catalyst for women's memories as well as their new experiences, woven into their subjective realities. Meanwhile, layering as recycling, or in subcultural terms as reappropriation, affirms the ties of dress objects to fashion history while at the same time destroying the value inherent in the economics of new fashion. This enables the making of a 'new-old', which is innovative in its own right yet lies outside of the fashion system and its gendering narratives.

As a result, the layering at Greenham can be seen to create the opportunity for the expression of hybrid identities that reflect a patchwork of moments and histories, a collage effect driven by techniques of bricolage and do-it-yourself that enabled women to develop new modes of agency. As an interviewee, Elizabeth Spring, remembers about the experience of living at the camp in the early 1980s,

> I used to make crazy things. Women would cut things up, put weird pieces together, put on anything they could find when it was freezing cold. We took what we had and we made it seem bizarre because we had to make do. (Spring, interview)

The agency of the punk cut resonated at Greenham, as women relied on bricolage and appropriation to customise their appearance and thus create individuality. Certainly the generative potential of the punk cut to engender new expressions of gendered difference informs the process of the Greenham layer. In subcultural theory, the concept of bricolage builds on Lévi-Strauss's definition of spontaneous actions that create improvised structures by appropriating pre-existing materials that are easy to obtain.[33] Dick Hebdige therefore constructs his analysis of punks in terms of populist bricoleurs who removed 'safe' objects—such as the safety pin—from their normal context to remake them in their own image, and as a form of 'semiological guerrilla warfare', as suggested by semiotician Umberto Eco.[34] The process refers to the transference of symbols from being mundane or commercial to being altered messages, defamiliarised objects. In Hebdige's interpretation, which, it is worth remembering, is semiotically determined, he says, 'Safety pins were taken out of their domestic "utility" context and worn as gruesome ornaments through the cheek, ear or lip.

[33] Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind (La Pensée Sauvage)* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1966).
[34] Umberto Eco, 'Towards a semiological guerrilla warfare', in: *Travels in Hyperreality: Essays* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986), pp.135-44.

"Cheap" trashy fabrics…were salvaged by the punks and turned into garments…which offered self-conscious commentaries on the notions of modernity and taste'.[35]

Bricolage at Greenham had a similar logic. By wearing layers of clothes in innovative and bizarre ways, particularly when trying to stay warm against cold weather, the women not only challenged the groomed look of conventional femininity, they also distorted the conventional look of everyday clothes and any semblance of familiarity therein.

> I know there was a Greenham look; when I think about it now I can identify it, but what you have to remember is that at the time we just took whatever we could and put it together. It was very creative, we used clothes in some weird ways. I remember having a blanket that I would wrap around me—not coats because sometimes it was just too cold. I remember someone putting on as many hats as they could find, until they had a structure built on their head! (Allen, interview)

Bricolage at Greenham, when embodied, produced emotionally driven female bodies that sang, danced, cried, yelled and keened. This embodied projection of emotions was a strategy aiming to contrast the women with the rarefied, male, unemotional domain of the military on the other side of the fence. So fears and terrors were voiced through physical expression, such as weeping at meetings,[36] and the emotional body was activated as a form of dissent.

This involved, in many cases, employing techniques that were connected with spiritualism drawn from eco-feminist theology. Ann Pettitt, a founder member of the camp, has wryly described how at Green Gate there were 'women who liked to commune with all sorts of sprites and spirits'.[37] Other stayers, such as Beth Junor, have noted that matriarchal prehistory and religions (from about 4000-3500BC) were important to the women at the camp in

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[35] Hebdige, p.107.
[36] Barbara Harford and Sarah Hopkins, *Greenham Common: Women at the Wire* (London: Women's Press, 1984), p.15.
[37] Pettitt, p.145.

reclaiming female power.[38] This is why symbols such as doves of peace and spider's webs, chosen to resonate with creation and re-creation myths, were used throughout the camp, to decorate the fence or in newsletters or in the camp's banners and artworks. (Figures 8 and 9)

Figure 8 Greenham Common Peace Camp newsletter, 11 December, 1983.

Figure 9 Banner designed by Thalia Campbell, displayed at Greenham Common, 1981-82.

Another theme celebrated in terms of women's bodily expression was that of female domestic crafts. Greenham women, in fact, had to rely on craft practice in all aspects of camp

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[38] Beth Junor, *Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp: A History of Non-Violent Resistance, 1984-1995* (London: Working Press, 1995), pp.63-65.

life in order to sustain themselves by the perimeter fence. Not only did they customize clothes and create artwork, they also relied on amateur craft techniques to build the makeshift homes they called 'benders'. After the police had banned tents and caravans from the site in May 1982, the women at Greenham created shelters from branches that were bent, tied and stuck in the mud, then covered with polythene and decorated or otherwise customised. This do-it-yourself architecture was not dissimilar to the ideals and ideas found in countercultural design and architecture and in the communitarianism of the 1960s and 1970s,[39] which were rooted in the utopian longing to recreate a pre-capitalist idyll.[40]

At Greenham, too, the craft element was representative of a broader philosophical position that sought to reject the synthetic world of capitalism. The way in which Greenham benders disorganized the environment around the base was akin to 'situations' or 'happenings'. This connects Greenham women's practice with the tactics of the avant-garde, particularly those identified by the Situationist International, for whom a situation was the term for a reformed and revitalized everyday life, and where 'the happening is a sort of spectacle pushed to the extreme state of dissolution'.[41]

Furthermore, from a gendered perspective the craft element also connected with ideas within second-wave feminism that drew attention to the fact that historically women's productivity had always been considered to be lacking in value. Kate Millett, for example, in *Sexual Politics*, had said that 'although they achieved their first economic autonomy in the industrial revolution and now constitute a large and underpaid factory population, women do not

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[39] Victor Papanek, *Design for the Real World: Human Ecology and Social Change* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1970); *The Dissenting Academy*, ed. by Theodore Roszak (N.Y.: Pantheon Books, 1968).
[40] *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader: Intellectual and Political Controversies*, ed. by Sandra G. Harding (New York; London: Routledge, 2004).
[41] 'The Avant-Garde of Presence' in: Knabb, p.143.

participate directly in technology or in production. What they customarily produce (domestic and personal service) has no market value and is, as it were, pre-capital'.[42]

There was in fact a trend for female domestic crafts at Greenham that was employed by the women living there as a tactic to rebuke the sexism within patriarchal structures. 'It was our vibrancy and our creativity that was going to change the world.' (Kidron, interview) Women spent time making costumes, for example, in addition to the banners and decorations and clothes mentioned earlier. They wove webs with wool as a symbol of women's power and collectivity. (Figure 10)

Image unavailable due to copyright reasons.

Figure 10 Women at Greenham weaving webs, 1980s. Courtesy of Your Greenham website.

In June 1983, over 2,000 women wove a four and a half mile serpent on the fence, an action that was described by feminist philosopher Mary Daly as an attempt to 'unweave the prevailing dis-order [of patriarchy]'.[43] (Figure 11)

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[42] Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics* (London: Hart-Davis, 1971), p.41.
[43] Mary Daly, *Gyn/Ecology: the Metaethics of Radical Feminism* (Boston: Beacon, 1990), p.417.
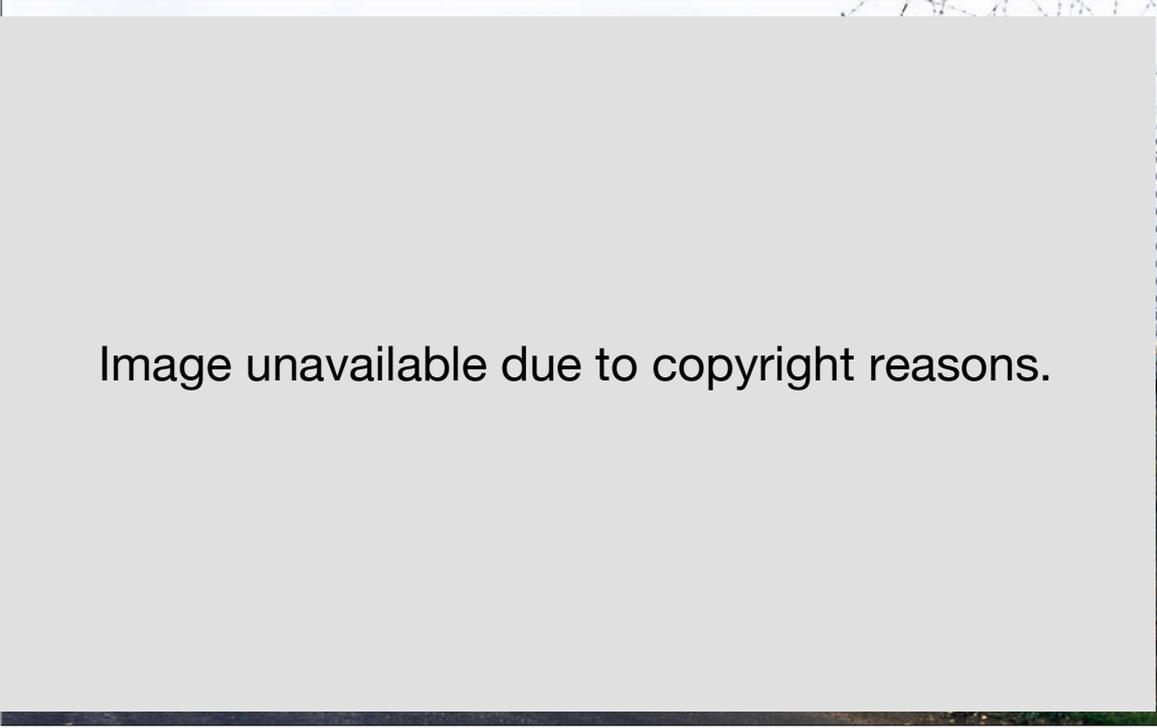
Figure 11 Serpent woven on perimeter fence, 1983. Courtesy of Your Greenham website.

Indeed, the use of traditional female arts was a deliberate provocation, as Ann Pettitt, one of the original marchers to the camp, recalls: '[these tactics]…produced a military enraged by cross-stitch that impeded their view, driving them to hysteria by embroidery'.[44] Attaching everyday and personal items, such as baby clothing, teddy bears, ribbons and family photographs, to the fence stressed the women-centred nature of the camp, and prioritised the realities of women's everyday experience. This was in direct opposition to what was perceived as the destructive patriarchal threat of the base.

Women at Greenham generally did not buy things, partly because many who lived there were on the dole, and so they relied on donations, shared possessions and customised objects and clothes.

> You've got a very high proportion, for the twentieth century, of home-made clothes
> that women made at the camp because they didn't have much stuff. So it was
> homemade without particular skills. They just started doing that. Then you get woven

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[44] Pettitt, p.306.

into that, literally, an earth mother thing, a nature thing, which is to do with the fact that we live on the earth, we shit on the earth, we are of the earth, we're protecting the earth, the moon, the sun, the stars, and this was the rainbow aesthetic, which made sense in the schema. (Kidron, interview)

As a hub of amateur craft production the camp produced objects (there was plenty of knitting) or 'works' that can be linked with other feminist art practices of the period. In the quest for a female aesthetic or an artistic approach which was authentic for women, many 1970s feminist artists sought to elevate what was thought of as traditionally 'women's craft' to the level of 'high art' from its position as 'low art' or kitsch. The gendered context of art-making had spurred wide-ranging discourse. In an essay entitled 'Household images in art', written in 1973, Lucy Lippard described how previously women artists had avoided using techniques that were associated with the feminine, such as sewing, weaving, knitting, ceramics, the use of pastel colours or delicate lines, because of their strongly gendered reputation: women were worried about being labelled 'feminine artists'. Lippard discusses the way in which the women's movement offered the opportunity for women to begin 'shedding their shackles, proudly untying the apron strings—and, in some cases, keeping the apron on, flaunting it, turning it into art'.[45] The issue of temporality is also important to this discussion, since craft as a temporal activity, as well as visual and spatial 'otherness,' is often associated with slowness and sometimes cyclical, repetitive action, which connects with 'women's time', as discussed later in this chapter of the thesis. In 1983, Lippard commented that 'What is popularly seen as "repetitive", "obsessive", and "compulsive" in women's art is in fact a necessity for those whose time comes in small squares'.[46] [47]

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[45] Lucy R. Lippard, *From the Center: Feminist Essays on Women's Art* (New York: Dutton, 1976), p.57.

[46] Lucy Lippard, 'Up, Down and Across: A New Frame for New Quilts'*,* in *The Artist and the Quilt,* ed. by Charlotte Robinson (New York: Knopf, 1983), p.32-43 (p.32).

[47] It is worth noting that during the Women's Liberation Movement, and in feminist art practice and criticism since the 1970s the reification of connections between female art and ideas of home and domesticity have been thrown into crisis; instead notions of domesticity have been subverted in art, as in the Womanhouse project, California Institute of the Arts, 1972, conceived by Paula Harper. Since then, in some cases the home has been presented as a site of violence. See for example

New Domesticity: dirt

Dirt generally connotes 'matter out of place', according to anthropologist Mary Douglas.[48] In Douglas's view,

> As we know it, dirt is essentially disorder. There is no such thing as absolute dirt: it exists in the eye of the beholder. If we shun dirt, it is not because of craven fear, still less dread or holy terror. Nor do our ideas about disease account for the range of our behaviour in cleaning or avoiding dirt. Dirt offends against order. Eliminating it is not a negative movement, but a positive effort to organise the environment.[49]

Douglas suggests that 'Where there is dirt there is system. Dirt is the by-product of a systemic ordering and classification of matter, in so far as ordering involves rejecting inappropriate elements'.[50]

Dirt is therefore 'other' to social norms. Douglas continues, 'In chasing dirt, in papering, decorating, tidying, we are not governed by anxiety to escape disease, but are positively re-ordering our environment, making it conform to an idea. There is nothing fearful or unreasoning in our dirt-avoidance: it is a creative movement, an attempt to relate form to function, to make unity of experience'.[51]

The Greenham Peace Camp was a dirty place: it was muddy, access to water was difficult, women could not wash every day. The connection Douglas made between dirt and disorder was at play there, not only in the way that the women looked and lived, but also in terms of the fluidity of the women's camp in comparison to the ordered lines of rank, file and discipline at the base.

Alexandra M. Kokoli, Undoing homeliness in feminist art: Feministo: Portrait of the Artist as a Housewife (1975-77), *n.paradoxa: international feminist art journal*, 13 (2004), 75-78.
[48] Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger : An Analysis of Concept of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge, 2002).
[49] Ibid., p.2.
[50] Ibid., p.44.
[51] Ibid, p.3.

In Douglas's terms, Greenham represents an inverted model where dirt and the lack of domesticity demonstrates a lack of normative social order, or system, as well as agency. The issue of domesticity and housework had been a major issue in second-wave feminism and the politics of women's liberation. In 1976, for example, at the Women's Liberation Movement's national UK conference there was a demand for men to share in the housework;[52] even by 1977 fewer than 60% of women aged between 25 and 54 were in paid employment in Britain.[53] At Greenham, dirt was used as a critical tactic of subversion—which drew directly from the fact that women are traditionally associated with dirt's removal as part of their responsibilities as housewives and maids.

The muddy environment at the camp made 'layers' of dirt inevitable. In my previous chapter, I focused on the album cover for *Cut*, by The Slits, in which the punk band presented themselves layered in mud, dirty and dishevelled. There is continuity between this image and representations of women at Greenham. Interviewee Spring recalls that 'you stopped caring about how dirty it was because you were living outdoors and that's just how it was and you just made do'. (Spring, interview) (Figure 12)

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[52] 'There are discussions on a potential seventh demand, "calling on men to share housework and child care equally"': See Chronology of the Women's Liberation Movement in Britain 1976, in http://www.feministarchivenorth.org.uk/chronology/1976-1.htm [accessed 28 July 2012].
[53] 'Jubilees compared: incomes, spending and work in the late 1970s and early 2010s', Jonathan Cribb, Paul Johnson, Robert Joyce and Zoë Oldfield, Institute for Fiscal Studies Briefing Note BN128, 2012 http://www.ifs.org.uk/bns/bn128.pdf [accessed 27 July 2012].
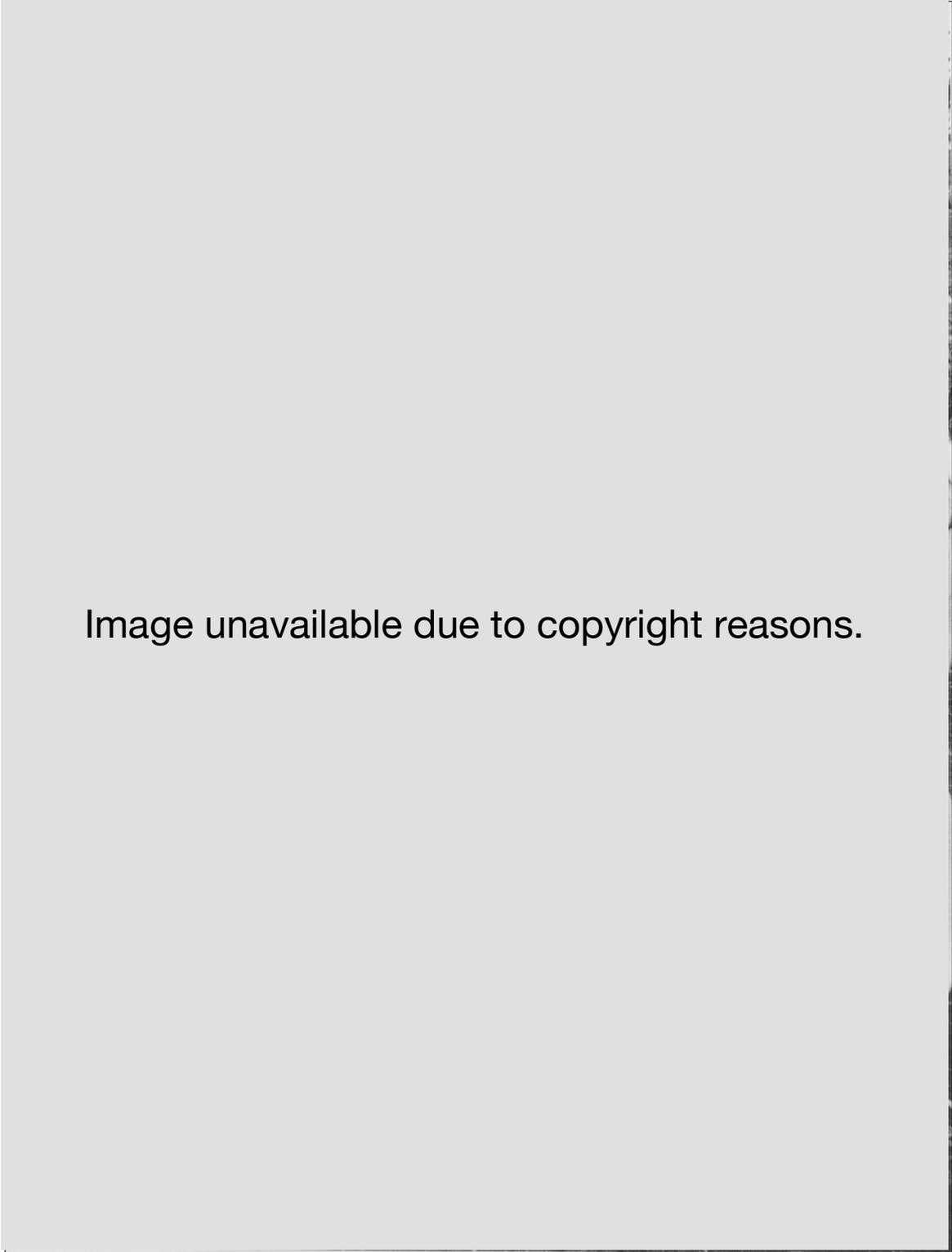
Figure 12 Women living at Greenham Peace Camp, c.1981-84 © Elizabeth Spring.

The theme of dirt and abjection was taken as far as using menstrual blood-soaked cloths in

protests. These were tied to the fence at Greenham —and sometimes menstrual blood was

rubbed onto the fence.[54] Blood was used in this shocking way as a demonstration of women's

life-giving nature that, it was hoped, would 'defuse male sacral powers of destruction [and]

bind together the fabric of the world that the missiles threatened to blow apart'.[55] This kind of

action was projecting a 'monstrous feminine', one that took ideas of dirt and deviance to a

new level of signification. Theorist Barbara Creed, in *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film,*

Feminism and Psychoanalysis, points out that when the feminine is constructed as monstrous

in a horror film, it is frequently done in conjunction with mothering functions.[56] Greenham

women's focus on the female body and bodily functions was a way in which they could cause

anxiety, as well as shock, within the established order. Certainly the British press developed

an intense preoccupation with these themes: the *Daily Mail* reported that 'Mud splashed

halfway up their legs. It oozed a raw onion smell and spread like brown paste over a chunk of

Berkshire. Peace was a dirty business'.[57] On 2 December 1983 the *Daily Express* suggested

that the 'final solution' to the Greenham 'problem' could be to 'dig a moat and fill it with

champagne, asses' milk, Chanel No 5 and men with massive dorsals', adding that this would

'clear out those awful women in half an hour'.[58] The Nazi resonance in the phrase 'final

solution' is disturbingly chilling. In sociologist Alison Young's analysis of Greenham, dirt,

disease, and disgust are positioned against cleanliness, health, approval, so that 'The

grotesque [female body] becomes synonymous with the marginal and the deviant, the cast-

out'.[59]

The 'layering' of stains and dirt at Greenham changed the clothes that the women wore into

signs of deviance and transgression. In fact the combination of stains, dirt, and detritus

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[54] Elizabeth Stuart, 'Exploding Mystery: Feminist Theology & the Sacramental', *Feminist Theology,* 12 (2004), 228-36.
[55] Melissa Raphael, *Thealogy and Embodiment: The Post-Patriarchal Reconstruction of Female Sacrality* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), p.149.
[56] See for example 'Horror and the Archaic Mother: Alien', in: Barbara Creed, *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp.16-30.
[57] John Edwards, 'John Edwards reports on the protest at Greenham Common', *Daily Mail,* 13 December 1982, pp.16-17.
[58] Jean Rook, 'Final Solution at Greenham', *Daily Express*, 14 December 1983, p.9.
[59] Young, p. 57.

around the camp reflected a countercultural position that mirrored other subcultural and alternative tactics. Punk had also used themes of dirt, damage and ruin in its aesthetics, as described in Chapter 1. In the 1980s, 'Crusties', white fans of Crass, an English punk rock band formed in 1977, took influences from punk, goth, hippie and reggae. They adopted dreadlocks and a 'dirty' look as a rejection of the clean consumer culture of Thatcherite Britain. Crusties were often also squatters, a fact that further emphasised the theme of dirt in their visual style.[60]

In addition to dirt, the naked female body was also employed at Greenham as a tactic. On 9 August 1984, women living at the camp stripped naked, covered themselves and the ground with ashes and formed a blockade at Yellow Gate, the site of the main camp, to mark Nagasaki Day. The army personnel at the base found it difficult to remove the women without getting covered in ash. The strange, ghost-like female bodies did not resemble the usual representations of naked women in mainstream culture, most typically in pornography.[61] In the case of Greenham, the abject naked presentation of women of different ages, sizes and shapes demystified notions of the female body as an object of desire while making a shocking comment about the destruction of war. '[I]t was women using their bodies, their naked bodies, even, for a purpose that had nothing whatsoever to do with sex, sexuality or sexual attraction.' (Johnson, interview)

The fact that the dualisms of the naked versus the covered, and the dirty versus the clean, were constantly at play at Greenham highlights the extent to which the idea of fluid identities, constantly changing and mutating, adopting and then rejecting cultural norms through various strategies of embodiment, were consistent themes at the camp. Furthermore, the 'layering' of

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[60] Angela McRobbie, 'Shut up and Dance', *Cultural Studies*, 7 (1993), 404-24, (p.408).
[61] Sarah Hipperson and Beth Junor, *Greenham: Non-Violent Women v the Crown Prerogative* (London: Greenham Publications, 2005).

dirt and stains not only changed the material and textual composition of clothes, it also reflected women's embodied subjectivities, drives and motivations as intertextual. In her essay 'Eccentric subjects: feminist theory and historical consciousness', Teresa de Lauretis identified the fact that 'Consciousness, as a term of feminist thought, is poised on the divide that joins and distinguishes the opposing terms in a series of conceptual sets central to contemporary theories of culture'.[62] The weight of mud-encrusted clothes, heavy, cumbersome, stiff and rigid, in transgressive contrast to social ideals of cleanliness, also symbolised the weight of repression that many women felt during the period. Nakedness was employed in opposition to heaviness, marking a subjective expression of fluid movement between states, of new potential rooted in bodily experience.

'How much has the perception of Greenham women as dangerous, threatening and dirty to do with the fact that in western life cups are not supposed to be on the ground, and women are supposed to wear nice clothes and be at home with husbands?'[63] The allegations of bad hygiene and dirt at the camp were further extended as a response to the way in which Greenham women were seen to transgress dominant socio-cultural and geographic boundaries. Not only were they away from home, they also confused public and private space. (Figure 13)

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[62] Teresa de Lauretis, 'Eccentric subjects: feminist theory and historical consciousness', *Feminist Studies,* 16 (1990), 115-50 (p.115).
[63] Lynne Jones, 'Perceptions of "Peace Women" at Greenham Common 1981-85: A participant's view', in: Sharon Macdonald, Pat Holden, and Shirley Ardener, *Images of Women in Peace and War: Cross-Cultural and Historical Perspectives* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, in association with Oxford University, Women's Studies Committee, 1987), pp.179-204 (p.188).

Figure 13 Greenham women living outdoors, c.1981-86. Courtesy of Your Greenham website.

The women lived their lives outdoors, in public, and this displacement was constantly emphasized through the way they behaved and looked. For example, *The Sunday Telegraph* described 'the pitiful sight of badly dressed women grouped together'.[64]

Erving Goffman has analysed, from a sociological perspective, the notion of 'front stage', meaning public spaces where we may feel ourselves to be on view, versus 'back stage', at home, not on view.[65] He suggests that there is appropriate dress for these two arenas. At Greenham, this distinction is rendered void. In fact, Greenham women deliberately invert the distinction by dressing comfortably and in a 'homely' way in public, open space. (Figure 14)

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[64] Catherine Steven, 'Council tries to move Cruise protest women', *Sunday Telegraph*, 19 December 1982, p.3.
[65] Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971).

Figure 14 Greenham women around a campfire, c.1981-86. Courtesy of Your Greenham website.

This meant that the Greenham women and their 'look' demanded a 'translation of context'.[66] The theme of recontextualisation is central to this study, and has been explored in terms of bricolage, détournement and reappropriation earlier in the thesis. Once again, through the inversion of public and private practice, and the adjustment or reconfiguring of objects to suit outdoor life, women were removing any veil of naturalness around themselves or their associated objects, breaking through the divisions of conventional classifications to show that there is nothing sacred or inevitable about them. As a result, they were able to invert normal expectations of women's everyday behaviour and transgress against essentialist positions.

The Greenham camp existed in a liminal space, created in the gaps between orders and structures: it was physically and materially outside either city, town or village, and was also

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[66] Guy Brett, *Through Our Own Eyes: Popular Art and Modern History, A Heretic Book* (London: Gay Men's Press, 1986), p.152.

in some—but not all—respects, beyond the reach of the monopolising powers that control space or regulate weaker groups in normative cultural and social geographies.[67]

The transgression of norms that construct space as gendered has been a key theme of feminist geography since the 1970s, a decade that saw the flourishing of research on the geographical and architectural reinforcement of gender roles.[68] In particular, the research identified the way in which femininity and masculinity are socially produced in public spaces, especially in the urban, the suburban[69] and the city. Elizabeth Wilson writes about how the city 'offers untrammelled sexual experience; in the city the forbidden—what is most feared and desired—becomes possible. Woman is present in cities as temptress, as fallen woman, as lesbian, but also as virtuous womanhood in danger, as heroic womanhood who triumphs over temptation and tribulation'.[70] Much feminist political organising, in fact, has been directed at breaking open the public spaces of the city in order to allow women in, an example being the efforts to create safety for women through Reclaim the Night marches.[71]

The liminality of the camp relates not just to the physical dimensions of women's protests, but can be theorised as a matter of subjective experience. Donna Haraway, in her essay 'A cyborg manifesto', discusses the potential of liminality for a feminist politics: she attempts to create what she calls 'an ironic political myth', which is the image of the cyborg, 'a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction'.[72] The cyborg for Haraway is both a metaphor for the postmodernist and political fluidity of identity as well as a lived reality of new technology. Since the cyborg

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[67] Roseneil, *Disarming Patriarchy*, p.143.

[68] Don Mitchell, *Cultural Geography: A Critical Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000).

[69] Betty Friedan identified the way that suburban wives in America struggled with what she called 'The Problem that Has No Name', by which she meant the yearning women felt for emancipation from conventional roles in the 1950s and 1960s. See Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (London: Penguin, 2010), p.5.

[70] Elizabeth Wilson, *The Sphinx in the City: Urban Life, the Control of Disorder, and Women* (London: Virago, 1991), pp.5-6.

[71] Reclaim the Night http://www.reclaimthenight.org/ [accessed 30 December 2012].

[72] Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs and Women*, p.149.

does not exist as nature *or* culture, but is rather a hybrid: it is not limited by traditional binarisms and dualist paradigms. The cyborg can be understood as a kind of unfettered self, and therefore a metaphoric paradigm for political action. Haraway writes: '[M]y cyborg myth is about transgressed boundaries, potent fusions, and dangerous possibilities which progressive people might explore as one part of needed political work'.[73] The physical reality of the liminal cyborg self translates into a framework for action which encompasses partiality, boundary transgressions, contradiction, and fracture. There is no pretence of unity or singularity. When extended to women's identity at Greenham, the liminal, in-betweenness of the camp can be understood as generative of new possibilities.

The liminal is a gap between two states—a motif explored in my theorisation of the punk cut, in Chapter 1, which resurfaces again here. Physical gaps were focal points at Greenham. Gaps in the wire fencing around the military base were typically layered with objects, as shown in the images above. Meanwhile gaps on the ground were filled with benders and campfires, with the practices of women's everyday lives and women-centred activities. Through gaps, women at Greenham strove to depart from mainstream conventions, creating a space where the patriarchal binarisms of male/female, war/peace, for example, were not at all in force. Kidron says, 'I think empowered is the right word. I think that the women felt that here was a place where they could come, they could voice their protest about this specific thing…I don't think people consciously went, "Oh, here's a world with whose aims I agree with, and therefore I can express myself". I think they could throw off the ties that bound them elsewhere'. (Kidron, interview)

 Certainly Greenham offered—at least notionally—respite from the male gaze due to the fact that it was an all-women camp. In reality, male policemen, tourists and journalists were

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[73] Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs and Women*, p.154.

regularly visible at the camp. However, Greenham had declared itself as a separatist site and this set an ethos that was generally embraced.

> We didn't dress for the male gaze. We didn't care about that, and it was great. We wanted to be free and we did whatever we wanted. (Spring, interview)

> We shared clothes and helped each other and we were there for each other, it was all about being together. We just pooled donations of clothes and everyone could take what they wanted. No one cared about things matching and all that, it didn't matter. (Allen, interview)

> We never looked feminine, it wasn't really on. You wouldn't have worn make-up and heels. Not because somebody told you not to, but because it just wasn't the space for that, it wasn't on. (Walker, interview)

The fact that Walker suggests 'it wasn't really on' to wear heels and make-up also suggests that the everyday values of the camp created a particular culture that women were expected to adhere to. Johnson confirms this. She was a master's student in her twenties when she arrived at the camp in 1982. Johnson was born in America into a large family that was part of the devout Christian Hutterite religious community dating from the seventeenth century. '[M]y upbringing was a fundamentalist upbringing', she says. (Johnson, interview) Pacifism was an essential tenet of the community: '…[it] was something that I drew in with my mother's milk'. (Johnson, interview) Prior to arriving at the camp, Johnson had travelled widely and had had a mix of far-ranging experiences, including being part of CND protests. She was not planning to stay long at Greenham, but ended up living there for five years: 'Because within three days of having gone to Greenham with a motorbike in August, I realised that I had to stay. I didn't know how long. I think I was just thinking about at least staying through this eviction that they were—but I knew that I had found something'. (Johnson, interview)

Johnson reflects on the complex political and personal expressions that formed camp life in the everyday, notably the sexual politics between women:

Johnson: Part of the revolution was we were dressing to please ourselves, for comfort and for our conditions. The last thing on any of our minds was dressing for men's gaze. So whether you were busty or you were non busty, big jumpers made us all the same. Whether you were tall or short, you could feel really comfortable in that clothing. We also shared clothing. We also had clothing donated. A lot of us didn't have much money. We'd either given up—I had to give up my student grant at the point of which I definitely chose that I was leaving studies. Women were on the dole. So there was that. One aspect was transgressive, because although we were in the public eye, we clearly didn't give a toss about how sexy we looked. Except to each other…

Suterwalla: Was there a look then for each other?

Johnson: Yes.

Suterwalla: How did you look sexy for each other in those conditions?

Johnson: I think there was even style even within Greenham. I would say that, for example, I remember one woman being kind of – everybody, well not everybody – some of the women were a bit suspicious of her. There was the rumour that she was probably with the police. She was probably a spy. When you'd say, 'Well, what makes you think that?' Because she was actually a Quaker woman. 'What makes you think that?' 'Oh she wears Marks and Spencer's clothing.' That which was perfectly normal in other lives was considered to sort of be a mark of the establishment. At the very least it said that she lacked style. At the worst, it made people suspicious.

Johnson's comment—exposing how, in the inverted values of Greenham, Marks and Spencer clothing was considered subversive—highlights the fact that in terms of lived reality, the communitarianism of the camp meant that women felt obliged to join in and fit in. Coincidentally, in Chapter 1, interviewee Whitman talks about subverting Marks and Spencer clothes as punk style. A further connection is that just as with punk, despite the postmodern techniques adopted to customize dress and selves into new gendered positions, ultimately the group realities of particular sites played a part in how women embodied the style and espoused the camp's values. From an embodied perspective, dress at Greenham, and the potentials created by gaps and layers to fashion new subjectivities, were often rooted in pragmatic concerns of what might, or might not, be acceptable. Johnson elaborates on this,

noting that after 1982 lesbianism became one of the dominant values at Greenham that was difficult to reject:

> …because there came a time when to be a lesbian at Greenham was also – it almost inverted the social structures in the rest of life. Where in the rest of life lesbians were marginalised and often in the closet, often expect to be in the closet, often hiding their sexuality, often discriminated against because of their sexuality.
>
> At Greenham, it was like that almost became inverted. That even women that later quite clearly turned out to be heterosexual felt that if they wanted to join the club, they had to be lesbian, they had to look lesbian, they had to act lesbian. They had to be part of that community.
>
> That was another of, I think, the hidden discriminations against this woman who wore Marks and Spencer's clothing was that, you know, she was heterosexual and clearly was not part of the gang. (Johnson, interview)

Certainly Greenham gave women the chance to play out and develop ideas proliferating in second-wave feminism, as discussed in the secondary literature about life at the camp.[74] This involved the rejection of heterosexual conventions and the free expression of homosexual relations. Kidron presents a more positive view:

> In all my time I never didn't feel lesbian enough. In all my time those women that wanted to be in their own space were allowed to be, without worry or comment, and those other women who were in a more inclusive space were in that space. That is part of the democracy of it, that it can allow both things to be true. (Kidron, interview)

There was a significant presence at Greenham of women who had been part of the more intellectual consciousness-raising groups in the 1970s, and who were readers of some of the more progressive literature and magazines. *Cosmopolitan* and *Spare Rib* magazine circulated widely, and camp members had strong links with *The Guardian*'s Women's Page. (Spring, interview) In Roseneil's documentation of life at Greenham, she recalls that

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[74] See Hipperson and Junor, 2005; Beth Junor, *Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp: A History of Non-Violent Resistance, 1984-1995* (London: Working Press, 1995); Roseneil, *Common Women*.

> The social environment at Greenham was one of often intense interaction and rapid change…Women living at and visiting Greenham, as well as those working in the close-knit local groups which met frequently, engaged in a great deal of discussion. Besides meetings in which the politics of actions, both internal and external, were discussed, much time at the camp was spent sitting around the fire talking about politics and personal experience.[75]

From this perspective, and for the women who were involved in this aspect of camp activity, the range of ideas and discourse available at Greenham was continually broadened by the influx of new women who kept adding to the layered effect of the camp.

> The women who constituted Greenham began as a heterogeneous collectivity, remained so throughout, and left Greenham still with many differences in political orientation and self-identity between them.[76]

The constant change of residents and the intellectual exchange at the camp offered an opportunity to layer and nuance knowledge and consciousness about being a woman, and the chance to adopt and amalgamate subcultural and alternative styles from feminist and woman-centric discourses to demonstrate that any fixed idea of woman or womanhood was in fact the product of various social technologies. One way that these ideas were projected at the camp was through the collage and salvage aesthetic that is evident at Greenham: women reclaimed and reused objects and materials to transform them into visual symbols that subscribed to the wider communitarian ethos of the camp—creating rainbow banners, peace symbols and flags, for example. Similar techniques of appropriation had been seen within the historical avant-garde and in traditional subcultural practice as forms of resistance, as discussed in the previous chapter. What was different at Greenham was that from a gendered perspective, the embodied collage and salvage aesthetic, based on found objects and recycled clothes, was also generative of new subject positions. This corresponds with Judith Butler's thesis that we

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[75] Roseneil, *Disarming Patriarchy*, p.144.
[76] Ibid., p.143.

can create categories that are in some sense new ones by means of artful parody of the old ones.[77] This is an example of how the idea of 'new-old' mentioned earlier in the chapter was achieved.

