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THE NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

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Faculty: Fashion

Violence in Fashion:

A Study of Violent Aspects in Fashion Clothing,

Promotion and Advertising

by

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doesn't sell just movies any more."

"Today Blood is sexy, the beast is a star, and carnage

INTRODUCTION

“Style is a way of stating who one is: politically, sexually, in terms of status and class. Style is a device of conformity, or of opposition. Style conveys mood - style is a device by which we judge - and are judged - by others. It is worn on the surfaces of our bodies; it organises the space in which we live. It permeates the objects of our daily lives; it is often mistaken for subjectivity to ‘have a lot of style’ is an accolade of remarkable personhood”. 2

Fashion, just like style, is a mode of language and expression. Fashion makes statements, be they blatant or subtle; an individual’s choice of clothing, an individual’s personal style, is a strong indicator of many aspects of their personality; political beliefs, sexuality, status, occupation, opinions, tastes We can therefore conclude that there is a lot more to fashion than simply garments. With the microcosm fashion reflects aspects of the individual. With the macrocosm, the phenomena of fashion is a reflection of the mood of the times, of the zeitgeist, and it is this zeitgeist which drives fashion forward, causing it to constantly alter, just as society in general is an ever changing force. Fashion is a mass of complexities and ambiguities, and often quite impossible to pin down. The truth of this can be seen when one tries to study aspects of fashion, for, unless we study them in a social and historical context, few seldom make any sense at all. One other important aspect of fashion to remember is that it continually contradicts itself; everyone, while trying to be different, ends up looking the same. This paradox is particularly true of youth subcultures, which are riddled with ambiguities.

I have chosen to explore the violent aspects of fashion. This choice was triggered by a spate of magazine articles I have encountered in recent months, all discussing the contemporary vogue in violence. Indeed, one of the most popular film-makers of recent months is Quentin Tarantino, contemporary toast of Hollywood, notorious for the graphic and bloody ultra violence of his movies, namely 'Reservoir Dogs' and 'Pulp Fiction'. (These recall Stanley Kubrick's 1971 film, 'A Clockwork Orange', one of the first instances of screen ultra violence). Tarantino has even been hailed as the instigator of this "New Brutalism" ³

Having established a definite aspect of violence in fashion today in these "Nothing Nineties" ⁴ (This contemporary vogue in violence will be discussed in more significant detail later) I was curious to discover if a violent concept or aesthetic was evident in fashions of past times. One obvious example which springs to mind almost immediately was that of the corset. The corset was a device used to achieve the nineteenth century beauty ideal of the hourglass figure. It was worn by both men and women. The infamous corset was a highly constrictive undergarment which caused permanent physical damage in many cases and therefore is a prime example of self-inflicted violence in the name of beauty and fashion. (It is ironic that in these liberal times, the corset is coming back into fashion in a very big way. Some would say, however, that comfort is more than just a physical thing, advocating comfort of mind and therefore adequate confidence, as being just as important). There are many other examples of such a nature, evident in almost every culture, and every period in time; e.g. Chinese foot-binding, scarification, circumcision, tatoos, piercing, bondage, cosmetic surgery the list goes on and on. These examples provide ample

material for a whole thesis, but since it has been covered many times before I felt I had to push further, think harder and dig deeper, to discover a perhaps less obvious selection of violent aspects of fashion.

Moving into the twentieth century I happened upon the post world war two phenomena of the youth subculture, with whom aggression, rebellion and violence are constantly associated.

The fifties bore a calm and conservative surface, yet beneath this superficiality, great change was taking place. This decade saw the inception of the Beatniks, whose apparel was all-black (still a staple colour of youth "uniform"), and whose ideals were inspired by the contemporary left-bank in Paris. Around 1953, Teds came about. They borrowed from Edwardian fashions for their look, and later, in the seventies, Punks plundered the Teddy boy look to add to their own mish-mash of styles. The sixties brought about the first teenages. The term 'youthquake' was often heard and widely used, a term which suggests the violence associated with these groups. Economic reasons in the sixties were one of the main causes of the growth of them. A strong economy in Britain led to increasing availability of work for young people. This increased their spending power and independence allowing them to satiate an appetite for clothes and music, and therefore define their own fashions and culture.

Among the main groups in the early sixties, were the Mods and Rockers, rival subcultures, infamous for their constant clashes. Early mods were obsessive fanatics, whose clean-cut look was often the result of a visit to their own personal tailor. By 1964-5, however, mods had divided into three main groups. The first were called the Scooter Boys, who sported a typical mod image and were relatively uninvolved in violent activity. The second group were the Smooth Mods. These

were generally older, better off and sharper looking than the other two groups. The final group were the Hard Mods, who were excessively violent. These were the predecessors of the Skinheads, whose culture and image I will discuss in detail in Chapter Two. The seventies saw the inception of the Punk subculture, whose violent aesthetics and anarchic ideals I will also discuss later in chapter Two. These will provide a basic historical context for the final subjects under discussion in Chapter Two; nineties fashion with an indepth look at the Grunge phenomena and the Punk revival. These too, portrayed a violent aesthetic and image. It is this point which I must stress; where skinheads, punks, grunge and punk revival are concerned, violence is a part of the image, a part of a whole. I would like to stress here the importance of keeping this in mind in any study of fashion. That is, fashion is not a whole entity, but rather it is part of the whole 'picture', influenced and shaped by the world around us:

"Those who would eliminate fashion by adopting and enduring a constant style of life make the mistaken assumption that our clothing habits exist as independent phenomena, totally unrelated to the social setting. One cannot stem the tide of fashion without halting progress in other aspects of our daily lives as well". 5

A fashion, therefore, only begins to be comprehensible, when taken in a social and historical context. Chapter One will look clearly and concisely at psycho-socio aspects of fashion, offering some theories which I hope will help to achieve a greater understanding of what fashion is, how it works, and why it changes. The purpose of this is to provide a foundation for the following discussions, primarily on skinheads, punk grunge and punk revival, and finally on contemporary promotion and advertising of fashion concentrating always, of course, on the violent aspects of these subjects. Two main examples will be

used. Firstly, a photo-shoot in The Face magazine in June 1994, which featured models brandishing guns and dripping blood, will be observed and analysed. Finally I will look at the Benetton concept of advertising, which they prefer to call "communication".⁶ This controversial nature of advertising cannot be ignored in a discussion of this kind.

To recap; Chapter One will be a psycho-socio discussion in relation to fashion. Chapter Two will look at the youth subcultures, skinheads and punks, in their original state, moving onto nineties fashion, with a specific exploration of the grunge phenomena and punk revival. Finally, Chapter Three will be concerned with fashion advertising and promotion, two main examples, as I have said above being used.

FOOTNOTES - Introduction

1. Luc Sante - "The Glamourization of Violence".
Vogue (US), September 1994, p 532.
2. Stuart Owen - "Consumption, Identity and Style" by
Alan Tomlinson, pg 43.
3. Andy Gill - "Mr Nasty". Q Magazine,
November 1994, pg 197.
4. Johnathan Freedland - "Welcome to the 90's".
Elle (UK), September 1994. pg 53.
5. Marilyn J. Horn and Lois M. Gurel - "The Second Skin", pg 125.
6. Puffin Moynihan - Profile Plus.

CHAPTER ONE

Psychology & Sociology of Fashion

Many theories have been proffered as to the origin of dress and the workings of the fashion process. This chapter conveys clearly and concisely the ones which I feel are most relevant. These psychological and sociological hypotheses lay the foundations for my thesis *Violence in Fashion*. I believe that to validate any discussions on the violent aspect of fashion (both conceptual and aesthetic, as well as the use of violent imagery in the promotion and advertising of fashion) a fundamental understanding of the psycho-socio workings of fashion must be reached.

“Fashion is a mode of symbolic expression - a clue to sexual identity, socialisation, culture, status, age, occupational role, personality, mood and possibly communicator style”.¹

In a nutshell it could be said that clothing was first invented for at least some of these reasons. Certainly the inception of institutionalised fashion (around the fourteenth century) was a direct result of the majority of the above suggestions. Clothing itself, when it came about around fifty thousand years ago was certainly not borne simply out of a need for protection from the elements. Other factors were, without doubt, major motivators. Ruth P. Rubenstein, in her chapter in “the Psychology of Fashion”, entitled “Colour, Circumcision, Tattoos, and Scars”² suggests three main theories to explain the origin of clothes. These are;

- The Modesty Theory
- The Protection Theory
- The Adornment Theory.

The modesty theory proposes that clothing came about due to a sexual type of modesty i.e., people, embarrassed to show off their naked bodies, particularly the areas of sexual activity, began to cover them up. This seems to defy the sexuality of human stature. I prefer to believe the adornment theory, which declares quite the opposite; yes, people

began to cover up for sexual reasons, but these reasons were not to hide their sexuality, but rather, to draw attention to it. This we can see as an explanation for the whole notion of erogenous zones. Even today the same principle still applies to ever-changing fashions. The dramatic change between the fifties and sixties offers a prime example. Fashions in the fifties promoted the image of the well-endowed woman. Due to a lack of adequate contraceptives, sexual desires needed to be focused on areas other than the vagina. Thus, big 'boobs', offering hours of fondling enjoyment, were invented. The new phenomena of "the pill" in the 60's, which opened new doors to sexual freedom, provoked the virtual disappearance of the breast. Fashions of the sixties portrayed an androgynous woman sporting a chest as flat as an ironing board.

The second theory, the protection theory, suggests two things; clothing was invented for protection from the elements and from the individual's environment. Although this cannot be disputed, I do not believe that clothing was conceived of solely for this reason. I believe that clothing came about for reasons of protection along with reasons of adornment. Rubenstein also gives reasons for the modification of the body in contemporary non-literate societies. These, in my opinion also suggest reasons as to the genesis of fashion itself;

- "1) To separate group from non-group members.
- 2) To place individuals in social organisation.
- 3) To place individuals in a gender category.
- 4) To indicate desired social conduct.
- 5) To indicate high status or rank.
- 6) To control sexual activity.
- 7) To enhance role performance.
- 8) To give individuals a sense of security."

