REFASHIONING THE ROMANTICS

Contemporary Japanese Culture –Aspects of Dress

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A thesis submitted in fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Faculty of Design, Architecture and Built Environment
University of Technology, Sydney
2011

CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORSHIP/ORIGINALITY

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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Acknowledgements

It is such a delight to thank the people who have inspired me and made this dissertation possible.

Foremost, I am deeply grateful to my excellent supervisors Peter McNeil and Meredith Jones. Peter's expansive knowledge and insights have been very inspirational, opening many doors to the realms of dress and design history, which were previously unknown to me. I would like to thank him for the continued guidance and care he has shown, and for giving me many opportunities to explore the wonderland of academics. Meredith's comprehensive knowledge of cultural studies and gender studies, in turn, has made this thesis much richer in its contents and theoretical perspectives. I am especially grateful for her continued support, enthusiasm, and encouragement since the beginning, and for taking the painful task of editing. My gratitude also goes to Tony Mitchell in the early stages of my PhD.

It is important to acknowledge both the Australia Postgraduate Award Scheme and the Faculty of Design, Architecture and Built Environment (DAB) for offering me funding and facilities that were quite vital to the completion of this thesis. I would like to thank Ann Hobson for her great effort to make the lives of research students of DAB, including mine, smooth, organized, and above all, enjoyable. I also must thank the staff of the Faculty. I greatly enjoyed a cheerful, everyday conversation I had with them, which often helped to refresh my fatigued mind.

I am indebted to my fellow research students in both the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS) and DAB for sharing this incredible journey and making it such a convivial experience. There are far too many to name all of you here, but I owe a special debt of gratitude to Alejandra Mery Keitel, Deborah Szapiro, Su-yin Hor, Kate Bower, Kelly Chan, Meher Nigar, Amy Wahlen, and Natalya Godbold. With many cups of coffee, glasses of wine, food, sweets, fun and a bit of academic discussion we shared, I am proud to say that doing a PhD is not a lonely experience at all.

I wish to thank Craig Norris for first introducing me to the world of PhD, Dominik Mohila for rekindling my interests in Japanese popular culture, Ronnie Zuessman for introducing me to the theory of gender and psychoanalysis, and Laura Miller for sharing her insights into Japanese culture, especially Japanese girl culture and *kawaii* aesthetics. It is also my pleasure to acknowledge the support, generosity, and advice of many individuals, which have, whether

directly or indirectly, ensured the completion of this dissertation. I would like to give special mention to Patricia Mears, Alisa Freedman, Sharon Kinsella, Rachael Hutchinson, Fuyubi Nakamura, and Olivier Krischer for their valuable suggestions, encouragements, and feedbacks. I would also like to thank Valerie Steele and Toby Slade for offering me memorable opportunities to present portions of this dissertation in New York and Honolulu, and my friends in Japan to whom the foundation of my knowledge and experience in Japanese fashion culture is largely indebted.

Lastly, I wish to thank my family for always believing in and inspiring me. My new journey has just begun, and I am very excited about what the future holds for me.

Contents

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Abstract

Clothing is often perceived as a device to create, define and demarcate the gender binary. Accordingly, there are sets of preconceptions regarding ways in which men and women are assumed to engage with fashion. The research presented here reviews three of these ideas, some of which have been challenged by scholars but which are, still persistently, present in popular culture. Such preconceptions assume that men prioritize functionality over aesthetics and are the bearers, not the objects of the gaze, while women's fashion is represented through multiple binaries of sexualisation and restriction, and female sartorial ornamentation is seen as symbolic of subservience. I investigate these presumptions via three contemporary Japanese cultural texts –(a) Japanese young men's fashion magazines, (b) Japanese female performers' appropriations of Lewis Carroll's "Alice" in their music videos, and (c) *Lolita* fashion and Tetsuya Nakashima's film *Kamikaze Girls* (2004), respectively.

My study of these three selected texts explores the following possibilities that: (a) through negotiating the male reader's desire to attract admirers and narcissistic impulse, young men's fashion magazines endorse an idea that "crafting" the pleasant "look" is a part of quintessence of self-assurance and the idea of a good, successful life; that (b) kinds of Japanese cute (*kawaii*) and girlish aesthetics demonstrated by the Japanese singers allow them to accentuate their "cute" femininity without a hint of sexualisation, and; that (c) one of the heroines in *Kamikaze Girls* engages in both conventionally "masculine" and "feminine" activities while almost always dressed in the highly elaborate, girlish *Lolita* fashion. My examinations of these texts arguably renders the cultural and social-psychological conceptions of "gender performativity" and "androgyny" effective and credible.

The Japanese context is appropriate for this aim because this is where, particularly since 1868, European sartorial styles have been actively promoted, both politically and aesthetically. Consequently, Japan has become an ethnographically unique space where the subtle marriage of European dress style and Japanese aesthetics has taken place. Along with the theme of fashion and gender, this research attempts to unearth the meanings behind processes of Japanese adaptation, appropriation and restylisation of European sartorial and aesthetic concepts. Japanese appropriation and refashioning of European sartorial concepts, this research argues, offers a unique interpretive illustration of the aesthetics of fashion and transnationality.

Introduction

Kyoko Fukada dressed in
Baby, The Stars Shine Bright, 2004

Introduction

> Taking great care of appearance is the first step of every fashion.
>
> -Kazuo Hozumi, *IVY Illustrated*, 1980[1].

There is a certain enigmatic air surrounding the images of Japanese fashion culture conceptualised by those "outside". On one façade it is a culture ruled by regimental uniformity and patriarchal values, perhaps best exemplified by the figure of the "salaryman" where freedom of individual expression is a luxury.[2] On the other façade, however, there is a recurrent flowering of youth adorned in vivid, flamboyant fashion styles, showcasing their creativity and individuality in such fashion magazines as *FRUiTS*. The kaleidoscope of these enthralling images might mirror certain aspects of Japanese culture. But understanding the culture only through such extreme binaries signals a danger of creating and sustaining an imagined "distance". They are so different that they seem to be of no relevance to non-Asian culture. Is a fleeting trace of Orientalist ideas, which predominantly appreciate the "exotic", the "authentic", and by implication, "different" qualities of foreign culture, still present? Or are these images and perceptions fruit of Japan's conscious construction of pure "Japaneseness" in order to differentiate the culture from any non-Japanese cultures?[3] Even as far back as 1891, Oscar Wilde wrote that '[t]he Japanese people, are the deliberate self-conscious creation of certain individual artists' and thus 'the whole of Japan is a pure invention'.[4] In either case, clothes play a crucial role in the construction of such images and the workings of visuality.

In our contemporary moment with its advanced media technologies, the increased presence of Japanese popular culture outside Japan is evident. There has also been published a number of excellent studies of Japanese fashion and beauty practices. Works such as Laura Miller's *Beauty Up: Exploring Contemporary Japanese Body Aesthetics* (2006), Toby Slade's *Japanese Fashion: A Cultural History* (2009) and Valerie Steele's *Japan Fashion Now* (2010) are scholarly indications of a growing desire for a more accurate picture of the intellectual history of the subject, while Tiffany Godoy's *Style Deficit Disorder: Harajuku Street Fashion* (2007) offers a vivid picture of what is happening in the streets of Japan's most dazzling fashion district. Despite this notability, however, only a selected portion of the cultural and art objects of everyday Japan have received comprehensive scholarly

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[1] K. Hozumi, *IVY Illustrated*. Tokyo: Aiiku-sha. 2003 [1980], p.132. Quote translated by Masafumi Monden.

[2] P. Hammond, 'The Mystification of Culture: Western Perception of Japan' *Gazette*, Volume 61, Issue 3-4, 1999, p. 312.

[3] K. Iwabuchi, 'Complicit Exoticism: Japan and Its Other' *Continuum*, Vol. 8, No 2, 1994.

[4] O. Wilde, 'The Decay of Lying: An Observation' in *Oscar Wilde Plays, Prose Writings and Poems*. London: David Campbell Publishers. 1991 [1891], p. 94.

attention in the English-speaking world.[5] How clothes are represented in contemporary Japanese culture, such as films, magazines and music video-clips are, for example, yet to be studied in great detail. This "absence" has contributed to the further flow of the clichéd images of the culture mentioned above.

With the intention of ameliorating this situation, what I demonstrate through this dissertation is that individuals in Japan engage with fashion in culturally significant ways. These ways might be different from how individuals are assumed to engage with clothes in European and American mainstream cultures. I investigate three contemporary Japanese popular cultural texts and how they represent dress–Japanese young men's fashion magazines, a group of Japanese female performers' appropriations of Lewis Carroll's "Alice" in their music videos, and *Lolita* fashion and Tetsuya Nakashima's film *Kamikaze Girls*. These three texts are selected primarily on the grounds of their relatively "mainstream" stature in contemporary Japanese culture with a slight "twist" or unconventional characteristic. The "mainstream" stature of these texts indicates their potential to reach out to and be consumed by a great number of individuals in the culture. Certain qualities they manifest, on the other hand, impose a subtle, almost "delicate" kind of revolt against a set of *idées fixes* surrounding the relationship between clothes and gender. As sociologist Diana Crane has argued, mainstream texts, which are generally directed toward large and heterogeneous audiences, tend to be stereotypical, unlike the texts with smaller audiences. This is because 'more stereotyped products are communicated more readily to heterogeneous audiences with diverse backgrounds and outlooks'.[6] The subtle combination of mainstream and atypical characteristics of the selected texts for this research is thus significant.

What is important to be recognized here is that we should avoid falling into a simple orientalist idea that "they" are "different" and hence are of minor, if any, importance to non-Japanese culture. This is because, as global anthropologist Jan Nederveen Pieterse has convincingly argued, an anthropological definition of culture narrates that there are no territorial limitations of culture. It is both sharable and learnable. According to him:

> Culture refers to behaviour and beliefs that are learned and shared: learned so it is not "instinctual" and shared so it is not individual. Sharing refers to social sharing but there is no limitation as to the boundaries of this sociality. No territorial or historical boundaries are implied as part of the definition. This understanding of culture is open-ended. Leaning is always ongoing as a function

[5] A. Phillips and J. Stringer 'Introduction' in A. Phillips and J. Stringer (eds) *Japanese Cinema: Texts & Contexts*, London and New York: Routledge. 2007, p. 14.

[6] D. Crane, *The Production of Culture: Media and the Urban Arts*. Newbury Park, London and New Delhi: SAGE Publications. 1992, p. 96,

> of changing circumstances and therefore culture is always *open*. To sharing there are no fixed boundaries other than those of common social experience, therefore there are no territorial limitations to culture. Accordingly culture refers as much to commonality as to diversity.[7]

Perhaps more cautiously than Nederveen Pieterse, dress historian Margaret Maynard argues that, to a certain extent, clothes are 'a form of informational exchange'.[8]. If clothes operate as a form of informational exchange, certain experiences and aesthetics of dress might be transmitted, shared, or understoond cross-culturally. Japanese fashion is a good example for looking at this hypothesis because this is where, particularly since 1868, European sartorial styles have been actively promoted, both politically and aesthetically.[9] Consequently, Japan has become an ethnographically unique space where the subtle marriage of European dress style and Japanese aesthetics has taken place.

The theory of "format" and "product" as articulated by sociologist Keiko Okamura, also reinforces the relevance of the study of Japanese fashion to other cultures. This theory allows a cultural form to be seen as a "format" when becoming transculturally accepted.[10] This standardised "format" becomes a carrier of a local culture, making its characteristics, visible and comparable with those of other cultures. This theory, when applied to the study of Japanese fashion, demarcates characteristics both culturally specific to and shared by Japanese and non-Japanese cultures such as European cultures. In other words, a critical examination of a range of cultural representations of fashion and gender identity in contemporary Japan can underscore how conceptions and representations of fashion and gender identities are circulated in many European cultures. As attested to by the quotation from Kazuo Hozumi's now classic *IVY Illustrated* (1980), which opens this research, there is a certain degree of universality ascribed to fashion and clothes. Thus, how clothes are worn, represented and understood in the Japanese cultural context is important for understanding non-Japanese cultures and vice versa.

One of the prominent aspects of dress as an object of study is its ability to amalgamate with other research matters. It could be used in order to calibrate the ways in which our conceptions of gender manifest, or to interpret the psychological state of a character in literature. The significance of academically examining fashion is enhanced by 'the cultural stereotype that suggests that fashion has always been more closely connected

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[7] J. Nederveen Pieterse, *Globalization and Culture: Global Mélange*. Maryland: Roman & Littlefield Publishers. 2004, p. 46.

[8] M. Maynard, *Dress and Globalization*. Manchester: Manchester University Press. 2004, p. 3.

[9] T. Slade, "Clothing Modern Japan". PhD Thesis, University of Sydney. 2006 (hereafter, Slade, *Clothing*); K. Hirano, 'The Westernization of Clothes and the State in Meiji Japan' in K. Hirano (ed) *The State and Cultural Transformation: Perspectives from East Asia*. Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 1993.

[10] K. Okamura, *Gurohbaru shakai no ibunka-ron (Cross-cultural Theory in Global Societies)*. Kyoto: Sekaishiso-sha. 2003, pp. 137-149

with the domain of women'.[11] This cultural stereotype then renders fashion to be 'almost automatically judged as less important, less worthy, less "great" than more "masculine" kinds of art'.[12] However, dress is, as feminist scholar Elizabeth Wilson beautifully puts it, 'the cultural metaphor for the body, it is the material with which we "write" or "draw" a representation of the body into our cultural context'.[13] Indeed, representations of gender within the three cultural arenas this dissertation analyses largely manifest through, and are intertwined with, clothes. The discourses of dress in the case studies selected for this research are, then, a vehicle for understanding constructions of gender, identity, and the Japanese cultural milieu.

Layers of Japanese Aesthetic History

Dress is a useful instrument in order to calibrate Japanese cultural and aesthetic history. For example, in the Heian court (794-1185), '[t]he art of combining colours was particularly important in men's and women's dress' and '[a] woman's skill in choosing clothes, and particularly in matching colours, was regarded as a far better guide to her character and charm than the physical features with which she happened to have been born'.[14] The colour combination of layers called "cherry blossom", for instance, were created by wearing a white kimono over a red kimono, the layers of "rose plum" consisted of a pink kimono over a lavender or crimson one, and the layers of "lavender" had a light green kimono beneath a pale lavender kimono.[15] This cult of beauty is well narrated in Lady Murasaki's *The Tale of Genji* (the 11th century), often noted as one of the oldest romance novels in the history of literature. In one scene, Prince Genji becomes the centre of attention when he attends a flower festival with his immaculate sense of fashion:

> He went to his apartments and dressed. It was very late indeed when at last he made his appearance at the party. He was dressed in a cloak of thin Chinese fabric, white outside but lined with yellow. His robe was of a deep wine-red colour with a very long train. The dignity and grace with which he carried this fancifully regal attire in a company where all were dressed in plain official robes were indeed remarkable, and in the end his presence perhaps contributed more

[11] P. McNeil, 'Introduction: Late Medieval to Renaissance Fashion' in P. McNeil (eds), *Fashion: Critical and Primary Sources*. Volume 1, Berg Publishers, Oxford and New York. 2009, p. 2009:xxxiii.