Thus the embodied collage and salvage aesthetic can be read as a performative articulation of 'otherness', in contrast not only to men but also to the other 'non-Greenham' women in the area. The Greenham camp was in close proximity to Newbury, a conservative market town in Berkshire, where support for the women was mixed. While some locals certainly opened up their houses to the women, and often joined some of the actions,[78] others were actively hostile: in 1983 banners with the slogans 'Peace Women You Disgust Us', 'Clean Up and Get Out' were paraded.[79] One resident wrote in the *Newbury Weekly News* that the women were lucky not to get ejected from this 'once nice, clean town and be given the good thrashing they deserve'.[80] On 12 February 1984, local residents went as far as forming a resistance movement called Ratepayers Against Greenham Encampments (RAGE). They issued a series of advertisements campaigning against the women at Greenham in the local press, several of them adorned with drawings of a butch, spike-haired peace woman sitting astride a cruise missile. Other residents took the law into their own hands and cut off the women's water supply, or dumped pig's blood and maggots in benders, as experienced by Johnson. (Johnson, interview) The tension and antagonism created between these groups and the Greenham women, despite being difficult and unpleasant for the latter, gave them a more concrete sense of opposition.

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[77] Butler, *Gender Trouble*; Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York; London: Routledge, 1993).
[78] David Fairhall, *Common Ground: The Story of Greenham* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2006), p.70.
[79] Gareth Parry, 'Punches thrown as housewives face campaigners', *The Guardian*, 2 June 1983, p.6.
[80] James D. Duffett, 'Peace women lucky not to be kicked out', *Newbury Weekly News*, 24 November 1983, p.32.

Greenham time

Greenham women's embodied protests were not just space- and site-dependent, they were also articulated temporally, where dress played a central role in redefining Greenham as women's time and thus a space for new subjective expressions. Historians of the period, notably Sheila Rowbotham and Sally Alexander, have demonstrated how social histories of Britain look different from women's perspectives,[81] while feminist postmodern theorists, in their attempts to dismantle universalizing tendencies and essentialist interpretations of women, have brought a focus to the politics of location and women's standpoints in their theorisations of women's experience and histories.[82] Within this framework, the idea of 'layering' as alternative cognitive praxis comes to the fore once again as we analyse how Greenham women chose to undermine conventional responses to time through performative disruptions based on the merging and looping of their different temporal frames, whether public, feminist, utopian, or day-to-day.

At Greenham, women were caught between dominant historical narratives and their own gendered experiences. Thus they drew on their lived realities in public time, that is the national socio-political time of Britain in the 1970s and early 1980s. Then, as we will see, they inverted the conventions of this time in line with personal ideals and general ideas—as well as practicalities—discovered and discussed at the camp. The notion of the everyday and of women's daily experiences was of major significance during the Women's Liberation Movement; it was a central concern in consciousness-raising groups where, for those women who attended, there was the chance to share personal life experiences in the belief that common patterns would emerge among them. These patterns were identified as demonstrating that female experience, rather than being exclusive to the individual, was

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[81] Sally Alexander, *Becoming a Woman: and Other Essays in 19th and 20th Century Feminist History* (London: Virago, 1994); Sheila Rowbotham, *Threads through Time: Writings on History and Autobiography* (London: Penguin, 1999).
[82] *Feminist Standpoint Reader*; Hartsock; Linda J. Nicholson, *Feminism* (New York; London: Routledge, 1990).

rooted in systemic oppression and gender inequality. Complex questions about gendered identity therefore emerged, and feminist writers such as Sheila Rowbotham argued in 1973 that whilst 'women's liberation does have strands of the older equal-rights feminism,…it is something more.'[83] She was suggesting that it possessed a more radical feminist consciousness that was collective and revolutionary, and held the potential to re-theorise, or change the meaning of the words that had defined women and their roles.[84]

During the 1970s the Women's Liberation Movement made great strides towards equality, but it also split into different factions and strategies as groups of women prioritised their own values, concerns and ideologies.[85] One strand, radical feminism, was specifically concerned with the perception that militarism and war are driven and perpetuated by gender relations. As academic and feminist researcher Cynthia Cockburn has argued, women who took this view often supported women-only or women-centred anti-militarization or peace movements so as to avoid patriarchal methods of campaigning; separatist camps were therefore popular because they offered women a feeling of security.[86]

Radical feminism, which emerged in Britain through the ideas of American activists,[87] also relied heavily on the idea that women had special moral attributes, and that being or becoming a 'woman-identified-woman'[88] was the best and most effective path to emancipation. Recognising this essentialist position and strategizing around it would,

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[83] Sheila Rowbotham, *Woman's Conciousness, Man's World* ([S.l.]: Penguin, 1973), p.ix.
[84] Ibid., p.33.
[85] Chris Beasley, *What Is Feminism? An Introduction to Feminist Theory (*London: Sage, 1999); Heidi Safia Mirza*, Black British Feminism: A Reader* (London: Routledge, 1997); Pugh.
[86] Cynthia Cockburn, *From Where We Stand: War, Women's Activism and Feminist Analysis* (London: Zed, 2007).
[87] Some key radical feminists were Shulamith Firestone, Kathie Sarachild, Ti-Grace Atkinson, Carol Hanisch, Judith Brown, and Valerie Solanas. See Alice Echols, *Daring to Be Bad: Radical Feminism in America, 1967-1975* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989).
[88] This phrase was used in a ten-page manifesto by the American group Radicalesbians in 1970, available at http://library.duke.edu/rubenstein/scriptorium/wlm/womid/ [accessed 31 July 2012].

according to feminist theorists of the time, enable new ways of seeing, thinking, feeling,

living, loving and experiencing the female body.

> We need to imagine a world in which every woman is the residing genius of her own
> body. In such a world women will truly create new life, bringing forth…the visions,
> and the thinking, necessary to sustain, console, and alter human
> experience…Sexuality, politics, intelligence, power, motherhood, work, community,
> intimacy will develop new meaning; thinking itself will be transformed.[89]

The focus on the woman's body as the locus of a new world order was also central to French

feminist scholarship and *l'écriture feminine*, developed in the 1970s and 1980s as a way of

reprioritising women's experience and using female nature as a point from which to

deconstruct language, philosophy, psychoanalysis, social practices and the direction of

patriarchal culture. This particular position turned to *féminité* as a challenge to male-centered

thinking. Theorists Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray and Hélène Cixous argued that for women

resistance can take place in the form of *jouissance*, that is, in the direct re-experience of the

physical pleasures of infancy and of later sexuality, repressed but not obliterated by the Law

of the Father.[90] Irigaray and Cixous developed their analysis to emphasise how new female-

centred languages, based on the body, can establish sites of *difference*, from which

phallogocentric concepts and controls can be taken apart not only in theory but also in

practice.[91]

Kristeva, on the other hand, distanced herself from the valorisation of sexual difference to

focus on the distinction between the semiotic and symbolic as means through which to

explore female subjectivity, particularly through ideas of abjection, as discussed in Chapter 1.

She also focuses on how women's bodies can engender a politics of resistance based on

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[89] Adrienne Rich, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (New York: Norton, 1976), p.292.
[90] *New French Feminisms*, p.36.
[91] Helene Cixous*,* 'The laugh of the Medusa', tr. by Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen, *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 1:4 (1976), 875-93; Irigaray, *The Sex Which is Not One*.

temporal fluidity that she associates with 'women's time'. In her essay of the same title

Kristeva argues that female subjectivity is divided between cyclical, natural time—such as

repetition, gestation, the biological clock—and monumental time, such as eternity, myths of

resurrection, or the cult of maternity. Kristeva identifies the purpose of the feminist project of

her generation as giving

> [A] language to the intra-subjective and corporeal experiences left mute by culture in the past. [. . .] [women] have undertaken a veritable exploration of the *dynamic of signs* [. . .]. By demanding recognition of an irreducible identity, without equal in the opposite sex and, as such, exploded, plural, fluid, in a certain way non-identical, this feminism situates itself outside the linear time of identities which communicate through projection and revindication.[92]

Kristeva discerned in the succeeding generation the emergence of 'aesthetic practices'

devoted to demystifying 'a community of language as a universal, unifying tool which

totalizes and equalizes'.[93] Speaking globally, Kristeva posited women's creative time against

epic time. Such a strategy, as well as many others that correspond with the feminist discourse

mentioned in this section, can be identified at Greenham and these are discussed next,

particularly in terms of women's embodied daily routines and experiences.

Radicality of the day-to-day

Everyday life at Greenham was unpredictable, due to actions, evictions and the weather. On a

daily basis, the camp members remained set on disrupting and distorting ideas concerning the

legitimacy of war, which Greenham women believed was yoked to the everyday, ingrained

assertions of patriarchy. There was an underlying conviction, therefore, to break the

conventions and patterns of everyday social orders in order to dismantle the structures that

propped them up.

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[92] Julia Kristeva, 'Women's Time', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 7:1 (1981), 13-35 (p.19).
[93] Ibid., p.35.

One way that Greenham women did this was to dress according to perceptions of threat, and according to the fact that they saw the everyday as filled with uncertainty, risk and danger.

> We were being evicted all the time. You never knew what was going to happen, you might not have your stuff at the end of a day. When the bailiffs came you put on everything you had. (Walker, interview)

> I remember once coming back to my bender and everything was gone. (Johnson, interview)

Women wore layers of clothes not just to keep out the cold, but also to safeguard their possessions by wearing them on their bodies. 'Certainly towards the end of my time evictions were daily so we didn't have many things. So you wore like a snail your house on your back.' (Kidron, interview) In this way Greenham women demonstrated, through dress, that the everyday was not an unproblematic reality, based on the assumption 'that it is simply "out there", as a palpable reality to be gathered up',[94] but in fact a site of uncertainty. Just like the soldiers on the other side of the perimeter fence, women dressed strategically, both for practicality and for protection against the possible physical threats of bailiffs, being dragged away by the police, or vigilante attacks.

> I remember during actions that we would need layers and tough boots because if we were being dragged you wouldn't want to have sandals and a dress on. (Johnson, interview) (Figures 15 and 16)

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[94] Highmore, in: *The Everyday Life Reader*, p.1.

Image unavailable due to copyright reasons.

Figure 15 Women arrested at Greenham Common Peace Camp. Courtesy of BBC News online (undated).[95]

Image unavailable due to copyright reasons.

Figure 16 'Police in Action as a Greenham Common Protestor is Arrested' © Mirrorpix (undated).

[95] 'In pictures: Greenham Common protests', BBC News online 5 September 2011 http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-berkshire-14760039 [accessed 19 September 2011].

Greenham women had to dress to be 'ready'. As Johnson says, 'this idea that you had to be at any moment…you kind of had to be ready, whether you were in bed or out of bed. You sort of had to be ready for almost anything. You know, and you sometimes had to catnap'. (Johnson, interview) Women would also use 'dressing-up' for actions as many of the layered tactics of resistance. Jean Hutchinson, a camper, remembers how often serious protest was dressed in fanciful, even childish clothes, to make it more effective: 'We were able to do things, in an apparently gentle way, that were actually hard as nails. Teddy bears, snakes, splashing holy water on gates—it terrified the Americans'.[96] Greenham certainly emphasized themes of carnival and play that existed at all levels: non-hierarchical decision-making, restoration of ancient symbols, actions and trouble-making that involved ingenious, bawdy, musical, humorous tactics. As we have seen in punk, and as we will see in other subcultural styles like hip-hop, which I discuss next in Chapter 3, through carnival, play and humour Greenham women followed embodied and experiential forms of expression where they would often exaggerate their bodies and selves, with painted faces, unusual haircuts, bizarre clothes or nudity, to demonstrate their 'otherness' as protest. In Kidron's view,

> [T]he protest was theatrical, because the protest was designed to attract attention. The clothes were gay. Not in that sense, but in the sense of a circus, because the protest was theatrical, because it was designed to attract attention. Do you know what I mean? If they'd built huts, and sat inside, and never came out, what was the fucking point? I think that the alternative is a result of the conditions. I don't think alternative was the style choice. I think that's really important. (Kidron, interview)

In 1983, the *Daily Express* picked up on the carnivalesque aspect, describing court events as the 'Greenham comedy show' starring women 'with faces painted white and wearing mock

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[96] Jean Hutchinson, in: Fairhall, p.87.

funeral shrouds'.[97] These tactics have been described by women who lived there as creating

'discursive dissonance'[98] that was disruptive on many levels at once.

The painted faces suggest that masking is being used as a tactic of subversive play. This resonates with theorisations of masquerade in discussions of femininity that have been central to the psychoanalytic theory of sexuality. In fact, the term 'masquerade', used in relation to women's gender identity, was coined by the psychoanalyst Joan Riviere as early as 1929.[99] She presented femininity as a mask adopted by women in order to be better accepted in a social world codified by men. Ideas of masquerade, masking, concealing, and pretending have subsequently been investigated in order to problematise and even dismantle totalizing and essentialist interpretations of femininity. For example, Butler, drawing on Lacanian theory, has investigated strategies of masquerade in the masculine order:

> Women are said to 'be' the Phallus in the sense that they maintain the power to reflect or represent the 'reality' of the self-grounding posture of the masculine subject, a power which, if withdrawn, would break up the foundational illusions of the masculine position [...]. Hence, 'being' the Phallus is always a 'being for' a masculine subject who seeks to reconfirm and augment his identity through the recognition of that 'being for'.[100]

The relationship between the sexes can be seen as a game where women masquerade, since masquerade, as Butler sees it, is the 'ontological specification of the Phallus'.[101] Butler argues that therefore all gender 'ontology is reducible to the play of appearances'.[102] Irigaray, in her analysis of this theme, suggests that in masquerade women submit to the dominant economy of desire in an attempt to remain 'on the market': a woman has to become a normal woman, that is, has to enter the masquerade of femininity, has to enter into 'a system of values that is

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[97] 'The Greenham "Comedy Show"', *Daily Express*, 16 April 1983, p.3 [no author listed].
[98] Roseneil, *Disarming Patriarchy*, p.143.
[99] Joan Riviere, 'Womanliness as Masquerade', *International Journal of Psychoanalysis,* 10 (1929), 303-13.
[100] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p.58.
[101] Ibid., p.60.
[102] Ibid.

not hers, and in which she can "appear" and circulate only when enveloped in the needs/desires/fantasies of others, namely men'.[103]

Irigaray interprets masquerade as a mobilizing tactic for women within traditional patriarchy. Butler, on the other hand, is suggesting that masquerade can be understood differently as *being in itself*, as being the performative production that holds the potential for disruption and the destabilisation of essentialised meaning. Butler's theorization is particularly apt in relation to Greenham women's strategies of 'dressing up', where the parodic and comedic use of masks is used as a form of resistance to the presentation of women within the authority of the courts.

Alongside this theme, the use of humour and mockery correspond, theoretically, with feminist conceptualizations of laughter as critical engagement, formed in the margins to radically challenge hegemonic narratives of patriarchy and heterosexuality. In particular, Hélène Cixous' essay 'The laugh of the Medusa' shows how the power of laughter can disrupt traditional patriarchal narrative conventions. Cixous critically interrogates structures of phallocentric language to offer a writing of feminine sexuality—*l'ecriture feminine*, as mentioned earlier. One of the main thrusts of her writing is a focus on linguistic structures that negate or erase female sexuality, or perpetuate a binary system of privileged terms of signification. Cixous explores the ways in which female sexuality can be re-imagined outside of phallocentric classifications and structures. She begins, 'I shall speak about women's writing: about what it will do. Woman must write her self: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies—for the same reasons, by the same law, with the same fatal goal'.[104] 'The laugh of the

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[103] Irigaray, *The Sex Which is Not One*, p.134.
[104] Cixous.

Medusa' thus undermines traditional philosophical practices by refusing logic and linearity and by developing a methodology that is simultaneously writerly and bodily.

As mentioned above, not only does laughter offset the language of patriarchy, it can also displace the language of heterosexuality. Butler argues: '[T]here is a subversive laughter in the pastiche-effect of parodic practices in which the original, the authentic, and the real are themselves constituted as effect'.[105] Butler is commenting on practices of drag, noting the potential for parodic practices to challenge the notion of originality, authenticity, or reality. Thus drag illuminates and exposes hegemonic masculinity and femininity as effects. Greenham women incorporated the fun, the bizarre, the bawdy, the pleasurable in their range of 'dressing up', as 'a different way of doing politics'. (Johnson, interview) They referenced historical examples that reflected a time when women were powerful and independent, from anarchist, socialist and pacifist groups back to the witches of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Europe, the anarchist wing of the English Civil War, the Diggers and the Ranters: these were all commonly cited in Greenham posters and newsletters.[106] (Figure 17)

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[105] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, pp.186-7.
[106] Roseneil, *Common Women*.

Figure 17 Poster designed by Greenham Common women calling for a peace camp in Scotland (undated).

The use of unexpected tools, like humour, enhanced the non-violent protests of the Greenham women. One action involved the women dressing up as teddy bears, covering themselves in honey, and climbing over the perimeter fence to face the soldiers on the other side, who, when they tried to move the women, were left covered in honey.[107] This tactic was more than just irreverence. It turned on its head the infantilisation of women by the establishment and the association of women with domesticity and childcare within political frameworks: it gave

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[107] Video footage of this action can be seen at the 'Your Greenham' website http://www.yourgreenham.co.uk/#teddy [accessed 3 August 2012].

women the opportunity to 'laugh at politics'.[108] (Johnson, video interview) A decade earlier the teddy bear had caused controversy in Britain when it had been used—in the guise of 'Rupert Bear'— in a collage and montage image poised in a sexually explicit position. The picture had been published in 1970 in the 'Schoolkids Oz' edition of the underground publication *Oz*,[109] resulting in a high-profile and highly controversial obscenity trial. The tactics of shock and senselessness that were used in writing relating to radical practices and protests in the 1970s underground, and as part of punk style, as noted in Chapter 1, continued to shape the political interventions of the 1980s. These can be understood as continuously looping back, in a layered fashion, to the strategies of the historical avant-garde. Peter Bürger noted, in his *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, that for the avant-garde artist, 'Shock is aimed for as a stimulus to change one's conduct of life', adding that 'it is the means to break through aesthetic immanence and to usher in…a change in the recipient's life praxis'.[110] Dorothée Brill has analysed the way that movements such as Dadaism, and later Fluxus, used concepts of shock 'to change society or—to formulate it less strongly—to have an impact upon the artists' sociocultural context and the recipient's engagement therewith'.[111] In fact, she claims that the notion of 'shock' was the preoccupation of many disciplines in the twentieth century,[112] and from a gendered perspective we see how connected ideas of disgust and the abject have shaped contemporary feminist theories about subjectivity through the work of scholars such as Kristeva.[113]

Shock and senselessness at Greenham applied not only to the 'dressed' body, but also to the way in which that body acted in the everyday, and how it was 'maintained'. At Greenham,

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[108] Quote from video interview with Rebecca Johnson at 'Your Greenham' website http://www.yourgreenham.co.uk/#teddy [accessed 3 August 2012].
[109] *Oz* (28), May 1970.
[110] Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), p.80.
[111] Dorothée Brill, *Shock and the Senseless in Dada and Fluxus* (Hanover, N.H.: Dartmouth College Press: University Press of New England, 2010), p.2.
[112] Brill, p.4.
[113] Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*.

women did not adhere to traditional routines of housekeeping, domestic order, tidiness or cleanliness, as mentioned earlier in the chapter, which meant that they did not adhere to the conventions of the 'everyday'. In Mike Featherstone's view,

> The everyday world is the one which the hero departs from, leaving behind the sphere of care and maintenance (women, children and the old), only to return to its acclaim should his tasks be completed successfully. A basic contrast then, is that the heroic life is the sphere of danger, violence and the courting of risk whereas everyday life is the sphere of women, reproduction and care.[114]

Inversely, then, at Greenham women's everyday world fits with Featherstone's heroic—and by implication, male—life, and the everyday that he describes for women does not describe Greenham life, because of the camp's exceptional circumstances and culture. Not only did Greenham women break the conventional theorisation of 'everyday life', they did not necessarily observe the cycles of day and night, either.

> We might get vigilante attacks in the night that would wake us all up. Or we'd be up early with the noise of road traffic. Some women would sleep whenever they wanted regardless of night and day, depending on how they were feeling or what they were in the mood for. It was a very free environment. (Harrower, interview)

Daily life did not start with traditional morning routines. Without easy access to water, daily morning washing was often difficult. 'Most of us washed in cold water. It was much easier.' (Johnson, interview) 'You took your clothes in to Newbury for a weekly clean, or women took clothes to the launderette for other women.' (Roseneil, interview) The maintenance of the body, and of clothing, within everyday cycles was distorted at Greenham. In an earlier work, Featherstone had identified that media and commercial interests 'have found the "looking good" and "feeling great" health education message to be a saleable commodity'. He saw body maintenance as a central endorsement of consumer lifestyle. Within this model,

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[114] Mike Featherstone, 'The heroic life and everyday life', *Theory, Culture & Society,* 9:1 (1992), 159-182.

Featherstone argued, women's slimness, appearance and presentation is projected as necessary to achieve social acceptability. 'The instrumental strategies which body maintenance demands of the individual resonate with deep-seated features of consumer culture which encourage individuals to negotiate their social relationships and approach their free-time activities with a calculating frame of mind.'[115]

Life at Greenham was not concerned with maintaining the body according to the expectations of consumer culture. Living outdoors, layering clothes and dealing with the realities of makeshift homes created, for Greenham women, a very different sense of everyday necessity and reality. (Figure 18)

Image unavailable due to copyright reasons.

Figure 18 Women living outdoors at Greenham (undated) © Elizabeth Spring.

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[115] Mike Featherstone, 'The body in consumer culture', in: *The Body: Social Process and Cultural Theory,* ed. by Mike Hepworth, Mike Featherstone, and Brian Turner (London: SAGE, 1991), pp. 170-96 (p.186).

Greenham life undermined conventional domestic ideals in the broadest sense. 'If we didn't want to wash and iron our clothes, no one cared in this environment. Personally I was very clean and tidy but this was irrelevant at the camp. You weren't judged for this.' (Walker, interview) The camp's conditions were harsh, but as long as the women managed to avoid eviction the days passed in talking, braiding hair, playing, making friendship bracelets, knitting and sewing.

> It was a bit like being back at school, we'd have so much time to kill, sometimes it was incredibly boring, so we'd end up shaving our head for a laugh, or dying our hair, or we'd make bits of jewellery out of things we could find just because it was something to do. (Spring, interview) (Figure 19)

Image unavailable due to copyright reasons.

Figure 19 Women having a laugh at Greenham (undated) © Elizabeth Spring.

Second-wave feminism had presented the home and housework as an antagonistic concept, as mentioned earlier. Simone de Beauvoir had claimed that the home is the sphere of

immanence, not transcendence,[116] and Betty Friedan had developed a rhetoric of leaving home as her feminist treatise.[117] In everyday life theory, the home, when considered from a philosophical and cultural studies perspective, was presented as much as a metaphysical symbol as a geographical destination. Lefebvre, for example, perceives the petit-bourgeois individual to be 'at home' in the world,[118] thus relating 'home' to complacency and pretentiousness. Meanwhile, the vocabulary of modernity is deliberately anti-domestic, focusing on movement and boundary-crossing, and on the city street as the site of chance encounters and adventures.[119] Within this frame freedom and agency are presented by movement though public space.[120] Michel de Certeau goes as far as to dedicate *The Practice of Everyday Life* to 'a common hero, a ubiquitous character, walking in countless thousands on the streets'.[121]

Yet de Certeau does pay attention in this work to domestic space as a political space, and he sees home as an active practising of place, so that even if 'home' is synonymous with familiarity and routine, that familiarity is actively produced over time, mostly through the efforts of women. Through such theorisations, home is exposed as a performative concept, and alternative visions and politics of home can therefore be conceived. bell hooks identified that for African-Americans 'one's homeplace was the one site where one could freely confront the issue of humanisation, where one could resist'.[122] At Greenham, women made their benders and their camps their homes, redefining static definitions of both 'home' and 'home-making'. As Kidron observes, 'I think you should also be aware that I think that the

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[116] de Beauvoir.
[117] Friedan.
[118] Henri Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life* (London: Verso, 1991), p.43.
[119] Christopher Reed, *Not at Home: The Suppression of Domesticity in Modern Art and Architecture* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1996).
[120] Lawrence Grossberg references mobility when he refers to nomadic subjects 'wandering through the ever-changing places and spaces, vectors and apparatuses of everyday life'. Lawrence Grossberg, 'Wandering Audiences, Nomadic Critics', *Cultural Studies,* 2:3 (1988), 377-391 (p.384).
[121] de Certeau, p.*v.*
[122] bell hooks, 'Homeplace: A Site of Resistance', in *Yearning*, p.42.

benders, as they were called, were also clothing. When your house is constantly removed…and when you don't have many clothes, I think that the houses were their clothes, and how they decorated them, and how they lived within them, because they were more like tortoises than people who live in buildings'. (Kidron, interview) The fact that in this comment clothing and shelter are collapsed into a single category highlights how any articulation of home—and all the routines associated with it—was anchored within fluid spatial and temporal realities.

During a 'typical' day at Greenham, then, identities were free from traditional roles; in the new physical spaces that the women created at the Greenham gates, they demonstrated autonomy and self-definition while drawing on layered continuities between their pasts and their present. This was Greenham women's experience of daily modern life, constructed on their terms.

In fact daily practice and everyday life had to be constantly renegotiated because of regular evictions by the police. During raids the women's possessions would often be removed, and as a result they had to rely on sharing, improvisation, and donations. 'Donations of clothes would come and they would be put in a central heap in a bender or a tent. Everyone was free to go in and take whatever they wanted or needed.' (Harrower, interview) Donated clothes were very often cast-offs, and not always in pristine condition. For many of the women this was of no concern. The shabby, dishevelled look was consistent throughout the camp so individual women did not necessarily feel conspicuous if they were wearing torn or ripped clothes, as long as they were warm and practical. A reliance on the distribution of clothing, rather than the consumption of fashion items, paired Greenham with other countercultural groups. '[Greenham women] were undermining the bought. They were undermining consumerism. They were undermining masculine notions of how women should be. They

167

were undermining fathers' ideas of what girls should be. They were undermining soldiers' ideas about what protesters should be. They were undermining with their visual thing.' (Kidron, interview)

Alexandra Palmer and Hazel Clark, in their work on second-hand fashion, note that as anti-fashion, second-hand clothes and used garments act as statement of anti-consumption, and have been worn as such since the 1960s hippie movement.[123] Similarly, the distribution of old clothes disrupts the linearity of conventional consumption that sees 'either the act of purchase or the point of production as the key defining moment in a commodity's biography'.[124] Instead, the distribution of second-hand items suggests the continuous and circuitous nature of the creation of meaning, where the value of the garment is constantly renegotiated by a new wearer, and shaped anew by constant re-personalisation. Kidron makes reference to the cyclical, reiterative nature of objects and generational experience alike when she says, 'So there are many layers. Certainly towards the end of my time in there the evictions were daily. So they didn't have very much stuff, and the whole thing of layering, which is absolutely hilarious... Looking at my daughter now, who's twelve: the layers and layers and layers, and under the school uniform they all wear a fancy vest that peeps out, until the teacher says enough… it's really excellent'. (Kidron, interview) This view not only loops back to notions of 'new-old' presented earlier in this chapter, it also corresponds with Arjun Appadurai's analysis that value is rarely an inherent property of objects, but rather a judgement made about them by consumers and traders.[125] Greenham women were proving this point.

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[123] Alexandra Palmer and Hazel Clark, *Old Clothes, New Looks: Second Hand Fashion* (Oxford: Berg, 2005).
[124] Nicky Gregson and Louise Crewe, *Second-Hand Cultures* (Oxford ; New York, NY: Berg, 2003), p.111. See also Ben Fine, *The World of Consumption: The Material and Cultural Revisited*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2002).
[125] Arjun Appadurai, *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p.3.

Women's layered visions

> I learnt so much at Greenham, it was like my coming of age. It was my awakening.
> (Allen, interview)

As an all-women camp from 1982, Greenham offered opportunities for a diversity of women's subjective views and expressions, as well as self-exploration, to emerge and develop.

> They [Greeham women] are living out a physical and mental resistance to a predominant order. They…are challenging the comfortable prevalence of the familial ideology, by establishing themselves in women-only camps outside a weapons base and by publicly embracing alternatives to authorised heterosexuality and the biological imperative of conventional motherhood.[126]

In some parts of the camp, but certainly not all, there was a desire and impulse to create a feminist utopia based on ideas of 'woman-identified-woman'. As Roseneil writes, 'As a community and social movement Greenham cohered as much, if not more, through the emotional ties of friendship, love and sexual intimacy as through shared politics and philosophies'.[127] Roseneil says that Adrienne Rich's article 'Compulsory heterosexuality and lesbian existence' and Lillian Faderman's book *Surpassing the Love of Men* were widely read at Greenham, fermenting ideas, as argued by Rich, that love between women was needed as part of the feminist political project of transforming the dominant social relations of gender and sexuality and as an everyday life-sustaining pleasure.[128] The use of women's symbols was therefore a common motif at the camp, which eventually developed a radical feminist identity which in some cases made women who were living there feel uncomfortable, and even unwelcome.

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[126] Young, p.84.
[127] Roseneil, *Common Women,* p.282.
[128] Adrienne Rich, 'Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society,* 5:4 (1980), 631-660.

> I was twenty-eight when I got to the camp and I was interested in life-affirming, maternal values that were rooted in being kind. It was the slow gentle feminism of the 1970s that I liked, I was about slowly changing the world through thoughtfulness and caring about the next generation but I wasn't about gender separation and I never used the word patriarchy—too radical. After a while, when the younger girls began to arrive after 1982 with their separatism and radicalism I left, I didn't like it. (Spring, interview)

Such comments—and those cited earlier in the chapter by Johnson and Kidron—indicate that Greenham had its own share of internal tensions and divisions, as well as political in-fighting. However, as an alternative temporal and spatial site the camp offered a continuous opportunity for the dynamic and performative recreation of the self, sometimes on a daily basis through the arbitrary tactical ruptures of actions, or over the longer term according to the cyclical rhythm through which women underwent personal awakenings and transformations. 'So what I'd say of the big idea is that unlike anywhere else I've ever lived, in my life, Greenham was phenomenally relaxing. Because you lived in a community with whose general aims you agreed. That is something that very few of us really, really experience, and it's something that you may not feel, or people may not feel, provides tension for them. But actually I believe it does.' (Kidron, interview) She also adds that,

> [T]he life, the life of self-expression, and the life of every day starting up with the process of imagining your day, in pursuit of a general goal that we all agreed with, is a very, very powerful thing.

> So I actually think that, in the biggest sense, it was the best place I've ever lived. (Kidron, interview)

It was precisely because the camp ran on multi-layered identities that were constantly in flux that it proved subversive and transgressive.

> At Greenham, classifications and dichotomies have continually been disrupted, upturned, burst open. The Greenham women have transgressed lines of gender, territoriality, sexuality, familiarity, subverted oppositions of culture/nature,

active/passive, father/mother, man/woman. They have touched in their protest, in their choice to live at Greenham, a raw nerve in the symbolic content of the dominant discourse.[129]

The layering of identity and image at Greenham created different series of hybrid events and patchworks of moments and histories, collage effects driven by a salvage aesthetic, coupled with a desire to change the world, that engendered both material and subjective 'otherness'.

> Imagine a bomb up the bum of suburbia. But the bomb is made of organic flour, wrapped in ivy, painted in funky colours and thrown by pixies; half punk, half pagan. The spirit of the direct action protest movement is like this, half 'spiky', half 'fluffy'—half politically hard, half warmly, humanly soft. The movement boils with life lived to the brink, to the full, its emotion intense, raw, extreme.[130]

The idea of 'half' and of the hybridity of Greenham women described in this evocative quotation returns us to ideas of in-betweenness, connecting us once again to notions of the liminal, as discussed earlier in the chapter. These ideas resonate with the Greenham 'layer' as a theoretical motif for creating new subject positions that are both intertextual and intersubjective. Kidron says, 'But I think women who went to Greenham found their voice, loved their body, found their brave courage, and possibly their physicality, which is separate from their body. I think probably to a woman they found a sense of expression…that they would not have found without Greenham'. (Kidron, interview) It also connects with the theoretical conceptualization of the punk 'cut' from Chapter 1, which is consistently evident at Greenham in that it plays a part in the cutting apart of any whole or totalizing narrative of the self.

Hybridity is a way to move beyond binary thinking or classifications, and it therefore lends itself to analysis of subjective histories as 'other'. In postcolonial theory, in the writings of

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[129] Young, p.63.
[130] Kate Evans, *Copse: The Cartoon Book of Tree Protesting* (Biddestone: Orange Dog, 1998), p.205.

Homi Bhabha, for example, it is used as way of interrupting sustained historicity and valorising the struggles of marginalized subjectivities. Bhabha says that, 'My purpose in specifying the enunciative present in the articulation of culture is to provide a process by which objectified others may be turned into subjects of their history and experience'.[131] This idea of hybridity as a form of resistance to essentialising histories is a central theme in my next chapter (3), entitled 'Black British Women in Hip-Hop, 1984-1997', in which I discuss how hip-hop style in Britain drew specifically on the technologies of bricolage, translation and hybridisation that were present in the punk 'cut' and the Greenham 'layer', and evolved these into a style that allowed women to break racialising black narratives that do not account for gendered difference. Ideas of liminality and in-betweenness are further developed in reference to the hip-hop 'break'. In hip-hop music, this refers to a regular interruptive composition; I also theorise it, however, as an agentive action in black women's disruption of totalising discourse through style. The chapters continue to cross-reference each other, and in this way the performative nature of Greenham Peace Camp, and punk before it, and the opportunity these movements offered women to redefine and renegotiate embodied subjectivities, is demonstrated as having a continuing impact, throughout the period under consideration, on other women and their dress styles, traditions and symbolic systems, in layered and complex ways.

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[131] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: New York: Routledge, 2004, 1994), p.178.

Chapter 3 The Hip-Hop Break: 1984-1997

> Talk about females, we got a lot to say
> There's all kinds working rap in this world today
> Females, 'cause we're sick and tired
> Of who is gonna rap, why don't you all retire?
> ('*Females (Get On Up)*' The Cookie Crew, 1987)[1]

In 1982, Malcolm McLaren turned his attention from punk to hip-hop when he

released his music single and video *Buffalo Gals.*[2] (Figure 1) It featured rapping,

scratching and breakdancing; not only did it draw inspiration from the hip-hop scene

that had emerged in the South Bronx, New York City, in the 1970s, it also showcased

the New York hip-hop group the World's Famous Supreme Team, and the video

included New York's The Rock Steady Crew.

Figure 1 Cover, *Buffalo Gals*, single by Malcolm McLaren and the World's Famous Supreme Team, 1982.

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[1] M.C. Remedee and Susie Q, *Females (Get On Up*): M.C. Remedee and Susie Q, *Females (Get On Up)* [Cookie Crew] [record], (Rhythm King, LEFT 12, 1987).
[2] Malcolm McLaren and the World's Famous Supreme Team, M *Buffalo Gals* (Charisma, 6400-732,1982).

By early 1983, the single had reached number nine in the British pop charts[3] and was one of the breakthrough hits to introduce the genre to the UK. In August 1984, the first British outdoor hip-hop festival was held in Birmingham. Within a couple of years, hip-hop parties that lasted all day (and night) were held in the UK's major cities, London, Manchester, Bristol and Birmingham. These parties were commonly referred to as 'All Dayers, All Nighters',[4] because they would start at midnight and last all night. By 1987, American hip-hop stars such as LL Cool J and Run-DMC were touring the UK, and hip-hop crews like London Posse, as well as all-female groups such as the Cookie Crew, formed in 1983, were signing recording deals.[5] (Figure 2)

Figure 2 Cover, *Rok Da House*, The Beatmasters, featuring The Cookie Crew, 1987.

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[3] For chart archive statistics see http://www.chartstats.com/release.php?release=10093 [accessed 18 September 2012].
[4] Posters of 'All Dayer, All Nighter' events were shown at the exhibition *Home Grown: the Story of UK Hip Hop*, Urbis, Manchester, 2009.
[5] The two members of Cookie Crew were Debbie Pryce, known as MC Remedee, and Susan Banfield, known as Susie Q. They signed a recording deal with Rhythm King record label in 1987.

In 1970s America hip-hop had emerged as a culture born of social and economic disenfranchisement and concerned with the mastery of urban survival. Theorists of African-American hip-hop identify its roots in blues, soul, funk and the Black Power movement,[6] and as its different strands developed—rap, graffiti, breakdancing and DJ-ing—the fashion and style associated with the culture emerged as both distinct and yet diverse, featuring tracksuits, baggy jeans, high boots, fake jewellery, baseball caps, trainers, flight jackets, dreadlocks and cornrows. The look was produced by 'dressing down' to 'dress up', a deliberately conspicuous style for black men and women to assert and affirm their Otherness, with an explicit focus on consumption for both sexes. Motifs, fabrics and colour were combined to create drama, a style of 'ghetto fabulousness',[7] constructed with attitude as a subversive discourse with multiple themes.