Thus, we can say that fashion defines our social and cultural situation, our sexuality, our behavioural patterns, and our self-image.

Fashion and fashion differentiation are also borne out of many instabilities, a string of examples being offered by Fred Davis in "The Psychology of Fashion";

"Youth vs age, masculinity vs femininity, androgyny vs singularity, inclusiveness vs exclusiveness, work vs play, domesticity vs worldliness, revelation vs concealment, license vs restraint, and conformity vs rebellion".

We can now conclude that fashion is borne out of a cultural reaction, and yet ambiguously, causes reaction. Fashion is ambiguous. Fashion is cyclical. At this point we must pose the question 'why does fashion change?' and 'how does this occur?'

In an attempt to answer these questions, examples of two theories will be used. The first example is "The Trickle Down Theory".

The Principles of this theory are as follows:

"Subordinate groups, following the principle of imitation, seek to establish new status claims by adopting the clothing of superordinate groups. Superordinate social groups, following the principle of differentiation, respond by adopting new fashion" ⁴

It is obvious, that taken in its absolutely literal sense, this theory lacks validity. However, it would seem that there have been times and cultures to which it did apply. Indeed, the court of Louis the Sixteenth passed special laws in order to control the process described above. These were called 'Sumptuary Laws' and pre-revolution France is not the sole example of their existence. These laws stated rules as to who could wear what clothing i.e. people of lower rank and status were forbidden from wearing clothing similar in appearance (it would not, logically, be of similar quality or richness, due to lack of financial resources anyway) to that of those higher in rank or status.

Contemporarily the trickle-down theory is something of an antique. Taken, however, in a very general sense it can apply to certain situations in a very fundamental manner, although it could also take on titles such as 'trickle across' or 'trickle up'. One simple example is the taking on of men's clothing characteristics by women in the women's business suit. This could be described as a trickle across from men-swear. The theory of 'Conspicuous Consumption' is not dissimilar to the trickle down theory. This states that those of higher rank and status, financially or otherwise, advertise this in the clothing they wear, i.e. they would wear expensive clothing rich in appearance to convey to an audience their status and therefore their power. It has been suggested that contemporarily, the theory of conspicuous consumption is null and void. I disagree with this statement. The theory still applies, only visually has reversed itself; the elite now wear 'plain' clothing to 'hide' their wealth or/and power. Yet, in the same way as above by doing this, they state absolutely their rank and status. This new rendition of the theory could be entitled conspicuous counter-consumption.

Drawing from all the above theories, a Conceptual Framework for a general fashion theory can be constructed:

- 1) Invention and introduction
- 2) Fashion leadership
- 3) Increasing social visibility
- 4) Conformity within and across social groups
- 5) Social saturation
- 6) Decline and obsolescence. 5

The first stage of this process, invention and introduction can be the result of a diversity of sources; Subcultures, historical resurrection and changes in beauty ideals are among the most common causes for the invention of new styles. Stage Two, 'fashion leadership' describes

the way in which these new fashions are taken on board by a fashion conscious and aware elite; these can be called the 'fashion leaders'. Stage Three, 'increasing social visibility', is the way in which the new fashion is further taken on board by the fashion conscious in general. 'Social saturation', Stage Four, occurs when the fashion becomes overused. All potential buyers have been touched on by the fashion and its excessive popularity is eventually its destructor. Thus, 'Decline and Obsolescence' falls into place. Naturally this process is not complete until a suitable new fashion is ready to take the place of the old one.

Obviously the above framework, is extremely generalised. There are many factors which may affect it, one of the main ones being the geographical position of potential buyers. However, if you observe what people are wearing for a year or so, you can see that this general fashion process is constantly in progress all around us - on a broad basis, it is not dissimilar to the trickle theory.

Clothing is often described as non-verbal communication. Finally, to close this chapter I would like to discuss 'the Visual Language of Clothes';

"Within individuals are rules of combination of garments, of combination of colours and forms to give redundancy and certainty of perception and interpretation. Between individuals, social rules, such as sumptuary laws or uniform regulations can increase redundancy." 6

The key terms in the language of clothes are as follows: fabric, texture, colour, pattern, silhouette and occasion. clothing is descriptive of many of the wearer's personal traits. Indeed Alison Lurie, in her book 'The Language of Clothes' says that:

“to put on someone else’s clothes is symbolically to take on their personality”.⁷ Of course this is not absolutely true, but taken in a very general sense, it has some foundation. Also reactions to and conclusions drawn from what an individual is wearing are wholly subjective rather than objective.

A study made in 1936, which refers to the ancient Chinese terms of Yin and Yang, provides a good staple vocabulary to describe the language of clothes:

“Yin - short, broken lines; curved lines; rounded silhouette; gathered fullness; horizontal and upward movement of line; small scale; soft, dull, delicate textures; medium to light colours, soft intensities; and cool hues.

Yang - long unbroken lines; straight, angular and continuous lines; vertical and downward movement of lines; straight or modified, straight silhouette; large scale; heavy, stiff and coarse texture, few details; dark bold colours; strong contrast in values, and warm hues”⁸

Although these are very generalised, they provide an adequate foundation for further discussion in various aspects of fashion. Yin conveys gentleness, tactfulness and warmth, while Yang refers to strength, forcefulness and dignity. Thus we have, in a nutshell, the language of clothes.

FOOTNOTES - Chapter One

1. William L. Gordon, Dominic A. Infante and Audrey A. Braun - "The Psychology of Fashion" by Michael R. Solomon, pg 167.
2. Ruth P. Rubenstein. "The Psychology of Fashion", by Michael R. Solomon, pg 243.
3. Ruth P. Rubenstein. "The Psychology of Fashion", by Michael R. Solomon, pg 245.
4. Gant D. McCracken. "The Psychology of Fashion" by Michael R. Sologmon, pg 39.
5. Grant D. McCracken. "The Psychology of Fashion" by Michael R. Solomon, pgs 56, 64-67.
6. Kurt W. Back - "The Psychology of Fashion" by Michael R. Solomon, pg 5.
7. Alison Lurie - "The Language of Clothes", pg 24.
8. Sandra M. Forsythe, Mary Frances Drake and Jane H. Hogan - "The Psychology of Fashion", by Michael R. Solomon. pg 269.

CHAPTER TWO

Skinheads, Punk, and Nineties Fashion

Culture:

“A particular way of life which expresses certain meanings and values not only in art and learning but also in institutions and ordinary behaviour. The analysis of culture from such a definition is the clarification of the meanings and values implicit and explicit in a particular way of life, a particular culture”.¹

Skinheads, who descended from the Hard Mods, first began to appear around 1964-5. Some writers suggest that they came into existence in reaction to the hippy movement of the late sixties; and suggest 1969 as a birthdate. In my opinion, however, hippies were merely once of a succession of targets for skinhead violence, so I therefore conclude that skinheads came about considerably earlier than this. Since mods began to divide around 1964-5 into three main groups, one of which were the Hard Mods, it seems logical to deduce that skinheads followed shortly after this.

“A skinhead, who might be defined as a teenage male, who has his hair cut very short, is greatly addicted to violence, possesses a very small vocabulary, and, indeed, is not much given to speech at all”.²

Although this definition of a skinhead is more than a little stereotyped, it does underline the association of the skinhead culture with violence, this being a part of the whole skinhead image, style and therefore, fashion.

The skinhead culture, as far as gender is concerned, was wholly male-dominated. It seems that female skinheads were almost virtual fashion accessories. Although some did hold their own, forming their own gangs and performing their own beatings, these were exceptions.

Born from the British working-class with this statement by Jon Savage underlines their predictable, but true values;

“Aggressively proletarian and puritanical, skinheads, who turned the body into a walking instrument of violence, the ultimate expression of ‘traditional’ masculine qualities”.³

It is these ‘traditional’ masculine qualities which seem to be the main cause of the skinheads violent culture. Although a myriad of other reasons apply - economical, historical, cultural, psychological - this was a definite common denominator between all skinhead groups.


Football violence is one of the most well-known aspects of skinhead culture. Indeed, even today football violence and hooliganism is part and parcel of British culture. British football fans are infamous for their mindless aggression and raucousness. Nothing exemplifies this more than the recent case of Eric Cantona, the Frenchman playing for Manchester United, who (having been provoked) attacked one of the fans at a match. The farce of this situation is that the British football association condemned him outright for his actions, even though, as you can now see, football and violence have gone hand in hand in Britain since even the sixties, and indeed, since long before that. As to the reasons for this excessive involvement in violence, George Marshall, has a clear and concise one to offer;

“the main reason kids got involved in football hooliganism and still do is because they enjoy it”⁴

This cannot be disputed. People are so steeped in involvement in violent that some at least must be, literally, enjoying it. It is where this violence is concerned that one of the main parts of the skinhead uniform makes absolute sense - the steel-toe capped big ‘bovver’ boot (fig 1).

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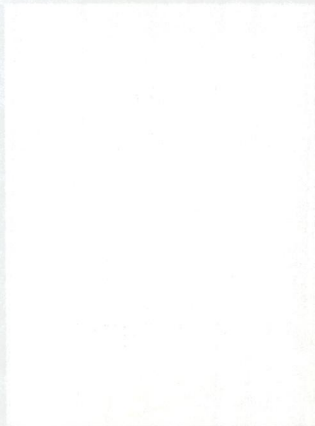
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Fig 1

More than simply footwear, these boots were worn as weapons to football matches, and were used as such when clashes with rival gangs occurred (this is an example of the ambiguities which youth cultures are riddled with, as I mentioned earlier; Skinheads fought with everyone, even rival gangs of their own kind). At one point police would, following a match, take the group of fans aside and force them to remove their boots and place them in a pile, until the rival group were at a safe distance. Such extreme measures convey the excessive nature of skinhead violence. Eventually, these steel toe-capped boots were classified as offensive weapons, and were banned from matches. Other football ground weapons included; bottles, half-bricks, sharpened metal combs, razor blades in oranges, lead piping and even from time to time, the odd shotgun or air rifle. These were, indeed, ruthlessly violent people.