[12] E. Wilson, 'Fashion and Postmodern Body' in J. Ash and E. Wilson (eds) *Chic Thrills: A Fashion Reader*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press. 1992, p. 5. (Hereafter, Wilson, *Postmodern*)

[13] *Ibid*., p. 6.

[14] I. Morris, *The World of the Shining Prince: Court Life in ancient Japan*. NY, Tokyo, London: Kodansha International. 1994 [1964], p. 194, p. 204.

[15] S. Nagasaki, *Kasane no irome (The Combination of Colors in Layers: The Aesthetics of Color in the Heian Period)*. Kyoto: Seigensha. 2001 [1987].

to the success of the party than did the fragrance of the Minister's boasted flowers.[16]

Fusae Kawazoe, the scholar of Japanese literature and expert on *The Tale of Genji* writes that it would have been as mesmerizing as a beautiful young man making his attendance to a social event wearing a pale pink dinner jacket while the other men were dressed in sober black.[17]

In more recent times, the sixteen year-old Tamaki Miura became famous at the beginning of the twentieth century when she started commuting to The Tokyo Conservatorium of Music with a European-made bicycle. With her long sleeved arrow-feathered patterned kimono, maroon-coloured *hakama* and her long hair swept back and tied with a big ribbon, she was dressed in a typical, privileged schoolgirl style (figure 1).[18]

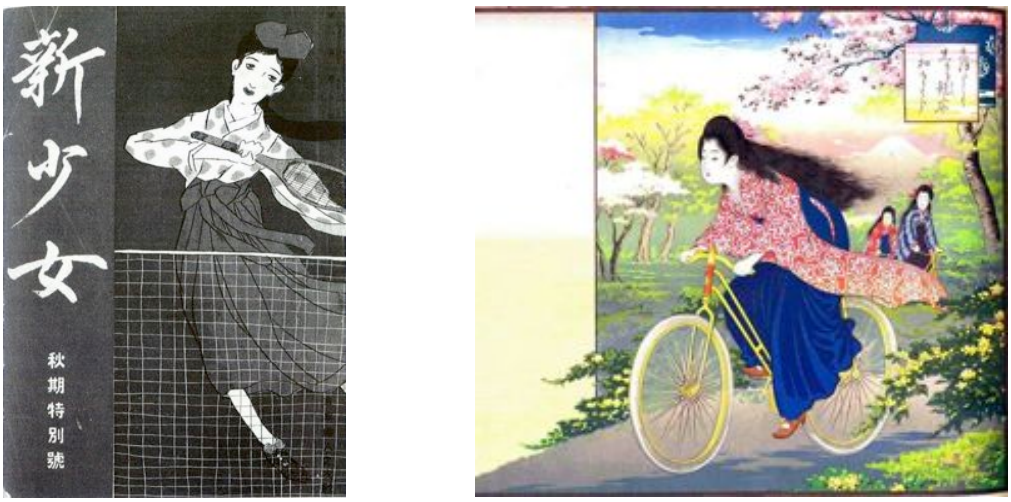

Figure 1 Schoolgirl playing tennis by Yumeji Takehisa (1915, left), and schoolgirls riding a bicycle (1903, right)

Most of the schoolgirls of the beginning of the last century were wealthy daughters of elite families. As Japanese studies scholar Melanie Czarnecki has noted, these "social princesses" were the symbols of both "ethereally sweet and innocent" girlhood as well as of "moral degeneracy". The latter conception was largely predicated on their progressive and liberated behaviours,[19] which gave them the name *haikara-san*, Miss High-Collar.[20] Her

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[16] Lady Murasaki, *Genji Monogatari (The Tale of Genji)* Translated by A. Waley, volume 1, London: George Allen & Unwin LTD. 1973 [1935], p. 152.

[17] F. Kawazoe, *Hikaru genji ga aishita ouchou brand hin (The dynastic brand artifacts Prince Genji loved)*, Tokyo: Kadokawa Gakugei Shuppan. 2008, p. 157.

[18] A *hakama* is a long pleated divided skirt worn over the kimono. This description is largely based on Tengai Kosugi's novel *Makaze Koikaze* (1903) as cited in Melanie Czarnecki's "Bad Girls from Good Families". Tamaki Miura (1884-1946), who later became the first Japanese opera singer to achieve fame in Europe, was often accredited for being one of the first schoolgirls in Japan to commute to school by a bicycle, adorned in the style very similar to the schoolgirl Kosugi delineated. She was also speculated as the model of Kosugi's heroine.

[19] M. Czarnecki, 'Bad Girls from Good Families: The Degenerate Meiji Schoolgirl' in L. Miller and J. Bardsley, (eds) *Bad Girls of Japan*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 2005.

[20] The term "high collar" (*haikara*) originally referred to a man's European shirt and the men who wore it at the turn of the twentieth century. It became a jargon for describing individuals who were "westernized" or

deployment of *onna-bakama* (female *hakama*) moreover gave Miura a sense of mobility adequate for her to ride a bicycle without compromising her modesty.[21]

In the Meiji (1868-1912) and Taisho (1912-1926) periods, it is argued that adoption, appropriation and restyling of European-style clothes "remade" the Japanese people.[22] This imposes a series of questions: can clothing "perform" a particular role in contemporary Japan? Does it represent "identity", as art philosopher Llewellyn Negrin proposes: 'the way one adorns oneself should reflect one's values and beliefs'?[23] Historians like Ken'ichiro Hirano and Toby Slade have suggested that Japanese women and men in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries adopted European-style clothes at different rates. Does this suggest, then, that Japanese women and men have profoundly different relationships to fashion? My research implies something more subtle than simple, yes-no answers to these questions.

Gendered Dress

Fashion defines and redefines the boundaries between two gender categories, "masculinity" and "femininity".[24] This conception is further developed by scholar of Japanese and cultural studies Vera Mackie. She points out that:

> Clothing may…be seen as the boundary between body, self and society. Fashion is symptomatic of gender relations, too, for clothing is one of the major means of communicating one's relationship to societal expectations of gender—whether this be to affirm such expectations, negotiate with them, or resist them.[25]

One of the most commonly held notions in relation to Japan is its approval of gendered inequalities and demand for a high degree of conformity. Indeed, anthropologist Jennifer Robertson in her study of *Takarazuka*,[26] mentions that Japanese women still live in 'a society where male privilege has been the rule'.[27] Many scholars have tacitly accepted this kind of view.[28]

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modern and chic. Today, the term is most often associated with the schoolgirls who were dressed in the style similar to the one described here.

[21] S. Uchida, Yayoi Museum, *Taishou/Shouwa Schoolgirl Book*, Tokyo: Kawade Shobō. 2005, p. 76.

[22] See, for example: Slade, *Clothing*; Hirano, *op.cit*.

[23] L. Negrin, *Appearance and identity: fashioning the body in postmodernity*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 2008, p. 30.

[24] E. Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams*. London: Virago. 1985, p. 117. (hereafter, Wilson, *Dreams*)

[25] V. Mackie, 'Transnational Bricolage: Gothic Lolita and the Political Economy of Fashion', *Intersections: Gender and Sexuality in Asia and the Pacific*, Issue 20, April 2009.

[26] *Takarazuka* is an all-women revue company founded in Japan in 1913.

[27] J. Robertson, 'Doing and Undoing "Female" and "male" roles in Japan: The Takarazuka Revue' in D. P. Martinez (ed) *Modern Japanese Culture and Society Vol. II*, London and New York: Routledge. 2007, p. 214.

[28] See, for example, K. Ito, 'Sexism in Japanese Weekly Comic Magazines for Men' in J. A. Lent (ed) *Asian Popular Culture*, Colorado: Westview Press. 1995, p. 133; H. Aoyagi, 'Pop Idols and Gender Contestation' in Edgington, D. W. (ed) *Japan at the Millennium: Joining past and future*, Vancouver: UBC Press. 2003, p. 162.

Thus an established idea that Japanese women are seemingly exploited and victimised by patriarchal male authority is recreated.

As far as young individuals are concerned, however, a different picture of the culture emerges. This idea is reinforced by a survey conducted by Japan Youth Research Institute in 2004, in which around 1000 high school students each from China, Japan, South Korea and the United States participated.[29] This survey indicated that only 28.4 per cent of Japanese participants (the lowest in the survey) answered either "strongly" or "somewhat" agree to the question of "do you think women should be feminine?" while 71.4 per cent of Chinese, 58 per cent of American, and 47.7 per cent of South Korean participants answered affirmatively (table 1, see the next page). On the question of "do you think men should be masculine?", Japan was the only group in which the majority of participants did not agree (43.4 per cent), significantly less than the Chinese (81.1 per cent), American (63.5 per cent), and South Korean participants (54.9 per cent).

Table 1 Survey of The Lifestyles and Consciousness of High School Students by the Japan Youth Research Institute (2004)

Women should be feminine

	Japan	USA	China	South Korea
Completely agree	5.8	17.3	34.0	16.5
Somewhat agree	22.6	40.7	37.4	31.2
Somewhat disagree	45.0	28.1	21.2	36.9
Completely disagree	26.5	6.4	5.8	15.0
No Response	0.1	7.5	1.4	0.6

Men should be masculine

	Japan	USA	China	South Korea
Completely agree	13.2	21.2	44.8	21.6
Somewhat agree	30.2	42.4	36.3	33.3
Somewhat disagree	35.0	24.6	13.1	31.1
Completely disagree	21.6	4.6	4.0	13.6
No Response	0.0	7.3	1.7	0.5

It is too early to draw a conclusion from one survey, and the aim here is not to read this survey result as reflecting general social attitudes. What "masculine" and "feminine" attributes connote could moreover be different across cultures. However, the results seem to suggest that Japanese young people may be unfettered by conventional gender expectations and restrictions, perhaps more significantly than they are assumed to be.

[29] Institute, J. Y. R. 'Koukousei no seikatsu to ishiki ni kansuru chousa (*Survey of the lifestyles and consciousness of high school students*)'. 2004. [http://www1.odn.ne.jp/youth-study/research.html].

Representations of gender in aspects of mainstream Japanese culture further endorse this perspective.

In her study of girls' comic book culture, Japanese literature and cultural studies scholar Susan J. Napier articulates a possibility that (girlish) femininity, asexuality and agency could be compatible. She suggests that 'all aspects of the female persona have a far wider play in Japanese popular culture than they do in the West'.[30] As for young men, linguistic anthropologist Laura Miller, in her observation of male beauty practice in contemporary Japanese culture, finds that they appear considerably "androgynous" and are sensitive towards the female gaze and evaluation of their appearance.[31] Although these may not automatically indicate the flourishing of gender egalitarianism in Japan, such interpretations of gender representations should contribute to our picture of the culture. If contemporary Japanese popular culture can offer "innovative" representations of gender as authors such as Napier and Miller have demonstrated, can they also offer new ways in which clothes and gender are represented?

Interlaced Flows of Culture

This research considers the Japanese adoption and restylisation of European historical dress forms, roughly fallen within the Romantic period. These are Edwardian dandy styles, Victorian "little girls' dresses" and the Rococo and Romantic dress aesthetics typical of the late eighteenth century. It needs to be acknowledged that there is another important way of looking at the adaptations of Japanese dress. For instance, these clothing forms may refer to Japanese cultural texts such as comic books (*manga*) and animation, which are already circulating within Japanese cultural discourse, rather than directly to specific period and clothing models of European history. Looking at the appropriation process of European clothing styles in Japanese cultural context, it is almost inevitable that the issue of cultural globalisation arises. Cultural globalisation is such a diverse and complex area of study that it needs dedicated research that I cannot offer here. Thus, my reference to it in this present research is rather contained.

When one culture becomes transculturally accepted and restyled, we tend to assume its inherent authoritativeness while deeming the appropriator's "local" cultures as inferior. Consequently, there is a danger of the emerging, hybrid cultural form being perceived as a substandard imitation of the "original". Referring to the recent trend of the popularity

[30] S. J. Napier, 'Vampires, Psychic Girls, Flying Women and sailor Scouts: Four faces of the young female in Japanese popular culture' in D. P. Martinez (ed) *The World of Japanese Popular Culture*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1998, pp. 104-5.

[31] L. Miller, *Beauty Up: Exploring contemporary Japanese body aesthetics*. Berkeley: University of California Press. 2006.

of Japanese popular cultures in Asia, Japanese studies scholar Leo Ching, for example, interprets it as a limited part of American domination. As he has noted:

> American mass culture is still the dominant and powerful cultural industry in the world today. Meanwhile, Japanese cultural influence is primarily constricted to Asia, and Japanese mass culture itself is still plugged into every trend of Western, especially American, pop culture.[32]

Where cultural globalisation is concerned, it is often European, and more recently American, cultures that are perceived as the "global" cultural force.

For some, this idea has been proven with some limitations attached. In his study of transnational interpretations of Hollywood cinema, emigration studies scholar Ulf Hedetoft argues that on one hand, 'American cultural hegemony is undoubtedly a telling case in point'.[33] On the other hand, however, cultural globalisation is not merely a simple relationship between assertive "sender" (in this case the United States) and passive "receivers" (local cultures). Instead, the sender itself has been culturally diversified and the receivers interact with, and reinterpret, American influences through their national cultural experiences. Thus, even though the global prevalence of American popular culture might be undeniable, its actual influence on both the lives and cultures of non-American audiences needs to be questioned. If we look at the process of cultural globalisation from a more extensive historical frame, European, let alone American, cultures themselves were importers of non-European cultures. Hence, many, if not all, cultures are described as cultural mélanges.[34]

When the presence of Japanese culture becomes known outside the Asian context, however, its "Japanese" qualities are often emphasised. This is particularly visible in the world of high fashion, as dress curator Patricia Mears points out. In her study of Japanese designers Rei Kawakubo and Yohji Yamamoto, Mears writes that when they address international audiences, Japanese designers tend to be perceived as sharing identical aesthetic visions, for 'modern Japanese fashion has often been viewed less as the result of individual designers' efforts than as a form of collective expression'.[35] This emphasis on the "Japaneseness" relates to the process of "othering". By articulating the complexity of cross-cultural influences present in high fashion scenes, fashion sociologist Lise Skov argues that:

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[32] L. Ching, 'Imaginings in the Empires of the Sun: Japanese Mass Culture in Asia' in J. W. Treat (ed), *Contemporary Japan and Popular Culture*, Richmond: Curzon Press. 1996, p. 171.