British hip-hop followed in similar vein. Like the music, hip-hop style in Britain, from its early manifestations, was based on sampling, and by the 1980s it included leisure and sportswear and subcultural items that drew from other contemporaneous subcultural trends, notably punk and reggae, as well as mainstream fashions. Analysis of images from two street photographers who were part of the British hip-hop scene in the 1980s gives an example of what this entailed for men and women. In a 1985 photograph by Beezer,[8] depicting Thekla, a club in Bristol, there is evidence of tracksuits, ski goggles, baseball shoes and hooded tops. (Figure 3)

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[6] See, for example, Murray Forman, 'Hip-Hop Don't Ya Stop: Hip-Hop History and Historiography', in: *That's the Joint!: The Hip-Hop Studies Reader*, ed. by Murray Forman and Mark Anthony Neal, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2012), pp.9-68.
[7] Van Dyk Lewis, 'Hip-hop fashion', in: *The Berg Companion to Fashion*, ed. Valerie Steele (Oxford: Berg, 2010), pp. 413-417 (p.416).
[8] Beezer's photographs can be seen at http://beezerphotos.com [accessed 19 September 2012].

Image unavailable due to copyright reasons.

Figure 3 'Everyone Freeze', Thekla, 1985 © Beezer.

In another image by Beezer, taken a year later at St Pauls Carnival in Bristol, there are unisex hooded tops and baggy jeans; women, some with short, cropped hair, wear oversized men's shirts as they stand in front of a wall of graffiti. (Figure 4) Beezer's photograph is entitled 'B-girl', referring specifically to girls who breakdanced.

Image unavailable due to copyright reasons.

Figure 4 'Wall Posse B-Girl', St Pauls Carnival, Bristol, 1986 © Beezer.

Beezer's photo of the group The Wild Bunch, in Camden, London, taken around the same time, shows Kangol hats, shell suits, ripped jeans and bold gold jewellery. (Figure 5)

Image unavailable due to copyright reasons.

Figure 5 'Camden', London, 1985 © Beezer.

Two years later, in images taken by Normski,[9] a British rapper, DJ and photographer, the Silver Bullet Posse are shown in London sporting tracksuits, trainers with tlaces undone, combat jackets, flight jackets and t-shirts with logos. (Figure 6)

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[9] Normski's photographs can be seen at http://www.normskiphotography.com [accessed 19 September 2012].

Figure 6 'Silver Bullet Posse', 1987 © Normski.

In hip-hop, both in America and in its diasporic outposts, style formed a critical part
of the culture's political economy. It was used to generate a double discourse, one that
creatively resisted the conventional social context while at the same time
appropriating from and mimicking the mainstream commodity system. The theme of
consumption has been central to hip-hop, and its creative contexts have never been
fully outside, or in opposition to, commodity culture, but have always involved, as
American theorist Tricia Rose says, 'struggles over public space and access to

commodified materials, equipment, and products of economic viability'.[10] She adds,
'It is a common misperception among hip hop [*sic*] artists and cultural critics that
during the early days, hip hop was motivated by pleasure rather than profit, as if the
two were incompatible'.[11]

Hip-hop, articulated through commodities, was engaged in the revision of the
meanings attached to them. This process of incorporation and reappropriation links
hip-hop specifically with punk (see Chapter 1), as well as some of the dress practices
at Greenham Common (see Chapter 2) and also the British hijab (see Chapter 4).
Aside from connections with subcultural and alternative cultural practices, in hip-hop
itself there are stylistic continuities between breakdancing, graffiti, rapping and the
musical construction based on sampling which centre around notions of flow, layering
and ruptures in time. Hip-hop's visual, physical, musical and lyrical lines are set in
motion but are also broken by the angular lines of graffiti, the rupture of flow in
breakdancing or the interruption caused by scratching in the music. This constant
interplay between themes of flow, layering and rupture is the basis of hip-hop's
creative processes of subversion and resistance, as I will discuss, but also
demonstrates how this case study connects with the agentive practices discussed in
the thesis generally.

The 'break'

The generative impact of hip-hop's rupture, or 'break', is the main focus of this
chapter. Rose has claimed that 'these effects [flow, layering, rupture] at the level of
style and aesthetics suggest affirmative ways in which profound social dislocation and

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[10] Tricia Rose, *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America* (Middletown, Conn.:
Wesleyan University Press, 1994), p.40.
[11] Ibid.

rupture can be managed, and perhaps contested, in the cultural arena'.[12] In my

discussion of gender, I am concerned with the way that hip-hop style and the use of

the break, in conjunction with ideas of cutting and layering, have been adopted as

critical strategies that defy binarisms thus moving hip-hop style beyond the

limitations of subcultural analysis based on models of power and resistance. I explore

how hip-hop style, as a product of technologies of bricolage, translation and

hybridisation, challenges essentialising visual and textual portrayals of black women,

their consumption and their socio-cultural signification, and I examine how, through

style, black British women in the 1980s and 1990s were able to create 'third spaces'

of radical openness to produce material and epistemological expressions of alterity

and freedom.

With gender as the central concern, in this research I have deliberately chosen to look

at the 'new school' period of hip-hop, from 1984 to 1997. This was when the success

of Run-DMC's MTV debut gave rap music a recognisable style identity, one that not

only inspired fans around the globe but also pushed hip-hop from the underground to

the mainstream, prompting an incredibly fast rate of commodification. The shift from

old to new school produced a complicated turn in the culture. Early hip-hop, during

the 1970s and 1980s, has been credited by theorists with creating a rich alternative

space for multicultural, cross-gender, culturally relevant, anti-racist community

building in local environments.[13] During the new school period, with rapid

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[12] Tricia Rose, 'Voices from the Margins: Rap Music and Contemporary Cultural Production', in: *The Popular Music Studies Reader*, ed. by Andy Bennett, Barry Shank, and Jason Toynbee (London: Routledge, 2006), pp.216-224 (p.218).

[13] See, for example, Craig Castleman, *Getting Up: Subway Graffiti in New York* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: MIT Press, 1982); Jeff Chang, *Can't Stop Won't Stop: A History of the Hip-Hop Generation* (London: Ebury, 2005); Nelson George, *Fresh: Hip Hop Don't Stop* (New York: Random House, 1985); *That's the Joint!: The Hip-Hop Studies Reader*; Havelock Nelson and Michael A. Gonzales, *Bring the Noise: A Guide to Rap Music and Hip-Hop Culture* (New York: Harmony Books, 1991); Gwendolyn D. Pough, *Check It While I Wreck It: Black Womanhood,*

commercialisation, a different type of hip-hop began to emerge, one that was industry-generated and that, over the last twenty years, has created what Rose calls a trinity of 'gangstas, pimps, and hoes'.[14] She argues that through commercialisation a ghetto fantasy has been produced, that has destroyed any nuanced understanding of the diversity in hip-hop, projecting instead a legacy of stereotypes that distorts blackness and sets up a black/white binary. Through commercialisation, ideas associated with the black community have been resold to black people in the form of products. Furthermore, the language, style and attitudes associated with hip-hop have become coded, understood, and performed as 'black'. She laments the fact that 'hip hop has become the breeding ground for the most explicitly exploitative and increasingly one-dimensional narratives of black ghetto life'.[15]

Within monolithic narratives, during the period under consideration hip-hop became increasingly associated with racial authenticity and an ultra-masculinist narrative that builds on a patriarchal construction of the body: masculinity is set up as hegemonic, constructed in simplistic, stylised—almost cartoonish—pastiche that is violent and misogynistic, relying on the disempowerment and objectification of women, who are 'produced' as a set of sexualized stereotypes, especially in music videos. Over the last decades, American and hip-hop feminists in particular have been preoccupied with exposing the complicated hold that hip-hop has on black women,[16] while at the same time challenging and rebuking the controlling images of media and mainstream

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Hip Hop Culture, and the Public Sphere (Boston; [Great Britain]: Northeastern University Press, 2004); Elaine B. Richardson, *Hiphop Literacies*, (London: Routledge, 2006); Rose, *Black Noise*.

[14] Tricia Rose, *The Hip Hop Wars: What We Talk About When We Talk About Hip Hop—and Why It Matters*, (New York: Basic Civitas, 2008), p.x.

[15] Ibid., p.3.

[16] T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting, *Pimps up, Ho's Down: Hip Hop's Hold on Young Black Women* (New York: New York University Press, 2007).

representations of women in hip-hop.[17] By focusing on lived experience, they have

demystified racist and misogynistic tropes of black women to discuss the multifaceted

and fluid subjectivity of black womanhood within this culture, to complicate hip-hop

as a male space[18] and to explore how hip-hop women are creating and building their

own legacies in the genre.[19]

However, this review has for the most part remained centred on the United States,

based as it is on the currents of global capitalism and the flow of the consumption of

hip-hop proceeding hegemonically from the USA outwards. My analysis of British

hip-hop in the 1980s and 1990s offers a reassessment of gender in the culture which is

recentred on to the temporal and spatial specificity of the UK. It focuses on the

performative particularities of hip-hop and its indigenization, models and idioms in

local spaces to discuss how British hip-hop developed as a distinctive, syncretic

manifestation. When Bakari Kitwana defined the 'hip-hop generation' as African-

Americans born between 1965 and 1984 he left little room for a more nuanced

discussion about black identity as cultural assimilation, appropriation and diffusion.[20]

In my counter-hegemonic analysis of gender I am concerned with the frames of

everyday blackness and Britishness. This chapter therefore provides a new

development in this thesis as it interrogates gender within the matrix of race. I explore

how through hip-hop black British women sought to write themselves into social

discourses that had historically silenced them, as part of their own politics of location,

on terms negotiated through their diasporic narratives and legacies. In particular, by

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[17] See for example Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, 2nd ed. (New York; London: Routledge, 2000); Joan Morgan, *When Chicken-Heads Come Home to Roost: A Hip-Hop Feminist Breaks It Down* (New York: Touchstone, 2000).
[18] *Home Girls Make Some Noise: Hip Hop Feminism Anthology* ed. by Gwendolyn D. Pough [et al.] (Mira Loma, CA: Parker, 2007).
[19] Ibid.
[20] Bakari Kitwana, *Hip Hop Generation* (New York: Basic Books, 2002), p.240.

theorising the hip-hop break I explore black female subjectivity as Otherness through notions of rupture, flow and layering to contribute to an understanding of the intertextuality of British black gendered history. bell hooks believes that: 'If radical postmodernist thinking is to have a transformative impact then a critical break with the notion of "authority" as "mastery over" must not simply be a rhetorical device, it must be reflected in habits of being, including styles of writing as well as chosen subject matter'.[21] This chapter provides insight into how style as daily practice creates breaks, deviation, displacements and discontinuities as strategies of opportunity.

Black style as an expression of the inequalities of gendered racism

The oppositional stance of hip-hop style, with its leisurewear as daywear, its baggy, ill-fitting jeans, garish bright colours and sportswear, all of which filled the streets of inner cities from as early as the 1970s, came about as a social critique and form of resistance for disenfranchised and disaffected youth. In both the United States and Britain, rap music and hip-hop culture developed as part of, and within the legacy of, black expressive culture: ideas of racial authenticity based on black legitimacy and opposition to racism were relevant on both sides of the Atlantic. From as early as the 1970s an atmosphere of disenfranchisement and distrust had been simmering in black communities in Britain, reaching boiling point in 1976 when the Notting Hill Carnival in London turned into a battle between black youth and police. The confrontation was played out in more extreme form in 1980 and 1981, as Brixton, Southall, Liverpool, Birmingham, Bristol and Leeds all experienced riots. Black youth were frustrated and angry at racial discrimination and stereotyping, the 'sus' laws being a good example

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[21] hooks, 'Postmodern Blackness', [accessed 29 April 2011].

of this.[22] 'There was quite a lot of racial tension as I was growing up. We had Enoch Powell with his "rivers of blood" [*sic*] speech and we had the National Front with their swastikas', remembers Don Letts, a black British musician, filmmaker and DJ who was part of the British punk and reggae scene in the 1970s and 1980s.[23] The music scene addressed the tensions of the period, and included anti-racist campaigns such as Rock Against Racism (RAR), a movement created in 1976 that brought together punk, rock and reggae. (Figure 7) At the same time, publications like the RAR fanzine *Temporary Hoarding* and the later *Beating Time: Riot 'n' Race 'n' Rock 'n' Roll*, [24] a punky, graphically rich, collaged account of the RAR movement, kept the political drum for disenfranchised groups beating.

Figure 7 Poster for an Anti-Nazi League concert at Victoria Park, Hackney, London, 30 April 1978.

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[22] This refers to the challenging of black youths by the police on 'suspicion' of committing a crime. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sus_law [accessed 5 January 2013].

[23] Interview with Don Letts, 'Voices from Rock Against Racism', *Socialist Worker*, 2059, 14 July 2007 http://www.socialistworker.co.uk/art.php?id=12353 [accessed 20 September 2012].

[24] David Widgery, *Beating Time* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1986).

Asserting 'blackness' as a political position became a self-conscious tactic for black communities, and black music, which later included hip-hop, was deliberately used as social and political critique, drawing from both American black politics and the British reggae scene. According to Letts,

> Being young and black in the early 1970s was like being part of a lost tribe. Many of us rejected the idea of trying to "fit in" and became influenced by some of the radical figures in the US civil rights movement. We wanted to create something that reflected that pride in being black—and the British reggae scene developed out of this background. For most young people, music is a laboratory in which we invent ourselves. Creating our own music was one of the first steps towards us trying to find our own identity.[25]

British black women formed a significant element of the protests, attending events and creating their own organisations to engage with racism. In 1978, for example, the Organisation of Women of African and Asian Descent (OWAAD) was founded. Black women, who had traditionally been racially constructed as wives and mothers, began to demonstrate their political will, and alongside black men they adopted African-ness as a deliberate style strategy to express difference from, and resistance to, mainstream racialising discourse. (Figure 8) Their strategies drew on, or showed a direct affiliation with, the black political movements of the 1960s and 1970s in the United States.

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[25] Letts, 'Voices from Rock Against Racism', http://www.socialistworker.co.uk/art.php?id=12353 [accessed 20 September 2012].

Figure 8 Olive Morris, a member of the Organisation of Women of African and Asian Descent (OWAAD), Brixton, 1970s. Courtesy of BBC London online.[26]

Hairstyles, particularly the 'Afro', were used as style techniques, and came to symbolise a reconstitutive link with Africa as a counter-hegemonic process. Angela Davis had set the tone when she adopted her Afro as a part of her Black Panther Party politics, reflecting the theorisation, years later, by Kobena Mercer that 'Where race is a constitutive element of social structure and social division, hair remains powerfully

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[26] 'In Pictures: Brixton pound note vote', BBC London online
http://www.bbc.co.uk/london/content/image_galleries/famousfigures_gallery.shtml?5 [accessed 20 September 2012].

charged with symbolic currency'.[27] In Britain, similarly, dreadlocks were worn to represent pride and empowerment through their association with reggae, and with the radical discourse of Rastafari that, like Black Power in the United States, inaugurated the redirection of black consciousness in the UK. As Mercer says, 'Through aesthetic stylization each black hairstyle seeks to revalourise [sic] the ethnic signifier'.[28] Performing 'blackness' marked a liberating rupture, a disidentification, or break, with the dominance of western and white identity structures.

However, British blackness was not a stable expression of 'a' fixed black identity, and although American hip-hop theorists have prioritised racial authenticity and the spatial dynamics of the ghetto in hip-hop as the entry point to the culture,[29] in Britain hip-hop emerged as the diasporic local embodiment of black experience within Britishness. As a result, British hip-hop did not privilege African-ness in the same way as did its American counterpart. It was constructed out of the hybridized and indigenised cross-cultural process that privileged instead the localized, everyday realities of blackness as Britishness. It is only by locating British hip-hop within this frame that we can begin to understand its significance for black gendered subjectivity within lived reality.

This is a view supported by theorist Paul Gilroy who, in his analysis of the diaspora in *The Black Atlantic*, stresses that though there is interconnectedness between black communities, any analysis that reduces blackness to an essentialism based solely on African inheritance is problematic because it denies the transnational cultural

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[27] Kobena Mercer, *Welcome to the Jungle: New Positions in Black Cultural Studies* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 102.
[28] Ibid., p.104.
[29] Murray Forman, *The 'Hood Comes First: Race, Space, and Place in Rap and Hip-Hop* (Hanover, N.H.: Wesleyan University Press, 2002).

syncretism of diasporic history and community. Equally, he maintains, black

communities should not dissolve black identity into an 'empty signifier',[30] a

deconstructionist move which loses the activist potential of black nationalism. Instead,

Gilroy's preferred position is 'anti-anti-essentialist': this relates to a performative

theory which values the cultural practices that sustain black identities and

communities but which recognises such practices as hybrid and locally specific, rather

than original and authentic. He suggests that 'identity can be understood neither as a

fixed essence nor as a vague and utterly contingent construction'.[31] For Gilroy,

blackness rooted in expressions of Afrocentrism is unrepresentative, because it can be

read as 'inventing its own totalizing conception of black culture'.[32] Further, he says

that

> This new ethnicity is all the more powerful because it corresponds to no
> actual existing black communities. Its radical utopianism, often anchored in
> the ethical bedrock provided by the history of the Nile Valley civilisations,
> transcends the parochialism of Caribbean memories in favour of a heavily
> mythologised Africanity that is itself stamped by its origins not in Africa but
> in a variety of pan-African ideology produced most recently by black
> America. The problems of contemporary Africa are almost completely absent
> from its concerns.[33]

Any monolithic reading of black expressive culture, as Gilroy warns, is problematic,

because then 'the idea of a diaspora composed of communities that are both similar

and [*sic*] different tends to disappear'.[34] To understand what Gilroy calls the 'double

consciousness' within black identity, it is imperative, therefore, to explore the

instability, fluidity and inconsistencies within hip-hop, to stress diversity rather than

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[30] Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), p.102.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid., p.87.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid.

homogeneity. 'While the core essence and elements of hip-hop are shared by all members of the hip-hop culture, the aesthetic is adapted to suit multiple national cultures, localized conditions and grievances.'[35] This theme has been stressed not only in postcolonial diasporic studies such as Gilroy's, but also in post-subcultural analysis of music, youth and identity. Rupa Huq, for example, says that

> Youth creatively fashion context-dependent musical-cultural forms in street-speak vernacular tongues that reflect their local environments, potentially providing a counter-balance to the negative version of globalization whereby a top-down process of cultural homogenisation forcibly flattens cultural diversity.[36]

Huq's emphasis on the local, where temporal and spatial specifics act as the impetus for creativity, exposes how the agency in contemporary youth cultures comes from drawing on immediate, layered influences and dynamics. The men and women who participated in British hip-hop in the 1980s, many of whom were British-born but came from Jamaican backgrounds, created hip-hop out of their pre-existing diet of reggae. For example, Smiley Culture was a renowned reggae singer and DJ who became known for his fast 'chat' style in songs such as *Cockney Translation* (1984). Using the style of reggae 'toasting', or Jamaican-style lyrical chanting, he was an original member of the Saxon Sound System. Sound systems were the British equivalents of American 'crews', and this particular sound nurtured the ground for many British hip-hop MCs and DJs who were creating a distinctly British-Jamaican hip-hop identity.

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[35] Carol M. Motley and Geraldine Rosa Henderson, 'The Global Hip-Hop Diaspora: Understanding the Culture', *Journal of Business Research,* 61 (2008), pp. 243–253 (p.248).
[36] Rupa Huq, *Beyond Subculture: Pop, Youth and Identity in a Postcolonial World* (London: Routledge, 2006), p.110.

British hip-hop and its visual culture drew from the 'spectacular' styles of other subcultural and alternative groups of the time, all of which were influencing each other. The significance of the interweaving and layering of influences was such that it was evident in the sounds and style aesthetics of hip-hop groups that eventually entered the mainstream. For example, British hip-hop group Soul II Soul incorporated both punk and reggae. This is not to say that black expressive culture did not hold a prominent position in its own right in the cultural fabric of post-war Britain, and furthermore, as Dick Hebdige has argued, black culture was in fact crucial to the formation of many post-war subcultures, the ska/rudeboy-inspired 'two-tone' movement being a particularly vivid example.[37] Earlier, in the 1960s, subcultures such as the mods had taken many of the 'found objects' of their stylistic bricolage from the diasporic cultural expression of the Caribbean, while skinheads had imitated the mid-1960s 'soulboy' look.[38]

These cross-cultural references meant that for the British black woman, 1980s hip-hop style in the everyday was about borrowing from and merging myriad influences—creating 'flow'—that reflected local, as well as the Black Atlantic, experience. As a result, hip-hop style could be unique, erratic, surprising. Kym Mazelle was a singer in Soul II Soul. Though she was American, she lived in London during her time with the group. She is an interviewee for this study, and remembers that

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[37] Dick Hebdige, *Cut 'N' Mix: Culture, Identity and Caribbean Music* (London: Comedia, 1987), p.177.
[38] Neil Spencer, 'Reggae: the sound that revolutionized Britain', http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/2011/jan/30/reggae-revolutionary-bob-marley-britain [accessed 22 February 2011].

> Boy George used to wear gothic stuff from Kensington Market all the time. He turned me on to it… Because you know, we were all in the same kind of clique and at the same kind of places. You know? Like the raves, the early raves which were illegal: they would be on open fields. People would just come dressed in the most bizarre, but amazing things. You know what I mean? (Mazelle, interview)[39]

Mazelle recalls that 'I picked it up on the African style, the braids…You know, kind of [the fact that] the UK and Britain [is] in between America and Africa you kind of pull from both looks, you know?' (Mazelle, interview) In fact during our interview Mazelle spoke repeatedly about how important black hair styling was to her during this period. (Mazelle, interview) Also, although she and other interviewees spoke consistently of going to markets in Wembley, Brixton and Camden to buy African prints to create styles that expressed confidence in African history and heritage, at the same time they would layer these with sportswear or high-street fashions, customizing fashion objects to rupture or break any single style narrative. Mazelle says:

> So I just kind of put on like leggings, some leggings. Or they used to make these shiny black tights here, quite big. Wolford had these – Wolford I think is the name of the – had these body tights that were like a thin polo neck, very shiny and they matched the tights. So that would be my basic undergarment. I put anything on then from ripped jeans, high waist with a belt tied around it, to high shorts. Really like short shorts, Thigh boots.

> I was out there, okay? I was thigh boots, mini skirt or thigh boots and hot pants. 'Daisy dukes' it is called – these little short-cropped jackets that you can get from Camden Market basically. They were suede and different multi colours. That was me – and a big old chain. (Mazelle, interview)

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[39] For an account of women's experiences in rave and club culture see Maria Pini, *Club Culture and Female Subjectivity: The Move from Home to House* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001). In this study Pini argues that club culture was a site for changing modes of femininity and she sees the modern club circuit as an area of feminine independence and pleasure. The book focuses on experiential accounts given by women ravers and clubbers, and several of the women interviewed stressed the pleasure they took in cultivating a particularly sexualised appearance. According to them this was not a sexual invitation but was geared towards their enjoyment. As Pini states, a hypersexualised performance of femininity 'became an end in itself' (p.121).

The theme of African-ness merged with other fashion objects was a popular hip-hop style identity, especially as it was worn by the 'first ladies' of hip hop, Salt-N-Pepa, who combined '8-ball' jackets with Kente cloth hats, lycra leggings and 'diva' boots. (Figure 9)
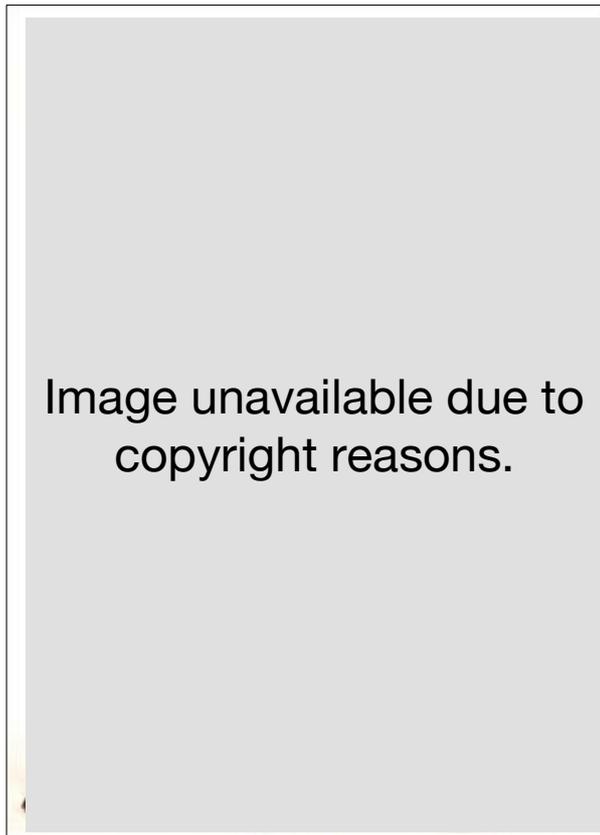
Figure 9 'Salt-N-Pepa',1986 © Janette Beckman.

The style plays on juxtaposition and inconsistency: hats in natural textiles and muted dyes contrast with the women's startling red lipstick, dyed blonde hair and jackets in bright, artificial, plastic colours. The style celebrates flamboyance, excess. Though Salt-N-Pepa represent American hip-hop, their style resonated in Britain. However, according to Shaun Cole, a London-based academic who contributed to the V&A's *Black British Style* exhibition,[40] in the UK the merging of hip-hop with dancehall

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[40] *Black British Style*, Victoria and Albert Museum, 7 October 2004 to 16 January 2005. See http://www.vam.ac.uk/vastatic/microsites/1341_black_british_style/ [accessed 27 June 2010].

style and the 'ragga' scene gave its fashion a distinctly British 'flava'. (Cole, interview) This created scope for diversity and individuality. Mazelle says, 'I just fitted in perfectly with my braids and my dishevelled whatever. Because it was fresh'. (Mazelle, interview) The cut-and-mix approach and the juxtaposing of ready-mades, including English clothing labels, created mixed, hybrid or fluid positions that were constantly cross-referencing through layer and flow. As Cole says, 'It is important to recognise the importance of influence; and then we see that later hip-hop style has an influence on grime, on British *bhangra* and house. They are all connected'. (Cole, interview)

It is the instability in hip-hop style that is significant in discussions of gender in the context of race. Rather than reifying racial authenticity and its essentialist connotations concerning the gendered body, style, as outlined above, was fashioned and experienced in terms of hybridity. The way in which clothes were mixed and merged, or found objects were appropriated and recontextualised, reflected the emergence of a 'postmodern blackness', the term popularized by Cornel West and further developed by bell hooks in her essay of the same name, as mentioned in previous chapters.[41] This position acknowledges that blackness is diverse, complex, multidimensional and socially constructed, while it seeks to de-naturalize the social construction of whiteness. 'When black folks critique essentialism, we are empowered to recognize multiple experiences of black identity that are the lived conditions which make diverse cultural productions possible. When this diversity is ignored, it is easy to see black folks as falling into two categories—nationalist or

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[41] hooks, 'Postmodern Blackness', [accessed 24 February 2009].

assimilationist, black-identified or white-identified.'[42] In fact, by looking at the

syncretic process of hip-hop style we see how hip-hop dress strategies forced black

essentialism and postmodern blackness to work paradoxically with each other,

creating an ontological tension that becomes difficult to resolve. As a result, any

expression of subjective 'authenticity' reflects a performative expression, rooted in a

particular politics of location.

> I think a lot of them [women] looked around—what was around them,
> because also in the UK we didn't really have black magazines. You didn't
> have black hair magazines. You know, so there was just like—you couldn't
> see what you looked like. Everywhere you looked it would be like, blonde
> hair. Or, you know, that is not my image you know. So they just started for
> themselves. You want the head-wraps, you know. A lot of things from Africa.
> They just sort of put twists on it. (Mazelle, interview)

Hybridity was evident in male and female style practice. An example is the 'Funki

Dreds' adopted by Soul II Soul creator Jazzie B. Funki Dreds was the name of both

the sound system of Soul II Soul and its fashion style and business, created by Jazzie,

based on black British fusion. As part of the new British look, Jazzie B developed a

style of short dreadlocks cultivated to create a different articulation of black identity

that was contemporary and 'fresh', a term also used by Mazelle (above), reinforcing

the importance of creativity and innovation in hip-hop. On the cover of the April 1989

issue of *The Face*, the magazine claims that Jazzie B is 'the new funki face of black

Britain'.[43] Funki Dreds were distinct from Rastafarian dreads, yet still referenced a

philosophy based on 'vague flower-power-cum-Rasta notions of love, peace and unity.

As the Soul II Soul motto goes, "A happy face, a thumping bass for a loving race"'[44].

Funki Dreds were enthusiastically adopted in hip-hop because they did not carry the

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[42] Ibid.
[43] *The Face*, 2 (7), April 1989.
[44] Ibid., p.64.

stigma of dreadlocks. Maybelle Peters, an interviewee who now works in the Digital

Media Lab at the Royal College of Art, was born and brought up in Ealing, west

London, and was a teenage hip-hop fan in the 1980s. She recalls that

> …that was like the first time that you would see a lot of people with dreads, because up until then you would be a Rasta if you had dreads, and definitely not women. You just wouldn't see that, so I think that was kind of one of the first times. (Peters, interview)

Jazzie B's protégé in Soul II Soul, Caron Wheeler, became a high-profile proponent

of the look. (Figure 10)
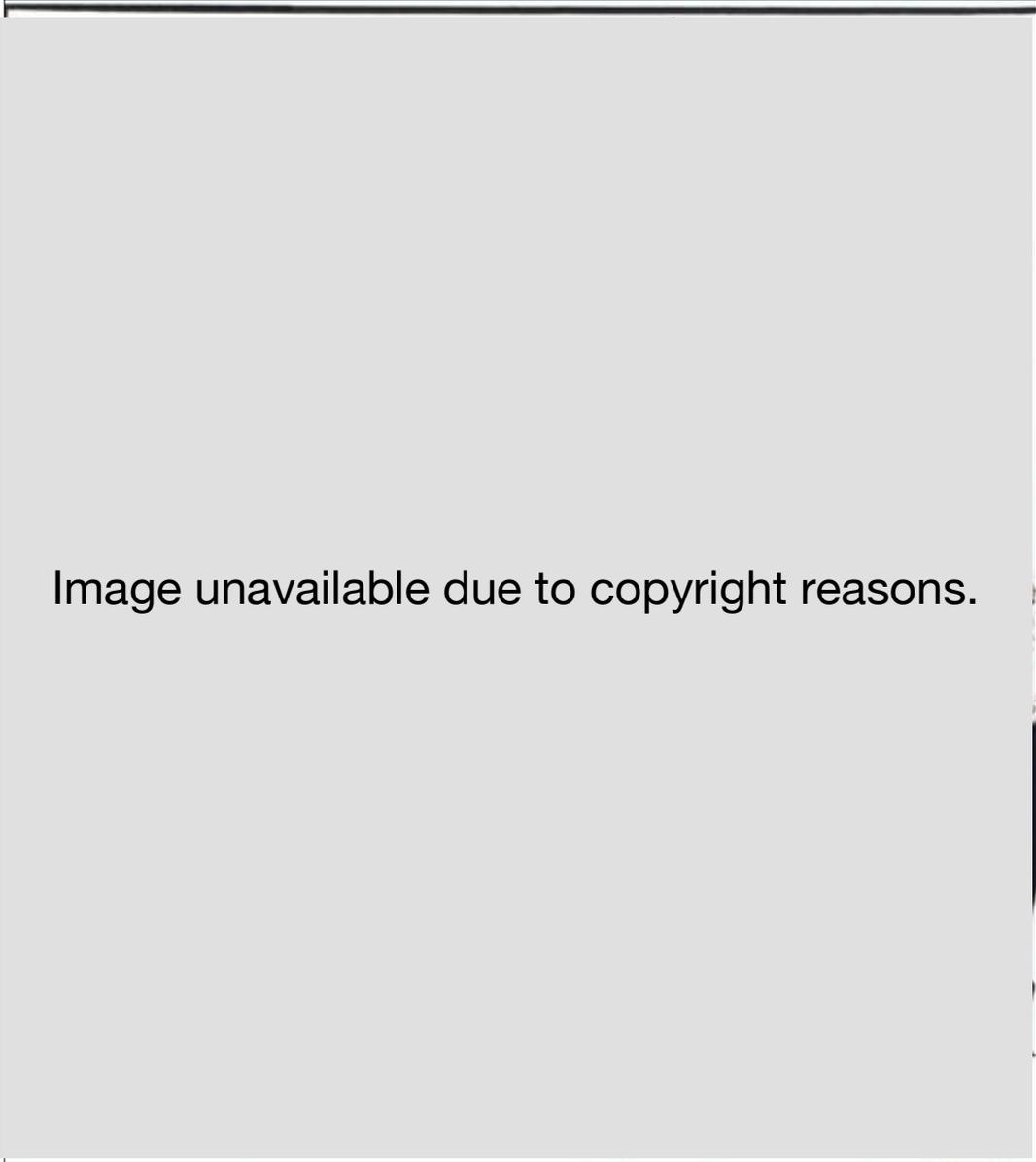
Figure 10 Caron Wheeler and Jazzie B, 1989 © Caron Wheeler.

With hip-hop's elements of fusion, innovation and appropriation in the 1980s, it became increasingly difficult for British white hegemonic structures to hypothesize an essential black subject. Instead, hip-hop as a constantly mutating black cultural expression opened the floodgates for the articulation of new black subjectivities that expressed diasporic agency. As Stuart Hall notes,

> …because they are irrevocably the product of several interlocking histories and cultures…[diaspora] have learned to live with, and indeed to speak from, *difference* [*sic*]. They speak from the "in-between" of different cultures,

always unsettling the assumptions of one culture from the perspective of another, and thus finding ways of being both *the same as* [*sic*] and at the same time *different from* [*sic*] the others amongst whom they live.[45]

This 'in-between' position of the diaspora that unsettles monocultural assumptions suggests that hip-hop style was the performance of a dissident subjectivity. As such, it mirrored strategies of subjective resistance based on hybridity. Homi Bhabha contends that a new hybrid identity emerges when elements from dominant and marginal positions are interwoven. This process challenges the validity and authenticity of an essentialist cultural identity. The result is a new mutation that replaces the established pattern with a mutual and mutable representation of cultural difference, positioned between the dominant and the marginal, or, in Bhabha's terms, the coloniser and the colonised.[46] For Bhabha, therefore, it is the indeterminate spaces between subject positions that are lauded as the locale of the disruption and displacement of hegemonic narratives of cultural structures and practices. This is a liminal 'third space' that critiques any essentialist position of identity. Bhabha says that

> For me the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity to me is the 'third space', which enables other positions to emerge.[47]

Bhaba's third space is a mode of articulation, a productive *break* from the status quo that engenders new possibility. Hip-hop style's strategies of cut-and-mix, of re-presentation and recontextualisation, reflect an ambivalence that undermines cultural

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[45] Stuart Hall, 'New Cultures for Old' in: Doreen B. Massey and P. M. Jess, *A Place in the World?: Places, Cultures and Globalization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, in association with The Open University, 1995), pp. 175-213 (p.206).
[46] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (1994) (London: New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 295-6.
[47] Homi Bhabha, quoted in Jonathan Rutherford, 'The third space: interview with Homi Bhabha', in: *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. by Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), pp.207-221 (p.211).

meaning, dismantling any 'primordial unity or fixity; [so that even] the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew'.[48] As essentialist narratives get *broken*, black male and female subjects have the potential for a renewed politics of representation. Working through the 'cracks and fissures' of traditional cultural production had been highlighted as part of feminist discourse in the 1980s to explore ways in which gender and representation could be re-scripted to offer 'glimpses of what in other circumstances might be possible'.[49]

This is further achieved through the tactic of compartmentalising the body into different zones through dress: in a hip-hop look the head might commonly have dreadlocks or braids, the torso might be covered in a tracksuit top or flight jacket, the legs might have jeans ripped in a punky style, or leggings, and on the feet could be trainers or unisex boots such as Dr. Martens. (Figure 11)

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[48] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p.55.
[49] Annette Kuhn, *The Power of the Image: Essays on Representation and Sexuality* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985), p.10.

Figure 11 'Heidi, Mud Club', London, 1987 © Derek Ridgers.

Style thus produces a double subversion. The first is anti-essentialist. It involves sharp

and abrupt discontinuities, or 'cuts', encouraging continuity by way of the all-

important 'mix'. This process is similar to that seen in punk. The second subversion is

that through compartmentalisation the style techniques critique longstanding

processes of racism that have used the same approach: one might refer here to the way

in which black body parts were compartmentalised and then fetishized in nineteenth-

century colonial ethnographic exhibitionist practices. One example is that of Saartjie

Baartman, a black woman who was exhibited in freak shows as the 'Hottentot Venus'

on account of her 'large' behind. (Figure 12) bell hooks notes that 'Representations of black female bodies in contemporary popular culture rarely subvert or critique images of black female sexuality which were part of the cultural apparatus of nineteenth-century racism and which still shape perceptions today'.[50]

Image unavailable due to copyright reasons.