Apart from rival groups of their own kind, skinheads also exercised their violence on many other groups, including; hells angels, greasers, gays, perverts, hippies and Asians. Skinhead violence was at its worst when against Asians. Indeed, one of their most favoured pastimes was Paki-bashing! One of the reasons for this was a new hysteria overtaking Britain, the result of a fear that the country would be flooded with foreigners. It is ironic then to note that the main skinhead music was, reggae, native to the island of Jamaica, yet another example of the ambiguities interwoven within youth subcultures.



Indeed, having visited an exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London recently, entitled 'Street Style' I realised that skinheads owe much of the inception of their culture to Jamaican culture. One could go so far as to say that without Jamaica, it is quite possible that skinheads would not exist. Basically, however, anyone and everyone was a feasible target for skinhead violence, as George Marshall conveys to us;

"Anyone who didn't belong to your patch was pencilled in as legitimate target for skinhead aggro. And that meant everyone from rival gangs on your turf right down to a hapless soul in the right place at the wrong time". 5

To close the subject of skinheads I would like to discuss their clothes. (See fig 2).



Fig 2: Skinheads, circa '87



I have already mentioned the steel-toe-capped boots, which were eventually classified as an offensive weapon. This led to Doc Martens becoming standard footwear apparel. Anyone who had new boots risked getting a "bleeding".⁶ This involved one's friends stamping all over them to make them dirty, in order to christen them. The title of this ritual, "bleeding", further underlines the violent nature of the skinhead cult. The laces in one's boots were often a bone of contention. Different colours symbolised many different things but the problem with this was that this varied hugely, geographically. Therefore, what was symbolised by one colour in one town, might mean the complete opposite somewhere else. Bootlaces were, therefore, the cause of many arguments, and much "aggro". Brogues were also another popular form of footwear. Trousers were either army greens (still a popular item with youth today, they have even been used in mainstream and high fashion) or jeans. Popular brands included Lee, Wrangler and Levis, with Levis Red Tag 501 jeans and jacket being necessities. Jeans were originally quite baggy. Skin-tight ones came about with the arrival of punk in the seventies. Sta-Prest trousers by Levis were also extremely popular since they never needed ironing, and thus were very neat and smart in appearance. Popular shirt brands included; Brutus, Fred Perry, Jaytex, Permanent Press and most popular, Ben Sherman. Ben Shermans were American style button down shirts. The collar buttoned down at the front and back. Also at the back was a loop for hanging it up, along with a pleat. These have now become trademark of the skinhead style, along with a left breast pocket. Fred Perry's were short-sleeved tennis shirts. Initially advertisements for these read "Shirt by Fred. 'Nuff said".⁷ These were also a standard element of the skinhead wardrobe. Fred Perry cardigans were also popular. Brutus and Jaytex tartan shirts were wide-spread as well. As with all youth cultures the t-shirt was and is extremely common. These were often emblazoned with brand names, football teams

and Union Jacks. One of the most popular skinhead coats was the crombie (Fig 3) This has recently been revived in high fashion. They usually featured a left breast pocket, where a hanky would be placed and often had velvet collars as an added touch.



Fig 3 - The Crombie Jacket

The nature of the placement of these hankies was reminiscent of the obsessiveness of mod culture of which elements seem to have trickled through onto skinhead culture; the neatly pressed jeans or trousers, the clean shirts, the shiny boots and the meticulousness with which hankies were dealt with. Instructions were given in the 'Boots N Booze Skinazine' as to how to fold handkerchiefs. (Fig 4)

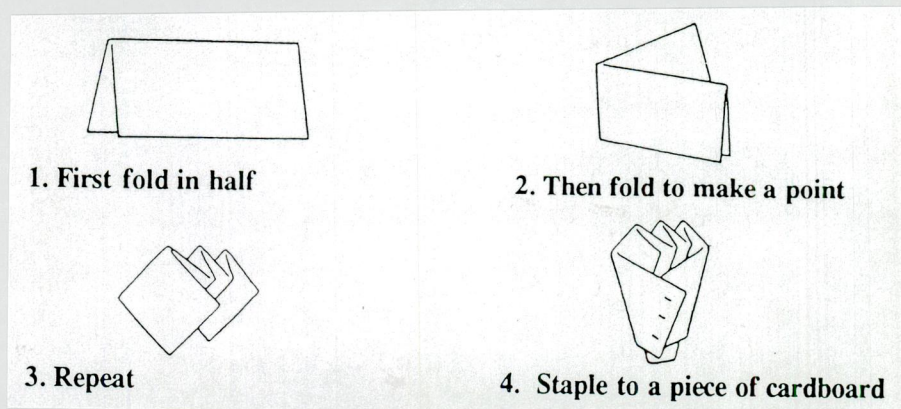
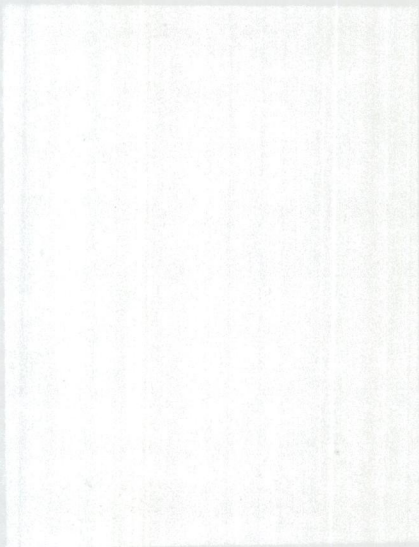
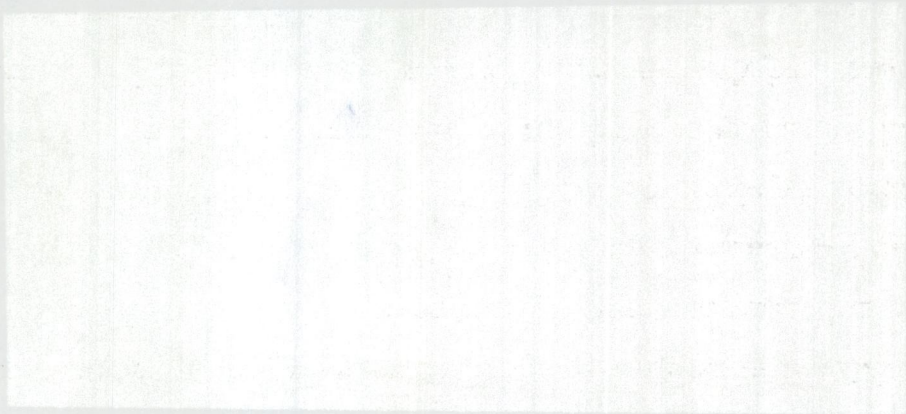


Fig 4 -



Other accessories included steel combs, which were sharpened and perfect as weaponry. They were worn in the back pocket so that all and sundry knew you had one. Braces were a staple accessory for skinheads. The jeans they wore were made to be worn on the hip but they insisted on pulling them up to the waist. This necessitated the addition of braces. At this stage braces are a virtual trademark of the skinhead image. Staples of the female skinhead wardrobe were fish-net stockings, worn with white ankle socks, and mini skirts, often made of denim.

Thus, we can see that violence was and is very much part and parcel of skinhead culture, style and fashion. Today skinheads live on, but they have divided into many different types of groups, as diverse and wide ranging as the many cultures in the world. Some are violent and some non-violent, yet all wear a similar uniform. To me it is reminiscent of 1944-5 when mods, the skinheads predecessors, themselves divided into groups of a contrasting nature. It is interesting to note that presently in 1995, a mod revival is underway in all walks of fashion life. Fashion trickles across, down, and around in circles. Fashion is cyclical.

“Although it was often directly offensive (t-shirts covered in swear words) and threatening (terrorist/guerilla outfits) punk style was defined principally through the violence of its cut ups”.⁹

Punk was born in the late seventies, making its debut in the British music press following an uncomfortably hot summer, reflecting perhaps the discomfort and instability of a dwindling economic climate. The late seventies was a period of diminished economic prospects for young people. No-where reflected this better than fashion in the seventies, which has been said to have been, along with just about every other aspect of life, as having been, “by and large, a mess”.¹⁰

The punk youth subculture reflected this notion in its mish-mash of styles, for which they plundered from all types of sources. The economic hopelessness of the late seventies was also obvious in the hopelessness of punk aesthetics and ideals.

Punk was the first major instance of the marriage of fashion with music, a phenomena which we take for granted nowadays. The 'Sex Pistols' were, of course, a prime example of this concept, a group marketed by Malcolm McLaren, whose associate, Vivienne Westwood pioneered punk fashions in their shop 'Sex and Seditonaries'. On separate occasions McLaren spoke in contradictory terms of this music/fashion partnership:

"As long ass the band has the right look the music doesn't matter too much". 11

"For the young music is the medium, the clothes needed the group¹²".

These statements reflect the paradoxical nature of youth culture, particularly in this dual concept of fashion and music i.e. the music needs the clothes, the fashion needs the music. This further emphasises the notion that fashion is not a lone phenomena but instead, is part of a whole. It is constantly changing, just like society, culture and history, and ambiguously, this nature of constant alteration is fashion's only stable property;

"Fashions only constant property is that it changes, from person to person, group to group and day to day; a fact that makes it virtually useless to the theorist. Concentrate on it and you're left with a fragmentary image. Catch it off-centre, as part of the whole scene, and you may have captured something more substantial". 13

Punk fashion emulated this concept. More than just a visual aesthetic, it was a state of mind, an attitude, a style, an occupation. The clothes were merely a means of reflecting all this, and much more.