[33] U. Hedetoft, 'Contemporary Cinema: Between cultural globalisation and national interpretation' in M. Hjort and S. Mackenzie (eds) *Cinema and Nation*, London: Routledge, 2000, p. 280-1.

[34] Nederveen Pieterse, *op.cit.*, p. 114.

[35] P. Mears, 'Formalism and Revolution: Rei Kawakubo and Yohji Yamamoto' in V. Steele, *Japan Fashion Now*. New York: Yale University Press. p.142.

> What I criticize is the fact that the starting point for appreciating 'Japanese' design was always Japan's difference. Such a categorical isolation was all the more ambivalent because the styles and goods that entered Europe from Japan in the 1980s tended to have a stylistic and technological anonymity which allowed them to blend in easily on the consumer market. It is especially ironical that the 'Japanese fashion' has been interpreted with reference to simplistic ideas of Japanese culture, because of the way the style was worn, exactly as a marker of individualism. Hence, one of the meanings of 'Japan' in Western consumer culture seemed to be an 'otherness' inside people's minds, made visible through austere dress.[36]

This "othering" theory is closely associated with the field of postcolonial theory. Leela Gandhi, in her postcolonial studies, argues that "othering" of culture is important for the Orientalist theorists. According to her, those theorists often accuse formerly colonised countries of being too "modernised" and "Westernised". This is because these countries are, for them, no longer "otherable".[37] As such authors as sociologists David Morley and Kevin Robins (1995) and media and communication studies scholar Phil Hammond (1999) indicate, Japan is another culture that is frequently subjected to this "othering" process by Euro-American perspectives. This is because Japan has frequently been regarded as the first "non-Western" culture to have achieved a degree of "modernity". Modernity is generally believed to be only achievable by "the West", and 'if the Japanese are able to achieve modernity, then the distinction between "the West" and "non-West" will disappear'.[38] Therefore, Japan 'can no longer be handled simply as an imitator or mimic of western modernity'.[39] Needless to say, the "othering" process may also be initiated by "non-Western" cultures, too.[40] In any case, this "us" verses "them" logic is often constructed in order to serve a particular purpose, to define their identity and achieve a feeling of "superiority" over other cultures. As the works of Mears and Skov suggest, the difficulty of "non-Western" cultures to be understood and accepted globally without a sense of "otherness" is highlighted.

As theorists of social-cultural approaches have indicated, "global" and "local" cultures interact instead of one infiltrating the other.[41] Cultural globalisation is about cross-cultural interaction, appropriation, and hybridisation where transcultural forms

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[36] L. Skov. 'Fashion Trends, Japonisme and Postmodernism' in J. W. Treat (ed) *Contemporary Japan and Popular Culture*. London: Cuzon. 1996, p. 151.

[37] L. Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction*, Sydney: Allen & Unwin. 1998, pp. 126-27.

[38] D. Morley and K. Robins, *Space of Identity: Global Media, Electronic Landscapes and Cultural Boundaries*, London: Routledge. 1995, p.173.

[39] *Ibid*., p. 173.

[40] Iwabuchi, *op. cit.*

[41] See, for example, Nederveen Pieterse, *op. cit*.; A. Appadurai, 'Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy' in B. Robbins (ed), *The Phantom Public Sphere*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 1993.

circulate in multiple directions. This research builds upon and enhances that idea. When a transnational cultural form is appropriated and restyled, it might involve a creative process of engendering a clearly novel form. Rather than merely a substandard imitation of the "original", global culture, this restyled form can be both creative and refined. Japanese adoption of European dress forms, then, can be much more complex than an allusion to uniform, global culture. In order to effectively calibrate this idea, I refer to the theory of "format" and "product" at various stages in this research.[42]

According to Okamura, the important point to consider in this argument is that the "format", which becomes transnational, does not always originate from European and American cultures. This becomes a persuasive idea when one thinks about "Third World Music". Different music genres, which have originated from the non-West, 'may become world city music, and then world music' as a consequence of being played by local musicians around the world with their own arrangements and interpretations.[43] Thus, theoretically, a transnational culture can originate from any culture. These intellectual concerns will be addressed through examining the cultural uses of fashion within Japanese cultural texts, namely films, magazines, and music video clips.

Reflections and Distortions

What is the relationship between reality and representation? Since this research concerns analysis of representations of gender and clothes in cultural texts, it is logical to pose this question. The accuracy and effectiveness of cultural forms as a source for research might be debatable. As art historian Christopher Breward has noted:

> … until very recently, social and economic historians have retained a profound suspicion of fiction and artistic representation as a source, while dress historians have plundered the surfaces of novels and paintings too uncritically for depictions of historical appearances.[44]

Needless to say, neither fictional art objects such as films or fashion merely mirror the actual world that first gave birth to them. This is because they also reflect refashioned and predominantly distorted images, intertwined with (un)consciously constructed or manipulated ideas of the world. According to the scholar of English literature Elisabeth Bronfen:

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[42] Okamura, *op.cit.,* p. 143.

[43] U. Harnnerz, 'The cultural role of the world cities' in A. Cohen and K. Fukui (eds), *Humanizing the City?* Edinburgh: Edingurgh University Press. 1993, p. 138.

[44] C. Breward, *The Hidden Consumers: Masculinities, fashion and city life 1860-1914*. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press. 1999, p. 17.

> One cannot speak of an 'essential' self preceding the social and cultural construction of the self through the agency of representations. Cultural practices are defined as signifying systems, as sites for the production of representations which are not to be equated with beautiful things evoking beautiful feelings. The word *representation*, Griselda Pollock notes, 'stresses that images and texts are no mirrors of the world, merely reflecting their source. Representation stresses something refashioned, coded in rhetorical, textual or pictorial terms, quite distinct from its social existence'.[45]

Thus, representations do not merely mirror the actual world that first gave birth to them, they also reflect refashioned images, intertwined with consciously constructed or manipulated ideals of the world. This idea is clearly shared by language and cultural studies scholar Paul A. S. Harvey who states that mediated productions often provide a selective representation of a certain society. As he argues:

> Contemplating a society through the window of its artistic productions is an activity fraught with peril: there will always be distortion, for art is necessarily a selective representation of society and its multiple ideologies.[46]

This means that the representations of a society in media and cultural texts could possibly be selected and distorted, mirroring both reality and ideology of that certain society. This sentiment is also found in the scholarship of dress. For example, art historian and philosopher Ulrich Lehmann states that:

> …we cannot expect to ascertain historical facts merely from looking at clothes. This is not to say that no factual interpretation is possible; yet fashion will always remain too transient and ephemeral to simply explain historic causality—though its changes are very often anticipated. Obviously, a sartorial style at, for example, a certain point in the nineteenth century might be regarded as a reflection of contemporary society. But because of its transcendent autonomy it can never be seen as simply mirroring that society; instead, it projects forward.[47]

In this research, I concur with what sociologists Crane (1992) and Robert C. Bulman (2005) assert. Crane argues that what the media portray is not merely a reflection of real life in society or how people perceive it, but instead 'cultural producers in each medium shape content as a function of the ways in which they continually define and redefine their audiences'.[48] In other words, the intentions of the creators and producers to attract and capture the attention of their "target" audiences, which Crane argues are the fundamental force of media representations, are at least partially, reflective of a real life in

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[45] E. Bronfen, *Over Her Dead Body: Death, femininity and the aesthetic*. Manchester: Manchester University Press. 1992, p. 65.

[46] P. A. S. Harvey, 'Nonchan's Dream: NHK morning serialized television novels' in D. P. Martinez, *The World of Japanese Popular Culture, Shifting Boundaries and Global Cultures*, Cambridge and Melbourne: Cambridge University Press. 1998, p.133.

[47] U. Lehmann, *Tigersprung: Fashion in modernity*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press. 2000, p. 299.

[48] Crane, *op.cit.*, p. 106.

society where their audiences dwell. Acknowledging these intellectual concerns that are suspicious of the adequacy of cultural forms as a source for research, Bulman also suggests that it is nevertheless worthwhile to examine representations of society, and hence reality through cultural productions, in his case films. He suggests that although films do not present a whole reality, they '[b]oth reflect and shape culture'.[49] Films, he argues, have 'the cultural power to influence how members of a society make sense of social life…Films *teach* us who we are as much as they *reflect* who we are'.[50] In this sense, the compound of the constructed ideals, biases or distortions demonstrated in cinema themselves are part of the society or culture which first produced them. If this sentiment can be read as reflecting cultural texts in general, then I assert that studying clothes and gender identity through such texts is legitimate.

The significance of clothes in literary texts is moreover endorsed by the idea that clothes themselves are nearly always animated and understood by a body. In other words, fashion cannot be understood as an isolated product or cultural form. Art historian Ann Hollander beautifully articulates this point as follows:

> Dress has not only no social but also no significant aesthetic existence unless it is actually being worn…This is true not just if they are displayed unworn, but always, simply because they are not seen completing the unique and conscious selves of their owners.[51]

It might be extreme to argue that clothes have no significant aesthetic existence unless it is being worn. But since 'the clothes themselves are only complete when animated by a body', they are always animated and understood through other genres from literature to film, from music videos to museum going, from classical ballet to figure skating.[52] For that reason I would argue that it is worthwhile to observe dress through cultural texts rather than, for instance, to study it through the garments themselves. In so doing, I attempt to bring cultural and media studies sensibility to a design and fashion studies tradition and to bring the rich empirical data of cultural texts into the realm of fashion and design history.

Although my main interest is contemporary, by necessity my project must refer to earlier sources and connotations. Historical images influence new and contemporary fashion. History, then, is interlaced with the present, and this subtle intersection of past and present is where much of my research theme is focused. One of the limitations of this research is that it has focused on a very selected portion of contemporary Japanese

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[49] R. C. Bulman, *Hollywood Goes to High School: Cinema, Schools, and American Culture*, New York: Worth Publishing, 2005, p. 6.

[50] *Ibid.*, p. 6.

[51] A. Hollander, *Seeing Through Clothes*. New York: The Viking Press. 1978, p. 451.

[52] E. Wilson, 'Magic Fashion', *Fashion Theory*, Volume 8, issue 4, p. 376. (hereafter, Wilson, *Magic*)

popular culture. There are a variety of styles present in contemporary Japan, some of them might suggest opposite arguments to the ones this project deduces. Furthermore, since this research solely focuses on representations of clothes in Japanese popular culture, I do not aim to read the outcomes of the present research as reflecting general attitudes of the Japanese. Therefore, I do not profess that the ways in which Japanese individuals or styles are represented in the given cultural forms might be representatives of other individuals in the culture. It is nonetheless worthwhile to study how these particular groups of individuals and art forms have been represented within the given narrative texts. This is because they likely represent a particular part of the whole reality.

One might also wonder why I use theories predominantly developed in the canons of European and American intellectual tradition when my research subjects are first and foremost Japanese. It is part of my research aim to calibrate how these theories do and do not apply to the Japanese cultural context. Likewise, as mentioned previously, the anthropological definition of culture is both sharable and learnable across cultures. Nerderveen Pieterse even goes further by suggesting historical affinities between, for instance, Europe and Asia:

> In fact, historical revision may well show that there are much greater historical affinities, in particular similar feudal histories with their attendant consequences for the character of capitalism, between Europe and Asia than between Europe and North America.[53]

Apparently Wilde was right by (quite ironically) saying: '[t]he actual people who live in Japan are not unlike the general run of English people'.[54] My aim to study contemporary Japanese clothing culture by using the theories of European and American scholarship is thus justified. A brief guide to the journey of this research is as follows.

Tracing Chapters

In Chapter 1 "Preparing the Stage: Three Key Ideas" I review the important theories of gender and dress. Through this operation I attempt to demarcate theoretical frameworks for three of the prevalent ideas this research investigates and questions, namely: that a certain sense of ambivalence is attached to men's fashionability, and men are the bearers, not the objects of the gaze; women's appearances are regulated through multiple binaries of assertiveness and fragility, and; "feminine" fashion, particularly ornate ones, symbolise

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[53] Nederveen Pieterse, *op.cit.*, p. 48.

[54] Wilde, *op.cit.*, p. 94.

Notes to Chapter 1

[1] J. Austen, *Northanger Abbey*. London: Penguin Books. 1996 [1818], p. 22.

[2] E. Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams*. London: Virago. 1985, p. 117. (hereafter, Wilson, *Dreams*)

the subordination of women. My aim is to offer a firm set of alternatives to these preconceptions.

Chapter 2, "The Magic Virtue of A Glance" focuses on a group of contemporary fashion magazines targeted at young men in Japan. It offers a content analysis of three magazines, with particular attention to their prioritisation of fashion over lifestyle contents and the specific age demographic of the readership. This chapter seeks to establish the idea that these magazines' emphasis on the necessity of taking care of one's appearance endorses, for the male readership, the importance of being subjected to the gaze.

Chapter 3, "Boys' Elegance" examines the men's fashion publications further with particular attention paid to the magazines' deployment of non-Asian models, alongside Japanese and Eurasian models. By using the theory of "format" and "product", this chapter focuses on the transcultural difference in the manners of conceiving modes of preferred male aesthetics, which these models highlight. With a short case study of the boyish reinvention of the "Neo-Edwardian" dandy style in Japan, the chapter also seeks to establish the idea that stylishly elegant, youthful and sophisticated styles serve as an alternative to the established, "hegemonic" mode of Japanese masculinity. The high degree of fashionability showcased by the Japanese young men who both feature in and consume these magazines suggest that they are considerably unaffected by conventional notions of gender.

Chapter 4, "Glacé Wonderland" explores a group of music-video clips in which female Japanese pop-singers adapt and appropriate the imagery of Lewis Carroll's famous heroine "Alice". The emphasis in these videos is on the singers' girlish and cute, almost infantile appearance, mostly constructed through their repertoires of clothing. I argue that these performers offer an innovative representation of youthful femininity in terms of a negotiation between "infantile" cuteness (*kawaii*) and forceful independence. Paying particular attention to Laura Miller's analysis of *burikko* (feigned innocence), this chapter also shows that these Japanese performers enact this innovation through an implicit parody of the sweet and innocent mode of girlish femininity once ascribed to Japanese female pop idols. Further, I explore how the "cute" fashion displayed in these music videos possibly serves as an alternative to the established multiple binaries of sexualisation, assertiveness and subservience in which young women tend to be represented, particularly in (but not exclusive to) Euro-American cultural contexts.