Figure 12 Saartjie Baartman ('Hottentot Venus'). a) Léon de Wailly, *Femme de race Bôchismanne,* c. 1800s, b) Jean-Charles Werner, *Femme de race Bôchismanne,* c. 1800s. Courtesy of Musée national de Histoire Naturelle, Paris.

Themes of commodification and fetishisation have also been central to the critique offered by Marxist social theorists, who have held advanced capitalism responsible

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[50] bell hooks, 'Selling Hot Pussy: Representations of Black Female Sexuality in the Cultural Marketplace', in: *Writing on the Body: Female Embodiment and Feminist Theory*, ed. by Katie Conboy, Nadia Medina and Sarah Stanbury (New York; Chichester: Columbia University Press, 1997), pp.113-128 (p.114).

for the creation of dislocated and contradictorily abstract space that destroys individual subjectivity, including individual sexuality, to the extent that the self and sexuality become sites of alienated specialization and fetishisation. For Henri Lefebvre, it is this space that distances subjective experience from what he calls a 'culture' of the body.[51] 'The body as represented by the images of advertising (where the legs stand for stockings, the breasts for bras, the face for make-up, etc.) serves to fragment desire and doom it to anxious frustration.'[52] Lefebvre argues that in the special logic of capitalism it is women's bodies, in particular, that become 'pulverised' and broken for the consumer market, 'transformed into exchange value, into a sign of the commodity and indeed into a commodity *per se* [*sic*]'.[53] What we see in the fragments and sampling of hip-hop style is the *self-styled* breaking or pulverizing of the body as a conscious response to historical assaults on the black body. In other parts of hip-hop culture, too, such as breakdancing, there is segmentation and delineation of various body parts as arms and legs are manipulated to juxtapose the smooth and the circular with the abrupt and the linear. Part of the style's visual appeal lies in its ability to engage and resolve such apparent dichotomies.

Style and gendered subjective agency

Within the matrix of race, the issue of gender and black femininity in hip-hop is not only complex but also contradictory and controversial, embroiled in totalizing commercialization, as mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, and in intra-community misogyny and sexism. In *Hip-Hop America*, Nelson George states that 'Around the middle of the '80s an intense focus on ghetto life as the nexus of African-American life seemed to overwhelm the community. This ghetto centric view was

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[51] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), p.309.
[52] Ibid., p.310.
[53] Ibid.

harsh, unsentimental and anti-woman…it was a time when calling a woman a bitch became weirdly respectable'.[54] In 1985 Richard Walters (MC Ricky D, later known as Slick Rick), a black British hip-hop rapper, used the phrase 'black bitch' in his mainstream song *La Di Da Di*[55] (recorded with Doug E. Fresh), echoing his American counterparts.

Yet in 1994 Rose's focus on black women rappers in the early years of the culture highlighted the way in which 'The presence of black female rappers and the urban, working-class black hairstyles, clothes, expressions, and subject matter of their rhymes provide young black women with a small culturally reflective public space'.[56] Despite her optimism, Rose lamented, in her 2008 book *The Hip-Hop Wars*, that 'the world of hip-hop upon which *Black Noise* was based…is not what dominates the U.S. airwaves and recording industry today'.[57]

Hip-hop's history and its current position towards women, gender and black femininity is deeply inconsistent. Despite the dominant masculinist discourse of rap, hip-hop scholars have identified—consistently—how 'female rap artists have not only proven that they have lyrical skillz [*sic*], but in their struggle to survive and thrive within this tradition they have created spaces from which to deliver powerful messages from black female and black feminist viewpoints'.[58] Author Kyra Gaunt has challenged the pervasive notion that women exist in hip-hop solely as 'groupies', suggesting that female fans nurture a real appreciation or understanding of the

[54] Nelson George, *Hip Hop America* (London: Penguin, 2000), pp.185-186.
[55] Doug E. Fresh, *La Di Da Di* [record] [Doug E. Fresh and MC Ricky D] (Cooltempo, 602 075, 1985)
[56] Rose, *Black Noise*, p.182.
[57] Rose, *The Hip Hop Wars*, p.x.
[58] Cheryl Lynette Keyes, *Rap Music and Street Consciousness* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), p.186.

creativity and production of the work involved in rap music.[59] Meanwhile, black

feminist theorist Patricia Hill Collins has described how women in the hip-hop

generation have used the publishing venues of hip-hop to bring a renewed focus on

the precept that 'the personal is political'. She says that 'Their version of both the

"personal" and what constitutes the "political" resembles yet differs dramatically

from that expressed by feminists of the 1960s and 1970s'.[60]

It is, in fact, the inconsistencies in hip-hop that form the fundamentals of the culture's

politics of gender. It is not surprising that theorists such as Rose refuse to discuss

gender in a strict 'male-versus-female' context, because any rigid framework fails to

address the fact that '[women rappers] are able to sustain dialogue with and

consequently encourage dialogue between young men and women that supports black

women and challenges some sexist male behavior'.[61] Issues of gender in hip-hop are

constructed dynamically around black women's interactions with black masculinity

and hegemonic whiteness. Like any gendered identity, black femininity does not exist

prior to its social recognition, but is constructed within a multiple and shifting

ensemble of norms within specific locales (in this case, particular 'streets'), through

embodiment, dress, and vernacular language. Neither fixed nor stable, black

femininity is performative. As Butler would say, it is 'produced as an effect of the

performance'.[62]

Even ideologies of black masculinity, whatever its locale, are loaded with racist

histories and classification, and racism has ensured that black men do not have the

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[59] Kyra Danielle Gaunt, *The Games Black Girls Play: Learning the Ropes from Double-Dutch to Hip-Hop* (New York; London: New York University Press, 2006).

[60] Patricia Hill Collins, *From Black Power to Hip Hop: Racism, Nationalism, and Feminism* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Temple University Press; Chesham: Combined Academic [distributor], 2006), p.162.

[61] Tricia Rose, 'Never trust a big butt and a smile', in Neal and Forman, *That's the Joint!*, p.350.

[62] Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York ; London: Routledge, 2004), p.218.

same relationship to patriarchy or capitalist hierarchies as white men. In the words of the Combahee River Collective:

> We…find it difficult to separate race from class and sex oppression because in our lives they are most often experienced simultaneously…we struggle together with Black men against racism, while we also struggle with Black men about sexism.[63]

However, for black women race and gender have always gone hand in hand as strands in the web of oppression. Kobena Mercer states that

> In racial terms, black men and women alike were subordinated to the power of the white master in hierarchical social relations of slavery, and for black men, as *objects* of oppression, this also cancelled out their access to positions of power and prestige which in gender terms are regarded as the essence of masculinity in patriarchy. Shaped by this history, black masculinity is a highly contradictory formation of identity, as it is a *subordinated* masculinity.[64]

The predicament of the black male struggling to obtain recognition within a racially stratified society that denies it to him formed the core of many black cultural and political movements throughout the twentieth century, most notably the Black Power movement of the 1960s and 1970s, and in Britain the reggae, Rastafarian and dub music scenes. All of these show traces of the lasting power of the oppressive structures of slavery and colonialism that had historically destroyed any coherent black subjectivity. Frantz Fanon has described how being a black man in a world dominated by the white man creates a 'split' or a 'divided self' at the heart of the

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[63] *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color,* ed. by Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, (Watertown, Mass.: Persephone Press, 1981), p.213.
[64] Mercer, pp.142-143.

black male subject, suggesting that the black man can only exist in relation to himself through the alienating presence of the white Other.[65]

The historical assault on black masculinity has created a legacy of patriarchy built on systems of male control and domination over black women. Notions of 'black phallic power' emerged with the Black Power movement in the 1960s, and, as Winifred Breines concludes, this power, or the new glorification of black male virility, was the centrepiece of Black Power and 'asserted black masculinity as coterminous with racial emancipation'.[66] This example highlights the fact that the masculinist discourse of rap music is not an anomaly, and also that in the case of black women the realities of racism link them to black men in ways that are complex, and that challenge cross-racial sisterhood.

Erotic power

It is within this matrix that style as gendered subjective agency should be explored. Within the various expressive cultures of black Britain—not only hip-hop but also dancehall's raunch culture—the adopting of coded sexual tropes that played simultaneously on notions of black patriarchy and white hegemony was used as a satirical tactic. This involved a range of styles, some of which were overlapping, others diametrically opposed. For example, unisex and hypersexual dressing were both common. Lycra dresses, bra tops and cycling shorts, as well as men's shirts, baggy jeans and tracksuits, were all part of everyday hip-hop style. In the case of Mazelle, she remembers how emphasising the black body was a key part of hip-hop's rhetoric of 'pump'n'grind', fundamental to showing a new-found confidence in black

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[65] Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 1967).
[66] Winifred Breines, *The Trouble Between us: an Uneasy History of White and Black Women in the Feminist Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p.56.

femininity. She would buy figure-hugging dresses from markets. In a photograph

from her own collection, taken in 1989, she is dressed in a lycra t-shirt dress, cut out

to show flesh above and on the side of her breasts, displaying a bare midriff. (Figure

13)
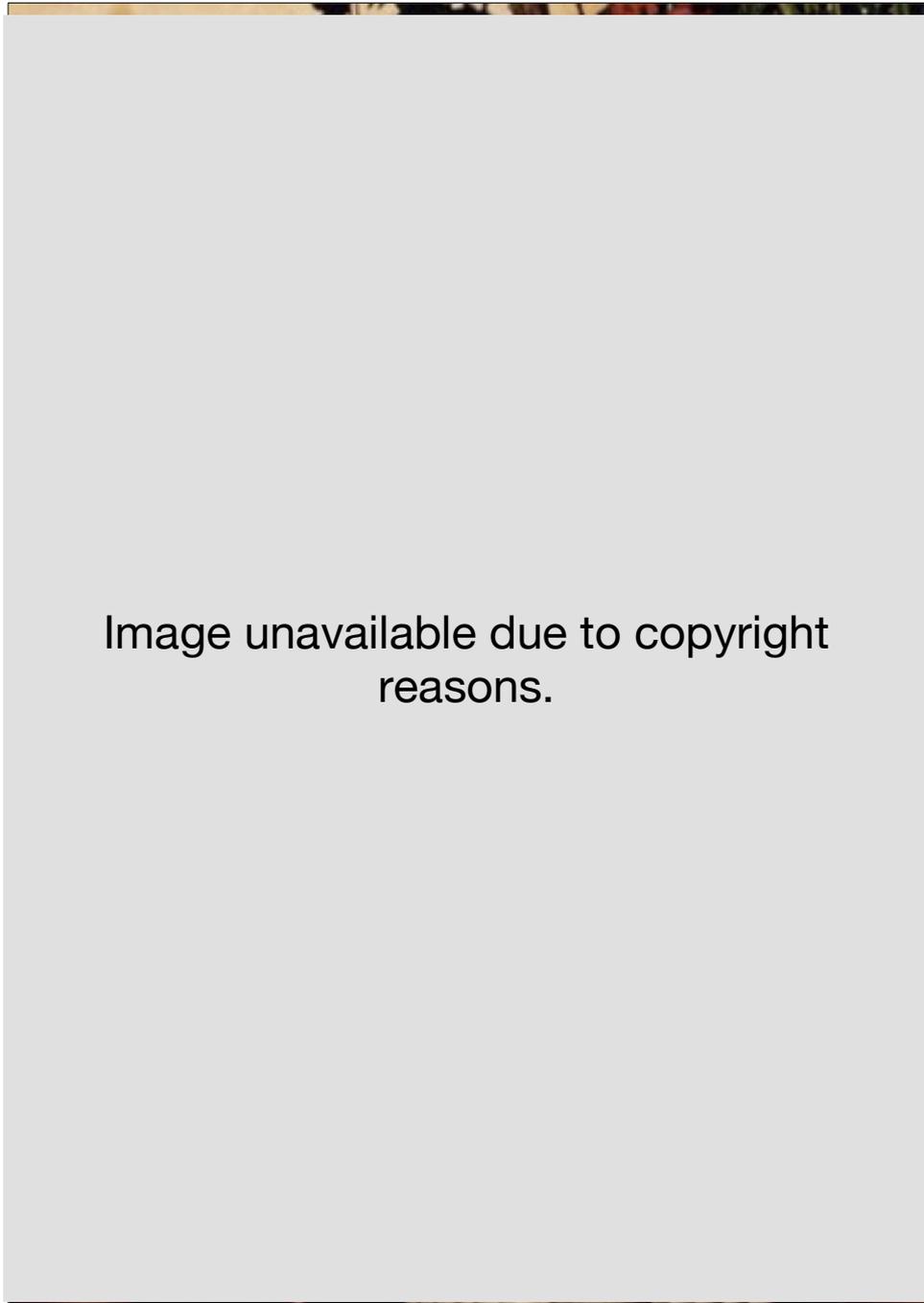
Figure 13 Kym Mazelle, 1989. Courtesy of Kym Mazelle.

Mazelle sits with her legs astride, head thrown back, eyes closed, an expression of evocative pleasure on her face. Her hair, though dyed, is left in a natural style. Between her legs, in sexual pose, is a statue of a lion's head. The image is sexually charged and provocative. There is an implicit suggestion that Mazelle owns her black female sexuality—there is no man in sight. As such, she is playing to the 'Jezebel' trope, identified by Hill Collins as the incarnation of sexually aggressive black women who were historically seen as temptresses.[67] There is almost a suggestion that the lion is phallic. Through her expression of hypersexuality Mazelle stays within the boundaries of the expectations that govern her gendered economy, playing on the idea of black woman as sexual object while at the same time undermining it through caricature.

In the 1980s, Mazelle's look might have been described as 'fly'. According to Cheryl Keyes, this term describes someone in chic clothing and fashionable hairstyle, jewellery and cosmetics, a style that grew out of the Blaxploitation films[68] of the late 1960s through to the mid-1970s.[69] 'Fly' became an important concept in American hip-hop in the 1980s, so much so that, as Keyes points out, in 1985 a group called Boogie Boys released a record called *A Fly Girl*, describing someone 'who wants to see her name, her game and her ability'. To do so she sports a lot of gold, wears a 'designer purse, leather mini skirt'; has 'voluptuous curves'. In short, 'Fly girl's a girl

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[67] Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, p.81.

[68] Blaxploitation is a film genre that emerged in America in the 1970s to present the black experience through ghetto heroes. Even though the films presented potentially positive images of black people they did not necessarily accurately represent the aesthetic values of black culture. See Novotny Lawrence, *Blaxploitation Films of the 1970s: Blackness and Genre*, (New York; London: Routledge, 2008); Yvonne D. Sims, *Women of Blaxploitation: How the Black Action Film Heroine Changed American Popular Culture*, (Jefferson, N.C.; London: McFarland, 2006).

[69] Keyes, p.194.

who speak their mind'.[70] A central idea in 'fly' is that a woman like this is independent, an erotic subject rather than an object.

Claiming erotic power proved a central tactic in hip-hop, with multiple connotations. The first of these is as an expression of embodied subjectivity. In her work 'The uses of the erotic: the erotic as power', black feminist poet Audre Lorde writes that 'Our erotic knowledge empowers us, becomes a lens through which we scrutinize all aspects of our existence, forcing us to evaluate those aspects honestly in terms of their meaning within our lives'.[71] Secondly, the cartoonish manner in which hypersexuality is carried out suggests not only empowerment for the wearer, but a means to disempower the controlling images that established black femininity, a means to deterritorialise gender norms. As Butler explains,

> …there are norms that govern what will and will not be real, and what will and will not be intelligible, they are called into question and reiterated at the moment in which performativity begins its citational practice. One surely cites norms that already exist, but these norms can be significantly deterritorialised through the citation. They can also be exposed as non-natural and nonnecessary [*sic*] when they take place in a context and through a form of embodying that defies normative expectation.[72]

In Butler's view, embodiment is critical in challenging normative expectations. In the lycra bra tops and cycling shorts regularly worn by hip-hop women in the everyday, the materiality of embodied style becomes important, not only theoretically but also in terms of practicality. Interviewee Peters alludes to comfort as a source of pleasure when she speaks about the touch and feel of lycra fashions of the time: '…it was more about the whole comfort of wearing stuff that fitted', she says. (Peters, interview)

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[70] Boogie Boys, *A Fly Girl* [record] (Capitol, B-5498, 1985).
[71] Audre Lorde, 'Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power' in: Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Trumansburg, NY: Crossing Press, 1984), pp. 53-59 (p.57).
[72] Butler, *Undoing Gender*, p. 218.

Peters had experimented with many trends. She has an older sister who introduced her to music and she says that before hip-hop she was a ska enthusiast, or 'rude girl'. She remembers that during her very young teenage years her main influences were mods and two-tone,

> …because Greenford was very much an area that was white working class and middle class. So we used to go to this club on a Monday, we were quite young actually, we were about 11 and upstairs they had like an under 16s disco, but there used to be a load of these skinheads and I remember that they used to play Bad Manners and Madness, and there were these little kids with crew cuts and flight jackets. (Peters, interview)

In her early teens Peters would wear punk-inspired dress: 'In fact they were my sister's trousers I remember, they were tartan green tight trousers that I used to wear with my DMs', she says. (Peters, interview) As she got older, Peters became a regular at the Soul II Soul club nights in Covent Garden, London. She remembers that

> …it was more about being able to dance, so you'd have to wear clothes that were more…more something that's flexible. I remember we always used to choose our shoes carefully, because we knew that if we wore rubber soles we wouldn't be able to kind of slide across the floor and yes just kind of practical things like that. So we just wouldn't wear trainers, we just wouldn't. (Peters, interview)

It is interesting that Peters contradicts the notion that trainers were the only style of hip-hop shoes. For her it was Dr. Martens or monkey boots—borrowed from other subcultural trends—that were shoes for dancing; meanwhile, the flexible dress that she refers to references the 'body-con' fashions of the time. Curator and academic Carol Tulloch remarks that:

> Messengers around town were wearing lycra, gay men were mixing this style up, Vivienne Westwood was bringing out her leggings. It was all about mixing, very experimental. It was the sign of the times. (Tulloch, interview)

The adoption of sportswear in hip-hop, and lycra's move from underwear to outerwear in the form of t-shirt dresses and bra tops, became ubiquitous in 'ordinary' women's style, as well as for music stars of the period. On the front cover of her 1988 album *Raw Like Sushi*, Neneh Cherry wears a lycra slip with spaghetti string straps. (Figure 14)
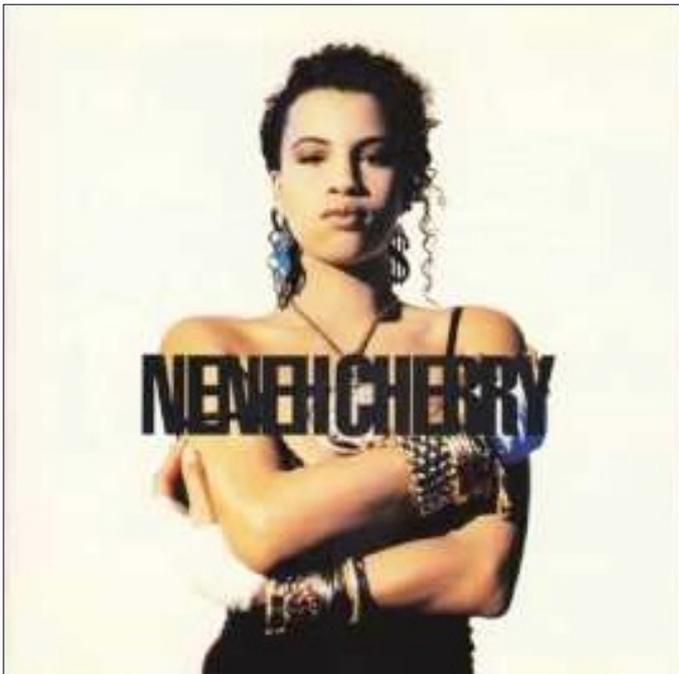
Figure 14 Cover, *Raw Like Sushi*, Neneh Cherry, 1988.

Cherry's arms are crossed over her chest, obscuring most of the dress, but an oversized gold medallion can be glimpsed, and there are layers of gold bangles on each of her wrists. Her hands are in white leather boxing wraps. She also has dollar sign earrings and her hair is partly tied back, but natural. Cherry looks directly at the camera, confident and serious.

On the back cover Cherry is in an ecstatic dance pose; her hair is loose and flying backwards. (Figure 15) She wears a leather mini skirt and lycra t-shirt that is cropped,

baring her midriff. Her body, and the oversized dollar sign, this time a neck medallion, is in a central position.

Figure 15 Album back cover, *Raw Like Sushi*, Neneh Cherry, 1988.

Cherry's style carries the message of her songs. Speaking in *The Face* magazine of her hit *Buffalo Stance*, which features on the album, Cherry says it 'is meant to be hard, fast, sexy…and raw',[73] adding that the song 'was written about sexual survival'. She explains, '[the song is] not a feminist record—none of my songs are. But it's about female strength, female power, female attitude'. Cherry's dress and pose

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[73] 'Cherry Blossoms', *The Face*, 2: 2, November 1988, p.44.

confirms this. Similarly, on the cover of the same magazine there is a picture showing Cherry smiling ecstatically, her eyes closed, her arms flying outwards. Her hair is natural, 'wildly' blowing backwards. She wears little make-up, and no jewellery. She is wearing a cotton long-sleeve t-shirt with a polo neck and a glittery lycra vest by Rifat Ozbek, who was named Designer of the Year at London Fashion Week in the same year. The image is entitled 'Wild Cherry'. The photograph, by Eddie Monsoon, exudes confidence, unfettered pleasure, energy. In the article Cherry says, 'It's all about attitude, really', echoing the sentiments associated with fly.[74] (Figure 16)

Figure 16 Neneh Cherry, cover of *The Face*, November 1988.

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[74] 'Cherry Blossoms', p.44.

In hip-hop, not only was the materiality of lycra important, it was also significant because it deliberately highlighted the materiality of the female black body, its form and shape clearly defined through the skin-tight fabric. bell hooks has drawn attention to black women's erotic consciousness as theorised around issues of body esteem. 'Erotic pleasure requires of us engagement with the realm of the senses', she says,[75] adding that it involves 'the capacity to be in touch with sensual reality'.[76] She encourages us to accept and love our bodies; '[to work] toward self-recovery issues around body esteem';[77] and 'to be empowered by a healing eroticism'.[78] In this type of dress there was no shying away from showing blackness. In its visibility and exaggeration, there is an implicit teasing in the style of dress, a 'look-but-don't-touch' type of subversion. There is a brashness about showing what might be considered self-expressions of 'sexiness': underwear, for example, such as bra tops, become outerwear, just as in punk style, but this time used to draw on and subvert the stereotypes of black femininity.

Through hip-hop style, strategies emerge for black women to mark their presence on their terms, in a world where they have historically been denied the privilege to speak. By showcasing the black form through dress they challenge their conscious negation from discourse in what Gayatri Spivak has called 'epistemic violence',[79] the historic silencing of the subaltern by colonialism and patriarchy. Instead, hip-hop style positions the black female form as upfront and visible. Mazelle says that in this way, hip-hop was about '…telling young girls: "Look, you don't have to be embarrassed

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[75] bell hooks, *Sisters of the Yam: Black Women and Self-Recovery* (Boston, Mass.: South End Press, 1993), p.116.
[76] Ibid.
[77] Ibid., p.122.
[78] Ibid., p.124.
[79] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics*, 2nd.ed. (London: Routledge, 2006), p.213.

about your body. You know, you can use your body to empower, as a tool for empowerment."' (Mazelle, interview)

Another theme that emerges through the showcasing of the black body is the celebration of black female skin. Anne McClintock has argued that one of the consequences of centuries of colonial domination is that whiteness functions as both spectacle and desire in capitalist production, as well as being the central organising signifier of the European imperial conquest of non-white peoples and cultures.[80] In racialised discourse black skin had come to lie outside of the realm of the beautiful, and black hair has been historically devalued as the most visible stigma associated with blackness.[81] Bhabha says that 'skin, as the key signifier of cultural and racial difference in the stereotype, is the most visible of fetishes, recognized as "common knowledge" in a range of cultural, political and historical discourses, and plays a public part in the racial drama that is enacted every day in colonial societies'.[82]

In hip-hop, black skin is celebrated, brought to central view through midriff-baring clothes, or shorts that valorise black beauty. As such, hip-hop style puts an emphasis on the surface of the body–often, the dancing, sweating body. Philosopher Richard Shusterman in his work *Pragmatist Aesthetics* has outlined how rock songs were enjoyed through moving and dancing that involved breaking a sweat, noting that, 'on a somatic level, there is much more effortful activity in the appreciation of rock than in high-brow music, whose concerts compel us to sit in a motionless silence which

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[80] Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York; London: Routledge, 1995).
[81] See Mercer. For analysis of beauty within the black diaspora see Shirley Anne Tate, *Black Beauty: Aesthetics, Stylization, Politics* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009). For an early history of black stereotypes and representation see, *Black Africans in Renaissance Europe*, ed. by Tom F. Earle and Kate J.P. Lowe (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Fanon.
[82] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p.112.

often induces not mere torpid passivity but snoring sleep'.[83] He makes the connection that when in rock the term 'funky' was used to characterise the spirit of the music, it derived from an African word meaning 'positive sweat' which he says is 'expressive of an African aesthetic of vigorously active and communally impassioned engagement rather than dispassionate judgemental remoteness'.[84] This aesthetic is evident in hip-hop too, where the sweat from dancing expresses emotion through movement; black skin gleams as it sweats, conspicuous and jewel-like in the effortful activity. In white British society bodily fluids are generally considered abject, and thus sportswear and trainers have conventionally been designed and worn to contain sweat, or to mop it up in a pretence that it doesn't exist. In the case of hip-hop a whole new schema emerges. Sportswear is chosen to enable dancing, to free the black body from constraints. In Michael Holman's history of breakdancing in 1970s New York he describes how the culture fetishized certain dress items, such as shoes, to emphasise the importance of dancing, of the moving, sweating black body. He recalls, '…it was shoes like marshmallows. Fat-toed, colourful shoes,' adding that these were embellished with wide, bright laces, loosely tied so that the tongues stick out.[85] This stress on the dancing black body has further resonance since, as Holman shows, although breakdancing came out of the disco decade, the 1970s, it also has roots in eighteenth-century American slavery, when African slaves introduced the shuffle-step dance known as the 'joba' into European dance styles. The importance of the black body in relation to dance, then, is significant within legacies of black expressive culture. There is a long black folk history of dances and songs that celebrate big behinds for men and women, such as 'The Bump', 'The Dookey Butt', and 'The

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[83] Richard Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics: Living Beauty, Rethinking Art* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), p.184.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Michael Holman, *Breaking and the New York City Breakers* (New York: Freundlich; Scribner Books [distributor], 1984), p.45.

Black Bottom', made famous by Josephine Baker in the 1920s and a close relation to 'The Charleston'.

There is a further connection when considering the female black body. In racially-focused popular expression women's dancing has become associated with 'booty-shaking', and in both dancehall and hip-hop there has been an emphasis by black men on black women's 'behinds'. This is so much the case that black women rappers have deliberately used their physical attributes to challenge, or, as Gwendolyn Pough puts it, 'bring wreck' to those who disrespect them.[86] Salt-N-Pepa are one such group who have used not only their songs, with titles like *Let's Talk About Sex*, but also their bodies, to deliberately address the misrepresentation and objectification of black womanhood in hip-hop. In their 1986 *Push It* video,[87] the group wore lycra cycling shorts to perform the hip-hop 'grind'. This involves gyrating the hips back and forth, a move that dominated the video while the women sang:

> Yo, yo, yo, yo, baby-pop
> Yeah, you come here, gimme a kiss
> Better make it fast or else I'm gonna get pissed
> Can't you hear the music's pumpin' hard like I wish you would?
> Now push it.[88]

The sexual suggestiveness of the lyrics matches the sexual movement of 'grinding', which is similar to the 'batty' shaking in Jamaican culture. In that example the bottom is given certain reverence in the discourse of beauty and sexual desire. As Janell Hobson explains,

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[86] Pough, *Check It While I Wreck It,* p.97.
[87] Salt-N-Pepa, *Push It* (UMG recordings, 1986), http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vCadcBR95oU [accessed 18 January 2013].
[88] Hurby Azor and Raymond Douglas Davies, Push It [record] [Salt-N-Pepa] (Next Plateau Records, KF 315, 1987).

> Whether in working-class Jamaican dancehall settings or in carnival street scenes in Trinidad and the Caribbean diaspora of Brooklyn, Toronto, or London, black female batties are let loose and uninhibited in glorious celebrations of flesh and sexual energy.[89]

Grinding in hip-hop is a common and exaggerated move that unashamedly draws attention to the black body and challenges normative standards of decency. Hazel Carby notes that historically illicit sexual behaviour was a 'natural' consequence of certain modern forms of dancing in black social contexts. This led to moral panic among whites and middle-class blacks who feared black women's lack of control over their sexual behaviour or displays of sexuality in their dance style.[90]

In grinding, the black female body undergoes transformation through movement so that bottoms, or 'booty', no longer function as fetish but as expressive extensions of mobile, energetic bodies. Mazelle remembers: 'You know, you had the big leather jackets and the really small tank tops and the big dolphin earrings and the grinding. Grinding and legs open wide'. There is a recognition that grinding, though it plays to male tropes of desire, at the same time allows women to claim their bodies and sexuality. Rose says, 'By expressing their sexuality openly and in their own language…black women rappers challenge men to take women more seriously. Black women rappers might respond by saying: "That's right, don't automatically trust a big butt and a smile. We've got plenty of sexual power and integrity, but don't mess with us."'[91]

Grinding therefore becomes a defiant gesture. Mazelle explains: 'That [grinding] is going to give me my respect because I am going to wave it in your face and I might

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[89] Janell Hobson, 'The "batty" politic: toward an aesthetics of the black female body', *Hypatia* 18:4 (2003), pp.87-105 (p.101).
[90] Hazel V Carby, 'Policing the black woman's body in an urban context', *Critical Inquiry* 18:4 (1992), 738-755.
[91] Tricia Rose, 'Never trust a big butt and a smile', in: *That's the Joint!: The Hip-Hop Studies Reader*, p.340.

not necessarily be going to give it to you. This is what the woman is thinking. But it is not what the image is portraying'. She adds later, laughing, 'I am saying "But don't touch it, Okay!" You can look but you don't touch it. "Don't touch it or else you are in a coffin!"' (Mazelle, interview)

The grinding body conjures ideas of ability, strength and athleticism traditionally linked with black masculinity, especially the black male sporting body.[92] Women's pleasure and enjoyment is privileged and the space for self-fulfilment is established. Grinding draws attention to the black female form as anatomically different— certainly in movement and expression it is completely opposite to the vertical, linear, androgynous pogo-ing of punk. Instead, grinding follows the curves of black voluptuousness, a defensive armoury through which black women assert their subject positions. Explicit focus on the behind counters mainstream definitions of what constitutes a sexually attractive female body. White Western culture, in defining its female sex symbols, has placed a high premium on narrow hips and small behinds. The vast majority of white female actresses and musicians, and even the occasional black model in the 1980s and 1990s, fit this description. Zoe Whitley has suggested that in fashion photography the visualisation of 'authentic' black culture is often constructed according to two stereotypes: the jungle or the ghetto.[93] In her work analyzing black representation in fashion images, Whitley has explored the way that, since the 1960s, images of black women in *Vogue* have been set up as tropes in the magazine's fashion spreads to reinforce and maintain racial myths. She argues, therefore that, 'the fashion industry, as a "culture industry", appropriates the politics in

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[92] See Ben Carrington, 'Fear of a black athlete: masculinity, politics and the body', *new formations* 45 (2001/2002), 91-110.

[93] Zoé Nicole Whitley, 'Black Panthers in *Vogue*: signifying 'blackness' in fashion magazines', in *Design and the Modern Magazine,* ed. by Jeremy Aynsley and Kate Forde (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), pp.114-132 (p.124.).

culture in order to create arresting images', thus reinforcing the inherent racism within the hegemonic white gaze.[94]

When viewed in this context, grinding, and the emphasis on a 'natural' black body, invert the aesthetic hierarchy that renders black women's bodies sexually unattractive. Also, although grinding does not eradicate sexual objectification, it problematises and complicates the male gaze. The up-frontness of female dress in hip-hop creates a competition between the genders, and black women offer a counter-narrative to that of hip-hop as an all-male space.

The concept of battling[95]—or 'wrecking', to use the hip-hop term mentioned earlier— which comes from the traditions of confrontation in rap, also occurs through the embodiment of a different style in hip-hop: unisex dress. At the opposite extreme to hypersexualised dress there was a deliberate move by some hip-hop women to adopt the same clothes as men. Baggy, loose unisex tracksuits, baseball caps, hooded tops, MA-1 flight jackets and trainers are just some of the items worn by both sexes. For women the mannish look included baggy jeans and branded athletic attire—Polo and Tommy Hilfiger, for example. In an image of Cookie Crew in the 1980s, taken behind the scenes by street photographer Normski, we see the baggy tracksuit look. (Figure 17)

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[94] Zoé [Nicole] Whitley, 'Funky Afro Chicks: Representing 'Blackness' in *Vogue*, 1966-2002' (unpublished MA thesis, Royal College of Art, London, 2003), p.81.
[95] See the American film *Wild Style*, dir. by Charlie Ahearn (First Run Features, 1983), which includes an effective portrayal of the concept of battling.

Figure 17 'Cookie Crew',1980s © Normski.

Susie Q (Susan Banfield) is standing at the front of the image. She is wearing an oversized white tracksuit, long chain ropes and a necklace with a cross-shaped medallion. She has a name belt on. MC Remedee (Debbie Pryce) is behind her, wearing a long dark coat; only her cornrows and African beads make the look conspicuous. The women's stance is strong, bold, confident and confrontational: they stare directly into the camera.

Debbie Pryce was interviewed for this study (see Appendices, Volume II); when asked to comment on this photograph she said, 'I'm in a B-girl stance'.[96] (Pryce, interview) She added, 'These jackets, I think we got them from Topshop, and we were very- everything we wore, as you noticed here, it had to be baggy. We weren't into anything that was close-fitting. If we bought trousers, guarantee, I'm smaller, my trousers have been huge and anything like shirts we'd buy men's size. Nothing could

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[96] Short for breakdancing girl. 'B-boy' stands for breakdancing boy.

ever fit us as close as that. We would die'. (Pryce, interview) She also stressed that, 'You know? When we went on stage, we wouldn't be caught dead in a—what do you call it? A skirt or showing a bit of arse. Are you mad? No. We were wearing the jeans; we were wearing the Lee jeans, our name belts, sneakers and basically we were dressed like the guys'. (Pryce, interview)

In the interview Pryce spoke specifically about dressing like men:

> Suterwalla: Would you have thought about the fact that this is what the men were wearing as well?
>
> Pryce: Well, men…
>
> Suterwalla: Were you looking to dress the same?
>
> Pryce: Yes. We had to wear trousers. We wouldn't be caught—In our early days we used to wear—when we first came out with the whole red and white thing with these little white skirts on, but they weren't, like—they weren't horrible-looking. They were—My mum made them so they were pretty—But we always had tights on so we'd wear a white skirt and we had these red and white, like, baseball jackets, so our whole thing was we came—We were booked to do a show: we're coming in red and white.
>
> But, like I said, we grew out of that. Our trousers would never be too close. The only time we—our trousers may have been slightly fitted was when we started wearing Lee. Remember Lee Cooper jeans? And the material trousers became B-boy trousers, so we had to have those. (Pryce, interview)

It is ironic that Pryce's mother attempted to make 'pretty' clothes for her. Nonetheless, for Pryce and for 'ordinary' women in hip-hop, unisex dressing created a sense of equality, enabling them to participate in all aspects of the culture, including graffiti and breakdancing. In Beezer's photograph of the Bristol dance scene in 1986 (Figure 4), almost all of the women participating at the event have short hair, and they are wearing items such as unisex hooded tops and baggy jeans. One of the women is

wearing an oversized man's shirt, a look popular for women in punk. Interviewee

Peters, when talking about getting ready for a club night in London, remembers that

> It was more about the whole comfort of wearing stuff that fitted and that you could dance in, because the dancing was the most important thing...I know Wembley Market was just like a place people went to and Camden. Those were the two main places that people shopped at, so it was probably that, it was probably kind of the supply and what they saw, because I don't remember why people wore the flight jackets and they were always black, they were never green flight jackets. So it might be a case of it was still that association with skinhead, the whole green that you just wouldn't wear that. Would wear navy, but it would always be black, possibly navy, never green. (Peters, interview)

Peters's comments highlight not only the process of choosing clothes, but also the

close proximity between different subcultural and alternative styles of the period.

Pryce also commented on this in terms of her influences from broader popular culture.

In her view, the proximity of different cultural trends was positive and generative:

> Ooh – we were heavily into UK pop music. Don't get me twisted. We loved… Dexys Midnight Runners; we loved Culture Club…it's almost like we didn't see a degree of separation between the love of hip-hop and pop music when we all watched *Top of the Pops*.