Vivienne Westwood is notorious for her shocking and innovative clothing designs. Her first collection 'Pirates' was worn by Adam and the Ants, a punk band also managed by McLaren. Her view was that it is "an artist's job to wreak violence on a culture to give it a new life".¹⁴

Punk, with its new shocking aesthetics and ideals reflected the mish-mash of styles it perpetrated, did indeed wreak violence on society. Outrage was the name of the game, resulting from disillusionment, caused by an ever-weakening economy. One needs to look at the punk 'uniform' (Fig 5) to appreciate its violent aspects. The main jacket worn, has that classic staple of 'a young wardrobe', the battered black leather biker's jacket. Often these would be customised with band names such as Discharge, The Unwanted, The Rejects, The Sex Pistols, The Worst, The Clash, or emblazoned with pleasant phrases like "Never mind my bollocks" or "Shit on my face".¹⁵ Army fatigue jackets were also worn and some punks even wore the dirty raincoat, an everyday symbol of sexual kinkiness, in itself a manifestation of one of punk's big contradictions, sex. Shirts and t-shirts were constructed from a myriad of fabrics; rubber, lurex, plastic, pvc, or again featured slogans and names like those on the jackets. Girls often wore shocking pink finger knit mohair jumpers. Trousers were always tight; be they leather, tartan or jeans, while skirts were always worn short, be they kilts or old school skirts. As with skinheads, Doc Marten boots were a fundamental footwear requirement, although punks wore them battered, worn and dirty. All punk clothing was riddled with rips and zips, accessorised with safety pins, paper clips, razor blades, nails, and other such ordinary implements, and decorated with graffiti and fake blood. The punk image also plundered bondage and fetish clothing to add to their image; rapist masks, rubber wear, leather bodies, fish-net stockings, stilettos, belts, straps and chains, again conveying the



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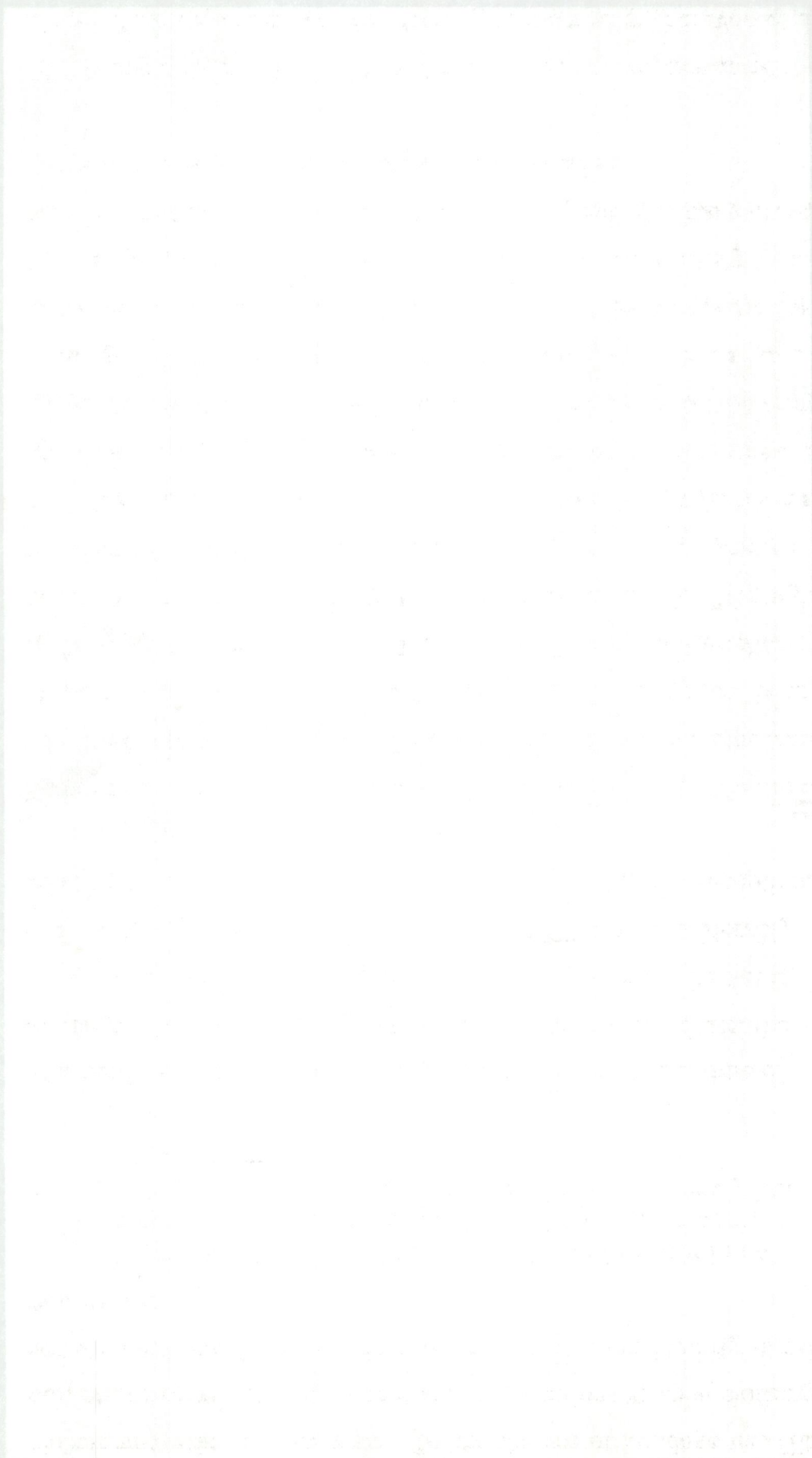
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floor Kensington

(451 1824).
m Camden High

St W1 (437 5842).
B5 8505).
High St W8.
St W1 (636 4314).
check the small

Fig 5 - Punks, Kings Road, circa '87



violent aesthetic of punk style. Today, the use of bondage has filtered into mainstream fashion. The sexual implications of such clothing again underlines the paradoxical nature of punk, particularly in relation to sex;

“Punk rock threw sex back into the face of society in an apocalyptic vision; as the name Sex Pistols made clear, sex here was not a means to pleasure or self-discovery but a weapon”. 16

The punk era was a time to hate everything, even sex, a time of anarchy. Like skinheads, punks were puritan in their ideals, the most anarchic of these being that punks simply liked to be hated. Also, like skinheads, punks have lived on, though in considerably smaller numbers today than in the time of their original inception.

Violence has been no stranger to fashion in the nineties. We are almost halfway through the decade and evidence of violent aspects of fashion can be found as early as 1989, when British designer Helen Storey featured camouflage gear and bullet bras in her winter collection. 1989 was the year the Berlin Wall came down. 1990 brought us what has now become a cult classic movie, David Lynch's strange and ultra-violent 'Wild at Heart'. Fashion looked to the sixties for inspiration and a huge hippy revival was evident, along with a new androgyny, a concept which is only now, in 1995, beginning to fade away. Ecology concerns, at this stage a fashion cliché, were also present, particularly on the Katherine Hamnett catwalk who encouraged us to "clean up or die". The fur debate raged on and the military theme was featured in high fashion. Derived from period military dress, this theme has become commonplace in fashion design.

1991 brought us the Gulf War, and thus, American customers were absent from the couture shows, leading to worried speculation of an imminent recession. Confusion was abundant as designers seemed

indecisive as to skirt length. Emanuel Ungaro coined a phrase to describe the prevailing mood of the times, saying they were: “spiritually violent”.¹⁷ Helen Storey entitled her collection “Rage” and featured bondage, as did many other designers, finding expression for the mood of the times in “the violent visual shock of a great deal of flesh bound up in pvc, rubber and chains”,¹⁸ all reminiscent of Vivienne Westwood and the punk era.

The confusion regarding skirt length of 1991 reached a decision in 1992 as skirts fell with a thud. Fashion themes were about clashes of cultures, colours and fabrics. The androgyny theme was carried further, many designers featuring ‘menswear’ for women.

1993 opened with Francis Ford Coppola’s movie “Bram Stokers Dracula” leading to much blood bound discussion of aids. This was the year of grunge, featured in both youth and high fashion, as portrayed by magazines such as The Face, ID, Vogue and Elle. Top Shop encouraged us not to “just break the rules, shatter them: get into grunge”.¹⁹ Like punk had been in the seventies, grunge was very much a marriage of fashion and music, the American group, Nirvana, the unwilling leaders of the pack. The emergence of the ‘waif’ supermodel was as a result of grunge, Kate Moss, (see Fig 6) being the best example. This superwaif was super-thin, pale, sickly looking, a carbon copy of punk physicality. Make-up was not to enhance, but rather, it seems, to ‘uglify’, emulating bruises and blood, again reminiscent of the punk era. Hair was worn long and limp, eyes wide with an almost emaciated appearance. Clothes appeared ‘destroyed’, thrown together in wispy loose layers. Fabrics were rough and raw. Clothing construction was raw, rough and ready, lacking constructive devices such as interlinings and interfacing, unless these were visible. Seams were visible also. Hems hung and unravelled behind the wearer.



Fig 6 - Kate Moss; the grunge look, make up emulating bruises

The first part of the paper discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions. It is essential for the business to have a clear and concise record of all income and expenses. This will help in the preparation of the annual financial statements and will also be useful for tax purposes.

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All this was reflective of the economic climate, restless and unsettled. Conspicuous counter consumption was prevalent in high fashion as the rich elite paid exorbitant prices for ragged garments, which looked like something from a Salvation Army store, so as not to look rich.

Logically, grunge led to a punk revival, the first evidence of this appearing in the second half of 1993, in both high and youth fashion. Women used punk concepts to give them a new power, none better than the 'Riot Grrrls' (see Fig 7) of both Britain and the USA. This movement consisted of a network of feminist punk bands and angry fan-zines;

"A growing number of angry young women, influenced by punk-rock but disillusioned by the way in which the scene mirrored the sexist society it had once spurned began to identify themselves as Riot Grrrls".²⁰

Thus Riot Grrrls took the rage of punk, but rather than allow it to manifest itself in a frustrated hopelessness, they used it to a positive end; "girl positivity".²¹ This concept, where fashion is concerned, has developed into a hard-core glamour, where the image is as much about being sexy as it is about being strong. Women have become increasingly fed up with having to hide behind drab business suits or safe, long clothing. They want to be able to be both a "sex symbol for men and a role model for women"²² It is with this new powerful and ambiguous (for while being sexy, it is highly aggressive, and domineering) glamour that they have achieved this. The look is sharply tailored, sometimes trashy with lurid colours or shiny and metallic fabrics, vampish and bitchy. Silhouettes are strong, sharp and streamlined, with razor edged finishings, free of fussy bows or other such frivolous and 'feminine' details. All in all, this new image is reminiscent of the photographs of seventies photographers Helmut Newton and Gary Boukchin. It is these innovative men from whom

contemporary Vogue photographer, Nick Knight, draws inspiration, to achieve the “brash, bitchy, violent and aggressive” feel. 23

The contemporary punk revival also took another road, which led to a more literal re-interpretation of the seventies punk image. The staple items of safety pins; paper clips, zips and rips were reused to design or customise clothing. The new punk also plundered bondage and fetish clothing again, the image creating a mood similar to that of the new hard-core glamour. The hopelessness of the old punk has also been “revamped”, taking form in the “New Rage”.²⁴ This is a young movement, whose only link to each other is their common frustration hopelessness and anger;

“We met a bunch of mouthy young nutters who don’t call themselves punks, but whose music is fast and noisy and whose slogan is ‘fuck off’”.²⁵

This new punk is much more about an ‘attitude’ than anything else. It is a reflection of the economical and social unease of the time, much like the mood of the seventies, the mood of the 90’s doesn’t make much sense, and is pretty much, a mess.