Chapter 5, "Glittering with Lace and Ribbons" deals with Tetsuya Nakashima's film adaptation of Novala Takemoto's novel *Kamikaze Girls* (2004) and its representation of Japanese *Lolita* style, a lavishly flounced and self-conscious girlish fashion with references

to European Rococo and Romantic traditions. This chapter argues that *Kamikaze Girls*, via its predominantly positive representation of *Lolita* fashion, offers an alternative to the somewhat monolithic idea that amalgamates decorative girlish fashion and unfavourable passivity. This in turn reinforces one facet of the theory of gender performativity, that a young woman can "perform" both "masculine" and "feminine" acts alternately, while being clad in the same dress adorned with flounces and ribbons. Indeed, this "androgynous" representation renders the very idea of performative gender effectively and credibly.

Finally, Chapter 6 concludes and rounds up the main arguments. Through a short study of the "Ivy style", I try to unite the two principle arguments made in this research: that transnational appropriation of culture reflects local characteristics and the presence of reverse flows of culture, and fashion acts on both men and women equally. It re-emphasises the importance of recognising the fluid nature of fashion, as well as its ability to affect individuals regardless of their gender and nationality.

Two different fashion coordinates: a conservative "Prince Boy" style (left) and a lightly sexy "Bad Boy (*waru-men*)" style (right), which presumably appeal to young women differently. *FINEBOYS*, April 2010

Chapter 1: Preparing the Stage: Three Key Ideas

> 'Do you understand muslins, sir?'
>
> 'Particularly well; I always buy my own cravats, and am allowed to be an excellent judge; and my sister has often trusted me in the choice of a gown. I bought one for her the other day, and it was pronounced to be a prodigious bargain by every lady who saw it. I gave but five shillings a yard for it, and a true Indian muslin.'
>
> Mrs Allen was quite struck by his genius. 'Men commonly take so little notice of those things,' said she: 'I can never get Mr Allen to know one of my gowns from another. You must be a great comfort to your sister, sir.'
>
> 'I hope I am, madam.'
>
> 'How can you,' said Catherine, laughing, 'be so—' she had almost said, strange.
>
> ---Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey*, 1818.[1]

Written nearly two centuries ago, Jane Austen's delightful parody of gothic novels implies two important strands of the debates surrounding dress and gender, which are significantly current to this day. As the quoted dialogue that opened this chapter outlines, a young man, as embodied by Henry Tilney, could have a keen eye for fashion and clothes. Such an open demonstration of a man's fashion consciousness, however, might be perceived rather unusual even in the Regency period where Austen's imagination operated. This is because, as explicated precisely in the words of Mrs Allen, 'men commonly take so little notice of those things'. Have our conceptions of gender and clothes radically been revised after two hundred years? The answer, I believe, is rather mixed. It is a common knowledge that men can be as fashion-minded as women, and most scholarly examinations of dress and sociology have proved this. Histories of dress, both European and Japanese, suggest that in some periods sartorial distinctions between men and women were rather subtle. In other periods, men could be adorned with ornaments as much as women were. Yet, in modern times men's fashionability comes with a sense of suspicion and ambivalence, particularly in mainstream popular culture. Not only that, there is a set of widely-circulated preconceptions regarding ways in which men and women are assumed to engage with fashion.

My research arguments can be condensed into three strands. Firstly, rather than prioritising functionality over aesthetics, "crafting" the fashionable "look" can be a quintessential part of self-assurance for men. Secondly, a certain kind of "infantile" and cute aesthetic can offer women a position somewhere in between the established multiple binaries of sexualisation and subservience in which they tend to be represented. And

[1] J. Austen, *Northanger Abbey*. London: Penguin Books. 1996 [1818], p. 22.

thirdly, decorative girlish fashions do not necessarily have to be construed as symbolic of feminine oppression. In order to examine these points, this chapter reviews the canon of dress narratives and attempts to determine to what extent their theories are valid and relevant and to what extent they are inapplicable, invalid and even absurd in relation to this research.

This chapter proceeds in four parts. The first section reviews general theories of gender and clothes. With a cultural and socio-psychological analysis of gender, this section attempts to highlight the idea that what we have come to understand as gender is largely a cultural construction, and clothes are often used as primary devices to sustain and recreate the "performance" of gender. The second section looks at the relationship between men and fashion, paying particular attention to how "masculine" identity for a group of males is sustained and strengthened by "othering" "feminine" interests such as fashion. The multiple binaries of fragility and (sexual) assertiveness that shape the way in which young women's fashion is constructed, are the focus of the third section. In particular, this section argues that such multiple binaries, which are especially but not exclusively visible in Euro-American culture, reveal the tendency in which "normative" or "exaggerated" femininity are perceived as negative and even demeaning. The negative attributes ascribed to such modes of femininity are also responsible for the preconception that (ornate) "feminine" clothing styles connote female subservience and objectification. This point is the focus of the final section. It seeks to support the theories that such ornate fashion does not have to operate solely for the (objectifying) male gaze, but can also have quite unrelated aesthetic appeals to the wearer. In short, by examining and reviewing these ideas, this chapter attempts to demarcate theoretical frameworks for the following chapters.

Clothes and Gender Distinctions

In *Adorned in Dreams* (1985), feminist and dress scholar Elizabeth Wilson has said that '[f]ashion is obsessed with gender, defines and redefines the gender boundary'.[2] In her reading, not only "masculine" or "feminine" clothing styles, but "genderless" or "androgynous" styles, too, are placed on the poles of a continuum of "gendered" looks. Fashion sociologist Joanne Entwistle articulates this point as follows: '[s]o while it would seem that today's fashions are more androgynous, even 'uni-sex' clothes display an overriding obsession with gender'.[3]

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[2] E. Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams*. London: Virago. 1985, p. 117. (hereafter, Wilson, *Dreams*)

[3] J. Entwistle, *The Fashioned Body: Fashion, Dress and Modern Social Theory*. Cambridge: Polity Press. 2000, p. 140. (hereafter, Entwistle, *Body*)

This idea echoes what distinguished scholar of Japanese literature Ivan Morris had told his student, scholar of Japanese literature Barbara Ruch:

> You cannot engage a person's mind unless you engage the *person* and appreciate who they are and what they are. An androgynous mind may be one ideal, but even such a mind is housed in a human being who has been raised either a man or a woman and must live real life in real time in that capacity, at home with that self.[4]

These ideas thus highlight that even the concept of "androgyny" cannot be separated from our conceptions of gender. In a converse reading, their remarks point to the "constructed" and "crafted" nature of what we come to understand as two gender categories; "masculinity" and "femininity". The theory of gender performativity, made famous by post-structuralist philosopher and scholar Judith Butler, comes immediately to mind. Gender, this theory argues, is not a stable fact but something we imagine and construct. Most of what we consider "masculine" or "feminine" is constructed, and there are no clear definitions of the terms "masculinity" and "femininity" except in relation or contrast to each other.[5] In *Bodily Inscriptions Performative Subversions* (1990), Butler argues that gender identity is indeed performative. She considers gender as a collective performance that is designed primarily to sustain the legitimacy of heterosexuality, punishing those who fail to perform their "gender" roles correctly.[6] Conventional "masculinity" and "femininity", or the gender reality as Butler calls it, is therefore created through sustained and repeated social performances. This means that:

> The very notions of an essential sex and a true or abiding masculinity or femininity are also constituted as part of the strategy that conceals gender's performative character and the performative possibilities for proliferating gender configurations outside the restricting frames of masculinist domination and compulsory heterosexuality.[7]

Thus, the theory of gender performativity denounces the absolute distinction between the two gender categories. However, keeping in mind what Morris had said, it might be

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[4] B. Ruch, 'Introduction' in I. Morris, *The World of the Shining Prince: Court Life in ancient Japan*. NY, Tokyo, London: Kodansha International. 1994, p. xiv.

[5] See, for example: C. Paechter, 'Masculine femininities/ feminine masculinities: power, identities and gender' *Gender and Education* Volume 18, Issue 3, 2006, pp. 253-263; J. Beynon, *Masculinities and Culture*, Phildelphia: Open University. 2002; B. Pease, *Men and Gender Relations*, Croydon: Tertiary Press, 2002; D. Reay, "Spice Girls', 'Nice Girls', 'Girlies', and 'Tomboys': gender discourses, girls' cultures and femininities in the primary classroom' *Gender and Education*, Volume 13, No 2, 2001, pp.153-66; R. W. Connell, *The Men and the Boys*. St. Leonards: Allen & Unwin. 2000; S. Nixon, 'Exhibiting Masculinity' in S. Hall (ed) *Representation: Culture Representation and Signifying Practices*. London: Sage. 1997, pp. 293-323; S. L. Bem, *The Lenses of Gender: Transforming the Debate on Sexual Inequality*, New Haven & London: Yale University Press. 1993.

[6] J. Butler, "Bodily Inscriptions, Perfomative Subversions" in S. Salih and J. Butler (eds), *The Judith Butler Reader*, Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers. 2004 [1990], p. 114.

[7] *Ibid*., p. 115.

too extreme, and in a sense too simplistic, to reduce the whole existence of gender identity to a construction and fabrication. Indeed, biological differences between men and women should not be disregarded when examining gender.[8] In relation to socio-biological perspectives on "masculinity", social work scholar Bob Pease also states that '[i]n rejecting biological determinism, we have to be careful not to replace it with cultural determinism'. Thus, gender identity could be much more complex than either thoroughly biologically determined or culturally constructed. Accordingly, dress anthropologist Joanne B. Eicher is right in saying '[o]bviously, both men and women have sexed bodies and gendered dress in every society'.[9] However, Butler's idea that (the conventional ideas of) gender is *largely* performative, and indeed relies on collective performances, is highly useful. This is particularly so when we consider that in reality not every male acts or behaves strictly according to the conventional idea of "masculinity" while not every female acts or behaves accordingly to the conventions of "femininity". Dress is, quite patently, one of the most crucial elements both supporting and revealing the performance of gender.

As a matter of fact, clothes are a fundamental component in the sustenance of "gender" performance because they are 'one of the most immediate and effective examples of the way in which bodies are gendered, made "feminine" or "masculine"'.[10] As sociologist Tim Edwards suggests[11]:

> The role of dress in defining the genders is most evident, then in modern western society and particularly in the case of children who are assigned to differing genders through their dress very early on and are 'dressed for sex' almost *ab ovo*: blue for a boy, pink for a girl; trousers for boys and skirts for girls.[12]

Thus, children, and even adults tend to distinguish gender not by individuals' actual biological gender, but by their dress or appearance.[13] The sartorial distinctions between men and women are moreover not always kept transparent in the European history of dress. Anne Hollander articulates that:

> In the early Middle Ages until about 1100, when garments for both sexes were still relatively shapeless, relief sculptures and mosaics tended to create one

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[8] C. Paechter, 'Masculine femininities/ feminine masculinities: power, identities and gender' *Gender and Education* Volume 18, Issue 3, 2006; D. Cornell, *At the Heart of Freedom: Feminism, Sex, and Equality*. Princton: Princeton University Press. 1998, p. 80.

[9] J. B. Eicher, 'Dress, Gender and the Public Display of Skin' in J. Entwistle and E. Wilson (eds) *Body Dressing*. Oxford and New York: Berg. 2001, p. 244.

[10] Entwistle, *Body*, p.141.

[11] T. Edwards, *Men in the mirror: men's fashion, masculinity and consumer society*. London: Cassell.1997, p. 14. (hereafter Edwards, *Mirror*).

[12] It is significant that Marjorie Garber notes that this gendered scheme of colour is a recent historical construction, as boys would wear pink and girls blue before World War 1 (Garber, 1992:1).

[13] Bem, *op.cit*, p. 148.

> unifying pattern of drapery inside compositions that combined male and female figures. The result was that the clothing seemed to link the sexes instead of dividing them.[14]

The modern sartorial distinctions between men and women in Europe were increasingly accentuated in the Victorian period, when 'the renunciation of decoration on the part of men is contrasted with the increasing fussiness of women's dress'.[15] Hollander offers a possible explanation –that the early nineteenth century witnessed the emergence of the Romantic movement, which required the patent differences between the two gender categories. She also suggests that fashion in the periods when male and female sartorial styles were kept distinct from each other (e.g. in 1380 or 1680, 1850 or 1950), illuminate two points.[16] Firstly, men and women in such periods were compelled to express 'a very clear sense of distance from the other one', which was often endorsed by laws and penalties.[17] Secondly, and more importantly, this would usually emerge 'when the visual differences between men's and women's clothes [were] actually in a new state of confusion, and fashion [was] beginning to bring the sexes closer together after having sharply divided them'.[18] Hollander's theory thus endorses the cultural and socio-psychological proposition that gender is a cultural or social construction, an imaginative necessity for which clothes are used as a primary device to demarcate such differences. Since the subjects of this research are Japanese, it is useful and logical to see how sartorial distinctions between the two gender categories have been manifested in the history of Japanese clothing. Likewise, as noted in Chapter 1, I apply the anthropological definition of culture in this research. In such a definition, there would be no territorial limitations of culture, and it is both sharable and learnable.[19]

(A)symmetrical Patterns of Gender

The Japanese history of dress before the country "opened" to the "West" in the1860s also demonstrates the instability of gender differences. The rich history of Japanese clothes would require a space no less than a whole book to fully explore, and thus I refer briefly to only a portion of it in the present setting. The Chinese-influenced clothing styles for men and women in the seventh-century did not differ significantly. 'Men and women wore a similar upper body garment and ceremonial skirt. Beneath this skirt, men wore pants,

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[14] A. Hollander, *Sex and Suits*. NY: Knopf. 1994, p. 33. (hereafter Hollander, *Suits*)
[15] Entwistle, *Body*, p. 157.
[16] Hollander, *Suits*, p. 40.
[17] *Ibid*, p. 40.
[18] *Ibid*., p. 40.
[19] J. Nederveen Pieterse, *Globalization and Culture: Global Mélange*. Maryland: Roman & Littlefield Publishers. 2004, p. 46.

while women wore another long skirt that Japanese call a *mo*'.[20] In the Heian court when Japan closed its door to Chinese influences, the sartorial differences between noble men and women, let alone between social classes and ranks, became relatively more visible.[21] Although sartorial sensibilities were a requirement of both men and women in the period, men's clothes were less elaborate in shape than women's.[22] Court ladies' ceremonial robes consisted of several layers of unlined kimono worn one over the other, taking great sensitivity to 'match and contrast the colors of each layer, which were visible at the neck, sleeve ends and lower skirt…Worn underneath were an under-kimono and a *hakama*[23].'[24] Further difference was marked by the great length of women's hair.