> To us, all music was good at that time. Whether it was punk, rock 'n roll or just general pop music…At one point we thought we were mods. We went to the whole mod thing through the dressing in black-and-white…Oh yes. Shirts. We'd get our dad's tie out. Get our dad's—you know, the men's jacket. Oh yes. We embraced a lot of things. (Pryce, interview)

These layered and intertextual processes were important in creating a new public

expression for black women. Unisex dressing, mix-and-matching and multi-

referencing were all moves towards developing a counter-narrative within hip-hop's

competitive arena, a type of street-smart revenge against stereotypes. 'So, yes,

[regarding sexism] we came up against all that "Oh, you're girls in a rap" and this,

that and the other but we always brushed it off because it meant nothing to us.' (Pryce, interview) The various tactics adopted by these women seem like an early response to a rallying cry made by Rose towards the end of the 1990s:

> ...I would like to call for counternarratives that rewrite these sexualized tropes without surrendering the sexual arena through the reclaiming of purity and chastity or relying disproportionately on repressive tropes of sexual responsibility that equate female sexual desire and pleasure with immorality or irresponsibility.[97]

Women dressing as men meant that they could appropriate masculinity as an expression of female sexuality and desire. Simultaneously there was an unleashing of ungendered pleasure and delight in the way that hip-hop style for both sexes included ludic and liminal dress in childish, 'bubble-gum' bright colours that suggested childhood playfulness and carnival. Hats were no longer for work or for church; they were for play, worn off-kilter and with the sunshade flap back to front or on the side so that it no longer served its purpose but showed that the wearer was ready for breakdancing. Humour and irony were critical strategies in these processes. Hip-hop dress presented a 'queering' of identity, in a similar vein to the dress practice at Greenham Common, where the ludic became a tactical subversion. In particular, its references to childhood included 'dressing-up', unseriousness, the refusal of fixed identity. After all, you are not going to get very far in trainers that are not tied up. For women, the playful, infant colours and the mismatched layering were ways to remove sexual undertones from the black female body. Obviously this contrasted with the hypersexualised dressing that has been discussed above, but the polarization between styles was all part of the diversity of hip-hop. With childish, ludic clothes a liminal

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[97] Tricia Rose, 'Rewriting the Pleasure/Danger Dialectic', in: *From Sociology to Cultural Studies: New Perspectives*, ed. by Elizabeth Long (Malden, Mass.; Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), pp.185-202 (p.191).

look was created, one that suggested that women were hovering between childhood and adulthood. This was exactly the space that Neneh Cherry straddled in her fast transition from teenage rising star, styled in baggy jumpers and colourful leggings, to hip-hop adult, eight months pregnant in figure-hugging lycra on *Top of the Pops* in 1988.

The liminal 'vibe' also played on the notion of in-betweenness for the hybrid 'Black Atlantic' subject who culturally straddles different worlds simultaneously. In hip-hop's mixed and shifting forms, style becomes an affirmative statement of 'new' blackness, expressing a cultural politics of difference, offering flexible ways of being Other. In speaking about postmodern radical subjectivity, hooks says, 'It's exciting to think, write, talk about, and create art that reflects passionate engagement with popular culture, because this may very well be "the" central future location of resistance struggle, a meeting place where new and radical happenings can occur'.[98] The bricolaged, multi-referential style of hip-hop allows such happenings, as style presents a way in which black female subjects can embody alternative codes of gendered expression.

Decentring from the margin

Hip-hop style, then, favours sampling, cutting and mixing as a way of giving birth to something different and distinct. Hip-hop identity and subjectivity is purposefully heterogeneous, and, through radical collage and a disordered, fractious, almost lawless mixing, merging and layering, conventions are broken, enabling a challenge to narrow assumptions about both black and white and male and female identity within the rhythms of everyday life. The eclectic instability of hip-hop style is an

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[98] hooks, 'Postmodern Blackness', [accessed 24 February 2009].

example of hooks's construction of a space of radical openness where the key question of black subjectivity can be politically re-imagined and practised: 'Assimilation, imitation, or assuming the role of rebellious exotic are not the only options and never have been'.[99] Through style, black women restructure and recentre the margin to create new spaces of opportunity and counter-discourse. As hooks describes, it is the margins that can act as sites of resistance. She says,

> It was this marginality that I was naming as a central location for the production of a counter-hegemonic discourse that is not just found in words but in habits of being and the way one lives. As such, I was not speaking of a marginality one wishes to lose, to give up, but rather as a site one stays in, clings to even, because it nourishes one's capacity to resist. It offers the possibility of radical perspectives from which to see and create, to imagine alternatives, new worlds.[100]

The strategies of bricolage, appropriation and layering offer new opportunities for black expression as signs are hijacked and inscribed with new meanings that relate to a particular local context. James Lull has called this cultural 'reterritorialisation'.[101] This process also means that women can continually transfigure and transform objects of consumption into sites of production, and hence be as 'productive' as hip-hop men.

In traditional subcultural theory, the quest for authenticity and independence from the culture industry—that is, the renouncing of any prevailing culture of media, image, and hypercommercialism—is presented as a route to resistance. In hip-hop, however, consumption is actually posited as a creative process of style distinction. It therefore presents a post-subcultural articulation, one where people choose style, or elements of style, in the constant creation and recreation of identity. According to Michael Eric

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[99] hooks, *Yearning*, p.20.
[100] Ibid., p.149-50.
[101] James Lull, *Media, Communication, Culture: A Global Approach* (Cambridge: Polity, 1995), p.253.

Dyson, the over-commercialisation of the last decade has resulted in a rise in lyrics about materialism, consumerism and the glorification of hypermasculine lifestyle characteristics, which have replaced the 'great rhetoric' of pre-commercialised rap with 'the mindless redundancy of themes we're all too familiar with: women, weed, wine, cars, and jewelry [*sic*]'.[102] While hip-hop has undergone significant levels of commercialisation, it would be wrong to imagine that there was an earlier 'golden age' of rap. Even early hip-hop, of the 1970s, was always linked to economic forces and commercialisation; black and Hispanic producers in New York, for example, marketed themselves and their music heavily in this period. In Britain, too, Pryce remembers making cassette tapes from radio recordings and handing them out: 'Yes. I used to do that all the time. Come back from America with cassette tapes, tape shows…take them back and we'd all sit around or I'd hand them out to people. And-But that's how we got music, because we weren't—We wouldn't go to record shops to buy records. We didn't know anything about buying records'. (Pryce, interview)

The difference between old and new school hip-hop lies, according to Rose, in the fact that in the early days the producers, rather than the record industry, owned and controlled output.[103] In the case of black British men and women in the 1980s and 1990s, the active production of hip-hop culture was an agentive means for them to control their body, space and entertainment, and this involved close proximity with commodities that, through appropriation and embodiment, were distributed within a 'black market' (pun intended).

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[102] Michael Eric Dyson, *Know What I Mean?: Reflections on Hip Hop* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2007), p.148.
[103] Rose, *Black Noise*; Rose, 'Voices from the Margins: Rap Music and Contemporary Cultural Production', in: *The Popular Music Studies Reader*.

As such, commodification did not necessarily interrupt, but in a crucial sense fuelled, hip-hop culture's own appropriative resistance, rendering it both more urgent and more richly supplied with recyclables, creating a dialectical network. In Russell Potter's view, 'hip-hop is not merely a critique of capitalism, it is a counter-formation that takes up capitalism's gaps and contradictions and creates a whole new mode, a whole new economics'.[104]

Hip-hop makes a direct challenge to western capitalism through 'bling', chunky, flamboyant and ostentatious jewellery and accessories that allude to being expensive, even though, and precisely because, they are fakes. Long necklace chains, sometimes diamond-encrusted, or chunky gold dolphin-shaped earrings were popular styles, whether real or not. Early pioneers of hip-hop, such as Afrika Bambaataa and Run-DMC, had set the tone by using showy clothes and jewellery as iconic in hip-hop style. 'You know you—it just meant that you know you had—you got your things together, you had a little bit of money because you were wearing these earrings. It was like a Cadillac', recalls Mazelle. (Mazelle, interview)

The ostentatious manner in which 'bling' was worn was directly associated with the logic of mass production and mass consumption, drawing on the American origins of the trend. Despite the local evolution of British hip-hop, the influence of the United States cannot be underestimated, especially in the 1980s when global groups visited the UK. Interviewee Mazelle, who was American, and Pryce, who first discovered hip-hop when she went to the Bronx in the 1970s and 1980s, both stress strong relationships with American hip-hop, as well as other black music. 'So I would be

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[104] Russell A. Potter, *Spectacular Vernaculars: Hip-Hop and the Politics of Postmodernism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), p.111.

travelling all over New York, going to Brooklyn, going downtown and going to all of these particular record shops to dig out white labels, basically, to bring back some DJs.' (Pryce, interview) Pryce also notes that it was the in the United States that she was introduced to the genre, and it was here that she found early inspiration. 'And we grew up— I must say, we did grow up listening to music, so when it got to—When did I go to college? That might have been '82, '83, when—I think that's when *The Message* [Sugar Hill Records] came—I can't remember exactly the year, but it was that record I think that triggered us. And also *White Lines* [Sugar Hill Records].' (Pryce, interview)

The increasing global influence of American hip-hop shaped the way that the style in Britain in this period appropriated 'bling' as a central motif. 'But when we went to America, our first thing was to sort out getting our belts, getting the big dookie earrings, as they used to call them. And we bought them and, you know, we got the round ones and the square ones.' (Pryce, interview) Historically, dominant commodity culture appropriated bits and pieces from the otherness of subcultural and ethnic differentiation in order to reproduce 'the new' as the emblem of modernity and, in turn, to strengthen its dominance and revalorise its own symbolic capital. On the other hand, bling undermines traditional Western capitalism by showcasing an alternative entrepreneurialism. In fact, the irreverence of bling could be considered 'camp' in its lack of respect for traditional structures. Susan Sontag suggested that 'The hallmark of Camp is the spirit of extravagance. Camp is a woman walking around in a dress made of three million feathers'.[105] The exaggeration of hip-hop bling, with its thick 'dookie' rope chains in bright yellow, for example, is a close

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[105] Susan Sontag, 'Notes on "Camp"', in: *Against Interpretation, and Other Essays* (London: Penguin, 2009), pp.275-292 (p.283).

match, and defines perfectly what Sontag calls the 'new-style dandy': someone who appreciates vulgarity.[106] After all, the key to camp in Sontag's terms is an ironic, hyper-aware sensibility.

Hip-hop consumerism represents the 'pragmatic self-reliance of the hustler, out of frustration with its [his] disenfranchisement'.[107] In a process of exaggerated adorning, objects like fake jewellery in diamonds and yellow gold are used to accentuate black skin and features, to reinforce the visibility of blackness while at the same time taking an ironic side-swipe at traditional processes of production and success. In the context of hip-hop, then, bling becomes a gesture of symbolic agency. It is like a negative dialectic, a kind of anti-desire, a refusal to participate in the white economy as 'straight'. Tulloch stresses that hip-hop 'style was never straight down the line. That's why you saw things like Burberry coats!' (Tulloch, interview) Similarly the shine and polish of huge gold door-knocker earrings, such as those worn by Salt-N-Pepa, (Figure 18) were eye-catching; they encouraged the fetishisation of surface, of appearance rather than content, challenging the seriousness of commodity fetishism and prestige value within the mainstream (white) fashion system.

[106] Sontag, 'Notes on "Camp"', p.289.
[107] Sam Davies, 'Not Bad Meaning Bad...But Bad Meaning Good', Loops, 1 (2009), 70-79 (p.77).

Figure 18 'Salt-N-Pepa',1980s © Normski.

In an ironic pun, hip-hop's central tenet of 'keeping it real' included the valorisation of fakes and exaggerated copies of brands. An example is the 'Paid in Full' B-Boy fake Gucci tracksuit top worn by Eric B and Rakim in the photograph on their album cover of 1986. (Figure 19)
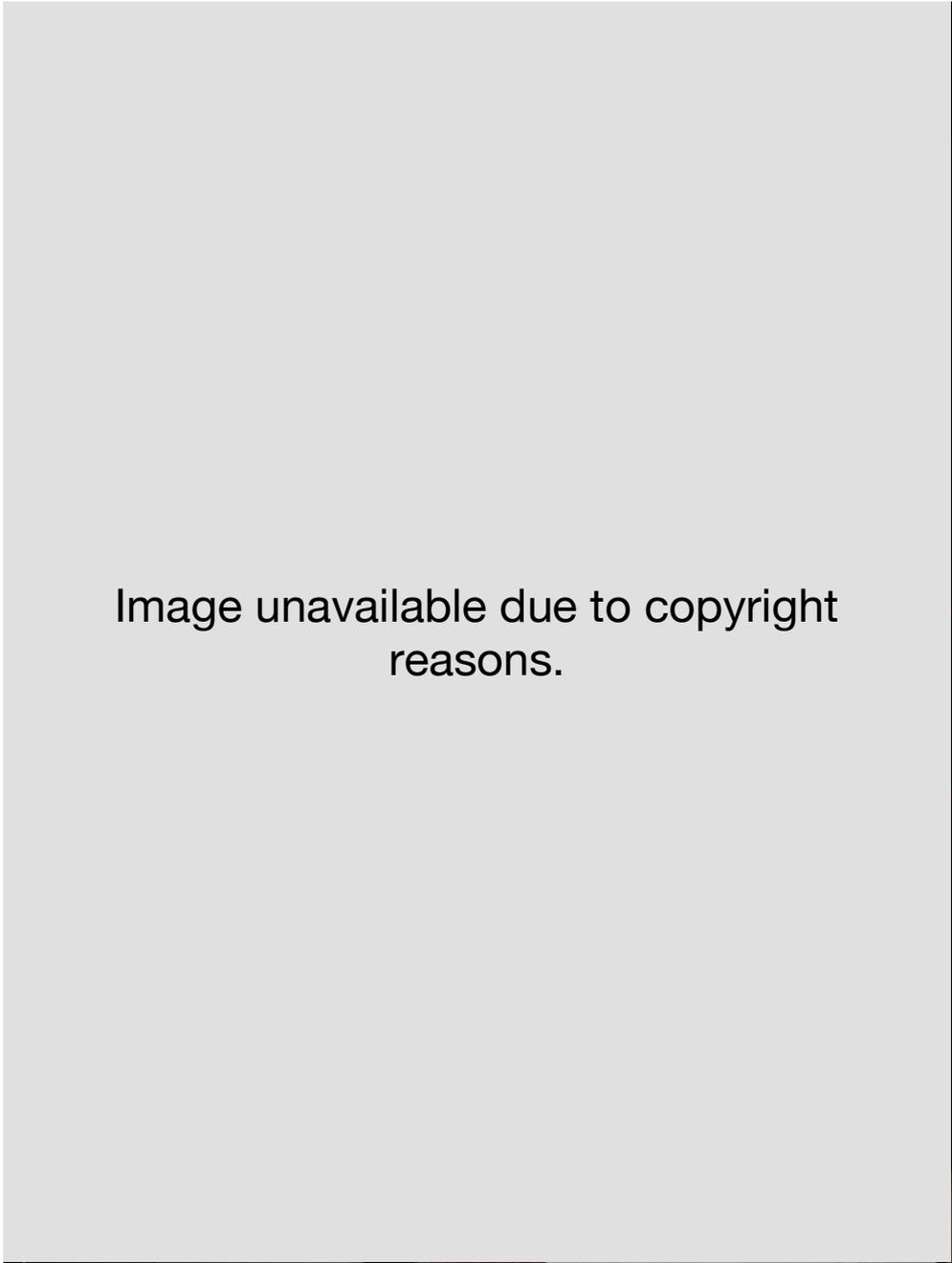
Figure 19 'Paid in Full' B-boy outfit, UK 1988. Courtesy of V&A images.

The outfit is accessorised with a 'dookie' chain and baseball cap. The exaggeration in the replica—the oversized printed symbols, the artificial yellow of the gold, the redesign of the designer brand with letters spelling 'GUCCI'—all flout convention to play out a defiant, dandyish Otherness. In no way could this be a substitute for 'the real thing'.

Yet, ironically, and subversively, this was hip-hop's way of 'keeping it real'. Although the style relied on copies and fakes, these could not be 'straight' knock-offs, because 'straight' copying undermined the entrepreneurial spirit of the culture. 'Straight' copying was not good enough, especially in the music, where the emphasis in sampling was always on originality and innovation. Murray Foreman recalls that early rap artists in New York 'were often derided as mere copyists'.[108] Instead, as Figure 18 demonstrates, copies and exaggeration were used to create a blur of simulations, with sign superimposed on sign. The look leaves us caught in a whirlwind of references, submerging us in messages without meaning. It mocks. In this way hip-hop style is the ultimate postmodern trick: surface becomes a 'new', 'modified' reality, and knowledge and commodified consumption become disrupted.

Butler echoes these same techniques when she analyses the subversion of gender: 'when the unreal lays claim to reality, or enters into its domain, something other than a simple assimilation into prevailing norms can and does take place; [these norms] themselves can become rattled, display their instability, and become open to resignification'.[109] Resignification through the unreal—through unlikely fakes or copies—can be theorised in racial terms, too. Speaking of mimicry, Bhabha says that it is about a 'desire for a reformed, recognisable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite* [*sic*]'.[110] In other words, mimicry is a performance that exposes the artificiality of all symbolic expressions of power. As such it destabilises racial and colonial discourse, becoming a form of critical agency:

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[108] Murray Foreman, in *That's the Joint!: The Hip-Hop Studies Reader,* p.450.
[109] Butler, *Undoing Gender*, pp.27-28.
[110] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p.122.

> Mimicry is thus the sign of a double articulation: a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which 'appropriates' the Other as it visualises power. Mimicry is also the sign of the inappropriate, however, a difference or recalcitrance which coheres the dominant strategic function of colonial power, intensifies surveillance, and poses an immanent threat to both 'normalised' knowledges and disciplinary powers.[111]

Bhabha's comment about disciplinary power is interesting in the context of hip-hop style because of the way that bling and copies defy the criminalisation of fakes in the west. The law relating to copying in advanced capitalist systems has developed to protect corporate global consumer culture so that even though copying is ubiquitous it creates stigmas and anxieties. In his book *In Praise of Copying*, Marcus Boon says that 'the legal domains in which copying is framed are themselves mimetic structures. Law as institution, as intervention, as structure, exists so that society can place limits on ubiquitous, omnipresent mimetic transformation. Copying occurs inside those domains, outside their precincts, and in the construction of boundaries, definitions, which produce an inside and an outside'.[112] Hip-hop copying is 'outside', in this sense: brands and objects are recontextualised to the point of disidentification.

In hip-hop mimicry, resemblance is not only about going towards the desired other; resemblance is also about challenging normative systems and signs. Imitation of the brand expresses both identification and disidentification: that is, conspicuous consumption but also satire. Fakes and replicas mimic the behaviour of the mainstream fashion system, or white hegemonic structures, and while at times they were worn to show wealth and class mobility, at the same time 'hip-hop style was about people striving to be different, often with limited means, but still wishing to be

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[111] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, pp.122-23.

[112] Marcus Boon, *In Praise of Copying* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press, 2010), p.245.

acknowledged for their flair'.[113] Desire is about creating something new, about radically revaluing. In the moment of wearing fakes and replicas—of mimicking white fashion systems and access to capital—hip-hop style undermines the iconicity of these systems. According to Mazelle, 'It wasn't just that you made it to show off. [It was about showing that] you made it against the odds saying that you wouldn't, that you couldn't and that you couldn't have it [material success]'. (Mazelle, interview)

What emerges as a result of this process of (re)appropriation and fakes in hip-hop is an ambivalence towards brands. This feature of the culture is exemplified by the fact that there was a preference for and use of certain brands in hip-hop as opposed to others. In particular it was the use of particular Western or 'showy' labels that suggests that the use of brands was tactical, adopted as a means for hip-hop men and women to embody capitalism's deep contradictions. The adoption of, for example 'white' brands, such as Volkswagen, representative of German efficiency and prowess, was apporopriated into black hip-hop culture by the fact that VW symbols were often stolen from the front of cars and used as pendants on neckchains. A craze for stealing VW badges was linked with the Beastie Boys, an American hip-hop group from New York City that formed in 1981. In 1986 the rappers started to appear on stage with Volkswagen badges around their necks. Beastie Boys fans throughout the world aped the stars, using screwdrivers to unlock the symbols and demonstrating, according to a report in *New Legal Review*, 'their fearless street nous'. The report claims that 'although the craze eventually died down, a spate of VW badge theft was

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[113] Zoé Whitley, 'Dressing viciously: hip-hop music, fashion and cultural crossover', in: *Postmodernism: Style and Subversion, 1970-1990*, ed. by Glenn Adamson and Jane Pavitt, (London: V&A, 2011), pp.186-190 (p.188).

reported in Yorkshire as late as 2000'.[114] Similarly BMWs, also German, became another car brand associated with hip-hop in the period; in fact the letters BMW were vernacularly adopted as a double entendre standing for 'Black Man's Wheels', and drew racist connections with black criminals driving BMWs that were stolen and uninsured.[115] These overtones became so prevalent that black rappers eventually appropriated the phrase into song titles.[116]

Luxury brands that were considered 'flashy', such as Gucci and Versace, were deliberately identified and chosen over others, used to correspond with the values and aesthetic of the style's association with boldness and individuality. The show of labels was especially important. Run-DMC wore white shelltoe Adidas sneakers, shades, gold chains, for example. Others in hip-hop then 'riffed' on this look by using very specific brands: Kangol hats were typical street style choices in the 1980s, and in 1994, Snoop Dogg appeared on the television show Saturday Night Live in an oversized Hilfiger rugby shirt; following this appearance the brand became heavily associated with the rap community worldwide. The fact that Hilfiger had until that point been marketed as 'preppy', as in a style for rich prep-school children, provided an ironic twist. The consumption of particular brands shows that hip-hop was not about the slavish consumption of all things, rather it was about the symbolic

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[114] 'VW Badges and the Beasties', *New Legal Review*, 23 June 2009
http://www.cpaglobal.com/newlegalreview/widgets/notes_quotes/more/1731/vw_badges_and_the_beasties
[accessed 6 June 2013].
[115] In 2008 a British police officer was disciplined after referring to a BMW toy car as a 'black man's wheels' because fellow officers found the remark racist and offensive. Nicole Martin, 'Senior officer in West Midlands Police disciplined for 'black man's wheels' jibe', the *Telegraph*, 27 July 2008
http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/2463326/Senior-officer-in-West-Midlands-Police-disciplined-for-black-mans-wheels-jibe.html [accessed 6 June 2013].
[116] Ras Strika, *Black Man Wheels* (Master Touch Records, 2012), http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Fx926aXa8w [accessed 6 June 2013].

consumption of a 'flashness', often to express irony or subversion, that corresponded

with the upward mobility and entrepreneurial spirit in the culture. Hip-hop style

therefore involved a sophisticated reading of brands. Perhaps this is why the Gucci

print is made even more 'flashy' in the fake interpretation worn by Eric B and Rakim.

(Figure 19) In fact ambivalence towards brands, and by implication the Western

fashion system's notion of luxury, is subverted through bricolage in a similar way to

how white working class teddy boys used theft and transformation of the Edwardian

style. Furthermore ambivalence towards brands demonstrates that in hip-hop certain

labels carried subcultural capital[117] that helped to demarcate lines of authenticity. An

incorrect set of dress labels or references elicited scorn: in Andy Bennett's 1999

ethnography of British hip-hop culture he noted that when white people dressed in

typical African-American ways they were ridiculed as 'Wiggers'.[118]

Figure 20 shows an image of She Rockers, a British female hip-hop group who

performed in the late 1980s and 1990s.

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[117] 'Subcultural capital' is a phrase coined by Sarah Thornton in her study *Club Cultures: Music, Media and Subcultural Capital*, (Cambridge: Polity, 1995). In this book Thornton focuses on youth cultures that revolve around dance clubs and raves and explores the idea of 'subcultural capital' to make sense of how youth create notions of 'cool' through the disparagement of the mainstream.
[118] Andy Bennett, 'Rappin' on the Tyne: White Hip-Hop Culture in Northeast England—An Ethnographic Study', *Sociological Review* 47:1 (1999), pp. 1-24 (p.12).

Figure 20 'She Rockers and Griff' (undated) © Normski.

Band members wear baseball hats and American football jackets, referencing the influence of American hip-hop. One of the hats sports a Gucci print on the flap exemplifying precisely how labels were layered in a process of bricolage. It is unclear whether the cap's logo print is real or a fake. If it is the latter, the ease with which these copies are worn undermines the authority of designer brands and hegemonic fashion systems. It also highlights how the idea of the 'original', or authorship, can be dismantled. Imitation in this example is mischievous, and also deeply subversive. In Bhabha's words,

> In the ambivalent world of the 'not quite/not white'…the *founding objects* [*sic*] of the Western world become the erratic, eccentric, accidental *objets trouvés* [*sic*] of the colonial discourse—the part-objects of presence. It is then that the body and the book lose their part-objects of presence. It is then that the body and the book lose their representational authority.[119]

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[119] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p.131.

Fakes were often made from a combination of cheap metal and plastics. The lightness of these objects, and the 'quick-change artistry of plastic',[120] recall Roland Barthes' claim that 'plastic is, all told, a spectacle to be deciphered: the very spectacle of its end-products'. In this case Barthes meant spectacle as 'the interplay of action, representation and alienation in man and in society'.[121] For Barthes, plastic was the ultimate sign of transmutation: 'Plastic, sublimated as movement, hardly exists as substance'. In fact, as he says: 'The hierarchy of substances is abolished: a single one replaces them all: the whole world can be plasticized, and even life itself since, we are told, they are beginning to make plastic aortas'.[122] Decades later, plastic's instability, its malleability corresponds with the fluid and mobile changes and exchanges of hip-hop's style objects as they are appropriated and transformed, as they are manipulated outside of the fashion system, as they emphasise the agentive, multiple strategies and subjectivities of their wearers.

The use of plastic, not just in fakes but also in PVC objects, in the polyester of sports clothes and in shoes such as trainers, was also about innovation, since it reinforced the importance of technology and fast pace of reproduction during the 1980s and 1990s. This paired well with the general entrepreneurial spirit of these decades. The creator of Soul II Soul, Jazzie B, mentioned earlier in the chapter, was not only responsible for creating music and hairstyles, he also opened a hip-hop fashion shop in Camden, the success of which was summed up by a subtitle on the cover of *The Face* in 1989 when it boasted that Jazzie 'has a car phone in his Mercedes'.[123] [124] The Soul II Soul

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[120] Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (1972), selected and translated by Annette Lavers, with an introduction by Neil Badmington rev. ed. (London: Vintage, 2009), p.97.
[121] Ibid.
[122] Ibid., p.99.
[123] *The Face*, 2:7, April 1989, cover.

shop was a hip-hop fashion mecca that sold 'Troop' and 'Gucci' gear and t-shirts, tracksuits, leather jackets and even umbrellas, that were significantly more expensive than those in the nearby market. Nonetheless it was a popular and iconic haunt for black and white men and women alike, and eventually the goods started to assume a designer status of their own: 'A lot of people found an identity in the clothes, in the high-legged pants [trousers]. You know, the kind of high-legged pants and then those boots and the trainers', recalls Mazelle. (Mazelle, interview) Peters also remembers a positive association with the shop, and the fact that it was easily accessible:

> It was post-riots—up until that point it was quite problematic being a black kid… school was a problem, work was a problem, it was a problem in families because of absent black males, it was kind of like problems and that [Soul II Soul] was something that was really positive, that they had this shop that…and also people like having Caron Wheeler. You know you watched *Top of The Pops* and you see this woman that's got an amazing voice and she's obviously over a size 14 and she looks incredible, she's beautiful and she's got [dread]locks and that whole thing and then yes, I think that's probably what we tapped into…we could go to the shop…it was like a train ride, but, you know, distance wasn't a problem. It was the fact that it was on our doorstep, that we could go there. (Peters, interview)

The easy availability of hip-hop objects, which was a result of both rapid commodification and cheap production and reproduction, was all part of hip-hop's up-and-coming movement. Hip-hop's quick adoption meant that it was revalued within the British socio-political economy, developing its own cultural capital as it went mainstream and became coveted as street style. Simultaneously, the lavish show of newness and freshness in hip-hop style, not only through bling but also through an

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[124] Jazzie B represented a 'Buppie', a shorthand term for 'black urban professional'. The term was used most commonly by journalists to describe a rather loosely defined economic, social, and cultural group of urban black entrepreneurs. It came into broad use in the mid-1980s as a counterpart to the 'yuppie' phenomenon, which was popular in its own right in the 1980s to describe primarily white young urban professionals. See Cynthia Rose, 'Jazzie B and the New Black Economy', *New Statesman*, 17 June 1988 http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/jazzie-b-and-the-new-black-economy [accessed 6 June 2013].

emphasis on the pristine—'box-fresh' trainers, for example—makes an important statement about conspicuous consumption as part of aspirational class mobility. Mazelle says, 'So it is about being visible… about showing that you have got the money – you have got the power because you have got the money'. (Mazelle, interview) What we see in hip-hop style, therefore, is an explicit dialectical relationship between aspiration and parody that is constantly in play. As a result, black youth on the street can be seen as creative and mobile rather than deviant, and style inspires positivity rather than moral panic.

The term 'fresh' had far-reaching connotations. The notion has been mentioned earlier in relation to individuality, but it also referred to having the right 'gear', developing the right 'look' and sound. In many ways 'fresh' echoed 'fly': 'When you look fresh, it's the same thing [as fly]. It has the same meaning but with fly, I think fly was sort of like was more female kind of directed. You know?' (Pryce, interview) Pryce also added that 'When we were doing our stuff, it was all about your fly gear, your freshest lyrics and being in the club'. Hip-hop's style strategies offered the opportunity to show confidence, to exhibit an expressive style that reflected personal pride.

Gendered style and the urban street

Fresh image-making in hip-hop has been dependent on the urban street. Hip-hop was as much an outdoor sensation as an underground one when it emerged in the 1970s, neighbourhood block parties being a good example. Hip-hop style is street style as much as dancewear: sportswear, flight jackets, cycling shorts, trainers were all worn in the everyday life in a hip-hop 'way', embodied in the strut and the attitude as quotidian expressions, not just reserved for club nights. Within this context, 'keeping

it real' was about performing an ever-changing logic of style across the cultural surfaces of daily life. Just as in the context of punk (Chapter 1), where everyday wear and dressing for gigs involved the same processes and looks, hip-hop ran to the schedule of black lived reality, situated both within and as *breaks* in the progressive time of modernity and its grand historical narratives. Mazelle says that hip-hop style was about saying 'we've arrived'. (Mazelle, interview)

> I think what was kind of in a way happening was power happening for black women in the UK. You know? (Mazelle, interview)

Discourses of black nationalism, such as that of Marcus Garvey,[125] have acknowledged that racism 'works' by encouraging the devaluation of blackness by black subjects themselves. So a recentred sense of pride, demonstrated with hip-hop's street-style visibility, is a prerequisite for a politics of resistance and reconstruction. From a gendered perspective, hip-hop's activism lay in the fact that women, through their style, expressed their yearning for visibility and equality.

> …when I think back to how we were as women, we were strong women naturally, and we knew when we got into that scene it was very male-dominated, and we were very passionate about our music.
>
> We were passionate about who we were; we were passionate about image. And it wasn't something that we sat down and said we were going to be like this. It was almost like it was just in our DNA. (Pryce, interview)

It is worth stressing that because hip-hop emerged during second-wave feminism, the influence of the Women's Liberation Movement, as well as other emancipatory cultural expressions, including punk and Greenham Common Peace Camp, also

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[125] Marcus Garvey was a Jamaican political leader and proponent of the Black Nationalism and Pan-Africanism movements in the early twentieth century. He was the founder of the Universal Negro Improvement Association, which represented the largest mass movement in twentieth-century African-American history. See Robert A. Hill, Marcus Garvey, and Barbara Bair, *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers* (Berkeley ; London: University of California Press, 1990).

influenced black British women. Pryce certainly situated the trend for unisex dress in hip-hop as part of a broader feminist project (Pryce, interview), and this is why the same techniques of either hypersexualisation or the adoption of men's clothes are seen in various subcultural and alternative cultures of the time. The trend is also seen in high fashion of the period, with designers such as Vivienne Westwood and, later on, Jean-Paul Gaultier focusing on underwear as outerwear.

These factors contributed to the fact that in the 1980s and 1990s women in hip-hop were becoming as visible 'on the street' as men, at the heart of the scene. It was on the street that they displayed the same creative resources as men in their investment and participation in hip-hop's signifying economy. This is not to suggest that the hip-hop street became a sort of fantasy space, in which all previous oppressions disappeared. Just as in the case of punk, as discussed in Chapter 1, the gender politics of the culture remained complex. Mazelle recalls that within the music scene and recording studios, 'it [hip hop] still put a limit on women. Because now the male DJ was emerging and he wanted to still hold the female artist down'. (Mazelle, interview) She continues, 'there was some movement. Yes. But you know...I saw a lot of them [girls] be left behind because of the politics'. However, against the prevailing racial slur of black 'unproductivity', hip-hop style and culture in the street showed itself to be productive in its work of creative resistance as an entrepreneurial activity. In the same way as black men were doing, black women actively prowled through the circuit of goods and images, creating new looks that they threw back into the world of consumption through commodification. Black women became objects of desire, creating looks that carried prestige and taste in the complex feedback loop within which white youth tried to appropriate their looks. 'The way we presented ourselves, it was important not only because we were women in a male-dominated scene but we

realised that we were- we were a brand and we were marketing material…we were very in tune with younger girls and being role models, and we had a lot of fans and a lot of girls who used to write letters to us thanking us for who we were, particularly how we dressed and how they want to be like us.' (Pryce, interview)

Furthermore, the street became the stage upon which black British urban hybridity was showcased. This in turn articulated a black third space that opened up realms of possibility for imagining new kinds of black citizenship within the British urban landscape. A new, multilayered black public sphere created by hip-hop was the place in the everyday where social practice could have disruptive political consequences, complicating the relations of centre and periphery in British society. According to Mazelle, '…we were accepted …you know, for just being naturally ourselves. You know? We didn't have to perm our hair. We didn't have to worry about if your nose was too broad, or whatever. You know we had a sound, we had a movement that accepted us the way we were. It was for us, by us. It was the beginning of merchandising your own kind of clothing and merchandising your own brand in your communities'. (Mazelle, interview)

Hip-hop's hybridity, with its creative process of production and rapid-fire rate of commodification, meant that as well as creating a black public sphere, it transformed the British street irrevocably into a site of ethno-racial ambiguity. As such, British hip-hop in the 1980s and 1990s must be understood as a critical cultural and historical turning point for black British women and men—and for Britishness in general. The legacy of hip-hop and its critical strategies will be developed in the next chapter (Chapter 4) with reference to the hijab's layers and folds. Despite the unique

characteristics of each of my case studies, what connects them is best summed up by bell hooks when she says that style links directly with a politics of representation:

> [T]he ways we image ourselves, our representation of the self as black folks, have been so important because of oppression, domination. Clothing for us had so much to do with the nature of underclass exploited reality. For we have pleasure (and the way this pleasure is constituted has been a mediating force between the painful reality, our internalised self-hate, and even our resistance) in clothing. Clothes have functioned politically in black experience…to express resistance and/or conformity.[126]

This chapter has focused on the way that style has functioned politically in hip-hop to express diasporic Black Atlantic confidence and a new historicism that permits young blacks to discern links between past and present. As with the experiences of punk and Greenham, hip-hop culture from the 1980s continues to have an influence on my interviewees today. As Peters says:

> It was almost like I have to be away for three years to do this, but I'm not really prepared to kind of give up all the other stuff and even now, although we've kind of stopped going to clubs and stuff, those people that I went out with, that regular scene, there's still that bond that we have. (Peters, interview)

Pryce offers a similar view: 'the culture is still very important to me, and it's made me who I am today. It's been my livelihood for… twenty-five years!' (Pryce, interview) Pryce continues to work in the music industry, not as a performer but in management and promotion. Upon reflection, what her comments and those of others highlight is that it is as much through hip-hop's inconsistencies, discontinuities—or breaks—that women have dismantled racialising and totalising histories, as well as any binary logic of elite/subaltern, global/local, centre/periphery. Style has created a cultural politics of

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[126] hooks, *Yearning*, p.217.

difference based on the continued relationship between popular expression, commodification, urbanisation and global economic and local political realities. These themes are central to understanding style in the twenty-first century, and are particularly relevant when analysing the complex style strategies and intertextual gendered expressions of the subjects of my next case study, which focuses on British Muslim women in hijab.