Fig 7: Riot Grrrl meets Punk

Linda, model, wears knitted jumper and studded
platforms by Vivienne Westwood;
second-hand knickers customised with safety pins;
Lycra tights from John Lewis, 278-306
Oxford St, London W1



Fig 8: A Literal Reinterpretation of the Seventies Punk Look



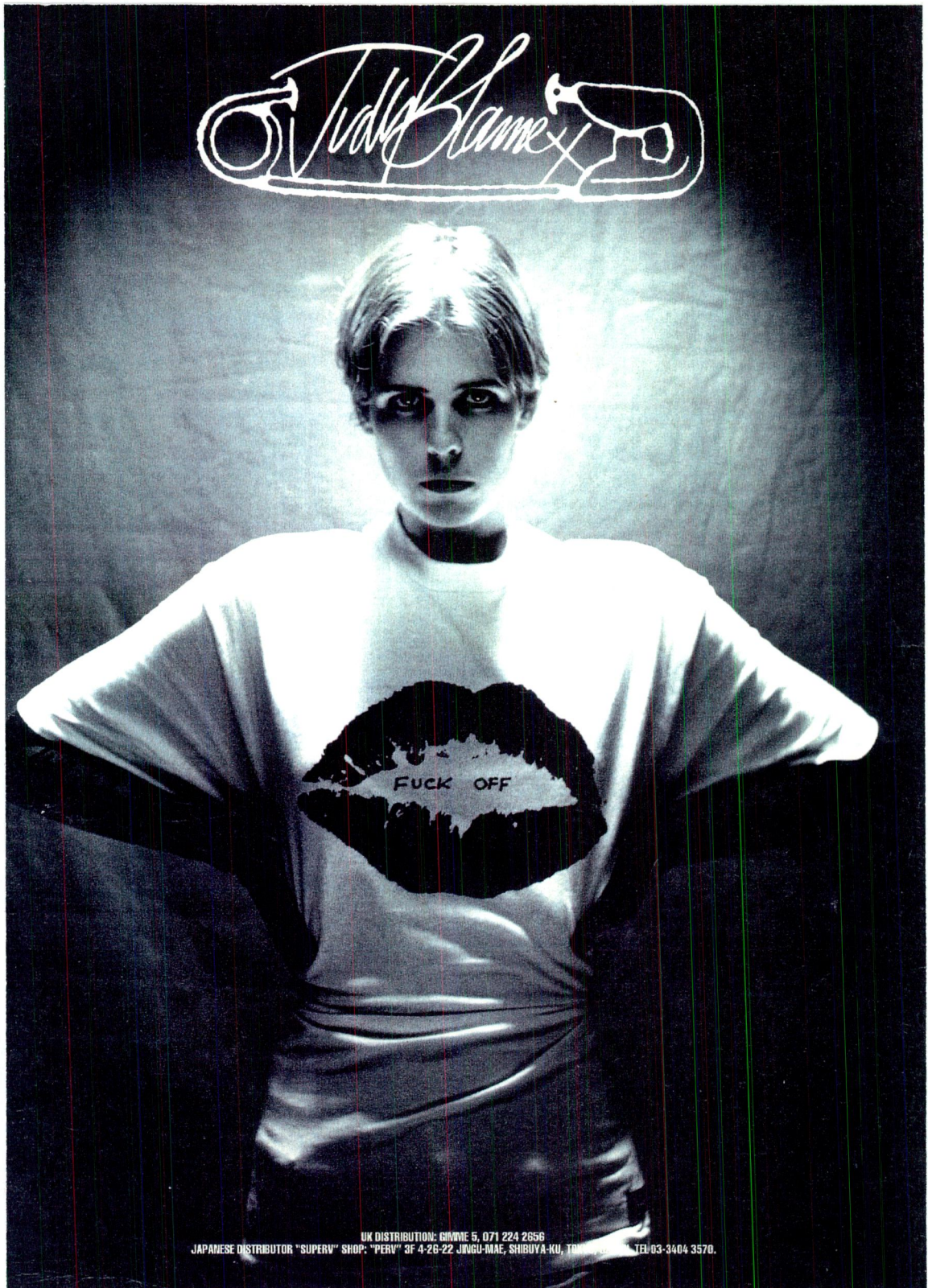
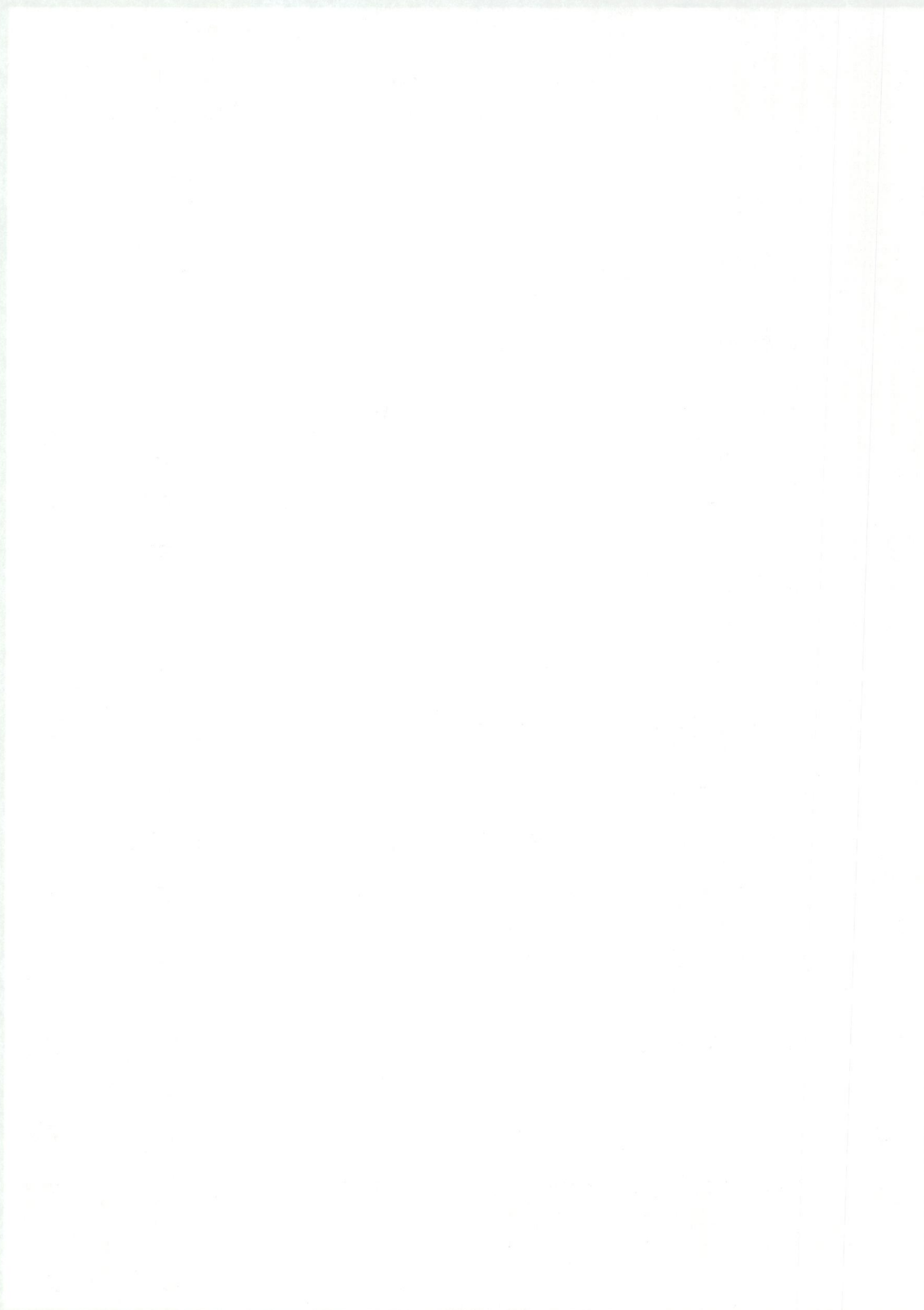


Fig 9: The New Punk - An Attitude



FOOTNOTES - Chapter Two

1. Dick Hebdige - "Subculture - The Meaning of Style". pg 6.
2. Kenneth Hudson - "The dictionary of the Teenage Revolution and its Aftermath". pgs 166-7.
3. Jon Savage - "consumption, Identity and Style" by Alan Tomlinson, pg 163.
4. George Marshall - "Spirit of '69 - A Skinhead Bible", pg 30.
5. George Marshall - "Spirit of '69 - A Skinhead Bible", pg 159.
7. George Marshall - "Spirit of '69 - A Skinhead Bible". pg164.
8. George Marshall - "Spirit of '69 - A Skinhead Bible". pg 162.
9. Dick Hebdige - "Subculture - The Meaning of Style". pg 106.
10. Diana Simmonds - "Consumption, Identity and Style", by Alan Tomlinson, pg 124.
11. Malcolm McLaren - "Sultans of Style" by Georgina Howell, pg viii.
12. Malcolm McLaren - "Sultans of Style by Georgina Howell, pg 31.
13. Georgina Howell - "Sultans of Style", pg xvi.
14. Vivienne Westwood - "Sultans of Style", by Georgina Howell, pg 29.
15. Caryn Franklin and Dylan Jones - "The I-D Bible", pg 27.
16. Jon Savage - "Consumption, Identity and Style", by Alan Tomlinson, pg 165.
17. Sarah Mower - "Couture and Crisis", Vogue (UK), April 1991, p 25.
18. Sarah Mower - "Of Human Bondage". Vogue (UK), February 1991, pg 15.
19. Top Shop Promotion - Vogue (UK) April 1993, pg 106.
20. Susan Corrigan - "Who are the Riot Grrrls?". I-D, April 1993, pg 29.
21. Susan Corrigan - "Who are the Riot Grrrls?". I-D, April 1993, pg 29.