Although the currency of her study might have lost its lustre a little, anthropologist Liza Dalby's work on kimono still gives some useful insights into the intricate relationship between gender and kimono. Dalby argues that the most significant historical change in the kimono form occurred during Muromachi period (1336-1573) when women ceased to wear trouser-like *hakama* altogether, triggering the refashioning of *kosode* from the calf-length to ankle level.[25] Once a Japanese version of chemise, it now became a prototype of today's kimono. The shape of *kosode* in the early Edo period was identical for both sexes.[26] But the first stylistic ramification of *kosode* seemingly occurred in the late-1660s when the sleeves of women's *kosode* grew longer. A sleeve of eighteen inches (approximately 46 cm) was considered *furisode* (women's *kosode* with long "flattering" sleeves) in the late 1660s. But they reached more than 30 inch (75 cm) long in the Genroku period (1688-1703), after only two decades since the lengthening of *kosode*'s sleeves began, possibly showcasing the luxurious aspects of life in this period.[27]

It seems that the Japanese history of kimono *per se* tells the defining and redefining process of gender boundaries, sometimes closing and sometimes demarcating the distinction. Significantly, sartorial distinctions between social class and age were as important as gender in the Japanese history of kimono. These distinctions were manifested not only through forms but also colours, patterns and textiles. Fabrics seem to

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[20] L. Dalby, *Kimono: Fashioning Culture*. London: Vintage. 2001 [1993], p. 28.

[21] The Heian Period lasted for approximately 390 years from 794 to 1192.

[22] I. Morris, *The World of the Shining Prince: Court Life in ancient Japan*. NY, Tokyo, London: Kodansha International. 1994 [1964], p. 194.

[23] A *hakama* is a long divided skirt worn over the kimono.

[24] N. Yamanaka, *The Book of Kimono*. Tokyo, New York and San Francisco: Kodansha International. 1982, pp. 34-5.

[25] Dalby, *op.cit.*, p. 39.

[26] The Edo period lasted for more than 250 years from 1603 to 1868.

[27] Dalby, *op.cit.*, p. 45.

have attracted the strongest interest throughout Japanese history.[28] In the Edo period, however, the people in the merchant class would incorporate the styles embraced by either court people, kabuki actors or courtesans, making dress further complicated. Any discussion of dress in the Edo period needs to take into account the existence of sumptuary laws, which were issued primarily in order to maintain status distinctions in the period, especially in order to distinguish the samurai class from *chōnin* (townsmen, often used to describe both artisans and merchants, who were richer but socially inferior to samurai).[29] The laws were difficult to enforce. Scholar of Japanese literature and culture Donald H. Shively notes that the sumptuary laws in the early Edo period possibly received respect only for a short period after their issue, and that infractions slowly became more patent and more radical.[30] Apart from infracting the laws overtly, it was popular for both men and women to wear fancy, expensive loincloths throughout the Edo period, and for merchants to use finer silk materials for the linings of otherwise simple kimono, as ways of subterfuge.[31]

Dalby alludes to a significant aspect of the relationship between garments and gender in the Genroku period. According to her, the mixing of male and female in the world of fashion was a facet of Genroku culture, where 'men borrowed styles from women just as women copied fads from men'.[32] For example, the on and off stage styles of kabuki actors specialised in women's roles:

> …served as showcases for original kosode patters, hairstyles, and ways of tying the obi.[33] These styles in turn inspired the wardrobes of townswomen. In effect, women strove to copy men who were mimicking women. Furthermore, certain female dancers…and a specialized subset of prostitutes called *wakashū jorō* played on the popularity of the stylish young men by reproducing their mode as faithfully as possible. These creatures were women taken for men who wished to be taken as women.[34]

Dalby assures us that there would have been subtle cues for the contemporary Genroku dwellers in order to distinguish gender of these people. Arguably, this also indicates that as in the European history of dress, the Japanese history of fashion has alluded to the rather precarious affairs of gender and fashion.

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[28] D. H. Shively, 'Sumtuary Regulation and Status in Early Tokugawa Japan' *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, Volume 25, 1964-1965, p. 133.
[29] Shiverly, *op.cit.*, p. 123; Dalby, *op.cit.*, p. 57.
[30] Shively, *op.cit.*, p. 134.
[31] *Ibid.*, p. 129.
[32] Dalby, *op.cit.*, p. 289.
[33] The *obi* is a sash worn with the kimono. The width of women's *obi* increased as the length of *kosode*'s sleeves grew longer in the Genroku period.
[34] *Ibid.*, p. 289. Female actors were banned from appearing on the Kabuki stage in 1629 due to the concerns for moral decline.

Keeping in mind this delicate relationship between gender and clothes, this chapter poses a series of arguments, namely: that the sense of ambivalence attached to the relationship between men and fashion reflects the unstable nature of "masculinity"; representations of (young) women through established multiple binaries of sexualisation, subservience and (masculinist) assertiveness allude to the regulation of women's fashion, and; that senses of autonomy and independence are likely to be woven into female sartorial ornamentation, thus repudiating the idea that such a style is symbolic of dependency and subservience. Through reviewing these points, I hope to unearth a set of paradigms concerning gender and clothes, which might invert or even subvert these preconceptions. We look at these three ideas, beginning with how men are perceived or not perceived to engage with dress.

Men and Fashion

Feminist critic Germaine Greer articulates the unfavourableness still present in Anglo-Western culture in appreciating male beauty:

> There are some who think the expression 'male beauty' oxymoronic, even perverse. Students of English as a foreign language are taught that it is incorrect in English to use the word 'beautiful' for a male. Good-looking males should be described as 'handsome'. Handsomeness is not an aesthetic quality so much as a moral quality; handsomeness is as handsome does. The substitution of the word 'handsome' for 'beautiful' when referring to a male is the linguistic sign of an implicit understanding that it is wrong, demeaning even, to appreciate men for their looks.[35]

Beauty implies something to be appraised while the word handsome does not automatically evoke that sense.[36] We might also recall the scholar of English literature Clair Hughes who attests to the tendency in literature that less attention is paid to male dress than to female's. [37] Arguably, this reflects an assumption concerning men's actual practices of fashion: namely, that men are supposed not to care about their appearances. This assumption has been challenged, successfully, by a number of scholars in both dress studies and sociology. Art historian Christopher Breward has proved that even during the time of "the Great Masculine Renunciation" in which men were supposed to have relinquished sartorial flamboyancy or ornamentation over more "austere" clothing,

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[35] G. Greer, *The Beautiful Boy*. New York: Rizzoli. 2003, p. 7.

[36] This is interesting to see, for example, that Louise Varese's English translation of Julien Gracq's *Chateau d'Argol* (1999 [1938]: 11) narrates that the beauty of the countenance of Albert, a principle character, has acquired an almost fatal character. This might illuminate that French language has different perceptions on male beauty.

[37] C. Hughes, *Dressed in Fiction*. Oxford and New York: Berg. 2006, p. 47.

British men continued to be loyal and active consumers of sartorial items.[38] For instance, the forms of men's dress associated with leisure pursuits such as weekend or holiday clothing in the late nineteenth-century allowed more opportunities for the display of individual taste based on the choice of accessories, textures and colours.[39] He sees this "concealment" of men's affairs with clothes, which was sustained even in the 1990s, as deliberate.

> The lack of space devoted to male attire in the historical record had thus become 'naturalised' as an apparently appropriate reflection of the minimal attention assumed to have been lavished on sartorial matters by most nineteenth-century men. The invisibility of Victorian conceptions of male fashionability in the late twentieth century simply seemed to strengthen arguments for fashion as an entirely feminised phenomenon in the nineteenth century. And these were the arguments that provided the basis for fashion histories which, when they did include men, upheld a slow moving rate of style change, functional utility and a well-mannered observance of propriety as the defining, indeed the only features of late-modern patterns of masculine fashionability.[40]

Thus, the preconceptions that a fashion sensibility is a "feminine" trait and that men prioritize functionality over aesthetics are seemingly crafted and sustained. In our contemporary times, Entwistle has also noted that the increase in visibility of fashion-consciousness among young men is evident.[41] However, even today it seems fashionable to see that men are less concerned with clothes or fashion than their female counterparts. As recently as in 2011, Tim Edwards finds it appropriate to open a chapter on men's fashion in his book by saying: '[f]ashion, it is commonly assumed, is a feminine phenomenon…Despite the recent resurgence of interest in men's fashion, and attendant studies of it, its significance remains severely underestimated'.[42] Although Edwards is a clear advocate of the opposite case, his concern itself indicates the prevalence of this preconception concerning men and clothes.

Why is this clichéd perception of men and clothes still present, at least to a certain extent, when it seems clear that male interest in appearance and fashion are increasing? There might be a number of hypotheses to explain this simple yet important question. I

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[38] C. Breward, *The Hidden Consumers: Masculinities, fashion and city life 1860-1914*. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press. 1999. (hereafter, Breward, *Consumers*)

[39] *Ibd*., p. 50.

[40] C. Breward, 'Mode of Manliness: Reflections on recent histories of masculinities and fashion' in G. Riello and P. McNeil (eds) *The Fashion History Reader: Global Perspectives*, London and New York: Routledge. 2010, p. 301-2. (hereafter, Breward, *Manliness*)

[41] J. Entwistle, From Catwalk to Catalog: Male Fashion Models, Masculinity, and Identity' in H. Thomas and J. Ahmed (eds) *Cultural Bodies: Ethnography and Theory*, Malden and Oxford: Blackwell Publishing. 2004, p. 57. (hereafter, Entwistle, *Catwalk*)

[42] T. Edwards, *Fashion in Focus: Concepts, Practices and Politics*, London and New York: Routledge. 2011, p. 41. (hereafter, Edwards, *Focus*)

review this question principally through the amalgam of dress, cultural and socio-psychological approaches. As already mentioned, Hollander has pointed out that sartorial distinctions between men and women reflect the desire to demarcate gender distinctions through clothes. In this case, the existing notion that assumes male indifference to fashion, and unfavourableness in male interests in fashion or appearance, seemingly reflects the unstable nature of "masculinity". The flimsy nature of "masculinity" might require a visual (and hence explicit) distinction from "femininity" in order to sustain its existence.

In the socio-cultural analysis of gender, "masculinities" tend to operate and be structured in hierarchies.[43] The most honoured and desired, but not necessarily the most common, hegemonic form of masculinity dominates, while other forms are 'rendered inadequate and inferior'.[44] This idea implies a general inclination that the hegemonic form of masculinity, which, for the most part, reinforces the attributes described by Andy Metcalf and Martin Humphries in *The Sexuality of Men* (1985), are perceived as "*the masculinity*". Sociologist Sean Nixon, by referring to *The Sexuality of Men*, presents what appear to be quintessential images of how "masculinity" has been understood or perceived in Euro-American culture. In this reading, masculinity is 'characterised by aggression, competitiveness, emotional ineptitude and coldness, and dependent upon an overriding and exclusive emphasis on penetrative sex'.[45] These preconceptions of "masculinity" are also referred to by Jungian analyst June Singer. She offers a thorough list of the attributes of what her students perceived as "masculine" and "feminine":

> The masculine stereotype would invariably include aggressivity, dominance, hardness, logic, competitiveness, achievement orientation, thinking, inventiveness, reason; while the feminine stereotype would include passivity, compliance, softness, emotion, co-operativeness, nurturance, intuition, conservation and tenderness.[46]

These characteristics of "masculinity" can also be found in Japanese culture as a preferred or "naturalised" mode of manliness, particularly held by older generations.[47]

The difficulty in acquiring all of these "masculine" attributes, however, intensifies the desire to create and sustain visual or sartorial distinctions between the two gender categories. This is because fully attaining such "masculine" qualities is second to

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[43] R. W. Connell, *The Men and the Boys*. St. Leonards: Allen & Unwin. 2000, p. 13.

[44] J. Beynon, *Masculinities and Culture*. Philadelphia: Open University. 2001, p. 16.

[45] S. Nixon, 'Exhibiting Masculinity' in S. Hall (ed) *Representation: Culture Representation and Signifying Practices*. London: Sage. 1997, p. 296.

[46] Singer, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

[47] K. Ito, "*Otokorashisa" no yukue : dansei bunka no bunka shakaigaku (The path of Manliness: Cultural Sociology of Masculine Culture). Tokyo: Shin 'yōsha, 1993; K.* Kumada, *Otoko rashia to iu yamai? (A pathology called Masculinity?)*. Nagoya: Fubai-sha. 2005.

impossible.[48] Hence '[t]raditional masculinity began to be regarded as a "neuro-muscular armour" that forced [men] to suppress tenderness, emotion and any signs of vulnerability'.[49] It is important to refer to psychologist Sandra L. Bem who argues that since "conventional" masculinity is intertwined with power and privilege, the majority of men who are, quite inevitably, neither powerful nor privileged, would feel insufficiently masculine. In order to feel, at least marginally, a sense of belonging to "real men", these men with neither power nor privileges exclude women from positions of public power and authority, and culturally marginalise male homosexuality.[50] In this sense, women and homosexual men are required for certain men as their "others". The significance of Bem's theory is further highlighted by the persistence of the misleading assumption that fashion or dress is "feminine", and thus not "masculine" even today.[51] In other words, man's lack of concern with the "feminine" interest of dress would (deliberately or otherwise) define his "masculine" identity. This point is articulated by cultural studies scholar Jennifer Craik:

> The rhetoric of men's fashion takes the form of a set of denials that include the following propositions: that there is no men's fashion; that men dress for fit and comfort, rather than for style; that women dress men and buy clothes for men; that men who dress up are peculiar (one way or another); that men do not notice clothes; and that most men have not been duped into the endless pursuit of seasonal fads.[52]

The cultural stereotype assuming that 'it is perhaps not appropriately "masculine" to take a serious interest in men's fashion let alone one's own appearance' is thus sustained.[53] Is fashion truly "feminine"? I argue against that. Some men are as fashion-minded as the most "fashionable" women while some women can be as careless about their appearance as some men are. As Entwistle convincingly argues:

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[48] Needless to say, this "androcentrism" also provides a demanding definition of "a real woman". As Bem (1993:151) indicates, since it defines women 'in terms of their domestic and reproductive functions, women who are unable to have children almost inevitably experience a sense that they are not real women'.

[49] Beynon, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

[50] Bem, *op.cit.*, p.151.

[51] Hollander, *Suits*, p. 10.