Chapter 4 The Fold of the Hijab: 2001 to the present

Since the early 2000s, both in Britain and elsewhere, the wearing of the hijab, or Muslim headscarf, has been a highly contentious and public issue that has sparked a range of debates about women's bodies and sexual politics, race and notions of Britishness. Radio and television discussions have aired verbal battles about whether the headscarf is an indicator of women's oppression,[12] and, in a climate where Islam has been associated with terrorism since the 11 September, 2001 attacks in New York and Washington DC, newspaper headlines, particularly in the right-wing press, have presented the Muslim veil in terms of a 'clash of civilisations', homogenising veiling practices and critiquing the wearing of the veil as an obstacle to communication and as an Islamic refusal to embrace modernity.[3] Within Western contemporary feminism, the veil, especially the burka (full-face veil), with its connections with Taliban-ruled Afghanistan, has commonly been seen as a representation of extreme gender repression and the denial of agency and personal freedom for women. The assumption has been that if they were freed from their bondage of veiling, Muslim women would naturally express their instinctual abhorrence for the traditional Islamic mores used to

[1] There have been a very large number of discussions about the hijab in the British media since 2001. An article in the *Lancashire Telegraph* as recently as 2010 describes how a recording of 'Any Questions', a BBC radio current affairs debate programme, in Burnley, Lancashire, caused controversy by discussing the issue of Muslim veiling. See Tom Moseley, 'Radio 4's Any Questions at Burnley raises burka issue', *Lancashire Telegraph*, 13 February 2010.
http://www.lancashiretelegraph.co.uk/news/burnley/5006580.Radio_4_s_Any_Questions_at_Burnley_raises_burk a_issue/?ref=twt [accessed 9 January 2013].
[2] It is worth noting that it was also in the *Lancashire Telegraph* in 2006 that Jack Straw, who was then Home Secretary, wrote an article stating that he believed full-face veiling hindered positive intercommunity relations. See Jack Straw, 'I want to unveil my views on an important issue', *Lancashire Telegraph,* 5 October 2006
http://www.lancashiretelegraph.co.uk/blog/index.var.488.0.i_want_to_unveil_my_views_on_an_important_issue/ [accessed 14 April 2012]. His comments sparked widespread debate and protest. See 'Straw's veil comments spark anger', BBC News, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/5410472.stm [accessed 9 January 2013]. Both Straw's article and the furore that he caused are discussed in more detail later in the chapter. See also: Emma Tarlo, *Visibly Muslim: Fashion, Politics, Faith* (Oxford; New York: Berg, 2010), pp.144-147.
[3] See Gholam Khiabany, 'Veiled Bodies—Naked Racism: Culture, Politics and Race in the Sun', *Race & Class,* 50 (2008), 69-88.

repress them. This view has been so prevalent that in 2001 Islamic feminists were provoked into asking: 'Do Muslim women really need saving?'[4]

This is a pertinent question, and it raises others, such as: which 'Muslim women', and 'saving' from what? The geopolitics of the Muslim veiling custom is critical to any discussion of it. In Britain there has been a rapid increase in the popularity of veiling for Muslim women since 2000,[5] with many young Muslims choosing to adopt it voluntarily, as this chapter will discuss. The diversity of the headscarf, in particular, whether it is coloured, decorative or plain, reflects the multiple meanings and connotations that the veil holds for women within this socio-political context. Rather than a marker of oppression, for some Muslim women in Britain the veil has come to represent agency, empowerment and consciousness in a historical moment, one that is markedly different from that of second-wave feminism in which their foremothers and fellow Britons came of age. It is for this reason that I include the British hijab as a case study in this thesis. I am concerned with both the politics of hijab dressing as a form of counter-hegemonic resistance in the British context and its role as a performative product of changing fashions, worn by British women who are consumers of media, fashion and beauty trends—within, not outside, the fashion system. This case study may at first glance seem incongruous in relation to my other examples, because it examines practices associated with religious dress, and also seems 'conservative' or conformist, as distinct from subcultural. However I will explore how it is, in fact, connected through similar and overlapping style strategies that create the opportunity for 'new' identities that are both Muslim and British. I explore the hijab as a political site for gendered and racial alterity and resistance,

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[4] Lila Abu-Lughod, 'Do Muslim women really need saving? anthroplogical reflections on cultural relativism and its others', *American Anthropologist,* 104:3 (2002), 783-90.
[5] For analysis of the increased visibility of Muslimness in Britain see Tarlo, *Visibly Muslim*. See also *The Veil,* dir. by Aysha Rafaele, BBC2, 20 May 2000.

developing further some of the postcolonial debates presented in the previous chapter about black British hip-hop (Chapter 3).

For example, in this chapter the cut, layer and break are revisited and contrasted with a theorisation of 'the fold' in an exploration of the way in which a material process of dressing corresponds with philosophical notions of subjective agency. This is just one echo between this case study and the previous ones; the uneasiness about Muslim women expressing cultural difference through the visibility of the veil, and the general anxiety that this has caused about the Islamification of Britain, is in some ways similar to the 'moral panics' that Stanley Cohen spoke about when discussing subcultural style. In Chapter 1, Cohen's study, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics*, is mentioned in regard to punk, but the author's ideas of how the media can create ideas of threat around certain groups of people is applicable here too. In the European context the veiled woman can be understood as the focus of moral panic because of the way she threatens traditional ideas of modernity: in fact, by reappropriating Islamic identity and ways of life against the homogenising forces of Western modernity, she has come to represent the 'forbidden modern', in the words of Turkish sociologist Nilüfer Göle.[6] Modest dressing and covering-up run contrary to the trend in contemporary British popular culture for women's bodies and dress codes to be not only exposed but actively spectacularised in public through magazines and 'makeover' television shows, where women 'are made and remade within texts of enjoyment and rituals of relaxation and abandonment'.[7] The hijab threatens the cultural integrity of these systems of over-exposure.

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[6] Nilüfer Göle, *The Forbidden Modern: Civilization and Veiling* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996).
[7] Angela McRobbie, 'Post-feminism and popular culture', *Feminist Media Studies,* 4 (2004), 255-264 (p.262).

All the women I have interviewed for this chapter are British nationals; not all were born in Britain, but they consider Britain to be their home. Within the urban and transnational frame of British metropolitan centres, these women choose to wear the hijab not because of tradition but as an articulation of their British identity. My work does not refer, therefore, to veiling practices from other cultures that are also evident on the British street. Through an emphasis on the analysis of the fold I discuss the ways in which, both materially and symbolically, British Muslim women's subjective experiences are folded into meta-narratives about belonging and community, how a variety of 'ensembles'[8] that are the result of high-street fashions mixed and matched with the head-veil highlight subjectivity as lived experience. The strategies of appropriation, bricolage and hybridity, discussed in my previous case studies, are now compared and contrasted within a new set of localised and temporally specific sartorial articulations.

The focus of this chapter is therefore as much on 'non-Muslim' clothes, in other words fashion objects from the high street, as it is about hijab. My discussion demonstrates that the fashion system is a series of fractured expressions rather than a single 'mainstream'. The chapter explores how, through expressions of style, Muslim women engage with top-down notions of power, not only within the fashion system but also in the media and in consumer practices, and how they use style to reinscribe alternative forms of power in their everyday lives to express their urban values and aesthetics.

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[8] Tarlo, *Visibly Muslim*.

Talking about scarves

In contemporary style, the hijab is a long scarf that is tied around the head and shoulders; it is made from a range of materials, from luxurious silk to cotton; it can be any colour, either plain or printed. Most often it is draped around the head so that an end tucks under the chin to stay in place, or is held in place by a pin. It is rare that the hijab is worn as a turban, though this can be the case. More often it is folded over the head in layers, in order to cover the hair or the skin of the neck or chest, in line with Islamic edicts relating to modesty. Muslim women interpret ideas of modesty differently according to their religious affinity and cultural backgrounds, and therefore they all have different ways of veiling. Some, for example, will wear the headscarf to cover only their head and neck, while others, in a niqab (face veil) or abaya (full body veil), will cover their entire face and body, revealing only their eyes.

Most of my British interviewees created their own hijab by adopting and adapting scarves and material from British high-street shops. Motifs, fabrics and colours from mainstream fashions have been rendered 'Muslim' through the way in which they have been shaped and draped on the head. As such, the aesthetic and cultural politics of the hijab simultaneously defy and enforce continuous engagement with the mainstream: the hijab, while fashioning otherness, at the same time constantly borrows from global cultural industries. In this way the hijab creates a double discourse, one that seems to resist the mainstream but at the same time is part of it, in a very similar fashion to hip-hop style.

Figure 1 shows interviewee Annika Waheed on a shopping trip in London.

Figure 1 Annika Waheed, London, 2010. Courtesy of Annika Waheed.

Waheed, who is in her twenties and working as a teacher comes from a Pakistani

background, and has been wearing hijab for more than seven years (see Appendices).

While she was growing up, she was expected to wear the Pakistani shalwar kameez

[long shirt and trousers], but not a veil. However, she rejected this form of dress,

which was imposed on her, for cultural reasons, by her father, and which she found repressive. Instead she adopted the hijab for reasons of faith, but also to stop unwanted male attention, to stop 'feeling objectified', (Waheed, interview) and to assert her identity as a Muslim in what she felt was an increasingly hostile climate of anti-Muslim sentiment following the terrorist attacks of September 2001. Waheed experimented with the niqab, but only very briefly in 2006, as well. (Waheed, interview) Nobody else in Waheed's immediate family wears the hijab. All of Waheed's hijabs are found by her, and come from high-street stores. Figures 2 and 3 are examples of the scarves, or in her terms, hijabs (Waheed, interview) that she likes. It is worth noting that Waheed has never been to a specialist hijab shop in London, nor does she intend to. As far as she is concerned, she 'love[s] high-street fashion' and says that she is a 'self-proclaimed fashionista'. She also adds that she puts great effort into making sure that her headscarves are chosen to match the rest of her high-street outfits. (Waheed, interview)

Figure 2 Example of high-street fashion scarf bought by Waheed and worn as hijab, 2010.

Figure 3 As above, another example of a high-street scarf worn as hijab, 2010.

Figure 4 is an example of one of Waheed's complete looks: a blue jumpsuit from
high-street store Next, worn with a cardigan and a scarf to match.

Figure 4 Waheed's jumpsuit from Next and complete hijab 'look', 2010.

Waheed's appropriation of non-Muslim high-street fashion objects is a way to enact 'Muslimness' as a performative articulation: in other words, through style Waheed's Muslim identity is 'produced as an effect of the performance',[9] shaped by her strategies of fashion syncretism. The result is an expression of cultural synergy rather than outright oppositionality, though her techniques of recontextualisation match those of other more self-consciously critical interviewees discussed in earlier chapters. Here, hybridity occurs not only for the wearer but for the fashion or style object too, unsettling the assumptions of any one dominant culture. The layering and combining of Western clothes into a Muslim 'look' is yet another example of how style is used to perform a dissident subjectivity, as a disruptive performance that challenges normative or stable structures. The theme of hybridity resurfaces as cultural difference positioned *in between* the dominant and the marginal. In Chapter 3 I discussed how the in-between spaces created through hip-hop style reflected Bhabha's theorization of hybridity and a third space as sites for the disruption and displacement of hegemonic narratives.[10] In the case of the British hijab, improvisation that involves recombination, hybridization and mixing and matching emphasises movement across boundaries and the ambivalence of cultural systems. Bhabha believes that there is remedial power in such processes, because they mark a 'shift from the cultural as an epistemological object to culture as an enactive, enunciatory site'.[11] The British hijab reveals culture itself to be hybrid, and this hybridity provides the space for agency.

The headscarf combined with Western clothes thus represents what Emma Tarlo refers to as 'Islamic cosmpolitanism', where the veil as fashion is interwoven in cosmopolitan lifestyles and attitudes that incorporate concerns about style as well as

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[9] Butler, *Undoing Gender*, p.218.
[10] See Chapter 3 The Hip-Hop Break: 1984-1997.
[11] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p.255.

religion, politics, and aesthetics.[12] These mixed references provide Muslim women with the chance to express their Muslim identity and yet remain part of the fashion system thus engaging with mainstream popular culture and fashion trends. At the same time, the cosmopolitan hijab engenders creativity: of the young Muslim women I interviewed, most of them always tried to make their hijab 'trendy'. Waheed was keen to tell me about her shoe collection, as well as her scarves, because she said she was always shopping for the 'trendiest' shoes to go with her hijab outfits. (Waheed, interview)

Fundamental to the process of creating individual looks is do-it-yourself techniques of customisation. Figure 5 shows examples of pins and brooches used by Waheed to style the hijab and to keep it in place.

Figure 5 Waheed's hijab pins, 2010.

Again, these pins are appropriated from the high street. They have various stones and crystals attached to them and they are bright, colourful and conspicuous, worn as an accessory to accentuate the hijab. In Figure 6 there are some examples of high-street

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[12] Emma Tarlo, 'Islamic cosmopolitanism: the sartorial biographies of three Muslim women in London', *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body & Culture,* 11:2-3, 143-172.

brooches that are sometimes used to pin the headscarf in place. The peacock feather and vibrant colours suggest confidence and pride.

Figure 6 Waheed's brooches and pins, 2010.

The agentive process of shaping and pinning the scarves and styling them appropriately to render them Muslim involves the active folding of the material into a new structure or form. This manipulation of the materiality of the cloth is interesting both technically and in theoretical and philosophical terms. As the material is folded over the head to envelop the hair, one cannot tell where the folds start or end, and as the cloth is wound around it becomes difficult to distinguish one end from the other, particularly as the cloth moulds the head, sweeping around the face and disappearing under the chin or behind the ear, as demonstrated in the photograph of Waheed. (Figure 7)

Figure 7 Waheed in hijab, 2009. Courtesy of Annika Waheed.

The techniques of folding and enveloping seen in the photograph are transformative in two ways. Firstly, the scarf is transformed from a piece of cloth into a Muslim sign, and the wearer into a Muslim signifier. Secondly, the act of folding can be seen as a remaking of the self. As Waheed herself has stated, 'I'm transformed when I wear the hijab, because my hair has always a big issue for me and it used to attract attention, and I look really different with it hidden and covered, I definitely look really different,

it's more about who I am. The thing is I love wearing the hijab because I feel like I've found me. I've found who I am as a person. I was sick to death of being judged by the way that I looked. And the thing is someone could say…its funny I say that because someone could have preconceived ideas about me wearing the hijab with the whole Muslim terrorism and this that and the other. And all the oppression. I love it! I love it when someone thinks I'm oppressed wearing my hijab because when they see the size of my mouth when I open it they completely change their mind'. (Waheed, interview)

The process of transformation through the hijab's fold enables us to think creatively about the production of subjectivity. This theme is developed by Gilles Deleuze in *The Fold*,[13] a text that explores, through an analysis of philosophy and art, the movement of thoughts and a philosophical approach to folding, with close reference to the work of German philosopher and mathematician Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz. The book is about culture only by implication, yet it nonetheless offers useful critical insights. In it Deleuze explains that a fold is not a line that dissolves into independent points. He describes it as more like a continuous labyrinth: the fold can never be accepted as a singular event, but rather as a population of many folds. 'A fold is always folded within a fold, like a cavern in a cavern. The unit of matter, the smallest element of the labyrinth, is the fold, not the point, which is never a part, but a simple extremity of the line.'[14] Even its antonym, 'unfolding', is not to be understood as the opposite of the fold, but as a movement up to a containing fold. It is itself a derivative of the fold. 'Folding-unfolding no longer simply means tension-release, contraction-dilation, but enveloping- developing, involution-evolution….'[15]

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[13] Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, foreword and tr. by Tom Conley (London: Athlone,1993).
[14] Ibid., p.6.
[15] Ibid., p.9.

Deleuze interprets folding as a series of potential expressions of pure movements, defined as differentiations. In the constant movement of alteration there are no fixed reference points or suggestive identities. Instead, folding presents another concept of space and time: the folding across lines creates impermanent configurations, instead of defined boundaries of separation. These uncertainties give rise to many different possibilities of becoming. In this way Deleuze's analysis suggests that folds create a blurring of inside and outside, solid and void, absence and division. The fold is thus a critique of accounts of subjectivity that presume a simple interiority and exteriority, such as appearance and essence, or surface and depth.

Deleuze's philosophical interrogation offers a model in which to understand the British headscarf in terms of material reality and subjectivity. In the folding of cloth to create a veil there is the possibility for transformation and liberation: through the fold the subject is freed from logical constraints. This matches the experiences of London-based interviewee Jihan Jamal, born in 1987, who has a master's degree in International Management, and who started to wear the hijab when she was fourteen. Jamal and her family are from Eritrea, but she has been living in the UK since she was four. She says,

> It felt so natural; it just feels like part of me. You know, I don't -- when I wear it in the morning I don't think, "Oh my god"; you know you have something additional on your head, something strange. It feels really natural, it feels part of me, it makes me feel whole. Because I'm going out into a public realm, what's the need for someone to see my hair? Or, you know, what's the need for someone to see the side of my face? There's no need for it, and I find it hasn't been a hindrance, it's been a strength. (Jamal, interview)

Deleuze defines the fold not as an agent of a metric or dimensional change but as one that can operate as a degree of development and differences. Deleuze says, 'Yet a

simple metric change would not account for the difference between the organic and the inorganic, the machine and its motive force. It would fail to show that movement does not simply go from one greater or smaller part to another, but from fold to fold'.[16]

The idea of movement is particularly significant when considering Deleuze's philosophy directly in relation to cloth, or textiles. Pennina Barnett uses Deleuze's presentation of the fold to reconceptualise what she calls 'the poetics of cloth' as '"soft logics", modes of thought that twist and turn and stretch and fold'.[17] She suggests that it is in movement that 'new encounters' can be made 'beyond the constraint of binaries'.[18] Barnett stresses that soft logics offer multiple possibilities, adding: 'if "soft" suggests an elastic surface, a tensile quality that yields to pressure, this is not weakness; for "an object that *gives in* [*sic*] is actually stronger that one that resists, because it also permits the opportunity to be oneself in a new way"'.[19]

The scarf as headcovering, twisted and folded and stretched, matches Barnett's description exactly, and the hijab does seem to represent for my interviewees an object of strength, not only because materially it yields to the physical manipulation of the wearer, but also because of its symbolic value as a Muslim religio-cultural object that enables the wearer to perform their Muslim identity. Barnett adds later, 'The poetics of cloth are composed of folds, fragments and surfaces of infinite complexity. The fragment bears witness to a broken whole; yet it is also a site of uncertainty from which to start over; it is where the mind extends beyond fragile

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[16] Deleuze, *The Fold*, p.9.
[17] Pennina Barnett, 'Folds, fragments and surfaces', in *Textures of Memory: The Poetics of Cloth* (Nottingham: Angel Row Gallery, 1999), p.25-34 (p.26).
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid., quoting Max Kozloff, 'The poetics of softness' in *Renderings, Critical Essays on a Century of Modern Art* (London: Studio Vista, 1968), p.233.

boundaries, beyond frayed and intermediate edges, expanding in the fluidity of the smooth. The surface is a liminal space, both inside and out, a space of encounter'.[20] The link here between fold and fragment highlights connections with the cut. In Chapter 1, I discussed the idea of the fragment in terms of the punk cut, and how it created gaps for new gendered expressions. Here the theme emerges again, though with differences. The more discrete nature of the fragment in punk, such as the defined cut, implies that its dynamics of cultural movement were more absolute, anchored in a different conception of history and temporality than the open and limitless potential of the fold.

Meanwhile, the idea of 'encounter', as mentioned above, is also interesting, for it raises questions about new possibilities. It reminds us that the manner in which the surface of the hijab drapes and covers the head and neck, how it meets the body and thereby creates a haptic experience, and its protection of the wearer from immodesty or the inappropriate gaze, are all performative articulations. Encounter reinforces the idea of the hijab as material *and* spatial practice that is embodied (or folded) according to an individual's social and cultural customs and understanding. Encounter also raises the idea of an interface, where Western scarf meets the Muslim wearer. This is a point of creative consumption, and, as Annelies Moors argues, the way in which 'Islamic fashion' is embodied demonstrates a politics of visual presence that brings together religious conviction 'with styles of dress that are highly fashionable and hence bear the sign of modernity'.[21]

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[20] Barnett, *Textures of Memory*, pp.31-32.
[21] Annelies Moors, '"Islamic fashion" in Europe: religious conviction, aesthetic style, and creative consumption', *Encounters* 1:1, 175-201 (p.197).

Embodiment also includes the way the headscarf is draped. Drapery has a long tradition in Western idealized body fashioning. Anne Hollander has discussed its place in Western art, where the nude body and draped cloth 'became essential elements of idealized vision; they came to seem correct for conveying the most valid truths of life'.[22] Gen Doy notes that 'the lack of drapery in the image of the nude woman…reveals that she has not been treated as an "aesthetic object", draped, idealized and distant'.[23] In Doy's broad analysis of drapery and the draped body in visual culture, she explores how in more contemporary (or postmodern) times, drapery has been reclaimed and reappropriated by female artists to disrupt patriarchal views of the female body, even notions of the self-contained body, to express feminist approaches to time and memory, and to 'question boundaries of art and craft, high and popular culture'.[24] In the case of the hijab, drapery is a technique that follows in this vein, for it subverts any traditional notion of Western idealism regarding fashioning the 'respectable' gendered form: the fashion system in the West relies on 'seams' and 'fit', not on folding or draping. Through the act of draping Muslim women create and emphasize Otherness by unsettling traditional hierarchies through the matrix of racial and religious difference.

Tightness and Muslim gendered temporality

The folding and draping of the headscarf emerge, therefore, as complex processes of subjective agency. The 'wrapping' of the head is based on the interplay between hiding and revealing, concealment and exhibition, based on individual patterns and destabilising the representation of the Muslim gendered face and body in public space. With hijab it is not enough to loosely rest a scarf on the head. At a physical level hijab

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[22] Anne Hollander, *Seeing through Clothes* (Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 1993), p.xiii.
[23] Gen Doy, *Drapery: Classicism and Barbarism in Visual Culture* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2002), p.103.
[24] Ibid., p.16.

involves the acts of pinning, knotting, tucking *tightly*. In previous chapters I analysed the issue of figure-hugging clothes, especially the use of lycra and 'body-con' (body-conscious') styles, or underwear as outerwear, to create hypersexual style as gendered confidence and difference. In this case study the issue of tightness re-emerges, but in a diametrically opposed guise: tightness in the case of the hijab ensures concealment, not exposure. Creating tightness involves stretching the material of the hijab to ensure it folds as closely as possible to the head. This is a potentially transformative act, physically and existentially. Ideas of 'stretching' and 'folding' return us to Barnett's logic concerning her 'poetics of cloth', which she claims 'are a stretching out: an invitation to leap inside the hollow of the fold, to see what happens'. This offers the possibility, according to her, to think inside the continuity of the fold, which means 'to think in a continuous present. It is to believe in the presence of the moment.' It is here, in Barnett's view, that the fold offers the power to begin anew, or again.[25]

Barnett's temporal theorisation of the fold offers a critical way of examining British Muslim women's embodiment of the hijab as subjective articulation that reflects their own temporal realities. For many Muslims in Britain, veiling has been a long-standing, contentious issue. Large Muslim communities started to arrive in Britain from Pakistan and Bangladesh in the 1970s. The post-immigration emphasis was on assimilation, and the result was that cultural traditions, including dress, and religion were left to private space. This started to change only in the late 1980s, with public protests around issues such as the publication of Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* (1988), and subsequently over UK foreign policy in the Gulf, Bosnia, Afghanistan and elsewhere. These protests reflected expressions of a more radical Muslim exceptionalism that was emerging, based on cultural and religious factors

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[25] Pennina Barnett, *Textures of Memory*, p.32.

which were integral not to British society but to the growing internationalism of the transnational Muslim *umma*—the worldwide Muslim community. With reference to *The Satanic Verses* protests, Harry Goulbourne observes that 'many British Muslims availed themselves of the occasion to articulate their grievances against their perceived and actual treatment within a society which at one level postulates that it is secular, and at another level is deeply Christian in traditions, institutions and social practices'.[26]

A new generation of British Muslims were coming of age against the backdrop of Islamist revolutions, such as that in Iran in 1979. As a result, Muslim communities began to reject the homogenizing 'British Asian' identity that had persisted throughout the 1970s and 1980s in the British mainstream and in popular culture. Instead, Muslim markers such as the veil began to play an increasingly important role in British Muslims' wider expression of their unease within British society, a dislocation from its values and mores, and an affiliation with transnational Islamism. Interviewee Sarah Joseph is editor of *emel*, a Muslim lifestyle magazine based in London. Joseph is an English convert to Islam and is married to a Bengali Muslim. (Figure 8)

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[26] Harry Goulbourne, *Race Relations in Britain since 1945* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998), p.66.
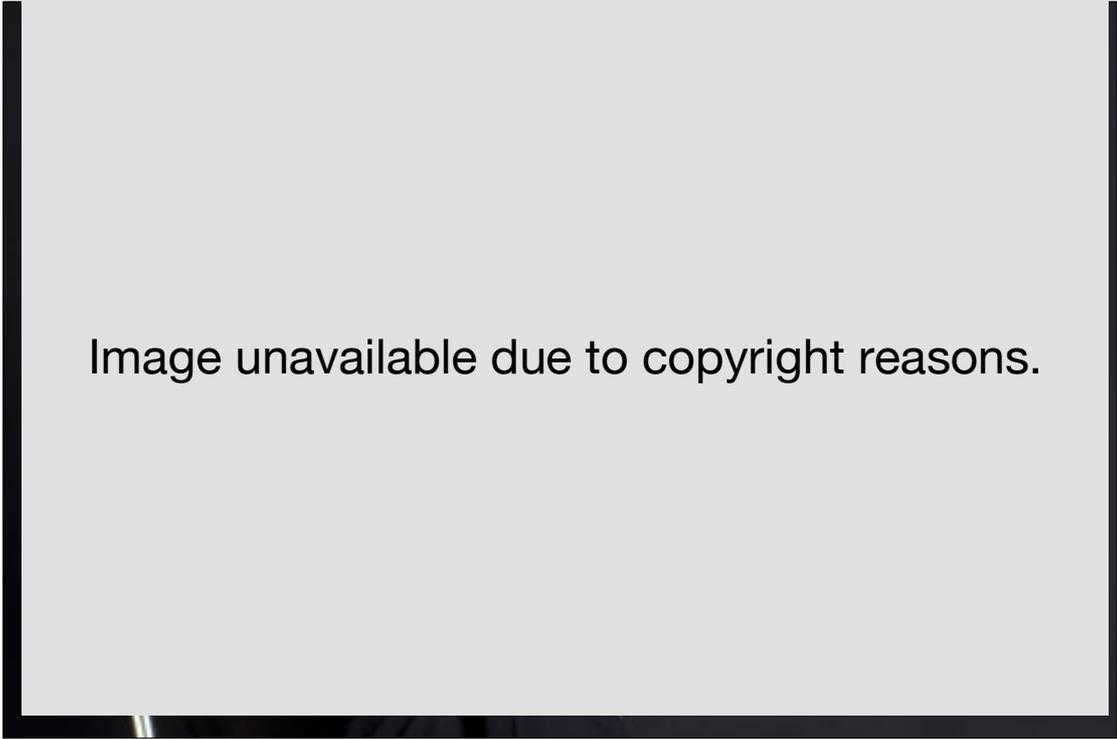
Figure 8 Sarah Joseph © *emel*, October, 2012.

It is worth pausing to consider the image of Joseph in Figure 8, which is striking not least because of the direct manner of its presentation: the photograph seems to emulate standard portraits of news celebrities. The image has the kind of 'polish' which is associated with media imagery, which is in tension with some of the acts of veiling that have been discussed because it creates a mainstream, 'styled' commercial image—unlike the photographs of other participants. Yet, despite her styled portrait, Joseph advocates a politically-charged view of thinking about Muslim Otherness. 'I think Bosnia was incredibly powerful in formulating a sense of coherent identity around faith. It gave rise to the post-Bosnia generation of Muslims who wanted to be politically active.' (Joseph, interview)

When religious teachers from the Arab Middle East started to arrive in Britain in the 1990s the Wahhabist 'purification' of Islamic practice brought a much more rigid and

austere form of Islam to the street. This teaching arrived at a time when many young British Muslims found themselves increasingly unable to identify with the 'cultural Islam' of the migrant generation. British-born, mostly urban and with limited links to the rural, village-based contexts of their parents' religious practice and that of many local imams (Muslim religious leaders), younger Muslims in the 1980s and 1990s were thus seeking to renegotiate their faith at a time when, globally, the meaning of Islam in relation to both the West and the political order in the Islamic world was becoming increasingly contested. According to interviewee Sara Wajid, a 35-year-old British Pakistani journalist who writes regularly for the British broadsheet newspaper the *Guardian*, the immigrant generation rejected the hijab as they tried to assimilate. She sees the growth of hijab-wearing among youth groups as linked to a political rearticulation:

> It was my mum's generation that didn't wear it in public places, because they
> wanted to be 'modern', and feminists, and all that. I think the hijab has
> always been a political thing. There's always been a relationship between the
> wearing of it and what that symbolizes at any given moment in any given
> context. (Wajid, interview)

In the spring and summer of 2001 race riots in several northern English[27] cities reflected a situation of extreme racial segregation, a multi-ethnic Britain composed of 'communities' without a 'meta-community' to tie them together.[28] A few years later, *The Voice of Muslim Students*, a report compiled by the Federation of Student Islamic Societies (FOSIS) after the London bombings of 7 July 2005, reported that nearly half

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[27] For BBC coverage of the race riots see '2001: Two stabbed in Bradford race riots', 7 July 2001, BBC 'On This Day' http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/july/7/newsid_2496000/2496003.stm [accessed 14 October 2012].
[28] Christian Joppke, 'The retreat of multiculturalism in the liberal state: theory and policy', *British Journal of Sociology,* 55 (2004), 237-257 (p.250).

of the Muslim youth interviewed at British universities claimed they suffered from increased racist tension and disconnection from the mainstream.[29]

The result of these realities has framed the way in which contemporary British Muslim women identify themselves. As Joseph explains,

> Muslims have suffered the massive issues created by Britain being in flux. Britain is a postcolonial power searching for a purpose, it's not as if it's a strong nation which is strong and thrusting and know what it is doing. It's thinking 'bloody hell, we are completely lost', we've got no international power, we don't have a manufacturing base anymore, we are not making anything, we have no sense of industry…the white underclass in this society has absolutely no aspiration for educational attainment. These are the issues Muslims have to deal with. (Joseph, interview)

Joseph launched her Muslim lifestyle magazine *emel* in September 2003. On the magazine's 'About Us' page on its website, the text reads: 'Sarah Joseph, the editor, founded *emel* with her husband in 2003 after she found herself "firefighting" on behalf of British Muslims as tensions rose after the 11 September attacks'.[30] The magazine says it wants to 'promote a positive and confident message about the Muslim communities in the UK'.[31] In past issues of the magazine there has been a consistent commitment to featuring British Muslim women as successful and confident, as 'modern', that is to say urban and mobile, as part of the mainstream culture industries but as espousing a distinctly British Muslim value system. In the magazine, Muslimness is presented as diverse, eclectic and individual. For example, on the cover of its April 2009 issue, there is a photograph of two women dressed in

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[29] *The Voice of Muslim Students: A report into the attitudes and perceptions of Muslim students following the July 7th London attacks*, London: FOSIS, 2005. The report found that 47% of Muslim students felt they had experienced Islamophobia and 25% of them said it was on campus; 30% of Muslim students said they felt isolated from other students; one in four Muslim students did not feel that their institution accommodated their needs, with the top grievance being the lack of a prayer room; only 76% of Muslim graduates of a working age were in employment compared with 87% of all graduates.
[30] 'About Us', *emel*, http://www.emel.com/about_us [accessed 3 December 2010].
[31] Ibid.

contrasting ways: 'Power women: the UK's most influential Muslim women', reads

the headline. (Figure 9)

Figure 9 Cover, *emel*, April 2009.

On the left is Reedah El-Saie, director of Islamic Art & Design, a London arts consultancy. El-Saie is unveiled, she sports short hair and a polo neck jumper. Next to her is Rimla Akhtar, who was at that time Chair of the Muslim Women's Sport Foundation, and who the magazine describes as 'currently tackling the issue of wearing hijab for women in national football teams'.[32] Akhtar wears a chilli-red pashmina shawl wrapped around her head, tied tightly and diligently to ensure that no hair shows, although the gleam of her gold earring peeps through the hijab and is eye-catching. She is wearing a charcoal jumper underneath. Joseph presents these women side-by-side, veiled and unveiled, as an example of the diversity of Muslim identity. The women are portrayed as equals, standing shoulder to shoulder. Inside the issue is a series of profiles featuring women considered to be high achievers, for a Muslim Women Power List compiled by *emel*, *The Times* and the Equality and Human Rights Commission. Accompanying text states that the list intends 'to recognize that Muslim women are not downtrodden underachievers'.[33] Certainly in the visual representations there is an air of confidence and pride, as the women stare directly to camera and smile. By showcasing Muslim women and their outputs and success, *emel* suggests that veiling is not only about patriarchy, Islamic feminism, or the religious affiliation and identity of Muslim women; it is also about the national identity of Western success.

emel attempts, therefore, to counter British media representations of Muslim women, which are often about the cultural incompatibility of Islam with the values, norms, and interests of Western nations. Representations of veiling, for example, have most

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[32] *emel*, April 2009, p.25.
[33] Ibid., p.24.

commonly focused on separation, difference and social exclusion.[34] This issue came

to the fore in 2006 when Jack Straw, at that time Home Secretary in the British

government, published an article in the *Lancashire Telegraph* describing his

discomfort with the wearing of the niqab, the full face and body veil with a slit for the

eyes. He suggested that the niqab prohibited communication, and that it was a

deliberate marker of separation. The issues raised by Straw were taken up by the

British media, sparking debates about legislating against the veil, about Muslim

women's politics and about multiculturalism, among other issues. What is noteworthy

is that in the images that accompanied the coverage, the niqab was equated with 'the'

veil, homogenising and flattening it into a single dress trope. A *Daily Express* front

page article read: 'Ban it! The veil is outlawed even by some Arab countries so why

must we put up with it here?'[35] (Figure 10)

Figure 10 Cover, *Daily Express*, 21 October, 2006.

In the newspaper's image there is no room to imagine the veil as anything other than

the niqab. The object is reduced to a single all-consuming concept that triggers

associations in the Western imagination with terrorist threats, servitude and

oppression. The statement in the headline that 'even' some Arab countries outlaw 'the'

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[34] Katherine Bullock, *Rethinking Muslim Women and the Veil: Challenging Historical & Modern Stereotypes* (Herndon, VA; London: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2002).
[35] 'Ban it!', *Daily Express*, 21 October, 2006, p.1.

veil carries the implicit racist message that Arab states are 'backward'. This type of alarmist coverage has the particular effect, if not aim, of encouraging primal fears of an expansionist Islamic force and of giving credence to the assumption of an inevitable 'clash of civilizations'.[36] The trend for this type of media representation of Muslims has increased consistently: in its analysis of the British news media between 2000 and 2008, a report indicates that 'the coverage of British Muslims has increased significantly since 2000', and that religious and cultural stories have accounted for 22 per cent of stories overall. These have included 'discussions of Sharia Law, debates about the wearing of veils, dress codes, forced marriages, the role of Islam in Britain and the Danish cartoon story. These stories generally highlighted cultural differences between British Muslims and other British people'.[37] The proliferation of Islamophobic sentiment has been a source of concern for more liberal commentators. For example, novelist Hari Kunzru wrote in the *Observer* in 2004 that he thought that 'Muslims in particular are being pushed out. They're being asked again and again to prove their allegiance as if, all the time, they're in doubt. I can understand why young Muslims are putting posters of Osama Bin Laden in their bedrooms. He's a fucking rock star. He's the only person who appears to be standing up to a ruthless, homogenizing identity'.[38] Joan Wallach Scott notes from her research about the headscarf controversy in France that 'for young dissenters in the twenty-first century,

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[36] Elizabeth Poole and John E. Richardson, *Muslims and the News Media* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2006).

[37] Paul Mason and Justin Lewis Kerry Moore, *'Images of Islam in the UK: Representation of British Muslims in the British National Print News Media 2000-2008*' (Cardiff: Cardiff School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies, 2008), p.10 http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/jomec/resources/08channel4-dispatches.pdf [accessed 28 November 2011].

[38] Hari Kunzru, quoted in Rachel Cooke, 'I'm the bloke who got the big advance', *Observer*, 16 May 2004 < http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2004/may/16/fiction.features3> [accessed 29 September 2009].

identifying with Islam was the functional equivalent of the Maoism of the 1960s and 70s'.[39]

It is within these temporal realities that British Muslim women's subjective experiences, and their desire to adopt the hijab, must be explored. It is then possible to explore how the tight wrapping of the headscarf, its close touch on the head, is a metaphor for protection against the anti-Muslim hostility and racism felt by young Muslims. Similarly, the tight envelopment of the scarf can be theorised in terms of British Muslim standpoints. In Chapter 1, discussing punk style, I referenced David Kunzle's work on Victorian tight-lacing as a form of sexual assertion and pleasure.[40] In her work on Chinese footbinding, Dorothy Ko raises the issue of how the practice created a putative unknowability for European colonisers: 'The history of Europeans looking at the Chinese presents a paradox…Nowhere is this paradox more poignant than in the case of footbinding, a practice that frustrated the foreigner because it could not be reduced to a core of absolute and timeless meanings'.[41] In the case of the hijab, it is not the object itself but the way that it is worn that creates multiple meanings to represent individual histories and motivations, and to counter the hegemonic gaze. It is the embodied, performative process of veiling that incorporates the politics of 'seeing' or 'revealing'.

Reclaiming the gaze

At a mundane level, one can understand how concealing parts of the body through veiling prohibits its 'to-be-looked-at-ness'.[42] However, in a complex irony, in British

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[39] Joan Wallach Scott, *The Politics of the Veil* (Princeton, N.J.; Woodstock: Princeton University Press, 2007), p.32.