22. Avril Marr - "Do You Think I'm Sexy?"
I-D, April 1994, pg 28.
23. Nick Knight - "The Bitch is Back", Vogue (UK), September 1994,
pg 240.
24. Frank Broughton - "Here's the New Punk!"
I-D, March 1994, pg 33.
25. Simon Dudfield - "Never Mind the New Punk, Here's the
Bollocks!". I-D, March 1994, pg 34.

CHAPTER THREE

Violent Aspects of Fashion Promotion and Advertising

CHAPTER THREE - "Reality Bites", The Face, June 1994,
photographs by Jean Baptiste Mondino.

"The most sophisticated advertising has lost interest in
selling a new product. It now sells the image".¹

The 'Reality Bites' photographs by Jean Baptiste Mondino are a classic reflection of this concept. When one looks past the image to the actual clothes, supposedly the point of the exercise, they are really quite ordinary and uneventful e.g. Marks & Spencer knickers, a nightie from a thrift store, a polyester shirt, platforms, plaid trousers; there is nothing aggressive about these clothes. In fact, they are totally "non-violent". Mondino has used violence as a prop, conveyed using 'blood' and guns, to portray an image of a violent nature in order to promote these clothes, and, in turn, to promote The Face magazine in which they appeared. It worked. Since their publication, because the concept of the stylisation of violence is very "now", these images have been the subject of intercontinental discussion, being mentioned in American Vogue and British Elle in particular.

The nature of the violence depicted on these images is reminiscent of Stanley Kubrick's 'A Clockwork Orange'. It is of an "ultra-violent" nature, and together with the trashy seventies styling echoes the spate of ultra-violent movies of recent months of which Quentin Tarantino, Hollywood's hottest new directorial talent, is a forerunner. The lucid bloodiness of his movies, in particular Reservoir Dogs, and later Pulp Fiction (which was released after these photographs were taken) is so graphic it fails to be frightening and becomes utter escapism. This fantasy element is present in Mondino's hyper-real photographs who himself quotes films such as Reservoir Dogs, True Romance (for which Tarantino wrote the script) Romeo is Bleeding (featuring Juliet Lewis, star of many other ultra-violent

contemporary movies e.g. Natural Born Killers) and Kalifornia as major influences. He himself lived in Los Angeles for a short time recently, and found Hollywood's "ultra-violent" mood strangely infectious: "exciting", "sexy", "corny", "repulsive".² These adjectives aptly describe the mood of these movies and indeed the prevailing ambiguous and confused mood of these times. It is important to note that these photographs were actually taken in LA, and that most of the clothes themselves are from American stores. Therefore, like the movies, the mood is wholly American, in a trashy and kistchy way. One need only compare an image of a blood soaked Tim Roth in Reservoir Dogs (Fig 10) with any of the 'Reality Bites' photographs to see the obvious similarities; the clichéd black suit, 'traditional' movie uniform of 'cool' criminals, the excessive presence of blood, and the hand-held gun, in Reality Bites; the trashy glamour of the clothes, again the ever present blood and the guns.



Fig 10: A Blood-soaked Tim Roth as Mr Orange in Reservoir Dogs

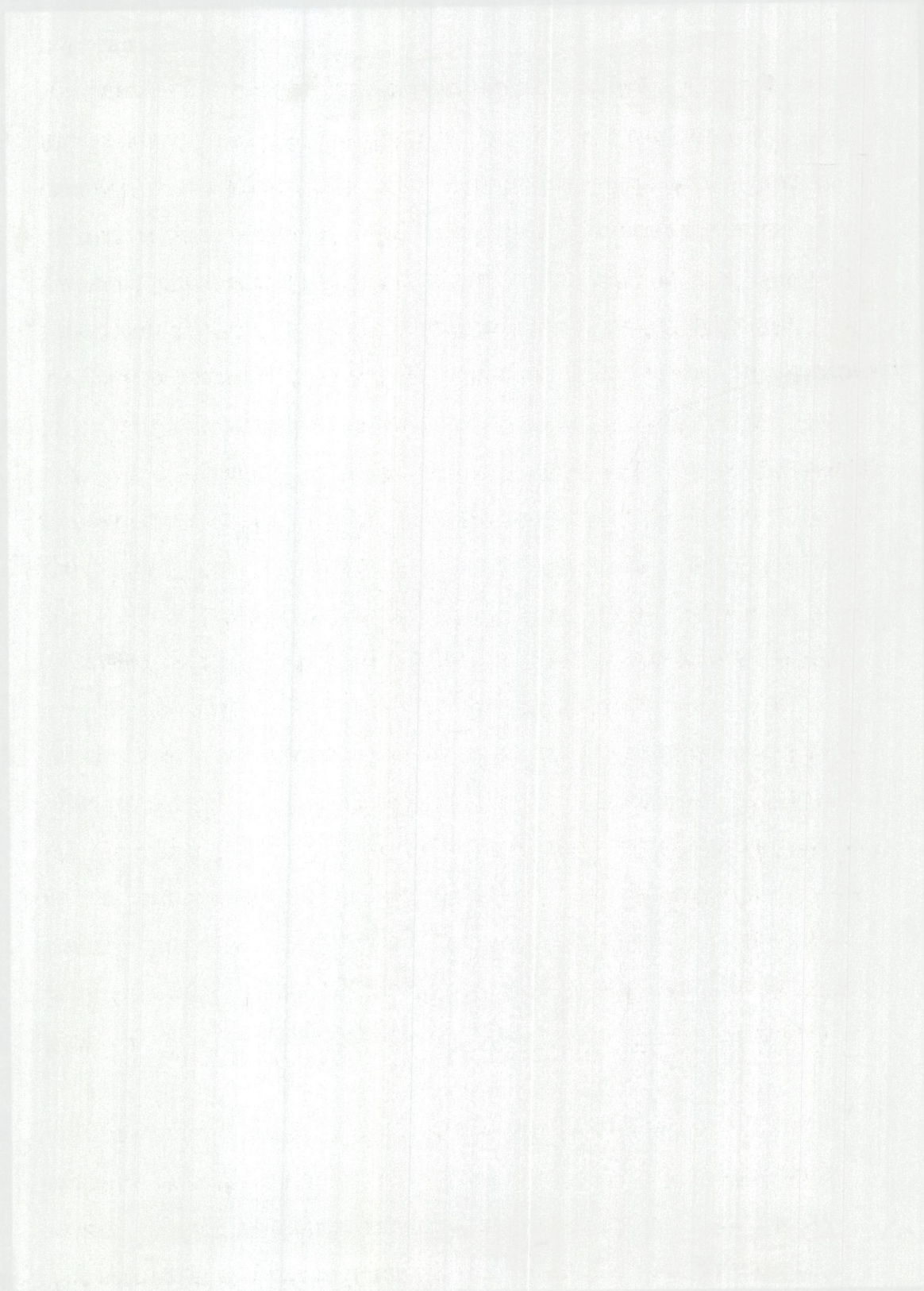


Each image is implicitly violent, and often of an ambiguous nature. I have chosen three, in particular, to discuss. The first, appearing in Fig 11 features a blond haired girl leaning against the boot of a car. She holds two guns, one limply between her legs, one languidly to her head. Blood trickles down the side of her nose, drops of blood are on both, bare-fleshed thighs. Her short skirt is lifted a little, revealing her clean white knickers. Her top is worn off-shoulder and around her neck is a necklace featuring a 'cutsie' image of a boy and girl kissing. On her wrist her bracelet features a big silver flower. The photograph is a cacophony of ambiguities. Her tousled hair and lifted skirt suggest aggression of a sexual nature. The guns and blood infer that she has recently killed and there are implications that she is about to kill herself, one gun in her right hand held limply to her head. Another possibility is that she has just decided not to kill herself, hence the limpness of the hand-held gun. Yet another, contrasting possibility is implied. She could also be "leaning" against the gun, caressing her saviour from aggression. The blood which trickles down her face resembles tears. Her mood too, is ambiguous, her face and body language conveying many different possible feelings; calm, sadness, relief, despair. The number plate on the car reads 'California' recalling perhaps the serial killer movie starring Juliette Lewis and Brad Pitt, 'Kalifornia'. Certainly the clothes the girl wears here are reminiscent of Lewis' wardrobe in the movie, her character, Adele, a gawky super-innocent creature who doesn't make much sense. On the other hand the model appears not unlike Patricia Arquette's character in *True Romance*, who, although she portrays a trashy glamorousness, surprises us with her strength and bravery. Indeed this could be read as being a both sexy and strong image, not unlike the Riot Grrrl concept of which I was speaking earlier. The gun, of course, being the ultimate phallic symbol of power here.