[52] J. Craik, *The Face of Fashion: Cultural studies in fashion*. London and New York: Routledge.1994, p. 176.

[53] Edwards, *Mirror*, p. 3.

> The motivations behind dress cannot be reduced to a single explanation: at different times we dress for different reasons and on some occasions women may dress for status and men to attract admirers.[54]

Fashion is, therefore, not fundamentally "feminine" but more likely labelled as such and "othered" by a certain group of men in order to visually accentuate the distinction between the two gender categories.

Although some men dress in such style simply for their stylistic preferences, strongly "masculine" style clothing is a simple way of achieving this sense of belonging. Thus, '[v]ery remarkable and fantastic male modes of dressing…are continuously adopted chiefly by the powerless, those not in the main stream of action'.[55] The suit is one such sartorial example closely identified with "masculinity", both stylistically and symbolically. It not only emphases the male form, but it also 'remains a potent symbol of success, virility and maturity, and the one ensemble from a man's wardrobe that still looks incongruous on a boy'.[56] A sense of irony is created with this reading, for these men would "other" fashion as a "feminine" trait but attempt to maintain their "masculine" identity through clothes nevertheless. If men are as much "fashion victims" as women and dress to attract admirers, the widely held notion that men are not subjected to the gaze needs to be radically revised.

Lost in a Glance

Another matter that is intertwined with this stereotyped assumption regarding men and fashion is that men are not believed to be the object to be gazed at. This conversely alludes to the tendency in which '[m]ost people have accepted without question that women are treated as sex objects, viewed principally as body, with a primary duty to attract male attention'.[57] Reflecting this conventional idea that assumes men as active lookers and women as passive objects to be looked at, cultural studies scholar Laura Mulvey famously identified two contradictory aspects of the pleasurable structures in (Hollywood's) traditional narrative films; scopophilic (pleasure in gazing at another person as an erotic object), and egolibido (forming an identification process).[58][59] Male characters in such films are unlikely to be gazed at as erotic objects precisely because men are

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[54] Entwistle, *Body*, p. 186.

[55] Hollander, *Suits*, p. 11.

[56] Edwards, *Mirror*, p. 22.

[57] Greer, *op.cit.*, p. 7.

[58] When this idea is applied in order to analyse films, the scopophilic involves (male) audiences taking pleasure at gazing at female figures in the film as erotic objects while the egolibido involves (male) audiences taking pleasures by empathizing with (male) protagonists in the film.

[59] L. Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema in Durham', in M. G. Durham and D. Kellner (eds) *Media and Cultural Studies: Key Works*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers. 2001 [1975], p. 397.

reluctant to gaze at their 'exhibitionist like'.[60] Mulvey's analysis might appear somewhat outdated, but this conception of men as the gazers and women as the objects of the male gaze is still widely accepted. Indeed, feminist philosopher Susan Bordo argues that such gendered roles are still reproduced and distributed through media images and advertisements. These images might instruct us to follow certain gendered behaviours. According to Bordo:

> As embodied in attractive and sometimes highly manipulative images, "men act and women appear" functions as a visual instruction. Women are supposed to care very much about fashion, "vanity", looking good, and may be seen as unfeminine, man-hating, or lesbian if they don't. The reverse goes for men. The man who cares about his looks the way a woman does, self-esteem on the line, ready to be shattered at the slightest insult or increase in weight gain, is unmanly, sexually suspect.[61]

Although her proposition might be simplistic, Bordo's idea implies at least two important points. Firstly, the assumption of men as indifferent to fashion might be constructed and instructed through mediated images among others, and secondly, this assumption is closely tied to the expected roles of men as a "gazer" and women as an object of the "gaze". The reversal of such roles is considered to be inappropriate, unfavourable or even interdicted. Endorsing this idea, '[m]any conservative straight men still complain today that they do not care to be "looked at" by other men, for whatever reason, and they sometimes resort to violence to stop the gaze'.[62] In this sense, some men are still devoid of pleasures arising from aesthetic appraisal of their appearances. This proposes a set of questions. Does it imply a sense of ambivalence emerging in relation to the increased recognition of fashion-consciousness among young men? Do the representations of young men in Japanese culture, with a set of different preferred aesthetics, offer greater latitude for men in the engagement with fashion? It is logical to refer to Japanese men and contemporary fashion practice here.

It is my belief that a group of Japanese young males manifest less conflicted attitudes towards fashion and their masculine identities. Linguistic anthropologist Laura Miller and marketing writer Megumi Ushikubo substantiate my idea.[63] For instance, Miller mentions that change in the preferred model of maleness is notable among young men in Japan.

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[60] *Ibid.*, p. 398.

[61] S. Bordo, 'Beauty (Re)Discovers the Male Body', in Z. P. Brand (ed) *Beauty Matters*, Indiana Bloomington: University Press. 2000, p. 142.

[62] P. McNeil and V. Karaminas, 'Introduction' in P. McNeil and V. Karaminas (eds) *The Men's Fashion Reader*. Oxford and New York: Berg. 2009, p. 8.

[63] There is a convention in which Japanese names are presented in the order "family name followed by given name". In the present setting, all names, including Japanese names, are presented in the order 'given name followed by family name' in order to create a sense of consistency.

She argues that young men in twenty-first-century Japan 'are increasingly concerned with their status as objects of aesthetic and sexual appraisal'. This shift to beautification, she writes, is a component of masculinity rather than, as many older critics tend to interpret, signifying a "feminisation" of men.[64] Perhaps not surprisingly, the increased visibility of Japanese young men's concern over fashion and appearance has been subject to criticism, primarily from middle-aged men. These older males, Miller writes, 'often interpret new fashions and beauty work among young men as evidence of the loss of male power and martial virility' where physical strength and aggressiveness might be considered as "properly masculine".[65]

One such example of criticism derived from middle-aged men can be found in the article of freelance writer Akira Nagae. He laments that these fashion-conscious young men are prioritising fashion over attracting women, which, he thinks, might even have contributed to the decline in the birth rate. He also describes young men's fashion magazine *MEN'S NON-NO* as the 'least likely magazine targeting young blokes'. This is mostly due to the lack of sexual discourse, which makes a striking contrast to *LEON*, a lifestyle magazine targeted at a group of middle-aged men, whose concerns are predominantly focused on attracting women.[66] Miller surmises that this kind of criticism, found particularly among middle-aged men reflects their uneasiness about change to the dominant model of maleness. Is the "dominant" model of males, which has been seemingly "naturalized" by the older males, at risk of being undermined?

The questionable assumption of "masculinity in crisis" has also been a part of scholarship on masculinity in Japan. Based on his research conducted between 1995 and 1999, educational sociologist Futoshi Taga, for instance, argues that the "hegemonic" mode of "salaryman" masculinity still has a powerful influence on the Japanese understandings of masculinity. However, 'the recent economic recession and the collapse of corporate safeguards that ensured long-term employment for many workers' have inevitably called into question the validity of the gender-based roles, namely male breadwinning, which Taga perceives as justifying male domination over women.[67] He asserts that although this economic impact does not thrust the roles of Japanese men dramatically to more gender egalitarian ones, 'traditional notions of masculinity are

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[64] L. Miller, *Beauty Up: Exploring contemporary Japanese body aesthetics*. Berkeley: University of California Press. 2006, p. 126. (hereafter, Miller, *Beauty*)

[65] For example, such criticism comes from comic book author Yoshinori Kobayashi 1998, mentioned by Miller (2006*:* 126).

[66] A. Nagae, 'iroke wa fuyou? *MEN'S NON-NO* (No sexiness sought? *MEN'S NON-NO*), *Yomiuri-Shinbun*, 5 June 2006.

[67] F. Taga, 'Rethinking Male Socialisation: Life histories of Japanese male youth' in K. Louie and M. Low (eds) *Asian Masculinities* Oxon: RoutledgeCurzon. 2003, p. 139.

declining in legitimacy, and many Japanese men have experienced a crisis of gender identity'.[68] What renders Taga's belief significant is Ushikubo's contention that there are significant differences noted between Japanese men who were born before and after 1974. According to her, the former men whom Ushikubo calls "bachelor princes" due to their relatively affluent income and single-marital status, tend to represent conventional "masculinity".[69] In contrast, Japanese young men born after 1974, and especially those born between 1978 and 1982, tend to have significantly more candid attitudes towards "feminine" concerns such as fashion and beauty consumption, than more stereotypical males.[70]

Although a simple generalisation should be avoided, Ushikubo's "bachelor princes" demographically fit Taga's male research subjects, all of whom 'were born between the late 1960s and the early 1970s'.[71] This suggests that Taga's view of Japanese young men experiencing a crisis of gender identity is not entirely applicable to a certain group of men who were born after 1974. Arguably, these men who belong to younger generations are able to engage in activities unjustly perceived as "feminine", such as fashion consumption, with less intimidation. In order to further explore the relationship between Japanese young men and fashion, I observe a group of fashion magazines targeted at this demographic, which will be addressed in Chapters 2 and 3. While the conventional idea tends to suggest a stable and firm even if ambivalent, single-dimensional and biased relationship between men and fashion, women's relationships with fashion tend to be understood through conflicting and rather extreme binary oppositions of (sexual) assertiveness and fragility.

Fragile, Erotic and Disorderly

If the culturally constructed idea concerning men and dress assumes men's indifference to fashion, its female counterpart would point to the cultural construction of women's

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[68] *Ibd.*, p. 142.

[69] M. Ushikubo, *Sōshoku-kei danshi [ojō-man] ga nihon wo kaeru (herbivorous men (lady-man) change Japan)*. Tokyo: Kōdansha +α shinsho. 2008, p. 151.

[70] These emotionally competent yet calm young men are described as physically slender, fashion/beauty-conscious, passive, not particularly ambitious, as well as having gentle and nonaggressive attitudes towards women (Ushikubo, 2008: 4-5). Ushikubo suggests that there are two main reasons contributing to the genesis of these appearance-conscious, sensitive young men, namely the burst of Japanese asset price bubble in the early 1990s and the decrease in population. Growing up with the recurrent images of bankruptcy and economic recession, the first reason has taught these men from their childhood that everything concerning their future is uncertain and unpredictable. Therefore, they have learned to be cautions, restrain extravagance, which was a feature of Japanese asset price bubble, sensible, and less ambitious. For the latter reason, Ushikubo notes that since a decline in population has been prominent largely due to the decline birth rate, the young people belonging to this particular generation had less competition among their peers compared to one generation above (Ushikubo, 2008: 22). Consequently, they tend to prefer cooperation to competition.

[71] Taga., *op. cit.*, p. 142.

appearance through binary oppositions. In this section I look at the multiple binaries of sexualisation, assertiveness and subservience in which women tend to be represented. What I examine here is the possibility that these binaries might impose restrictions on the relationship between women and clothing while a certain kind of *kawaii* (cute) aesthetic concept, which is prevalent in Japan, might offer a moderate yet different alternative. As a matter of fact, young women tend to be represented through multiple binaries, the most famous one being the virgin-whore dichotomy in which 'women are either innocent victims of male lust and violence or guilty of incitement by their own behaviour and conduct'.[72]

A slightly subdued version of this dichotomy are "the Girl Power" (assertive) and "Reviving Ophelia" (fragile) stereotypes. The former became popular after being used as a catchphrase for British female pop group Spice Girls in the mid-1990s while the latter, although the lesser known, is used by clinical psychologist Mary Pipher in her book *Reviving Ophelia* (1994). Sociologist Marnina Gonick identifies these two main discourses as organising meanings of girls and girlhood in Anglo-Western culture. She suggests that 'while Girl Power represents the idealized form of the new neoliberal subjectivities, Reviving Ophelia personifies an anxiety about those who may not be successful in taking up these new forms of subjectification'.[73] Although Gonick proposes that these two discourses do not necessarily oppose and contradict one another, they seem to be situated on the extremes of emphasised assertiveness and pathological fragility.[74] While one end of the binary, that is fragile or passive femininity, is left relatively unchanged from its historical counterparts, the other end of the binary can be multiple, with a sexualised mode that is most notable in contemporary Euro-American culture. Can such modes as "porno-chic" be construed as symbolic of female empowerment that the "fragile" femininity is devoid of?

Sexing Barbie

When assertiveness is associated with youthful femininity, it is often manifested through sexualisation. This is particularly the case in American female celebrity culture with what music journalist Stuart Burman calls "Barbie doll" musicians, such as Beyonce, Britney Spears, and perhaps more recently, Katy Perry and Rihanna.[75] Although it might not

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[72] K. Ross & V. Nightingale, *Media and Audiences: New Perspectives*. 2003, p 80; M. Meyers, *News Coverage of violence Against Women: Engendering Blame*. Thousand Oaks, London and New Delhi: Sage. 1997, p. 9.

[73] M. Gonick, 'Between "Girl Power" and "Reviving Ophelia": Constituting the Neoliberal Girl Subject' *NWSA Journal* Volume 18, Issue 2, 2006, pp. 15-6.

[74] *Ibid*., p. 19.

[75] S. Burman, interviewed in Martin, Brough & Orrego, *Get It On*, 2004.

reflect their intention to accept and adopt the sexual connotations, the impacts these female celebrities are allegedly imposing on young women and adolescent girls are noted, especially in relation to a style called "porno-chic".[76] According to scholars of performance studies Hanna B. Harvey and Karen Robinson:

> The very term "porn chic" [sic] makes public the usually unspoken yet understood correlation between women, bodies, fashion, and sex. Women are commonly described as dressing sexy or sharp, or like whores or prudes, terms which carry both the baggage of moral judgement and the assumption of sexual insight through visual appraisal.[77]

Of Yves Saint Laurent's controversial *Opium* perfume advertisement (2000), media scholar Feona Attwood notes that:

> the significance of sexual representations is always relational; the advert was read in relation to pre-existing artistic, pornographic, and fashion conventions, and derived its meaning in relation to a variety of discourses including those around body image, celebrity, feminist politics, and the sexualisation of mainstream culture.[78]

It is plausible that especially for young women, the current mainstream fashion trend of revealing clothes, predominantly associated with "porno-chic" style, operates as a reaction against the traditional "restrictions" and representations of "passive" femininity. The latter more passive mode of femininity is, needless to say, believed to be epitomised by "normatively/emphatically" feminine women.[79]

There is a controversy surrounding the modes of sexualized feminine fashion. Attwood, for example, implies a possibility that the (mainly feminist) criticism of "porno-chic" trend and hence sexualized feminine fashion likely reflects a view that "incriminates" sexuality as something distasteful and disorderly.[80] Radical feminists are often strong supporters of this view. By way of illustration, the feminist scholar Sheila Jeffreys claims that 'in the last quarter of the twentieth century, fashion for women was explicitly pornographized so that the role of women's clothing in creating men's sexual

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[76] See, for example: A. McRobbie, 'The Rise and Rise of Porn Chic' *Times Higher Education*, 2 January 2004; L. Duits and L. van Zoonen, 'Headscarves and Porn-Chic: Disciplining Girls' Bodies in the European Multicultural Society' *European Journal of Women's Studies*, vol. 13, no. 2. 2006, p. 107.