[40] See David Kunzle, *Fashion and Fetishism*.

[41] Dorothy Ko, 'Bondage in time: footbinding and fashion theory', *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body & Culture,* 1 (1997), 40.

[42] Laura Mulvey coined this term; see: Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures*, p.19.

urban transnational centres the draping of the veil simultaneously renders the wearer

as hypervisible Muslim Other, fixing her gendered position in public. In the case of

full veiling—the niqab, for example—the veiling garments become charged as an

opaque surface: it is impossible to see what is underneath. The material reality of the

woman is in this example reduced to the material surface of the cloth; now what is

seen concerns the unseen (the hidden woman), and the relationship between surface

and ontology is thrown into question. The aspect of the veil that conceals or hides,

whether it is just the head or the entire body, is accorded exaggerated power in this

model, and woman's construction as a play of surfaces can be seen to subvert

conventional Western ideas about surface and depth, appearance and truth and

appearance and reality, as well as Western mainstream ideals of beauty and femininity.

As Egyptian feminist Lama Abu-Odeh observes, 'the Western attire which covered

their [unveiled women's] bodies carried with it the capitalist construction of the

female body: one that is sexualised, objectified, thingified…'.[43] Although in the

British example the hijab most often comes from the capitalist, mainstream fashion

system, its embodiment as Otherness can bring about feelings of personal exhilaration

associated with a sense of security, comfort and confidence for the wearer. Jamal told

me that 'It just feels natural…and I think that when men deal with women in hijab

they treat them with more respect because we can keep our distance and mark out our

own space'. (Jamal, interview) In Waheed's case it offered the chance to stop the

uninvited male attention that made her feel uncomfortable:

> I came to the conclusion that, you know, guys just hit on something which is
> aesthetically pleasing for them. Nothing, not for my thoughts or my
> achievements, my opinions, nothing like that, it was just 'She's hot!'…it was

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[43] Lama Abu-Odeh, 'Post-colonial feminism and the veil: thinking the difference', *Feminist Review,* 43 (1993), 26-37 (p.27).

getting quite tiresome…I just couldn't take it any more. I really, really had
had enough. (Waheed, interview)

Similarly, interviewee Nadia Solkar, a twenty-eight-year-old student who started wearing the hijab at the age of thirteen, says, 'Women are portrayed as cheap things in the Western media, when the Quran clearly gives us status that Western people trash'. (Solkar, interview) Solkar is from a Bangladeshi background and was born in Blackburn. All the women in her family wear the headscarf, but she states there was no pressure to put it on. She says that she has many different colours of scarves that she mixes and matches. She adds, 'I feel it's more about showing people that I am proud of being a Muslim and that I'm not ashamed of making a bold statement like that'. Solkar says that when she wears the hijab it 'makes me feel safe, comfortable, in my comfort zone'. (Solkar, interview)

Solkar's comments stress the fact the hijab is situational and contextual, and that its meanings are reliant on local and temporal power relations between the individual and her environment. The temporal shift that has occurred in the interpretation and reception of the hijab in Britain in recent decades affect the veil's politics of representation in contemporary analysis. The environment within which Solkar wears the hijab is markedly different to the one in which her mother wore it: 'For my mum it was completely different, it was just about tradition. For me it's definitely about my identity, who I want to be'. (Solkar, interview) In her essay 'Visibility, violence, and voice? attitudes to veiling post-11 September', Alison Donnell writes that

> The familiar and much-analysed Orientalist gaze through which the veil is
> viewed as an object of mystique, exoticism and eroticism, and the veiled
> woman as an object of fantasy, excitement and desire, is now replaced by the

xenophobic, more specifically Islamophobic, gaze through which the veil, or headscarf, is seen as a highly visible sign of despised difference.[44]

The process of homogenising and universalising Muslim women into Orientalist tropes has typically been extended to the process of veiling, too. Homa Hoodfar has offered a comprehensive evaluation of how Western colonial and imperial history has shaped veiling practices and constructed the veil as a symbol of both Muslim women's oppression and the inferiority of Arab-Islamic and Oriental peoples. Writing in 1993, Hoodfar demonstrated how the West has marked veiled women as universal victims, symbols of the (assumed) oppressiveness of Islam: '…many assumptions about Muslim women were false, and were based on the racism and the biases of the colonial powers'.[45] Scholars such as Meyda Yeğenoğlu have developed Edward Said's arguments to include sexualized readings of Orientalism, demonstrating how images of Muslim (and veiled) women and sexuality are critical to the very formulation of Orientalist discourses.[46] Meanwhile, as part of the critique of second-wave Western feminism emerging in the 1980s postcolonial theorists, including Chandra Mohanty, writing in 1984, have accused Western feminists of appropriating and colonizing the fundamental complexities and conflicts which characterize the lives of women of different classes, religions, cultures, races and castes.[47] Mohanty argues that power is exercised when Western values and culture are used as a universal measure of progress and modernity, working on the assumption that Western women are secular, liberated and modern. According to Mohanty, women in

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[44] Alison Donnell, 'Visibility, violence and voice? attitudes to veiling post-11 September' in: *Veil: Veiling, Representation and Contemporary Art*, ed. by Gilane Tawadros and David A. Bailey (London: Institute of International Visual Arts in association with Modern Art Oxford, 2003), pp.120-135 (pp.122-123).

[45] Homa Hoodfar, 'The veil in their minds and on our heads: veiling practices and Muslim women', *Resources for Feminist Research,* 22:3-4 (1993), 5-18 (p.5).

[46] Meyda Yeğenoğlu, *Colonial Fantasies : Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

[47] Chandra Talpade Mohanty, 'Under Western eyes: feminist scholarship and colonial discourses', in: *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism,* ed. by Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russo, and Lourdes Torres (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), pp.51-80.

non-Western societies are thus studied primarily in terms of their '*object status* (the way in which they are affected or not affected by certain institutions and systems)' and evaluated on the basis of how far they have reached the goal of achieving Western ideals.[48]

This raises critical issues about objectification and the gaze within Western specular economies. At a macro level, the relationship of the West with Islam can in itself be described as specular because it is fundamentally dialectical, as the works of Orientalism's primary theorists, Edward Said and Samuel Huntingdon, have shown. They describe how Islam has been defined by its opposition to the West, where the West *sees* it as the Other.[49] On a micro level, Western feminist theory, in particular, points to the phallocentric functioning of the gaze through which sexual difference is supposed to be discovered or confirmed. For example, in her essay 'The blind spot of an old dream of symmetry',[50] Luce Irigaray examines the issue of the veil in connection with the question of the fetishisation of the female body. Paraphrasing Freud, Irigaray speaks of the veil in terms of the way that women have to veil their sexual lack: 'Ensuring the double game of flaunting her body, her jewels, in order to hide her sex organs all the better…to sell herself, woman has to veil as best she can how priceless she is in the sexual economy'.[51] This point is continued in Irigaray's reference to Marx's veil, which is to say, the wrapping that maintains women's value as commodities in the fetishistic economy:

> Therefore woman weaves in order to veil herself, mask the faults of Nature,
> and restore her in her wholeness. By wrapping her up. In a wrapping that
> Marx has told us preserves the 'value' from a just evaluation. lt allows the

[48] Mohanty, 'Under Western eyes: feminist scholarship and colonial discourses', p.57.
[49] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (1978) (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985).
[50] Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1985), p.11.
[51] Ibid., p.115.

'exchange' of goods 'without' knowledge' of their effective value. By abstracting 'products', by making them universal and interchangeable without recognizing their differences.[52]

Here the veiling gesture is described less as a means of covering up woman's lack than as a way of masking differences between women, rendering them invisible in order to make them look identical, easily substitutable. Following Marx, Irigaray distinguishes the wrapped objects' undecidable exchange value and illusory equivalence from what she calls their 'effective value'. She describes the process of wrapping as one which turns human subjects into commodities or 'products', one which renders the 'products' both 'universal', as opposed to 'particular', and 'interchangeable'. The veil in this case is described as a device that turns women into generic objects of consumption.

The connections between veiling, fetishising and commodifying continue in Irigaray's text 'Women on the market',[53] in which she talks of the 'phantom-like reality' of the marketed women,[54] suggesting that there is nothing more to them than a spectralised, disembodied wrapped-hence-generic object. Irigaray suggests that there can be no individuality for woman in this context, because veiling turns her into something generic.

Though Irigaray raises some important points about how the veiled woman is denied subjectivity, her view must be read within its historical context as part of French feminist thought which emerged from Lacanian psychoanalysis in the 1980s to explore new ways of interpreting the gaze and writing the female body.[55] In more contemporary debates, the veil has caught the attention of feminists of almost every

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[52] Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, p.115.
[53] Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, p.170.
[54] Ibid., p.175.
[55] Other French feminist thinkers who were working in this way include Julia Kristeva and Hélène Cixous.

social and political persuasion since the declaration of the 'war on terrorism' by George W Bush following the American attacks of 11 September 2001. In the last decade there has been a call from scholars of Muslim cultures to develop a serious appreciation of differences among women. This includes recognising that women are products of different histories, of different circumstances, and of differently structured desires.[56] In 2008, feminist writer Naomi Wolf said, 'Indeed, many Muslim women I spoke with did not feel at all subjugated by the *chador* or the headscarf. On the contrary, they felt liberated from what they experienced as the intrusive, commodifying, basely sexualizing Western gaze'.[57]

However, it was in fact well before 2001 that Middle Eastern scholar and feminist Lila Abu-Lughod first asked this provocative question: how might we recognise instances of women's resistance without 'misattributing to them forms of consciousness or politics that are not part of their experience?'[58] As a corrective, Abu-Lughod recommends that resistance be used as a 'diagnostic of power'[59] to locate the shifts in social relations of power that influence the resisters as well as those who dominate. To illustrate her point, Abu-Lughod gives the example of young Bedouin women who wear sexy lingerie to challenge parental authority and dominant social mores. She suggests that instead of simply reading such acts as moments of opposition to, and escape from, dominant relations of power, they should also be understood as reinscribing alternative forms of power that are rooted in practices of capitalist consumerism and urban bourgeois values and aesthetics. Abu-Lughod therefore concludes that

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[56] See for example Abu-Lughod, 'Do Muslim women really reed saving?', p.783.
[57] Naomi Wolf, 'Veiled sexuality', *Project Syndicate*, 30 August 2008 http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/veiled-sexuality [accessed 16 October 2012].
[58] Lila Abu-Lughod, 'The romance of resistance: tracing transformations of power through Bedouin women', *American Ethnologist,* 17:1 (1990), 41-55 (p.47).
[59] Ibid., p.42.

[My argument…has been that] we should learn to read in various local and everyday resistances the existence of a range of specific strategies and structures of power. Attention to the forms of resistance in particular societies can help us become critical of partial or reductionist theories of power. The problem has been that those of us who have sensed that there is something admirable about resistance have tended to look to it for hopeful confirmations of the failure—or partial failure—of systems of oppression. Yet it seems to me that we respect everyday resistance not just by arguing for the dignity or heroism of the resisters but by letting their practices teach us about complex interworkings of historically changing structures of power.[60]

Subversive practice in everyday life, and the manipulation of top-down power through alternative style and embodiment, has been a central theme in all my preceding case studies, and continues to be critical in this one, too. The appropriation of scarves and textiles from mainstream fashion, their transformation into veils and the mixing and matching of the hijab with everyday trends into a contemporary Muslim look highlight the way in which the hijab carries a symbolic code which is not simply imposed 'from above', but is the product of multiple practices of everyday life, to use Michel de Certeau's expression,[61] that contribute to the invention of Muslim modern identity *within* British contemporary culture. The embodiment of the hijab in the context of British consumption is an active and self-conscious expression of subjective agency which plays a central part in Muslim women's design of everyday life. This interpretation reflects the view of sociologists such as Elizabeth Shove that, 'Equally there is no such thing as "just" doing. Instead, doings are performances, shaped by and constitutive of the complex relations – of materials, knowledges, norms, meanings and so on…'.[62] Shove, echoing other writers, notes that 'Theories of consumption have tended to emphasize acquisition rather than use and have consequently underestimated the work, the skills and the social relations involved not

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[60] Abu-Lughod, 'The romance of resistance: tracing transformations of power through Bedouin women', p.53.
[61] de Certeau.
[62] Shove, p.13.

just in "shopping", but in the practice-related activities of using, making and doing'.[63]

The significance of the hijab lies in the fact that through individual embodiment and appropriation it gives shape and meaning—or design—to British Muslim identity, which is practised and reinforced in everyday routines.

In their shaping of the everyday through hijab styles, contemporary British Muslim women build on the longstanding strategies of subversion as subjective expression that have been discussed earlier in this thesis. For example, the notion of subversion through the manipulation of pre-existing everyday objects forms the cornerstone of punk style, which drew in turn on Dadaist and Situationist techniques (see Chapter 1 for example). While the juxtaposition is surprising, it is nonetheless possible to draw a connection between the strategies involved in punk dress practice and that of the contemporary hijab. In *The Society of the Spectacle* Debord characterises the development of contemporary capitalism as 'the historical moment at which the commodity completes its colonization of social life ... commodities are now *all* [*sic*] that there is to see; the world we see is the world of the commodity'.[64] The veil can be read as offering the potential for a type of performance activism to disrupt what Debord calls 'society's real unreality'. As Debord says, 'In all its specific manifestations—news or propaganda, advertising or the actual consumption of entertainment—the spectacle epitomises the prevailing model of social life'.[65] However, the experience of the hijab presents a new reality: 'I think Western girls are just bombarded with images, images that give them an identity crisis. When you wear hijab you are forced to develop a personality, you are forced to push that out into the realm of public life'. (Jamal, interview) Thus the veil, in material and visual terms, is

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[63] Shove, p.14.
[64] Debord, p.29.
[65] Ibid., p.13.

a type of disruptive direct action that alters the experiential way Muslim women relate to commodities, and to commodification in general.

Similarly, Henri Lefebvre's critique of everyday life and urban theory is an account of the commodified, dislocated and contradictorily abstract space of capitalism. He argues that this spatial formulation destroys individuals, including their sexuality, which itself becomes a site of alienated, abstracted specialization and fetishisation, distanced from what he calls the culture of the body.[66] Lefebvre argues that in the special logic of capitalism, the body, especially the female body, becomes 'pulverised' and broken for the consumer market. In the previous chapter I discussed how hip-hop style offered a rebuke to capitalist space as outlined by Lefebvre by deliberately compartmentalizing women's bodies as subversion (see Chapter 3). In the case of the veil, similarities can be drawn in the way that the hijab focuses attention on one part of the body, the head, but at the same time renders it—as well as the rest of the covered, 'modest' body—strange, Other, signalling an alternative value system beyond the scope of Western ideals of femininity and sexuality. Tarlo has suggested that a new global vocabulary of Islamic dress is being articulated, 'in which styles drawn from diverse cultural traditions around the world are redefined as "Islamic". These form part of a growing body of consumer goods, from Islamic chocolate to wallpaper and Barbie doll lookalikes…through which new normative models of an ideal Islamic life style are created'.[67]

In terms of the everyday performance of the Muslim 'look' mentioned above, the daily and routine process of dressing in contemporary Muslim style involves

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[66] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991), pp.309-310.
[67] Emma Tarlo, 'Hijab in London: metamorphosis, resonance and effects', *Journal of Material Culture*, 12:2 (2007), 131-156. Read as an e-print http://eprints.gold.ac.uk/725/1/ANTH_Tarlo_2007a.pdf (p.10) [accessed 10 January 2013].

transforming fashions to comply with Muslim standards. According to my interviewees, this includes wearing dresses as long tops with jeans, instead of just on their own, layering tops so that arms are covered and necklines remain high. Waheed says, 'I have completely my own style. Whatever is the latest trend, I will go with it. But I make it my own'. (Waheed, interview) Jamal describes how she wears 'kind of like vintage dresses or nice dresses from Topshop and so on and then I'll have my jeans underneath'. (Jamal, interview) The layering and multi-referencing of fashion objects once again mirrors the style strategies of appropriation and customisation, of hybrid styling and intertextuality, presented in the previous case studies.

The hijab as a threat to acculturation

Cultural studies of fashion have explored how the body, as a physical form, is trained to manifest particular postures, movements and gestures, so that it 'is culturally primed to fit its occupancy of a chosen social group'.[68] Techniques of fashioning the body are a visible form of acculturation: we use the way we wear our bodies to present ourselves to our social environment, mapping out our codes of conduct through fashion behaviour. One way of interpreting the reason why the hijab has become a high-profile and increasingly popular, as well as increasingly contested, object in contemporary British identity politics is to explore the tensions that it creates between the veiled and the non-veiled. In order to do this I draw on the idea of the 'Hegelian subject', as discussed by Judith Butler in *Subjects of Desire*. Butler explains that individuals have two strands of desire: the desire for recognition by another so that one can recognise oneself and the desire to transform the natural world in order to gain autonomy and self-recognition.[69] We gain recognition both through our bodies

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[68] Jennifer Craik, *The Face of Fashion: Cultural Studies in Fashion* (London; New York: Routledge, 1993), pp.4-5.
[69] Judith Butler, *Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth-Century France* (New York; Guildford: Columbia University Press, 1987).

(the forms we inhabit in the world) and our work (the forms we create in the world): there is thus an important connection between subjectivity, labour and community.

According to Butler it is only by being in and of a community that the subject can acquire the identity for which it is searching. She says, '[t]rue subjectivities come to flourish only in communities that provide for reciprocal recognition, for we do not come to ourselves through work alone, but through the acknowledging look of the Other who confirms us'.[70] In the British context, the wearing of the hijab or other forms of veiling which conceal parts of the body, such as the hair or the face, that are normally exposed in Western ideals of femininity takes away the possibly of recognition, as the wearer is rendered alien, distant, unidentifiable, through dress. Resistance, in this case, happens through the interpretation of the veil as a barrier to self-recognition or unity at a macro societal level. Meanwhile, for the Muslim woman the hijab or veil reinforces her personal micro community and values, and self-recognition within these. This corresponds with Butler's model of agency, as set forth in *Bodies that Matter,* as grounded in the open possibilities of iterations which can either fail or be reappropriated or resignified for purposes other than the consolidation of norms. Butler explores the concept of agency by interrogating fixed notions of sex/gender. She says:

> As a sedimented effect of a reiterative or ritual practice, sex acquires its naturalised effect, and, yet, it is also by virtue of this reiteration that gaps and fissures are opened up as the constitutive instabilities in such constructions, as that which escapes or exceeds the norm…This instability is the *de*constituting possibility in the very process of repetition, the power that undoes the very effects by which 'sex' is stabilised, the possibility to put the consolidation of the norms of 'sex' into a potentially productive crisis.[71]

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[70] Butler, *Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth-Century France*, p.58.
[71] Butler, *Bodies that Matter*, p.10.

The same theorisation can be extended to the norms of femininity: in the case of the hijab, veiling plays a role in destabilising the myth that the identity of the British Muslim woman can be fixed or consolidated within the rhetoric of British ideals or power structures. The hijab as a hybrid style which fashions both Muslim and British identity at the same time exposes gaps and fissures in any homogenising project, or in visions of multi-culturalism based on assimilation.

An issue to consider in Butler's view, however, is that social norms are most often grounded in an antagonistic framework: norms are suppressed and/or subverted, reiterated and/or resignified. Her model of performative identity is set up dualistically along these lines. It is important to note that for some Muslim women veiling might be purely about faith, for others about resistance to Western femininity, and for yet others about participating in a plural and multifaceted alternative discourse, not one that is purely antagonistic but one that is socialising and ethnicising. It is for this reason that we see British Muslim women of different classes and levels of education in urban transnational centres incorporating the veil into their everyday routines and experiences. Take, for example, Shaheed Fatima, a London-based human rights barrister with a BCL from Oxford and a Kennedy Scholarship to Harvard, who won the 'Professions Woman of the Future' award in 2007. Fatima wears a hijab and full abaya (body coat) to attend court. (Figure 11)

Figure 11 Shaheed Fatima dressed for court © Faculty of Law, University of Cambridge.

In Reina Lewis's article about veiled assistants, who also merge Western dress with headscarves, in London fashion shops, she argues for a direct link between veils and the fashion system, noting that in this example the women wear the veil as a statement of a 'modern', postcolonial identity that is both integrative and social.[72] Another example is offered by the 'Ninjabis', women who take self-defence classes in their veils. (Figure 12)

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[72] Reina Lewis, 'Veils and sales: Muslims and the spaces of postcolonial fashion retail', *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body & Culture,* 11:4 (2007), 423-441.

Figure 12 Ninjabis, cartoon © http://ninjabi.blogspot.co.uk.[73]

Ninjabi is a play on the word hijabi (a woman who wears the hijab) and all the women who attended a six-week self-defence course for Muslim women in east London were, according to journalist Sara Wajid, young and British-born.[74] Muslim feminist scholar Saba Mahmood interrogates Butler's view of norms and subversion, claiming that 'Norms are not only consolidated and/or subverted…but performed, inhabited, and experienced in a variety of ways',[75] presenting a post-poststructural view that moves us beyond Butler's position to the realm of embodied lived experience. In her analysis of Muslim female subject formation, particularly in Middle Eastern cultures, Mahmood raises the problem of reading agency primarily in terms of resistance 'to the regularizing impetus of structures of normativity'.[76] She prefers to focus on the way that norms are inhabited, and in order to fully explore Muslim gendered subjectivity she suggests that

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[73] http://ninjabi.blogspot.co.uk [accessed 12 October 2012].
[74] Sara Wajid, 'Way of the Ninjabi!*' Guardian*, 15 June 2007
http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2007/jun/15/religion.gender [accessed 14 June 2010].
[75] Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton, N.J.; Woodstock: Princeton University Press, 2012), p.22.
[76] Ibid., p.23.

> [W]e explode the category of norms into its constituent elements—to examine the immanent form that norms take, and to inquire into the attachments their particular morphology generates within the topography of the self. My reason for urging this move has to do with my interest in understanding how different modalities of moral-ethical action contribute to the construction of particular kinds of subjects, subjects whose political anatomy cannot be grasped without applying critical scrutiny to the precise form their embodied actions take.[77]

Mahmood's framework for analysing contemporary debates about Muslim gendered identity and practice creates the opportunity to understand the political effects of wearing the hijab or veiling in a specifically British context. Her focus on embodiment corresponds with the emphasis in this study on lived experience in which, rather than creating a trope of resistance in the hijab, the focus is on the diversity of experience and the understanding of subjective expression as complex.

Issues of hypervisibility

In fact, myriad complex contradictions emerge when analysing the embodied subjective agency of British Muslim women who veil. Problematically, the veil has the semiotic potency to fix the gendered identity and sexuality of the Muslim subject in public space. After all, Muslim men do not wear the hijab. It thus creates what Abu-Odeh refers to as the 'rhetoric of the veil'[78] which, she argues, constructs a monolithic female sexuality that undermines the plurality of Muslim female subject positions. The veil in public space becomes a stereotype of fixed meanings: purity, religious affiliation and modesty. More critically, it materialises a stereotype of Muslim women's sexuality in accordance to Muslim scriptures and histories. Based on the presumption of an active female sexuality, harem seclusion and the veil have historically served to keep men and women in Muslim cultures separate, to protect the

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[77] Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*, p.24.
[78] Abu-Odeh, 'Post-colonial feminism and the veil', p.34.

community from the chaos of *fitna*, or uncontrolled sexual energy that would be released by inappropriate sexual contact.[79] The rhetoric of the veil thus carries within it the representation of an active and dangerous feminine sexuality that must be constrained, and the implicit view that women pose a threat to the social order. The link between the veil and perceptions of female wantonness is formalised through the role of the garment as cover, as concealment.

It is for these reasons that feminists such as the Moroccan sociologist Fatima Mernissi have argued against the practice of veiling since the 1970s, when women in Muslim countries were voluntarily adopting the veil as part of their postcolonial consciousness; for Mernissi the the wearing of the hijab indicates that women are considered powerful only because of their active sexuality.[80] Others, such as sociologists Pat Mule and Diane Barthel, unpick the way in which Muslim societies conceive of women's sexuality as 'a sexuality which it sees as irresistible and disruptive. As a source of corruption and a jeopardy to the social order, women's sexuality must be held in check, and women confined in a separate sphere, excluded from the world of men'.[81] Taking this point to a dramatic extreme, Iranian feminist Chahdortt Djavann has called the veil in Iran a form of 'psychological, sexual and social mutilation', accusing it of denying a young girl any possibility of 'becoming a human being'.[82]

According to this view, it is difficult to see how the veil can engender agency above and beyond the tropes of sexuality that it creates. Instead, the veil encourages the reiteration of Orientalist tropes where the Muslim woman is exoticised, universalised,

[79] See Fatima Mernissi, *Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in Muslim Society* (London: Saqi, 2011).
[80] Ibid., p.30.
[81] Pat Mule and Diane Barthel, 'The return to the veil: individual autonomy vs. social esteem', *Sociological Forum,* 7:2 (1992), 323-332 (p.328).
[82] Chahdortt Djavann, quoted in Scott, *The Politics of the Veil*, p.158.

reduced to a Western fantasy as a repressed seductress. Is it possible, then, for a veiled Muslim to be anything more than a sex object?

This question presents a fascinating twist in interpretations of the hijab as resistance to Western sexual objectification. It poses a counter-intuitive problem, one of sexual tropes creating layers of stereotypes to be negotiated. These contradictions were raised by British academic Amina Yaqin in her interrogation of the way that a new 'Muslim doll', Razanne, that went on the market in 2004, reinforced tropes about Islamic femininity. The doll, whose name in Arabic translates as 'shy' or 'modest', was created with a pre-teenage body; in the 'In-'n'-Out' version she has short-skirted fashions for indoor activity but for outdoors she is equipped with a hijab and a jilbab (button-down coat). (Figure 13)

Image unavailable due to copyright reasons.

Figure 13 'In-N-Out Razanne', the Muslim doll © Ammar Saadeh.

Yaqin observes the way that objects such as the doll reinforce normative images of the Muslim woman that become reinforced through reiterative performance. She argues that this process creates a double bind for Muslim women, who not only find themselves stereotyped, but also become agents who then stereotype themselves, locking themselves in a dialogic process of 'Othering'. As Yaqin explains,

> I am interested in exploring that intertextual dialogic process that exists between the representation of Muslims as stereotypes and the deployment of some of these stereotypes by Muslim groups in order to re-present themselves. In adopting these stereotypes, such Muslims not only reinforce the stereotype imposed upon them by the West, but they also construct a stereotype of their own other, the secular liberal West through which a finite bounded notion of Muslimness can be delineated.[83]

The stereotypes associated with the hijab are a case in point: they can be observed circulating among both non-Muslims and Muslims, where they are directly related to the internal Muslim debates for and against wearing the headscarf, and also address the way in which the headscarf should be worn. Within the contemporary British Muslim look, there are women who deliberately promote a hyper-conspicuous, even sexualised version of the hijab as a form of agency. British Muslim youth in areas such as Tower Hamlets and Bethnal Green, in east London, for example, where there is a large immigrant Bengali population and numerous Muslim clothing and fashion stores, choose to wear the hijab in bright colours, heavily embroidered and intricately designed. They push the headscarf as far back on their heads as possible to frame a heavily made-up face with kohl-rimmed eyes and bright lipstick. Their bodies are outlined by tight, tailored shalwar kameez and their high heels enable them to strut,

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[83] Amina Yaqin, 'Islamic Barbie: the politics of gender and performativity', *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body & Culture,* 11:2 (2007), 173-88 (p.177).

almost parading, in the street next to much more fully veiled women, who appear in niqab.

Among this youth group the veil is associated with contemporary trends to the extent that despite its gendered rigidity the young girls' ability to style it as 'cool' is a critical, agentive process within the boundaries of acceptable dress in their communities. Typically, girls from these backgrounds are obliged by their families to wear traditional—in their case Pakistani/Bengali—dress. The modified, 'hip' hijab is for them a way of asserting control and creativity over their image, their personhood. Their creative, do-it-yourself techniques give them the possibility to project their individuality and subvert the restrictions that the dress might impose. However, these complex and layered processes of embodiment of the hijab do not resolve the question of whether the agency shown by Muslim women who wear the veil can overcome mainstream representations of it as a marker of repression and regression. The semiotic backlash and hypersexualised interpretations of the garment that have been explored above have even led some women to unveil, and for spokespeople to come forward as campaigners against the veil. One of these is interviewee Jobeda Ali, a British Muslim from a Bangladeshi background who adopted the hijab and abaya when she was fourteen years old because it was part of her family's culture to veil, but took it off by the time she was in her twenties. In 2004 Ali founded Fair Knowledge, a media company devoted to channelling marginal voices into the mainstream media. She publicly rebels against the acceptance of the hijab in British society and discourages the liberal Western tolerance of it, which she calls 'liberal fascism'. (Ali, interview) She claims that Muslim women in the West defend their right to veil only because they already benefit from the privileges of Western liberalism and feminism.

Ali feels that by wearing the hijab Muslim women actually do a disservice to women in the Muslim world, for whom one of the effects of wearing the veil is to be denied equality and freedom. She believes fervently that 'the hijab sexualises us, and it is very damaging for safety and security because it allows men to abdicate the responsibility for their sexual self-restraint'. (Ali, interview) She argues that 'unless we can overcome the perception of genders as merely sexual beings Muslims are never again going to be able to build a society or a civilisation', adding that 'unless we take the veil off, we won't see women as human beings, but only as walking vaginas'. (Ali, interview)

Hijab, heterotopia and embodied difference

The terms hypervisibility and hypersexuality have been employed throughout this thesis to offer analysis of expressions of agency. This analysis is also relevant in the case of hijab, though it is complex and at the same time problematic. This does not negate the fact that the hypervisibility of the hijab simultaneously engenders opportunities for new embodied realities and interactions for Muslim women in public space. By adopting the hijab, Muslim women are seeking to recognise themselves (to use Butler's terms) in terms of the virtues and codes of their own faith and their own historically contingent discursive traditions, rather than Western norms. Interviewee Joseph says, 'I think a lot of people I've spoken to post-9/11 suddenly thought "well who am I? Where am I? And how do I want to identify myself?"' (Joseph, interview) The transnational influence of the hijab, and its semiotic power as a transnational symbol, means that in contemporary terms Muslim women in Britain have found an opportunity through veiling to move beyond national strictures to a more pan-Muslim identity: by wearing the hijab women can now dress according to either religio-social custom or international Muslim trends without ethnic or class specificity. The

cosmopolitan hijab maintains 'respectability' and upholds religious values; it means that Muslim women do not diverge from community expectations, and yet at the same time it creates a spatialising device that offers new possibilities for the female body by demarcating the area around the Muslim body as private. Interviewees have said that

> When I put on the veil it makes me feel safe, in control. (Solkar, interview)

> When I first put it on I felt really liberated and I felt it was really empowering. (Waheed, interview)

> [After adopting hijab] I noticed an active change between the way people actually spoke to me. In particular boys or men…there's more of an element of respect and people want to get to know you for your intellect, your personality before your physique. (Jamal, interview)

> So I think that my taking on the hijab was about that search for simplicity, that search away from the body, that search away from the beauty fascism of which I'd been aware and a liberation if you like from being judged according to what I looked like and how wonderful my hair was. I don't actually want to be like everyone else, I like to be my own kind of person, separate, I want to be my own individual. (Joseph interview)

The concept of the hijab as a spatialising device is important for two reasons. The first is that the veiled space functions as a heterotopia, where the interweaving and interlacing of different scarves as Muslim symbol and signifier create *different* spaces for Muslim women to co-exist with normal spaces. Through the materiality of the headscarf an alternative material Muslim position is created wherein women challenge Western spatial and rhetorical discourse, calling for a newly imagined space or place for British Muslim-ness. Michel Foucault's description of heterotopia includes the assertion that 'the heterotopia is capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible'.[84] The coming together of Islam and the West, the two components of the historical 'clash of

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[84] Michel Foucault and Jay Miskowiec, 'Of other spaces', *Diacritics*, 16:1 (1986), 22-27 (p.25).

civilisations', epitomises Foucault's claim. The embodiment of the in-betweenness that is the British hijab not only creates new subject positions, as mentioned earlier in the chapter, it also transforms the spaces of the everyday where the hijab is worn by imposing religio-cultural identity within secular space or non-Muslim space.

In Frantz Fanon's analysis the veil 'frustrates the coloniser'[85] through the suggestion that the subject has a privileged, hidden space, and with it the suspicion of privileged epistemology, which governing powers cannot control. In veiled women's space, agency can be rediscovered, and, more threateningly, women can embody the production of a space that subverts the logic of Western modernity and global capitalism through appropriation and recontextualisation. In this way the hijab mirrors the logic in each of my previous case studies.

At the same time the hijab, as a piece of cloth or an everyday scarf from retail or online stores and websites, often sold as a non-Muslim fashion object, also presents a new market for commodities and consumer segments, and the creation of new cultural industries. In recent decades, Islamic culture has become more mediated through increasingly commodified cultural forms such as books, magazines, films and television shows. Muslim women have been identified as a niche market with particular needs and desires, and Muslim femininity is now increasingly being projected by hijab websites[86] where ideals are produced, circulated, and consumed in the global marketplace.

As a result, Muslim femininities are being increasingly mediated through the market forces of consumer capitalism, impacting on Muslim women's identities, lifestyles

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[85] Frantz Fanon, 'Algeria unveiled', in: *Veil : Veiling, Representation and Contemporary Art*, pp.72-87 (p.77).
[86] See for example 'Hijab Style', which refers to itself as 'The UK's first style guide for Muslim women', http://www.hijabstyle.co.uk [accessed 25 October 2012].

and belonging in complex ways. While the centrality of the hijab in debates about British Muslim women's identities continues to broaden the debate about agency, self-expression and empowerment, at the same time representations of British Muslim women in Western 'fusion' looks conform to the images of the ideal consumer. It is no surprise, therefore, that with such proximity to the mainstream fashion system newspaper headlines no longer decry Muslim dress as merely oppressive, but instead ask: 'Is Muslim fashion finally "on trend"?'[87] The subtitle in the accompanying article reads: 'For Muslim women hoping to combine stylish clothes with modest dressing, Vivienne Westwood protégé Barjis Chohan may have the answer. And with Muslim fashion worth an estimated £59 million globally, the rest of the fashion world is sure to follow'. In the context of this thesis, the fact that Vivienne Westwood's protégé is trailblazing in the world of Muslim fashion seems like more than mere coincidence.

To sum up, for British Muslim women the relationship between local, everyday embodiment and global trends offers a critique of the secular and time-specific notion of British culture. Women's use of hijab liberates ideas of Muslim-ness and Britishness from monolithic and national space into a global and heterogeneous space. In this view, Muslim-ness is valorised as fluid, 'modern', lacking boundaries and offering limitless possibilities for women. Muslim women derive from the hijab not only a sense of autonomy, particularly in relation to their parents who might have been the victims of racism, but also of authority. The hijab's potency stretches beyond its embodied value to its semiotic value, providing an interruption to the visual culture of the street and thus creating the possibility for activism and change for women who might otherwise feel racially and sexually stereotyped by Western framing. 'By

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[87]Sara Ilyas, 'Is Muslim fashion finally "on trend"?' *Guardian*, 26 April 2012
http://www.guardian.co.uk/fashion/fashion-blog/2012/apr/26/muslim-fashion-on-trend [accessed 25 October 2012].

adopting the veil with British high-street fashions, and alongside other British values, women can assert an alternative identity that says: "yes, I am British too, but not on your terms". What women achieve through the veil is a chance to challenge what Britishness looks like.' (Wajid, interview)

From this position, any assumption that the veil denies Muslim women agency, or even that any support for Islam and its proscriptions could perhaps be an example of false consciousness, is undermined. Certainly Muslim women's increased support over the last two decades for socio-religious movements maintained by patriarchal structures poses a dilemma for Western feminists, particularly those from the second wave who based many of their ideologies within the Women's Liberation Movement on the rejection of patriarchy. Even if issues of sexual, racial, class, and national difference within feminist theory have now been much debated, questions regarding religious difference have remained relatively unexplored. The suspicion with which many feminists have tended to view Islamist movements only intensified in the aftermath of the 11 September 2001 attacks on the United States and the immense groundswell of anti-Islamic sentiment that followed. It is therefore not surprising that recent studies argue convincingly that the Islamic headscarf is a modern, not a traditional, phenomenon, and is an effect of these recent geopolitical and cultural exchanges that are global in scale. The French sociologist Olivier Roy, for example, describes the current religiosity of Muslim populations—including the increased desire to veil—in Europe as a product of Westernization.[88] It is the result of a performative dialectic, representing the dynamic interactions of Muslim immigrant

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[88] Olivier Roy, *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2004), p.15.

populations who are working towards establishing group identifications that are both enabling and empowering.

What women achieve through the British hijab is a chance to challenge norms of femininity and to create hybrid styles that constitute new forms of the 'spectacular', demonstrated by hijab style's conspicuous appropriative, mixed- and-matched and customised processes of disruptive direct action against dominant power structures and the status quo. The British hijab therefore continues the legacy of British anti-fashion, and of style as resistance, localized in everyday frames and experiences, dismantling essentialist claims concerned with identity that have preoccupied conventions of modernity in the twentieth century. Critically, what the case of the British hijab highlights is how strategies of layer and fold as interruption and continuity, and cut and break as rupture, are a quartet of techniques that are constantly at play within the context of British women's collective agency through clothes— from the early first wave of punk to the most recent contemporary styles of head coverings.