Opposite page: stiletto heels from Desert Industries, 2720 East 11th St, East LA
This page: rehearsal mini-skirt from Salvation Army thrift store, 1208 East Compton Blvd, Compton, LA; off-shoulder top by Free (details on 071 498 1349); knickers by Marks & Spencer, branches nationwide; bracelet and necklace from Berger Beads, 413 East 8th St, LA

Fig 11: Reality Bites - Image One



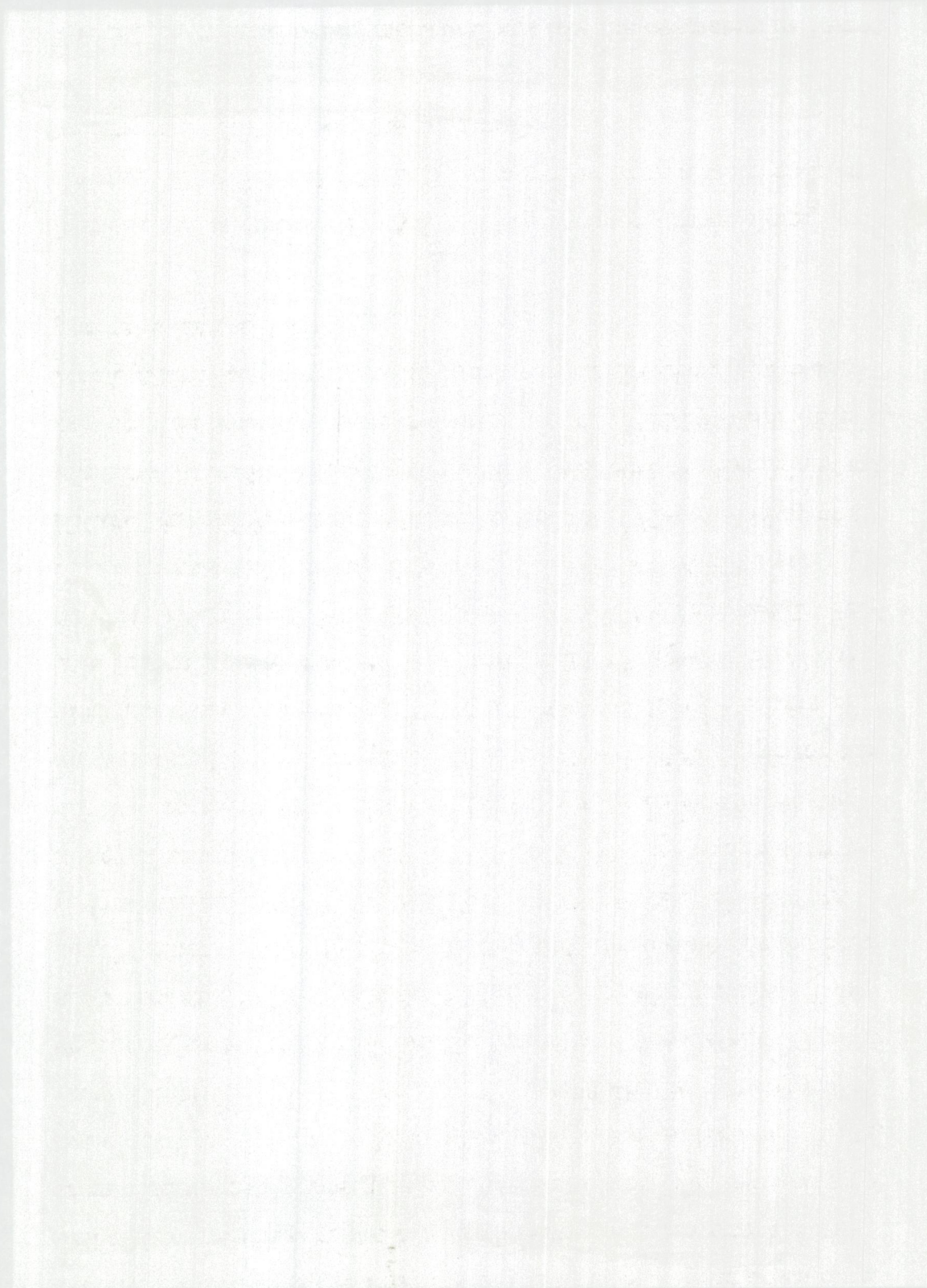
The setting of the image is totally American, just like the movies to which Mondino referred. It is uncertain as to the time, be it early morning or early evening. I would conclude that it is in fact early morning, due to the girl's clothing and heavy eye make-up.

Secondly, I will look at the image of a couple in Fig 12. Again, it is an onslaught of ambiguities. The powerful and sexy woman reappears. On the other hand, however, the power could be in the hands of the very androgynous male. It all lies in the question: is she taking the cigarette from him, or giving it to him? After much examination, I'm afraid I find this question utterly unanswerable. Perhaps there lies in their relationship a certain equality. I think that I have drawn this conclusion because I associate this image with "True Romance" where the two main characters, are basically on an equal par. The styling; hair, clothes and make-up, is also particularly reminiscent of "True Romance". The male's hands bloodsoaked, are around her waist, which is also blood-soaked, and one is quite unsure as to the source of the blood. The pair seem very calm and confident, however, so I therefore conclude that the blood is that of a third party. The image also bears a sexual nature; conveyed most blatantly in the open-top button of her pants. She seems unaware as to our presence. He, however, looks us right in the eye, and we feel that we are intruding, voyeurs caught in the act. His penetrating stare both moves us on and compels us to stop and stare back, yet another ambiguous element to this image. The setting again is absolutely American, utterly Hollywood, and again, one is unsure as to the time of day. It really does not matter.



Mike wears nylon jersey cowboy shirt from Opportunity Village thrift store, 921 South Main, Las Vegas; window pane pants from Goodwill Industries thrift, 342 San Fernando Rd, LA; Brighdie wears vintage bra by Marks & Spencer; pants from Cenci, 31 Monmouth St, London WC2.

Fig 12: Reality Bites - Image Two



Finally, I will look at the image in Fig 13 of a male lying down on a bed of flowers. Again, one can reach many conflicting conclusions from observing this photograph. The person here is utterly androgynous looking. One has to look twice to be sure as to his sex. In this way the image plays games with us, proposing different implications, depending on the sex, or indeed the sexuality of the viewer. One must not forget that the viewer is the subject of these photographs. It is not the other way around. The pose in this image emulates the crucifixion, particularly with the bloodied palms of hands. It is too, an image of submission, he seems to be holding his hands up in surrender as if someone were pointing a gun at him, as if, indeed, we, the viewer, were holding that gun. This lends a feeling of power for the viewer, as does the open shirt. Yet, again, one cannot be certain of this, for the look on his face is far from weak or submissive, on the contrary being more than a little provocative or even apathetic. Perhaps he wants to be killed. My thoughts turn to "Natural Born Killers", in which, due to media hype, two serial killers, Mickey and Malloray Knox, become celebrities, with a plethora of adoring and submissive fans, who beg, on their placards, to be killed by them. It is no accident that the flowers on which our subject lies are red, the ever-present colour of blood.

Is this a bed of roses he lies on? But these are not roses, simply red flowers. Here, Jean Luc Godard's comment on screen violence must be remembered; "It's not blood, it's red".

The people in these photographs are, just like the characters in Tarantino's films in particular, simply one-dimensional figures, characters in a fantasy. There is nothing real about them. Hence they seem hyper-real. This is the ultimate paradox of these images.



Fig 13: Reality Bites - Image Three



The Benetton advertising campaign is also a prime example of advertising, having lost interest in selling a new product, is now selling an image, this image provoking thoughts of the product, leading to sales.

Before 1984, Benetton advertising was fairly standard, limited to showing the product only, their market covering just Italy and France.

The “All the colours of the world campaign” however, in 1984, changed the face of Benetton advertising for good and led them to a more international audience, coming out in fourteen countries, the slogan being translated into many different languages. The theme developed in 1985, beginning their multi-racial advertising concept as the images featured a myriad of races, nationalities and flags. The year introduced the slogan “United colours of Benetton”, which is by now, ten years later, a household phrase, eventually becoming the trademark of the company. The 1986 campaign featured much use of the globe as a symbolic testament to their multi-racial concepts. These were further accented as, although the models were wearing Benetton clothing, it seemed that they were dressed in their national costume. The 1987 campaign was entitled “United fashions of Benetton”. Models were accessorised with objects reminiscent of some of the top names in the fashion world. “United Superstar” was the theme of the 1988 campaign, models’ outfits embodying images of famous names throughout history.

The real controversy began in 1989, when the campaign exploited the subject of racial equality. Images showed a black man and a white woman hand-cuffed together, or a black woman breast feeding a white baby. This photograph was the cause of outrage in America, critics claiming that it recalled the time of black slavery. Benetton withdrew the campaign, saying that the image was only of a symbolic nature, intended to promote equality, not cause tension. Eventually it became the most awarded photograph in Benetton's advertising history.

The 1990 campaign saw the continuation of the theme of inter-racial equality, the images becoming more and more symbolic. 1991 held this theme, but also introduced other world-wide issues; AIDS, drugs, pollution, religion, war. This was the year of the infamous Gulf War, and a few days after it started newly released Benetton advertisements featured an image of a war cemetery, with rows and rows of symmetrically aligned white crosses. It was refused in Italy, France, the United Kingdom and Germany. 1991 was also the year of one of Benetton's most controversial, criticised and celebrated images; the Benetton baby. Puffin Moynihan, of Profile Plus, Benetton's P.R. company here in Dublin, told me that this image created an almost unheard of phenomena, where people rang up Benetton, not to complain about the advertisement, but rather, to praise it.

The image features a new born baby in the rubber gloved hands of what is assumed to be a mid-wife, the umbilical cord is still attached to baby and mother. It was met with much criticism, disapproval, acclaim and discussion. The controversy continued in 1992 as the image of a man dying with aids was used by Benetton to advertise clothing. By now the aids theme constantly crops up in Benetton's advertising campaigns.

1992 also saw a series of seven newsreel photographs appear as Benetton advertisements. These were images of real occurrences, taken by photo reporters around the world, of which Fig 14 is one. It shows a dead body, which appears to be dressed in black, covered in a white sheet, a stream of blood ends in a big puddle in the foreground. We can conclude that the dead body is that of a man, due to the black umbrella and black hat on the ground, and what we can see of the clothing. A woman (wife or daughter) kneels by his side (clutching a hanky) appearing stunned and yet resigned. A younger woman stands leaning against the wall; she too seems stunned, but in a more apathetic way. Their black clothing implies that death is a daily occurrence in their world, and thus, this one comes as no surprise to them. It seems that apathy or a numb despair is the harsh reality of living in the shadow of death.