[77] H. B. Harvey and K. Robinson, 'Hot Bodies on Campus: The Performance of Porn Chic' in A. C. Hall and M. J. Bishop (eds) *Pop-Porn: Pornography in American Culture*. Westport, Connecticut and London: Praeger. 2007, p. 69.

[78] F. Attwood, 'Pornography and Objectification: Re-reading "the picture that divided Britain"' *Feminist Media Studies*, vol. 4, No. 1, 2004, p. 15.

[79] D. Reay, "Spice Girls', 'Nice Girls', 'Girlies', and 'Tomboys': gender discourses, girls' cultures and femininities in the primary classroom' *Gender and Education*, Vol. 13, No. 2.

[80] Attwood, *op.cit.*, p. 12.

satisfaction became very clear'.[81] However, sexualisation of young women does not need to be read as wholly negative, as the look of transparent sexuality is, for instance, often equated with maturity and autonomy. Attwood suggests that seen through a positive lens, "porno-chic" aesthetics offer a combination of 'elements which [signify] feminine pride and confidence with pornographic elements connoting the disorderly, pleasure-seeking female body in a positive and empowering way'.[82]

Popular culture scholar Susan Hopkins endorses this positive reading of sexualised femininity. She argues that the cute/girlish but powerful female is a dominant theme in current mainstream popular culture. According to her, (Anglo-Western) female pop icons 'reclaimed "girlieness" as strong, sexy and ambitious'.[83] However, she claims that the sexual objectification of female figures does not necessarily have to be read as demeaning or disempowering, as 'girls can be both feminine *and* fierce, sexy *and* powerful'.[84] As for such pop icons as Madonna, whom Jeffreys blames for the normalisation of prostitute-like "porno-chic" fashion, Hopkins muses:

> It's not just sexuality she's selling, but power – or rather sexuality *as* power. Although she is often compared to old-fashioned Hollywood heroines, she does not share their weak, soft femininity.[85]

Hopkins' "girl heroes" include Madonna and the Spice Girls, and thus reinforces the close ties between "Girl Power" and "porno-chic" styles.

The gloominess connected to styles such as "porno-chic" and sexualized femininity are that they tend to be "mandatory" in contemporary Anglo-Western culture. This in turn diminishes the most significant aspect of the view that perceives them as a form of female empowerment; that they are about choice.[86] One subcultural style of Goth women and their deployment of sexualized femininity as female empowerment offers a clear study of this point.[87] Sociologist Amy C. Wilkins, in her study of American Goth women, indicates that her research subjects often attempt to reject/oppose mainstream portrayals of passive femininity through celebrations of active sexuality. Their rejection of mainstream femininity is, however, often demonstrated through the embrace of fetish and

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[81] S. Jeffreys, *Beauty and Misogyny: Harmful Cultural Practices in the West*. London and New York: Routledge. 2005, p. 90.

[82] Attwood, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

[83] S. Hopkins. *Girl heroes : the new force in popular culture*. Annandale: Pluto Press. 2002, p. 13.

[84] *Ibid.*, p. 35.

[85] *Ibid.*, p. 48.

[86] A. Wilkins, 'So Full of Myself as a Chick: Goth Women, Sexual Independence, and Gender Egalitarianism' *Gender & Society*, vol. 18, no. 3, 2004, pp. 328-349; McRobbie, *op. cit.*,

[87] It needs to be stated that Goth subculture is diverse, and not every female participant of the subculture wears highly revealing dresses.

highly revealing clothing items such as corsets and garments made from PVC. As gender and cultural studies scholar Dunja Brill points out, Goth women's preference for sexy clothes over more "traditionally" flowing and velvety gowns corresponds with the increasing sexualisation and objectification of women in mainstream culture.[88] Such emphatically erotic femininity is often a display of Goth women's negotiation between their conformity to conventional norms of female attractiveness, and their (conscious or unconscious) attempt to exercise power and authority through pronounced feminine masquerade.[89] As Wilkins says, the effectiveness of such performance might be diminished by the fact that sexualised femininity is performed as mandatory rather than as a choice in her research subjects.

The aim of "porno-chic" as a means to challenge normative, "passive" femininity is partly shared by another subculture of "punk girls" who attempt to resist mainstream adolescent femininity and normative feminine beauty. Rather than emphasising or exaggerating sexualised femininity, these young women attempt to perform this operation through the adoption of punk style, which is (stereotypically) characterised by aggressive, rebellious and dominantly masculinist aesthetics.[90] Thus, "punk girls" seemingly challenge both "passive" versions of femininity as well as more sexually accentuated ones.

Cloaked and Uncloaked

What such styles as "porno-chic", "erotic Goth" and "punk girls" elucidate is the ongoing cultural construction of women's fashion through a set of extreme binaries. Social scientists Linda Duits and Liesbet van Zoonen articulate this point in relation to the Dutch public debate about Muslim headscarves and "porno-chic" fashion. While young women and particularly girls are expected to dress neither too decently nor not decently enough, schizophrenic demands of the virgin-whore dichotomy tend to define their styles in either extreme, not anywhere in between.[91] As a result, the cultural construction of women's fashion is unstable, problematic, and publicly regulated. Endorsing the proposition of Duits and van Zoonen, the three styles referred to above demonstrate the multiple binaries of sexualisation and assertiveness.

The significance of the point made by Duits and Zoonen is emphasized by different attitudes towards men's appearance demonstrated via public debate and regulation.

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[88] D. Brill, *Goth Culture: gender, sexuality and style*. Oxford and New York: Berg. 2008, p. 49.

[89] Wilkins, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

[90] L. Leblanc, *Pretty in Punk: Girls' Gender Resistance in a Boys' Subculture*. New Brunswick, New Jersey, and London: Rutgers University Press. 2001.

[91] L. Duits and L. van Zoonen, 'Headscarves and Porno-Chic: Disciplining Girls' Bodies in the European Multicultural Society' *European Journal of Women's Studies*, Volume 13, Issue 2, 2006, p. 111.

Whether it is religious (as the *djellabah*, a Moroccan men's item of clothing) or sexual (walking bare-chested in public), their attitudes seem less interfering.[92] Thus, Druits and van Zoonen argue that it:

> can only be understood as rooted in a fundamentally different cultural construction of men's and women's bodies that identifies the ones as autonomous and enclosed, and the others as dependent and subject to intervention.[93]

As for the logic of elimination, if the sexualised look connotes mature independence, freedom and a greater sense of agency, the sweet and "infantile" look ought to signify dependency, restriction and submissiveness. Reinforcing this hypothesis is the work of Hopkins. She claims that the image of a female action hero who is both tough and cute is increasing in (Anglo-Western) popular culture. But she dismisses the "conventional" femininity of heroines such as Walt Disney's *Snow White*, *Cinderella*, and *Sleeping Beauty* as too obedient, passive, and timid.[94] Hopkins displays her own value judgements by claiming that the young female audience of "the post-feminist 1990s" would reject such 'modest, sweet, and softly spoken' heroines.[95]

Although it is much more complex than what Hopkins suggests, sociologist Samantha Holland, in relation to the fairy-tale princess, articulates the ambivalence attached to the figure of the normatively beautiful, apparently-passive fairy princess. Her female research participants, who perceive themselves as "alternative", declare their admiration for the figure of the beautiful princess. But Holland also points out that 'they also contradicted themselves and made statements to place themselves in opposition to her – they liked how she looked but they did not like the fact that she stood for complicity and passivity'.[96] Thus, while they appreciated the looks of such figures as *Snow White*, they articulated their preference for the evil queen. This is because 'she was strong, intelligent, wicked, had black hair and looked like a goth with her white face, red lips and black clothes – that is, someone [who] looked more like them'.[97] This reveals the difficulty of appreciating apparently non-aggressive, "infantile" cute aesthetics in Euro-American culture. The Euro-American *Lolita* look further illustrates this difficulty.

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[92] Men's dress is, of course, not excluded from public debate and regulation completely. One case to exemplify this is a style called sagging, where men wear trousers below the waist, thus revealing their underpants. Although some local governments and school systems in the United States have banned this style, it may be argued that this style has racial rather than gender issues, as it is said to have originated from, and is associated closely with, black and hip-hop cultures.

[93] *Ibd*., p. 114.

[94] Hopkins, *op.cit.*, p. 108.

[95] *Ibid.*, p. 141.

[96] S. Holland, *Alternative Femininities: Body, Age and Identity*. Oxford and New York: Berg. 2004, p. 58.

[97] *Ibid.*, p. 58.

Derived from Vladimir Nabokov's (in)famous novel *Lolita* (1955) and its "nymphet" heroine, the *Lolita* look, which generally consists of highly eroticised adolescent or preadolescent girls, has stirred a controversy in many European and American societies. What is striking is, this "look" not only includes young girls with highly eroticised appearances, but the reverse of the concept as well. In other words, the eroticisation of preadolescent or adolescent girls and the "infantilisation" of women are perceived as the two sides of a same coin called *Lolita*. For instance, media scholar Deborah Merskin perceives the trend for more mature-aged women to dress and look like prepubescent girls with 'baby doll-style dresses that reached only to upper thigh, hair arranged in bows and barrettes' as operating exclusively for an unhealthy, objectifying male gaze.[98] The media studies scholar Meenakshi Gigi Durham endorses this idea by saying:

> This is a different twist on the same idea: that ideal female sexuality is youthful, or even childlike…Numerous clothing ads feature grown women dressed as little girls, sucking on lollipops, with tiny barrettes or bows in their hair, kneeling, crouching or lying flat in positions of utter helplessness and subordination…Childishness is sexy, these messages imply. Ergo, children—especially little girls—are sexy'.[99]

Consequently, for these authors, such fashion signifies the objectification and infantilisation of women.[100] These authors demonstrate their strong disapproval of "unhealthy" eroticisation of women in general. It is also significant that the Euro-American public debate about erotic display of young women through such styles as "porno-chic" has been relatively calm and lenient until the style infiltrates children's fashion.[101] This exemplifies a strict regulation bounding the relationship between women's body and clothes. Young girls, presumably up until they reach the later stage of adolescence, are expected to dress "modestly" without a strong trace of sexuality. But once they reach a certain age, young women are seemingly forbidden to appear as "sweet" and "innocent" as they once were required to do. This arguably points to the regulation of women's appearance. Conversely, then, the controversy surrounding *Lolita* alludes to the presence of a strong notion that forbids adults' fascination with adolescents, particularly girls.

This is not a new argument. In relation to the nineteenth century luxurious French child dolls like Bébé Jumeau, art historian Juliette Peers notes that the late-nineteenth

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[98] J. Kilbourne, 1999 referred by D. Merskin, 'Reviving Lolita? A Media Literacy Examination of Sexual Portrayals of Girls in Fashion Advertising' *American Behavioral Scientist*, Volume 48, No. 1. 2004, p. 122.

[99] M. G. Durham, *Lolita Effect:The Media Sexualization of Young Girls and What We Can do About it*. Woodstock and New York: The Overlook Press. 2008, p. 119.

[100] Merskin, *op.cit.*, p. 122.

[101] Duits and van Zoonen, *op.cit.*, p. 106.

century female vaudeville performers 'often performed in childlike costumes to intermingle girlishness and sexual display'.[102] While the doll was supposedly an infant yet often dressed as a lady, the grown-up performers dressed in pseudo-juvenile fashion yet bore a distinct erotic charge. Thus, the criticism regarding the "child-woman", which was present even at the turn of twentieth-century, emphasised 'the ironies inherent in nineteenth-century attitudes to small girls, especially the simultaneous contradictory discourses of purity and erotic fantasy'.[103] Needless to say, these late-nineteenth century ideas preceded today's *Lolita* controversy.

I argue that a certain kind of *kawaii* (cute) aesthetics present in Japanese culture offers a different way of looking at "infantile" cute aesthetics. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the concept of *kawaii* has sometimes been criticised for endorsing pathological sexual commodification when applied to or performed by women.[104] However, the diversity of the concept needs to be recognised. Although the word *kawaii* often invokes a sense of vulnerability, fragility or infantility, it does not necessarily have to point to unfavourable passivity or meekness. Psychological and political anthropologist Brian J McVeigh moreover implies that the concept of *kawaii* can be deployed by women to assert their presence in the fashion of Joan Riviere's famous *Womanliness as Masquerade* (1929).[105] Similarly, Laura Miller points out that young women often inscribe their creative and authoritarian controls on the concept.[106] Arguably, this kind of Japanese *kawaii* aesthetics can be interpreted as a "delicate revolt" that softly and implicitly subverts established stereotypes and cultural preconceptions. This is well-manifested through a group of Japanese mainstream female performers who successfully retain their public image as cute yet independent, girlish yet considerably asexual. These performers and their manifestation of the possibility of detachment of eroticism from "infantile" cute and apparently saccharine fashion aesthetics will be explored in Chapter 4. There I contend that the negative attitudes towards "normative" or "excessive" feminine clothing forms

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[102] J. Peers, *The Fashion Doll From Bébé Jumeau to Barbie*. Oxford and New York: Berg. 2004, p. 86.

[103] *Ibid.*, p. 85.

[104] K. Akita, 'Cuteness: The Sexual Commodification of Women in the Japanese Media' in T. Carilli and J. Campbell (eds) *Women and the Media*. Lanham: University Press of America. 2005, pp. 44-57.

[105] In her famous work, Riviere (1991[1929]: 91) argued that a certain group of women 'who wish for masculinity' put on a mask of femininity in order to conceal the possession of masculinity and avert anxiety and retribution feared from men. This idea is significant in two ways. First of all, Riviere suggests that (at least some) women are able to possess and display both "masculinity" and "femininity". Secondly, she acknowledges the expected punishment if one fails to perform her expected gender as these women masquerade as guiltless and innocent in order to make sure of their safety. Moreover, Riviere (1991: 94) presented her view that there is no such difference between genuine womanliness and the "mask", saying 'whether radical or superficial, they [womanliness] are the same thing'.

[106] L. Miller, 'Perverse Cuteness in Japanese Girl Culture', paper presented at Japan Fashion Now Symposium at The Museum at Fashion Institute of Technology, 2010. (hereafter, Miller, *Cute*)

are largely reflected in the long-existing assumption that female sartorial ornamentation is a signifier of dependency and subservience. I ask in chapter 5 whether such a style truly connotes dependent, objectified, and pathologically passive women?