Conclusion

> 'Getting dressed' in the modern world is a matter of *bricolage* [*sic*]…Every individual is a walking collage, an artwork of 'found items'—or perhaps something close to a contemporary installation, changing as it interacts with its audience.[1]

> Now, in our age of individual freedom/atomised isolation, just maybe our self-generated personal styles can articulate networks of communality as well as difference; articulating those values and beliefs which words can no longer signify and forging relationships and communities in the process.[2]

'New' gendered performances

When punk exploded in Britain in the mid-1970s, and women and men destroyed and cut up clothes to style new outfits using crude construction techniques, anarchy, damage, destruction were the motivations of its agents. Punks, both women and men, used style to express social, class, racial and gendered antagonisms; they adopted torn, worn, dirty clothing, androgyny, cross-dressing and hypersexualisation, maximizing the potential to destabilise static socio-cultural identities through style. From a distance punk appeared as the next evolution in the history of oppositional dress that had been part of the tactics of countercultural politics since the 1960s. On closer inspection, the subversions and processes of resistance that it engendered were more far-reaching: a fundamental signal, in fact, of the advent of the postmodern turn and myriad sets of new matrices that would determine how we would understand the self, identity and subjectivity in the twenty-first century.

The act of cutting through clothes as a technique to express subcultural positions matched the ways in which punk used the idea of rupture as the central tenet of its music, its culture. Punk expressed an aggressive, anti-decorous presence. For men,

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[1] Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams*, p.248.
[2] Ted Polhemus, *Fashion and Anti-Fashion: an Anthropology of Adornment*, 2nd edition (s.l.: lulu.com, 2011), p.92.

punk identity was commonly rooted in frustration, particularly for those who were working-class. For punk women, I contend, it was the sound and look of the female subject coming into view, claiming her voice, expressing agency and desire. It was the rallying cry for her presence next to men: 'This was the first generation that were experiencing the first glimmerings of women's liberation'. (Coon, interview). Punk expressed a vitality, of both agency and expression.

This thesis began with an analysis of punk style, and a critique of its construction through the punk 'cut'. I consider this case study an essential point of departure to discuss the way in which punk laid the foundations for the formation of new style subjectivities in the latter half of the twentieth century and the new millennium. After all, it was punk that was identified in early British subcultural theory as the 'subculture of style'.[3] Punk formed the cornerstone of postmodern style expression through its unfixing of static categories and its challenge to hegemonic cultural codes. It also changed contemporary interpretations of the gendered body irrevocably through its dismantling of conventional representations of traditional femininity. From, and because of, punk, other countercultural, subcultural and alternative styles in Britain created their own styles of subversion—resistance—drawing from punk's legacy, turning many of the style strategies first found in the subculture into their own expressions of individual freedom, or processes of liberation from gendered tropes and totalising histories. Punk is, one might argue, one of the foundational styles of multicultural Britain.

The agency espoused within gendered punk style lived on: certainly it resonated at Greenham Common Peace Camp in the early 1980s, as women used bricolage, do-it-

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[3] Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*.

yourself and appropriation to customise their appearance and create countercultural individuality. The 'cut' gave way to the 'layer' as a central motif that, in its own way, I contend, undermined stereotypes and myths of femininity while at the same time subverting fashion's rhetoric of 'innovation'. Layers created an intertextual system of reference, linking various objects together. This style was the embodiment of processes of 'tracing', or a flowing and looping back and forth which in turn resonated with feminist conceptualizations of gendered realities in the everyday, and Julia Kristeva's notion of 'women's time'.[4] It also corresponds with analyses of the fashion system as cyclical and circuitous, as discussed in Chapter 2. The linearity of conventional consumption was disrupted. Instead, the distribution of second-hand items or the recycling of donations showed that the value of garments and objects was constantly renegotiated and shaped anew by re-personalisation.

As agentive articulations, dress was the catalyst for women's memories, as well as their new experiences, woven into their subjective realities. Style actively dismantled gendering narratives, highlighting gender ambiguity, so that new hybrid identities could emerge. Layering at Greenham can be understood as a metaphor for patchworks of moments and histories, or collage effects driven by techniques of bricolage and do-it-yourself that enabled women to develop new modes of agency.

Within this period hip-hop style in Britain also drew specifically on the techniques and modes of bricolage, translation and hybridisation that were present in the punk 'cut' and the Greenham 'layer', and both evolved into a style that black women embodied to break free from essentialising, often misogynistic narratives in rap and hip-hop culture, or dominant racialising histories that had traditionally denied black

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[4] Kristeva, 'Women's time'.

subjectivity. Through strategic and critical manipulation of the idea of the hip-hop 'break' women created style through juxtaposition, appropriation, mimicry and exaggeration to expose instability of meaning, generating in-between positions through which they could rearticulate black identity in terms of subjective 'difference'. Black, gendered hip-hop style in the late 1980s can be seen to express ideas of postmodern blackness: a theorisation of blackness as diverse, complex and socially constructed. In hip-hop style's fragmentary, disjointed cutting-and-pasting, borrowing and layering there is a deliberate move away from homogeneity, so that black subjectivity, based on ideas of 'double consciousness',[5] could be politically re-imagined and practised as part of diasporic, hybrid lived experience within the situated bodily practice of black communities in the everyday.

The legacy of all of these critical style strategies lives on in contemporary Britain today. The everyday collage aesthetic, common to all my case studies, has paved the way for a radical diversity that sweeps through the British high street and street -style in the twenty-first century. Eclecticism defines everyday style, where acts of plundering, mixing and matching and the cutting and pasting of fashion histories is now part of mainstream style vernaculars.

Improvisation, another critical component of subcultural and alternative style strategies, seems to be a central focus of contemporary fashion culture, monopolising street-style pages in fashion magazines and highlighted on fashion blogs. 'Style', while constantly mutating and ephemeral, now carries cultural status; it can no longer be relegated to a 'sub-' or 'alternative' category. In fact, I would argue that one of the most important legacies of my case studies is the way in which women in Britain now

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[5] Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*.

experience unprecedented freedom and creativity in style to reflect their subjectivities, so that even contemporary tribe style incorporates mixing and matching into fusion looks.

This is exemplified in my final case study about the contemporary British Muslim hijab. I contend that although the hijab is a marker of traditional gendered dress and a signifier of static gendered positions, its embodiment in the contemporary British context, where hijab designs are made by adopting, adapting and critically 'folding' materials from the British high street and worn alongside mainstream fashions, creates a hybrid position for British Muslim women to perform a 'dissident' subjectivity—one that disrupts normative fashion system structures and offers new opportunities to express 'Muslimness' beyond Orientalist tropes. Through the 'cosmopolitan hijab',[6] Muslim women create a visual interruption to the potential hegemonic identity of the British street; they assert an alternative identity that, through the merging of Muslimness and Britishness, is a slippery, performative stylization that is difficult to pin down. The same processes of subversion that are found in my other case studies—the cut, the layer and the break—are employed in this case study too, to customise fabrics and materials. Meanwhile, the act of 'folding' invests fashion objects such as scarves with Muslim signification, and reflects Muslim subjective agency. As a result, the British hijab's aesthetic and cultural politics often simultaneously defies and enforces continuous relationships with the mainstream: the hijab, while marking otherness, is in fact anchored in localised frames and culture. It relies on cultural synergy as much as oppositionality. Meanwhile, however, the hijab acts as a spatialising device that affords Muslim women the chance to inhabit

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[6] Tarlo, *Visibly Muslim.*

quotidian life with a barrier around their identity—in other words, on their own terms. The veiled body can, therefore, be interpreted as a heterotopia, a heroic space for gendered Muslim subjective 'difference'.

Gendered opportunity

In this study I have linked together an unconventional set of women's styles to examine how the British gendered body has troubled the boundaries between representation and lived experience, between the relations of time and space, self and locale. I have explored how the idea of sites refers to women's psychic geographies, where physical spaces such as the street or the campsite are also the margins or borders where freedoms are expressed in terms of deterritorialisation for punks, 'women's time' at Greenham Common, 'keeping it real' for women in hip-hop, or a heterotopia in the case of British women in hijab—though of course, as I have argued in this thesis, the freedoms expressed through these groups are interrelated and intertextual rather than discrete.

The aim of this project has been to unpick some of the complex threads that constitute gendered identity and history in Britain over the last forty years, ever since British subcultural theory identified style as a means through which youth cultures and tribes could perform resistance. Furthermore, over the last forty years many of the people who were involved in post-war immigration trails have come of age and their children, who are British-born, have actively and self-consciously constructed their version of Britishness through style. My four case studies broadly cover these historical and cultural contexts. They are juxtaposed because they offer a far-reaching view of interpretations of gendered British identity.

Through analysis of style I have examined how the dislocation of a fixed identity can corrupt the relationship between the individual gendered body and the frozen idealization or diminishment of it. Through an interdisciplinary framework, my research has argued that any departure from the perfection of crystallised paradigms of femininity should not be understood as insufficiency or limit, but as opportunity and potential.

By examining style strategies in the everyday, this research highlights the importance of understanding women's gendered experiences as operating within *overlapping* spatialities and temporalities as well as competing, but mutually constituting, dress practices. It is in this way that we can understand more fully the agentive motivations of subjective bodily experiences that are ultimately located within the structural realities of popular culture, commodification, urbanization and global trends. From the perspective of the looping interconnectedness of women's style, fashion and fashion history are exposed as a kind of floating form in which the wearer drifts, interrupting grand narratives and dismantling fashion system hierarchies in her wake.

From this perspective it is not surprising to note how style in the everyday has made a significant impact on 'high' fashion or haute couture in the last forty years, prompting questions within the fashion industry about fashion ideals, questioning fashion's debt to its own history, to critical thought, to temporality and the modern condition. Westwood aside, as early as 1981, for example, Yohji Yamamoto began to present alternatives to mainstream fashion by drawing heavily on punk style. Holes in his sculptural knitwear; fabric that was pulled and misshapen, with mis-matched buttoning; ragged shapes, all contradicted the glamorous power-dressing outfits of the 1980s, and echoed the work of Westwood and McLaren. (Figure 1)

Figure 1 Ensemble, Yohji Yamamoto, 1983. Courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Similarly, a few years later Martin Margiela reworked old clothes and the most disparate materials for his first Paris show, in the summer of 1989, that included a punky mesh tattoo top. (Figure 2)

Image unavailable due to copyright reasons.
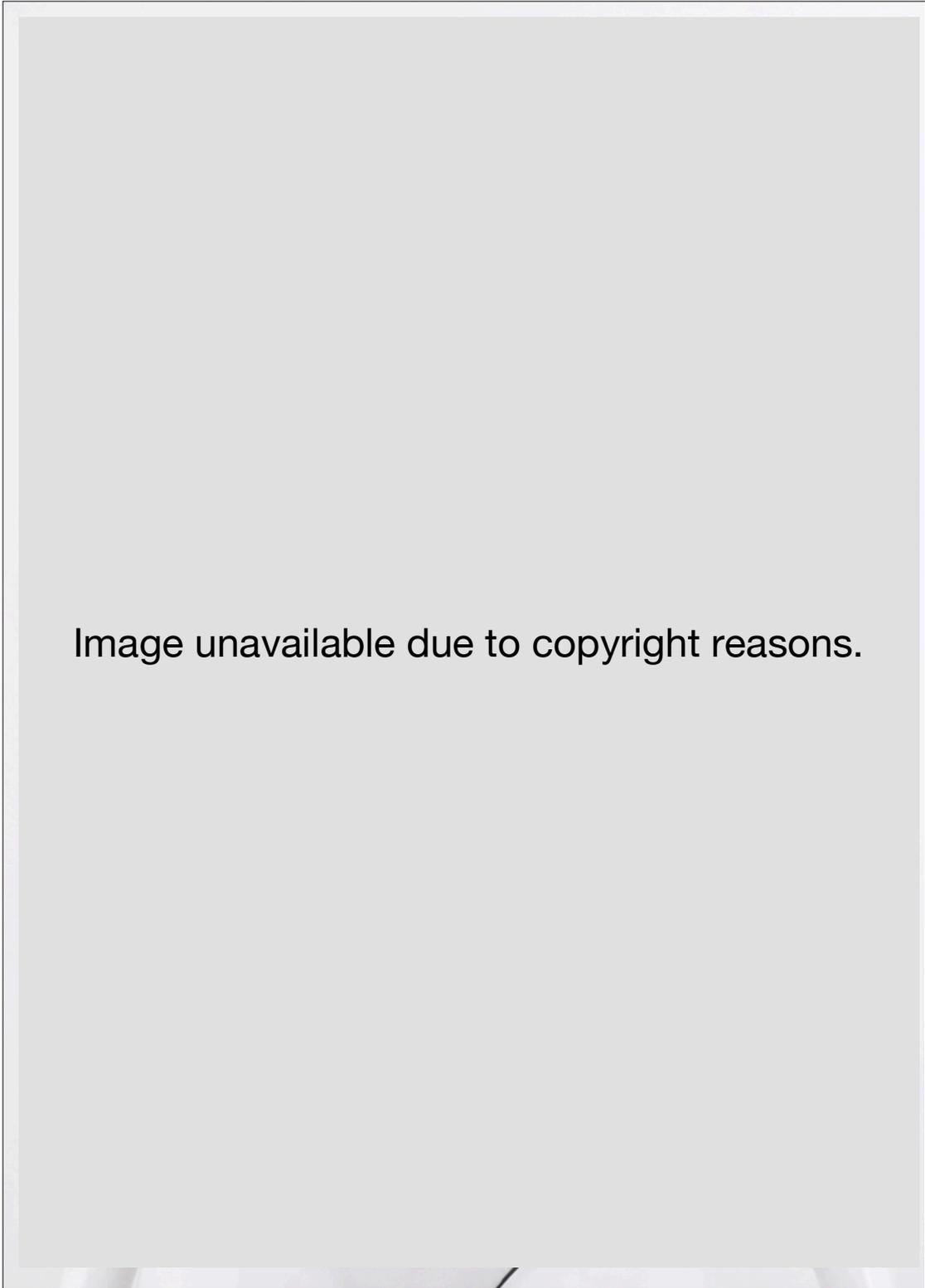
Figure 2 Mesh tattoo top designed by Martin Margiela for his first collection, 1989.

These designers deliberately adopted distressed materials and an aesthetic of ruin to parody the excessive fashion of the times. Elements of the punk 'cut' certainly resonated during this period, especially in the way that Margiela's work relied on disinterring the mechanics of dress structures, turning the mechanisms of fascination that haunt 'high' fashion inside out.

In the 1990s a vogue emerged for cross-cultural references within international fashion, including references to hip-hop style on the catwalk. An outfit designed by Gianni Versace for his Spring/Summer 1994 collection was inspired by the sari, which was infused with a punk aesthetic and re-presented as a glamorous evening dress. (Figure 3)

Image unavailable due to copyright reasons.

Figure 3 Gianni Versace, Ensemble, Evening, Spring/Summer, 1994 © Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Versace's clinging two-piece dress, entitled 'Ensemble', which resembles the 'body-con' dresses worn in hip-hop style, is made of bright neon synthetic jersey, just like much of the sportswear in hip-hop in the 1980s and early 1990s. The revisiting of punk through the use of symbolic safety pins makes this outfit a good example of the interconnectedness of style trends, not only in everyday style but in designer collections, too. In fact, among other styles of the 1990s the punk aesthetic remained front of stage: 'heroin chic', for example, picked up on some of punk's ideas of the ugly/monstrous as a comment on representations of beauty and perfection as damagingly unattainable fantasies. British photographer Corinne Day's photograph of Kate Moss in 1995, entitled 'Georgina, Brixton', showed the model looking unkempt, extremely thin, with shiny skin and a confused expression, which together were interpreted as signs of drug abuse. (Figure 4)

Image unavailable due to copyright reasons.
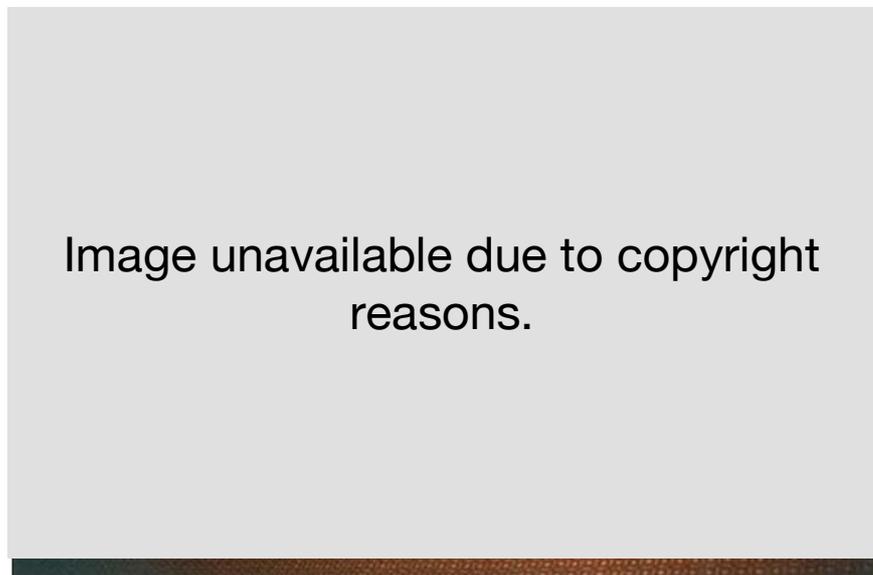
Figure 4 'Georgina, Brixton', 1995 © Corinne Day.

This is what led Amy M. Spindler, a journalist at *The New York Times*, to brand the style 'heroin chic'.[7] The photographs focus on abjection, dirt and decay, and are therefore not dissimilar to images of punks, as discussed in Chapter 1.

Somewhat prophetically, the mid-1990s also saw designs relating to a critique of identity in the works of designers such as Hussein Chalayan. In 1996, Chalayan's show entitled 'Burka' presented models wearing creations of different lengths inspired by the burka (body veil), with models appearing naked underneath; their only accessories were masks and sandals. (Figure 5)

Image unavailable due to copyright reasons.

Figure 5 Hussein Chalayan, 'Burka', 1996.

The designer's motivations were to challenge ideas about veiling in terms of modesty, identity, nationality—one face looks as though it has the English St George's Cross

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[7] The term was coined by Amy M Spindler in her article 'The 90's version of the decadent look', *The New York Times*, 7 May 1996 http://www.nytimes.com/1996/05/07/style/the-90-s-version-of-the-decadent-look.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm [accessed 12 April 2012].

painted on it—and femininity. Furthermore, rather than offering a statement purely about Muslim practice, the collection was also provocative in terms of the way it reflected discomfort for both the wearer and the viewer, thus constituting a comment on the scopophilic gaze. The masks used under the veil morph sequentially into a simple face guard that resembles the theme of fetish-wear in punk, as espoused in particular by Westwood and McLaren in the 1970s. The naked female body, demystified as the veil is incrementally reduced and removed along the catwalk, is not glamorised and groomed to perfection according to the laws of traditional representations of femininity. Chalayan ironically questions the stereotyped Western view of the hijab as concerned only with modesty and female repression. Within the fictionalized world of his catwalk shows, the designer tests the moments of encounter, conflict and hybridity in different identities and cultures. He threatens not only our ideals of beauty but also the notion of what constitutes fashion.

Perhaps Chalayan's collection should be viewed in terms of the post-fashion, postmodern style that has dominated style discourse since Hebdige's review of punk.[8] Since the 1960s, the view of fashion as a broadly homogeneous movement in a particular and approximately unified direction has been problematised by the declining influence of 'high' fashion. Certainly Chalayan's work moves away from presenting haute couture as the master narrative of the elite. Instead, he prioritises narratives around apparel and the body to provide a counter-hegemonic discourse.

In 1990, Elizabeth Wilson suggested that we were witnessing 'a blurring between mainstream and countercultural fashions; [and that] fashion has become "stagey"

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[8] See Vinken.

about its own status as a discourse'.[9] This view accords with histories and analyses of post-subcultural individualisation of style as postmodern,[10] with characterisations of consumption in the 1990s as increasingly individualized, and with the sociological move during that period towards theories of identity as increasingly reflexive.[11]

These examples, and those of my case studies, present 'high' fashion, fashion representation and street style as actively engaged in dismantling totalizing narratives, as emphasising hybridity and intertextuality, and as prioritising (re)creation using recycled objects and objects from the past.

Within these examples we see the merging of life, art *and* commerce, *and* the fashion system, *and* the mainstream in different parts. We move beyond notions of fixity, purity or authenticity lying outside of, or separate to, capital structures, as was the premise of subcultural theory in the 1970s. We see the limitations of existing definitions of postmodernity, which have tended to concentrate on consumption rather than production. For example, Helen Thomas and Dave Walsh have argued that

> [p]ostmodernity is a globalising, post-industrial world of media, communication and information systems. It is organised on the basis of a market-orientated world of consumption rather than work and production…[12]

In the case of my style groups, 'work' and 'production' are key to creating style and looks. After all, customisation and do-it-yourself rely on action. In my examples, the use of material and objects from the mainstream have not, as old definitions would

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9 Elizabeth Wilson, 'These new components of the spectacle: fashion and postmodernism' in: *The Contradictions of Culture: Cities, Culture, Women* (London: SAGE, 2001), pp. 50-63 (p.58).
10 Muggleton, *Inside Subculture*.
11 Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-identity* (Cambridge: Polity, 1991); Ulrich Beck, *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity* (London: SAGE, 1992).
12 Helen Thomas and David F. Walsh, 'Modernity/Postmodernity', in: *Core Sociological Dichotomies*, ed. by Chris Jenks (London: SAGE, 1998), p.363-390 (p.364).

have us believe, compromised the subject's autonomy, but rather rehumanised her in new positions.

Through its embodied framework, this analysis therefore develops post-fashion analysis as post-postmodern. From this perspective the relevance of 'the group' has emerged as significant. Through interviews it has become evident that local communities have framed a large part of the discourse within which women have constructed their values and expressions of alternative style. Grounded in lived reality, the margins and boundaries set by groups have acted as fault lines.

Outside cultural studies, since the 1980s sociological scholarship on groups within postmodernity has focused on the importance of 'community' in Western societies. In scholar Michel Maffesoli's view, 'postmodernity has tended to favour…[a] withdrawal into the group as well as a deepening of relationships within these groups'.[13] This corresponds with the experiences of my interviewees. However, Maffesoli has also argued that new 'tribes' have emerged in this context that are understood as informal, dynamic, and frequently temporary alliances centred on members' shared lifestyles and tastes rather than ideologies or beliefs.[14] In my view the fluidity within his definitions of these 'neo-tribes' does not fully reflect the lived experiences expressed in my study. These have been neither transient nor temporary, and often have been explicitly ideologically driven. For my interviewees, group affinities through style and culture have been formative and critical, and have been carried through their extended biographies.

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[13] Michel Maffesoli, *The Time of the Tribes: the Decline of Individualism in Mass Society* (London: SAGE, 1996), p.89.
[14] Ibid.

Many of the women I interviewed, especially in my punk, Greenham Common Peace Camp and hip-hop case studies, had saved dress objects and accessories from the period during which they were active in a style group, even if they were no longer primarily associated with it. My interviewees commonly maintained close relationships with the style, even if decades had passed since they were first involved with a subculture or alternative group style.

For example, this is a photo of interviewee Helen Reddington (discussed in Chapter 1), taken when I interviewed her in 2009. (Figure 6)

Figure 6 Helen Reddington, Costa Coffee, Barnet, London, 2009.

Reddington was a punk in the mid-1970s. However, when I spoke to her in 2009 she claimed that she continued to espouse the spirit of punk style. In 2009 she had bought her clothes from second-hand shops, just as she had in the 1970s. Reddington is now in her fifties; on the occasions when I met her she was wearing a mix of her father's old clothes (his waistcoat and jacket), a second-hand pair of men's 'Caterpillar' boots bought from a charity shop and some mismatched earrings (as in Figure 3). She also still pins badges to her jackets, with slogans such as 'Stop the War', and will regularly customise found objects.

Reddington is a good example of how women's subjectivities and stories are a fluid index charting a cyclical connection between the present and the past. Style, analysed through the lens of repetition, helps to connect subjectivity with extended personal biography. Furthermore, repeated themes in subjective style can relate to acknowledgement that dressing the body is a reflexive, agentive act that sews together past identities with current realities. It represents a self-narrative, where memories exist in a tangible form and personal histories are embodied; it also shows how the agency and materiality of clothing come not only from its texture, style, shape and colours but also from the histories of its use.

With oral history as my primary methodology I have been able to focus on experience and memory, on how women have explained, rationalised and made sense of their choices, what their perceived freedoms and cultural patterns have been and how they have negotiated the complex relationship between their individual consciousness and culture. Through oral history I have been able to fill some of the gaps in traditional sources, which I consider essential and worthwhile if we are in search of a full and inclusive history. Hearing women explain their choices not only highlights how their

bodies are critical to their experience of the self, but it also exposes how the gendered body becomes defined by many discourses and mundane practices *at the same time*, including those which are social, political, subjective, objective, discursive, narrative and material. In my study the embodied experience is located as culturally and historically specific while at the same time being mutable, shifting and radically open. Thus this thesis presents a study of women's possibilities as much as their narratives of dress. In this way it contributes to the now very longstanding discourse within feminist theory about women's epistemologies as part of feminist praxes.[15] For example, it exposes how embodied style can destabilise rigid gender norms, liberate alternative means of knowing and subvert hetero-normative histories and cultures. Furthermore, ideas of the 'body proper', that discrete, structured, individual myth of a European modernity, begin to disappear, to be replaced by an indeterminate site of natural-cultural processes that is difficult to delimit.

Women's embodied experiences break the frame of modernity that has dominated not only the fashion system but also fashion histories and the histories of women within it. Wilson has written that fashion and modernity share a double-sided quality, because they are both formed in the same crucible, that of 'the early capitalist city'.[16] In her conceptualization of women's time Kristeva has noted that 'female subjectivity would seem to provide a specific measure that essentially retains repetition and eternity from among the multiple modalities of time known through the history of civilisations'.[17] In this thesis I have discussed how women's embodied style provides an alternative narrative that highlights dress practice often as layered and cyclical. With its focus on

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[15] See Nancy Fraser, *Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory* (Oxford,: Polity, 1989); Linda J. Nicholson, *Feminism/Postmodernism* (New York; London, Routledge, 1990); Judith Butler and Joan W. Scott, *Feminists Theorize the Political* (New York; London, Routledge, 1992); Hartsock; Hill Collins.
[16] Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams*, p.9.
[17] Kristeva, 'Women's time'.

the everyday, the study offers a view of style as disrupting fashion's structures, as well as its visual codes and norms of consumption.

The thesis also corresponds with some of the most recent work in fashion theory and design studies concerning the everyday. An article by Cheryl Buckley and Hazel Clark, published in late 2012, is entitled 'Conceptualising fashion in everyday life'.[18] In it the theorists propose a critical framework that draws its methods from different disciplines, such as design history, social history, visual culture, urban studies and gender studies, and matches this with 'a micro-history approach' based on archival investigation, visual and textual analysis, and oral history.[19] In their study they comment that

> [T]he study of fashion as part of routine, mundane lives remains erratic, occurring largely when the ordinary impinges on the extraordinary, such as when fashion from the "street"—influenced by popular cultures—affects designer-led fashion. In contrast, our proposal is that by probing fashion's multi-layered complexities, a study of fashion can help to unearth the "never quite heard" or the "inner speech" of identity and everyday life that de Certeau tried to describe.[20]

In their identification of theoretical, historiographical, and methodological themes, Buckley and Clark present ways in which theorists can expand the critical framework for the study of fashion in the future. This article precedes their forthcoming book, entitled *Fashion and Everyday Life: Britain and America, 1890-2010*. I hope that my thesis, with its interdisciplinary framework and oral history methodology, and with its emphasis on 'unearthing' marginalized, gender-based histories in the everyday, pushes at the boundaries of this new design studies tendency.

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[18] Cheryl Buckley and Hazel Clark, 'Conceptualizing fashion in everyday lives', *Design Issues* 28:4 (2012), 18-28.
[19] Ibid., p.19.
[20] Ibid., p.26.

Furthermore, it corresponds with the 'global turn' in design history, illustrated by recent publications such as *Global Design History*,[21] which focuses on the importance of connections and networks in design analysis. Since the 1990s, design history's relevance within the humanities and social sciences has been based primarily on an interest in consumption studies shared by historians, sociologists, economists and anthropologists. Now the interconnectedness of objects has come to the fore. My review of the looping and circuitous processes and systems within street style, especially in the case of the hijab in the twenty-first century, will offer, I hope, a significant contribution to current and forthcoming discussions of design studies.

Future research

I would like to extend my methodology to conceptualise gendered style strategies of resistance in the digital age, to consider subjectivity, embodiment and issues of materiality in the context of the technologised self. Judy Wajcman has questioned the relationship between women and technology, as well as the way that technology shapes gender and gender power relations.[22] She says that 'gender is integral to this sociotechnical process: that the materiality of technology affords or inhibits the doing of particular gender power relations. Women's identities, needs and priorities are configured together with digital technologies'.[23] As social and cultural practices now extend into *many* digital environments, the spatial-temporal conditions of social interaction and cultural production have been radically changed. As such, 'everyday' gendered, subjective experiences have new structure and meaning, radically changing modes of gender and embodiment. In recent scholarship it has been stated that bodies are not 'lost in cyberspace' but continue to shape people's performances of gender

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[21] *Global Design History*, ed. by Glenn Adamson, Giorgio Riello and Sarah Teasley (London: Routledge, 2011).
[22] Judy Wajcman, 'Feminist theories of technology', *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 34:1 (2010), 143-152.
[23] Ibid., p.150.

identity within the materiality of various technologies that are increasingly integral to social interaction, cultural production, and processes of identity formation in the West.[24] Furthermore, far from being immaterial, disembodied, or cut off from the physical conditions of everyday life, the Internet itself consists of digitally material spaces and artefacts that contain multiple traces of the embodied users who shape and inhabit them. I would like to extend my framework to think about how gender and embodiment are articulated in these endless 'sites', and what this means for our understanding of strategies of gendered resistance. How does digital consumption and production impact on fashion theory and studies in the post-millennium era, where gendered and racial construction is both physically and technologically determined?

As part of an expanded methodology, I might consider themes such as fashion blogging to explore the complexities and challenges that emerge for 'located' gendered subjectivity from this new, increasingly powerful cultural production. Building on the emphasis on style as lived reality in the everyday, as street style, in this thesis, I would like to explore the problems within the street-style blogs that have now become a central and critical source of social documentary and dialogue. These deliberately reinforce *everyday style* as opposed to 'fashion', where the general public, rather than models, celebrities or designers, are at the forefront of fashion-making. Street-style blogs have therefore absorbed the visual language of straight photography, building on 'street' magazines of the previous decades, such as *i-D* and *The Face*. However, while expanding the importance of everyday style these blogs also create a

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[24] Maria Bakardjieva, *Internet Society: The Internet in Everyday Life* (London: SAGE, 2005); N. Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics* (Chicago, Ill.; London: University of Chicago Press, 1999); Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York; London: New York University Press, 2008); Judy Wajcman, *Technofeminism* (Cambridge: Polity, 2004); *The Internet in Everyday Life, ed. by* Barry Wellman and Caroline A. Haythornthwaite (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002).

homogeneous urban background to contemporary fashion: on the whole, the city as it

is represented is largely a conflation of discrete places in different geographic regions.

Thus while there is a focus on individual everyday-ness, issues of temporal and

spatial *difference* are often overshadowed by the all-encompassing, virtual city of the

Internet. While technology has created the democratisation of fashion within

contemporary culture,[25] at the same time it has caused the flattening-out of visual and

cultural distinction to engender sameness in notions of fashion capitals within global

fashion networks. Craik argues that there is a 'tension between global zeitgeist and its

propulsion of local cultures to differentiate themselves through distinctive fashion

statements and local variants'.[26]

As a final note, I return attention to the body. In the technological turn of recent years,

scholars such as Katherine Hayles and Mark Hansen have contended that we live in

an age of trans- or even posthumanism, which is characterised by the realisation that

the conventional boundaries between human and machine are dissipating.[27] [28] Hayles

has argued that embodiment gets ignored in the rush to proclaim an age of pure

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[25] For example, see Jennifer Craik's comments about how new media technology has made fashion increasingly available to a wide spectrum of people around the globe where the Internet's interactive opportunities allow users to engage with the fashion system through online shopping, digital fashion gaming, the streaming of catwalk shows and discussion on social networking sites. Jennifer Craik, *Fashion: The Key Concepts* (Oxford: Berg, 2009), p.270.

[26] Ibid., p.301.

[27] See Mark Hansen, *Embodying Technesis: Technology Beyond Writing* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000); N. Katherine Hayles, *How We Think: Digital Media and Contemporary Technogenesis* (Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2012); N. Katherine Hayles, *My Mother Was a Computer: Digital Subjects and Literary Texts* (Chicago, Ill.; London: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

[28] This idea has been explored before and was present in 1920s Modernism, when the human was already being conflated with the machine. An example is Oskar Schlemmer's 'Bauhaus Dances', which were delivered as a series of lecture dances between 1927-29 and were directly inspired by the architectonic cubical stage space designed for the Dessau Bauhaus (Bauhaus design school) in Weimar, Germany. Schlemmer created figures that symbolized technology's potential, but he ensured that the human element superseded the mechanical. See http://bauhausdances.org/ABOUT_BAUHAUS_DANCES.html [accessed 10 January 2013]. Within design history, Jeremy Aynsley's *Graphic Design in Germany: 1890-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000) has addressed how in the first half of the 20th century there was a recognition that the world was becoming dependent on a modern and commercialised system of communication that would give the designer great importance. For a depiction of some of the tensions between man and machine during the early part of the 20th century, see the film 'Modern Times', dir. Charlie Chaplin (1936), in which we see Charlie Chaplin's character, Little Tramp, trying to make sense of and to survive in the modern industrialised world.

information; she claims that it 'has been systematically downplayed or erased in the cybernetic construction of the posthuman in ways that have not occurred in other critiques of the liberal humanist subject, especially in feminist and postcolonial theories'.[29] Within posthuman reconceptualizations of subjectivities, therefore, the integration of the digital into the construction of the self and bodies is a central theme that currently spurs far-reaching debate. For example, these ideas have not only been explored in academic writing, they have also been the subject of contemporary digital media art installations. Consider the work of Ryan Trecartin, an American artist who incorporates video installations, sculpture, photography and film. One of Trecartin's techniques is to blend digital collages, mixing signs and signifiers, presenting renditions of an over-saturated world—themes and strategies that are not dissimilar to the postmodern and subcultural techniques presented, discussed and theorised in this thesis. In particular his focus on the urban street, on the vernacular, on fragmentation, resonate strongly with my work.[30] The idea of cut-and-paste is certainly evident in the fact that Trecartin uses widely available editing software to present layered images of American youth whose speech is articulate yet nonsensical, a patois of home-brewed slang and other borrowed mutterings. In his work entitled *I-be AREA*,[31] Trecartin weaves together several unruly stories with fast-moving, fast-talking characters, addressing themes such as cloning, adoption, self-mediation and virtual identities. In an interview in 2008, the artist said, '…I think Technology [*sic*] is helping us see that "sides" and "opposites" are simple boring easy ways out of evolution—*I-BE Area* is

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[29] Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman*, p.4.
[30] See for example Ryan Trecartin, *P.opular S.ky*, dir. by Ryan Trecartin (2009).
[31] Ryan Trecartin, '*I-be Area*', dir. by Ryan Trecartin (2007).

kind of the questions I have right...We're creating and participating in a new natural that we know nothing about yet'.[32]

Trecartin raises the issue of how we might examine digital bodies in relation to corporeal forms. His work echoes the views of critics of contemporary culture, such as Hansen, who have argued that critical theory must keep pace with technological change. Hansen challenges poststructuralism's legacy for contemporary cultural studies, and contends that technologies alter our sensory experience, affecting what it means to live as embodied human agents.[33] With altered conditions of perception, there is now a change in the prevailing structures of modern experience. It would be interesting to apply these extended methodologies to investigate some of the technologies in fashion too, such as the interactive products that are being designed[34] as part of the 'Wearable Senses' strand at the University of Technology, Eindhoven.[35]

It will be through diffuse, far-reaching and mutating methodologies that we will be able to grapple with the complexities of subjective, digital and global experience. The shifting and fluid subjectivities explored in this thesis offer a platform to explore the exponentially broad possibilities of difference and embodiment in the twenty-first century.

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[32] 'An Interview with Ryan Trecartin', *San Francisco Bay Guardian*, January 2008
http://www.mikehoolboom.com/r2/section_item.php?artist=311 [accessed 12 November 2012].
[33] Hansen, *Embodying Technesis*.
[34] These include necklaces that choke the wearer as stress levels rise. See http://wearablesenses.net/social-skin/ [accessed 12 November 2012].
[35] Department of Industrial Design, Technical University Eindhoven, Netherlands. See http://wearablesenses.net [accessed 12th November 2012].

Appendices

See Volume II for Appendices. This includes Appendices Introduction; Appendix I

Interview participants and information; Appendix 2 Interview transcripts.

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