The only hint that this is a Benetton advertisement is the placement of their logo on the left-hand side of the image. One wonders what all this had to do with colourful clothes;

“Benetton believes that it is important for companies to take a stance in the real world instead of using their advertising budget to perpetuate the myth that they can make consumers happy through the mere purchase of their product”. 4

Many have questioned the right of Benetton to take this stance. Certainly it is a perpetual bone of moral contention. There is no doubt that Benetton exploit world issues to advertise their clothing. No one can argue, however, that it is an extremely clever campaign. The advertisements are constantly under discussion in all walks of life. People almost stand back in nervous anticipation, posing the question; “What will they come up with next?”.



Fig 14: Newsreel Photo - Benetton Advertisement



The family of the deceased Marinko Gagro, i.e. "The Known Soldier", certainly feel that Benetton have a moral position in society;

"I, Gojko Gagro, father of the deceased Marinko Gagro, born in 1963, at Blizanci in the province of Citluk, would like that my son's name, and all that remains of him be used in the name of peace and war". 5

Marinko Gagro was killed in battle at Hum near Mostak in Bosnia Herzegovina in July, 1993. His parents mourning him with the "dignity of those who do not wish to forget" 6 sent his bloodied uniform to Benetton, so that it could be emblazoned on billboards around the world, forcing people to face up to issues of war and peace. The image appeared in early 1994 (Fig 15). It simply featured Gagro's camouflage trousers and bloodied t-shirt with a bullet hole. The t-shirt, which was once white, is now almost entirely red with blood. The trousers too, were soiled with bloodstains. The two garments were laid out so as to emulate a dead body sprawled on the stark white background, and we are left in no doubt as to the provocative purpose of the photograph. Like the newsreel images, the only indication that it is in fact a Benetton advertisement is the placement of the familiar logo in the lower left-hand corner.

Benetton were also involved in the creation of a new magazine. Entitled "Colors", it is a periodical about the rest of the world, thus violence is an issue which crops up constantly. The magazine is now an independent entity, yet still in keeping with the principles of Benetton communication, it claims to tell the story of reality. Each issue covers different themes; aids, the street, food, shopping ... and looks at the different traditions and cultures all over the world. The 'shopping' issue, of December '94 - Feb '95, featured a cover portraying a designer handgun made with gold and diamonds (Fig 16). In my opinion it echoes the ultra-violent mood of the movement, reminiscent of the trashy glamour at the height of the contemporary fashion and film.



Fig 15: The Known Soldier



a magazine about the rest of the world un magazine qui parle du reste du monde

COLORS⁹



Shopping

Defend yourself in style with a designer handgun from Bijan of Beverly Hills. Fashioned from 18-carat gold and studded with diamonds, this .22-caliber revolver is for people with a lot to protect.

US **\$98,000**

Défends toi en style avec un revolver à main griffe signé Bijan de Beverly Hills. Façonné dans de l'or 18 carats et serti de diamants, ce revolver calibre .22 est pour les personnes qui ont beaucoup à protéger.

Dec94-Feb95



Arg 3 pesos | Aus 4AS | BRD DM6.50 | Can 4CS | Esp 400Plas | Fr 15FF | Hellas 750DR | HK HK\$25 | India Rs.100 | Ire IRE2 | Ital L5.000 | Mac 250FT | Mex 95 | Nederl 5,5FL | Port 520S00 | SA9R | UK £2 | USA \$3.00

Fig 16: cover of Colours Magazine, Dec '94 - Feb '95



FOOTNOTES - Chapter Three

1. Georgina Howell - "Sultans of Style", pg X.
2. Jean Baptiste Mondino - "Reality Bites", The Face, June 1994.
pg 68.
3. Jean Luc Godard - "The Glamourisation of Violence", by Luc Sante,
Vogue (US) September 1994, pg 618.
4. Marina Gallanti - Benetton Communications Department.
5. Gojko Gagro - Profile Plus Files.
6. Profile Plus Files.

CONCLUSION

“Fashion is the mirror of industry”₁

It is this point which I have stressed more than any other throughout my discussion of violence in fashion; fashion reflects the mood of the times. Fashion reflects the mood of the times. Fashion reflects society. On a more personal level, fashion reflects the individual, their personality, taste, mood

“A fashion is no accident. It will always suit the situation, time and place. Fashion is really a matter of evolution. It has a natural life, unlike a fad, which is a stillbirth”. 2

Violence in fashion appears in many guises; tortuous beauty ideals, youth subcultures, high fashion, advertising, photography, behaviour, music

A myriad of theories propose explanations for the fashion process and indeed, attempt to convey why fashion exists at all, a selection of which I conveyed to you in Chapter One.

In the prosperous early sixties, one of the main styles in youth fashion was the mod style. Obsessive fanatics, mods reflected their new found economical affluence in the clothes they wore. Although mainly a working class group, they often had their clothes made by a personal tailor. Previously among working class groups this was an almost unheard of phenomena. This type of conspicuous expenditure on style was historically an area for the rich and aristocratic. Thus we can conclude that it was around the time of the mods that the conspicuous consumption role in fashion fell from the hands of the rich elite into the hands of the working class. This was a reflection of the economical mood of the times. It is probably because youth cultures were a new phenomena, that conspicuous consumption could be taken on board by the working class for the first time. We can also conclude that it has at this point the notion of conspicuous counter consumption fell into place, being taken on board by the wealthy in reaction to the

mods dressing up. They wished to differentiate themselves from the 'lower classes' of course, and announced their wealth in a new found conservativeness. This switching of roles is constantly underway as social groups react to each other and the society around them. It is, in a general sense, a version of the Trickle Down Theory.

While the mods attempted to emulate the rich elite in their style, skinheads reacted to this and went in the opposite direction, rediscovering working class values. They were thoroughly puritanical and working class in their ideals and aesthetics. They held the mods obsessive fanaticism about style but applied it to their own aggressively proletarian look. The dwindling economy of the late sixties further fuelled their aggression and anger. The language of skinhead clothing was harsh and aggressive. In Chinese terms, 'yang' would be applied to summarise their look; strength, forcefulness and dignity, and their cultural ideals, which took a new pride in being working class. The fact that one of the staple items of the original skinhead wardrobe, big 'bovver' steel toe-capped boots, were eventually classified as offensive weapons, underlines the violence associated with this group. Indeed, the strict puritanism of their style and ideals, make the skinhead culture of the sixties a prime example of violent aspects in fashion.

Punks, too, came about at a time of economic uncertainty. Rather than use this as a vehicle to return to a pride in being working class, however, the prevailing mood of the late seventies was utter hopelessness, which led to an angry and raging frustration in this new Youth Culture. By this time, youth culture had been through many looks; teds, rockers, mods, skinheads, glam, and punk plundered a myriad of these to create a confused mish-mash of styles. The language of punk clothing was wholly confrontational. This was a youth group with nothing to do. This led to a prevailing mood of hopelessness and frustration within the culture and in reaction to this they embraced a

new aesthetic of the ugly, which demanded a reaction; rips and tears in clothing, razor blades, safety pins, blood stains. The general framework for a fashion theory could apply to punk for eventually it was taken on in high fashion, a move which was met with disdain by the original perpetrators of the image. This trickle from youth culture to high fashion is a daily occurrence at this point, always met with an unfavourable reaction by the originators. This could be one reason why new cultures are constantly erupting.

The mood of the nineties so far has been very much like that of the punk era. It is no accident that a relatively new youth fashion, music and culture magazine, now in its tenth issue, is called "Dazed and Confused". There is a certain hopelessness and confusion in the air, reflected in fashion phenomena like grunge and the punk revival. This is causing a new anger and rage which I feel are major contributing factors to the vogue in violence. Technological over stimulation is and other possible cause of this hunger for the raw and the unfiltered, hence the lucid bloodliness and graphic violence of many recent film ventures. It has now reached a point where the violence portrayed is so graphic it has become unreal and instead reached fantasy status.

This surreal mood is evident in Jean Batist Mondino's 'Reality Bites' images (Chapter Three). They emulate the Hollywood mood of the moment, generally uneasy and confused. We, the viewers, are the subjects of these images, which confront us with a mass of ambiguous conclusions. Violence is used as a graphic visual prop and together with the androgyny of the models and conflicting sexual messages we are left quite baffled. The photographs are utterly fabricated and thus we expect them to be under our control as we observe them. Instead the models and images observe and confront us with a myriad of paradoxes and conflicting tales. They have not been subjected to us. We have been subjected to them.

Similarly, the Benetton advertising campaign (or communication campaign) has become more and more confrontational with time. The two advertising images which I chose for discussion, pushed the boundaries of morality further because they were images of reality; real objects, real people, real situations. Many question the right of Benetton to exploit human suffering to commercial ends, for this, one cannot dispute, is essentially what they are doing. No-one, however, seems to question so strongly, the morality of portraying lifestyles and objects in advertising which are unattainable and fantastical, in a sense, utterly unreal. One clichéd example is the portrayal of stick-thin models conveying an unachievable, in most cases, beauty ideal. Advertising constantly lies to us, telling us the product will make us better looking, richer, happier It is a sad fact of life that many people are taken in and deceived by this powerful advertising mechanism. Sex is one subject which many resort to for as we all know, sex sells!! When Benetton concern themselves with sex in their advertisements, however, it is in relation to broad social issues such as aids and aids prevention. In my opinion, at least Benetton, while promoting their fashions, provoke and confront us with wide ranging social issues, forcing a certain awareness on society where other advertising simply fabricates. It is this fabrication which is an instigator of much sociological rage;

“As long as there continues to be a major disparity between life as promised by the media and advertising and actual daily experience, there will be constant eruptions of rage”.³

As I have said repeatedly, fashion is not a lone entity, but a reflection of psychological, sociological and historical phenomena. There is more to fashion than simply clothing. Fashions proceed in advertising, behaviour, music, photography, film Throughout my discussion I have touched on all these aspects for clothing fashion cannot be isolated. It is part of a much bigger picture and very often is the visual reflection of aspects of society.

FOOTNOTES - Conclusion

1. Michael and Ariane Batterberry. "Fashion, the Mirror of History", pg 8.
2. Stella Blum. "Fashion, the Mirror of History" by Michael and Ariane Batterberry, pg 14.
3. Luc Sante. "The Glamourisation of Violence". Vogue (US), September 1994, pp 618.

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