Lace Dress of Liberty

From the end of the eighteenth century, upper-class men in Europe are believed to have prioritised sartorial functionality over aesthetics. Contrary to men, bourgeois women in such societies were economically dependant on the male head of their household. Their dress, which was visibly more ornate than their male counterparts, were interpreted by some as a symbol of these women's (financially) dependent positions. One of the most famous works to have articulated this idea was sociologist Thorstein Veblen's analysis of dress. In *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899), he contended that a complete unsuitability for work would function as a symbol of the reputation of those who belonged to the 'Leisure Class', including embellished, delicate clothes. According to dress historian Michael Carter, Veblen 'is the first thinker in the fashion classics tradition to systematically ask why it is that there are such enormous differences between the dress of the sexes'.[107] The answer Veblen deduced was that 'women are not free agents but are the property of the household and, in particular, the property of the male head of the household'.[108]

Veblen's view is shared by another functionalist and his contemporary, architect Adolf Loos, who backed up his view in the essay *Ladies' Fashion*. He argued that '[o]nce she is married, the woman acquires her social stamp through her husband, regardless of whether she has been a coquette or a princess. This love makes her the man's subordinate'.[109] In contrast, '[m]en, being the owners of women, have been able to withdraw, to some extent, from direct competition among themselves while the dress of women – especially during Veblen's lifetime – becomes ever more complex, ornate and cumbersome'.[110] This means that women in such households became living indexes of the pecuniary strength of the male head of the household and their positions were sartorially indicated by the highly ornamental dresses they wore. Likewise, whilst men were primarily defined through their social or pecuniary states, women tended to be defined within the frame of heterosexual romance, through which they were believed to acquire their social stability. These functionalists obviously 'regarded functional simplicity as the

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[107] M. Carter, *Fashion Classics: From Carlyle to Barthes*. New York and Oxford: Berg. 2003, p. 48.
[108] *Ibd.*, p. 48.
[109] A. Loos, 'Ladies' Fashion' in *Spoken into the Void: Collected Essays 1897-1900*. J. O. Newman and J. H. Smith (trans). Cambridge and London: The MIT Press. 1982 [1898, 1902], p. 99.
[110] Carter, *op.cit.*, p. 54.

highest aesthetic attachment'.[111] For them, fashion was an index to distinguish a social hierarchy, in which bourgeois men occupy higher status than their female counterparts. This point is clearly articulated by Loos as follows:

> The clothing of the woman is distinguished externally from that of the man by the preference for ornamental and colourful effects and by the long skirt that covers the legs completely. These two factors demonstrate to us that the woman has fallen behind sharply in her development in recent centuries. No period of culture has known as great difference as our own between the clothing that was colourful and richly adorned and whose hem reached to the floor. Happily, the grandiose development in which our culture has taken part in this century has overcome ornament. I have to repeat myself here. The lower the culture, the more apparent the ornament. Ornament is something that must be overcome.[112]

Still further, according to Llewellyn Negrin, women's consent to wearing these clothes with ornamentation elucidated their acceptance of subservience to the male head of their household. This is because such dresses 'were far more uncomfortable and incapacitating than the dress for men'.[113] As she has pointed out, these early functionalist ideas of women's dress infused the writings of theorists in the twentieth century. Not only impeding the physical movement of the wearer, some authors even perceived such women's ornate dresses as symbolising the subjected position and psychological passivity of women; women as the object and slave of the male gaze. As noted previously, the prevalence of this idea is evident even today as Bordo indicates.

The French philosopher Simone de Beauvoir claimed in *The Second Sex* (1949) that in contrast to man, woman 'is even required by society to make herself an erotic object. The purpose of the fashions to which she is enslaved is not to reveal her as an independent individual, but rather to offer her as prey to male desires'.*[114]* Here she presented a similar idea to what Veblen and Loos had articulated nearly half a century earlier, saying heterosexual men's clothes should indicate supremacy, not a desire to attract attention or appraisal. In contrast, women's clothes, which are fragile and impede movement, render them the object of the spectacle. Museum curator and writer James Laver took this view, developing the assumption of the vivid sartorial differences between men and women even further. He articulated that 'our clothes are dictated by the fundamental desires of the opposite sex'.[115] In this view, women are expected to attract men by their physical

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[111] J. Finkelstein. *After a Fashion*. Carlton South, Vic.: Melbourne University Press. 1996, p. 9.

[112] Loos, *op.cit.*, p. 102.

[113] L. Negrin, 'The Self as Image A Critical Appraisal of Postmodern Theories of Fashion' *Theory, Culture & Society*, Volume 16, No. 3, 1999, p. 101. (hereafter, Negrin, *Image*)

[114] *S.* de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex.* Translated by H. M. Parshley, 1953. Middlesex: Penguin Books. 1975, p. 543.

[115] J. Laver, 1950, cited in Carter, *op.cit.*, p. 137.

attractiveness, which Laver described as the "Attraction/Seduction Principle", and their clothes are designed to serve that purpose to the maximum degree. In contrast, men are assumed to attract women by their social status, and thus, their clothes are predominantly determined by the "Hierarchical Principle". As a matter of fact, Loos preceded Laver's theory by contending:

> That which is noble in a woman knows only one desire: that she hold on to her place by the side of the big, strong man. At present this desire can only be fulfilled if the woman wins the love of the man…The woman's hope is to arouse the lust and desire of the man…Thus the woman is forced to appeal to the man's sensuality through her clothing, to appeal unconsciously to his sickly sensuality, for which only the culture of the times can be blamed.[116]

Although they may not be entirely misleading or illogical, the complete application of two of Laver's sartorial principles to each gender, that is "Hierarchical" to males and "Seduction" to females, is anachronistic. This is because we dress for different reasons at different times, depending on each occasion, and importantly, sometimes women might dress accordingly to the "Hierarchal" principle and men to that of "Attraction".[117] Moreover, a number of theorists have challenged the adequacy of construing such women's dress and its supposed uncomfortableness as representative of female oppression.[118] Wilson, for instance, contends that the political interpretation of "uncomfortable" dress as symbolic of female oppression is too simplistic because clothes have never been functional or natural in the first place.[119] Her view is rendered credible by what Entwistle has noted. Although generally overlooked, she writes, there is a degree of discomfort attached to 'the tight, fitted male clothes' as well.[120] Hollander even goes further by saying that comfort in clothing is not a physical condition but a mental condition, and thus the degree of comfort would not be likely to increase with revealing clothes rather than long, voluminous ones.[121] Indeed, women's senses of agency, not their passivity, are evident even in women's fashion in late-nineteenth-century Europe. The period's voluminous, crinoline skirts and corsets have been perceived by some as a sartorial incarnation of imposed female docility.

As Fashion historian Valerie Steele indicates, '[t]he image of the Victorian woman has long been that of a person both sexually repressed and socially oppressed. Her

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[116] Loos, *op.cit.*, p. 99-100.

[117] Entwistle, *Body*, p. 186.

[118] Negrin, *Appearance and identity: fashioning the body in postmodernity*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 2008, p. 117. (hereafter Negrin, *Appearance*)

[119] Wilson, *Dream*, p. 224.

[120] Entwistle, *Body*, p. 158.

[121] A. Hollander, *Seeing Through Clothes*. New York: The Viking Press. 1978, p. 339. (hereafter, Hollander, *Clothes*)

clothing has been interpreted as an outward manifestation of her ambivalent psychology and subordinate position in society'.[122] Perhaps repudiating the idea that wearing an ornate dress simply implies women's consent to submission, historian Bonnie G. Smith in *Ladies of the Leisure Class* (1981) has suggested that voluminous decoration of women's dresses in the mid to late 1800s might have given the wearers some degree of power and visibility.

> Full skirts, bodices, huge sleeves gave substance to female claims to importance by increasing their physical size to at least double that of men. Women wearing hoop skirts, crinolines, bustles, or trains filled the social space and made people aware of their presence.[123]

Smith argues that senses of agency and autonomy were thus involved when women wore ornate dresses.[124]

Steele also emphasises that the significant meanings ascribed to women's dress in the nineteenth century were far more complex, saying: 'Victorian fashion expressed neither the social and sexual repression of women nor male perceptions of them as primarily sexual beings'.[125] She argues that the Victorian woman's emulation of an ideal of beauty, even if it came with limitations, should be understood more 'as a personal choice or an aspect of women's self-development than as a part of their oppression as "sex objects"'.[126] This is because 'women dressed not only for men or against other women, but also for themselves'.[127]

Steele's point becomes even more significant when we consider Negrin's contention that as long as ornament is treated as sensuous embellishment devoid of meaning, it does not fully challenge the patriarchal perception that assumes feminine fashion equals insubstantiality.[128] Yet, the aesthetic value of clothing is one of the fundamental factors ruling our selection of clothes. Thus the aesthetic importance of clothing should not be underestimated. Can the aesthetic component in clothes be a sufficient reason to vindicate the importance of sartorial embellishment? In order to claim the absurdity and impracticability of fashion, for instance, functionalists such as Veblen 'reduces the role of fashion, failing to understand its more complex cultural and aesthetic role'.[129] Art

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[122] V. Steele, *Fashion and Eroticism: Ideals of Feminine Beauty from the Victorian Era to the Jazz Age*. NY and Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1985, p. 3.
[123] *Ibd.*, p. 79.
[124] B. G. Smith, *Ladies of the Leisure Class*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 1981, p. 55.
[125] Steele, *op.cit.*, p. 4.
[126] *Ibid.*, p. 4.
[127] *Ibid.*, p. 143.
[128] Negrin, *Appearance*, p. 137.
[129] Entwistle, *Body*, p. 163.

historian Toby Slade has moreover suggested that despite numerous influences of fashion trends, 'there is still free-will in individual aesthetic choice', thus reinforcing the importance of personal aesthetic choice in clothing.[130] If comfort is seen as one of the functions of clothing, wearing clothes that match our aesthetic sensibilities would surely and significantly, increase the functionality of the clothes.

Despite the works of theorists who have challenged, in my opinion successfully, the idea of female (ornate) dress as symbolic of oppression, the idea of (women's) fashion as being attuned to operating for male sexuality is still recreated today. Jeffreys, for instance, as recently as 2005, asserts that fashion works to maintain the subordination of women to men. For her, women's fashion requires their sexual display and its primary motivation is pleasing men and their sexual desires. Needless to say, her view is largely based on the fact that men and women dress differently for different motivations. As Jeffreys notes:

> Overwhelmingly members of the two sex classes, women and men, are identified through "fashion" by wearing quite different clothes with very different sets of meanings and these do not seem to change much over time.[131]

According to this logic, it is often assumed that a rigidly defined binary that "masculine" clothing styles carry connotations of power and authority while "feminine" clothing styles, as the former's negation, are reduced to the signifier of (unfavourable) passivity. Jeffreys' view that the meanings attached to clothes 'do not seem to change much over time' is not plausible since, as we have seen, men's dress sometimes operates to attract admirers while women's dress can function as displaying power and authority and vice versa. Despite this, the stereotype that deems "girlish" fashion styles as inferior is still evident in an ethnographic study of an English-speaking online community dedicated to the Japanese fashion trend of *Lolita*, which I undertook in the years 2004 and 2005 as part of my masters degree.

The World of Flounced Lolitas

Stylistically, and perhaps conceptually, different from "the Lolita look" found in European and American fashion advertising, the *Lolita* fashion style favours elaborately flounced, girlish looks with conceptual references to European historical dress forms. It has a small yet firm portion of followers outside Japan. One Canadian participant of the online community, answering the question of 'Is there anything you dislike about [Japanese] Lolita fashion?', notes: 'I guess the name. Lolita. Whenever people hear it they

[130] T. Slade, "Clothing Modern Japan". PhD Thesis, University of Sydney, 2006, p. 16.
[131] Jeffreys, *op.cit*, p. 106.

assume I'm some sort of whore'.[132] This idea is reinforced by another participant from the United States who expresses her anger at such an assumption:

> It seems that most people's initial reaction to the style is to be squicked out by the idea of eroticizing pre-adolescence. The Lolita=Pedophilia thing bothers me by itself, but what really bothers me is the extent to which people cannot divorce the idea from how men perceive it…Is it really that impossible to imagine that women might occasionally spend alot of time on their appearance without it being for anyone else's benefit? I've had to answer time and again, "Why do you want to be infantilized/dis-empowered/victimized?" and the answer is of course, that I don't. I want to wear lace trimmed knee length skirts and puffy sleeves and hair ribbons. "shrug" It is fun and makes me feel pretty.[133]

Many participants in the community indeed strongly deny the direct correlation between the *Lolita* style and the concept of sexualised *Lolita* drawn from Nabokov's novel. This point is highlighted by one of the interviewees in Suzanne Dorfield's recent article about the increased appreciation of the fashion in Brisbane, Australia (2010).[134] While the twenty-three years old claims that the style has its own aesthetic standard of feminine beauty that allows the wearer to appear attractive without "being revealing", some of the comments posted to the story offer opposite views. For example, one individual leaves a comment saying:

> I'm also surprised that these young Lolita girls believe that this style of dressing isn't provocative. It's fetishist in its own way. I'm guessing there are lots of men out there who would appreciate it in the same way some men are hot for girls who dress like strippers.

This sentiment is shared by another individual who comments '[o]n a more serious note – doesn't such a fashion promote an infantilization of female sexuality and the whole dichotomy between good girl and bad girl thing?'. Such negative connotations associated with fashion styles like *Lolita* in Euro-American societies reinforce the views of theorists like Jeffreys that emphatically "feminine" or "girlish" clothing styles as having a primarily (and often the only) purpose of serving and gratifying the objectifying gaze of men. According to this logic, the concept of "feminine" or "girlish" carries negative attributes, and clothing styles that evoke this concept inevitably operate to highlight gendered roles, which assign men an active position of objectifier and women the role of objectified. Can an "androgynous clothing style", which literally points to the combination of both

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[132] M. Monden, 'Transcultural Flow of Demure Aesthetics: Examining Cultural Globalisation through Gothic & Lolita Fashion' *New Voices*, vol. 2, p. 33. Forum comments are reproduced in this chapter as they were posted.

[133] *Ibid.*, p. 33-34.

[134] S. Dorfield, 'Brisbane 'Lolitas' change fashion landscape' *The Age*, November 5, 2010. [http://www.theage.com.au/lifestyle/fashion/brisbane-lolitas-change-fashion-landscape-20101105-17grh.html]

"masculine" and "feminine" traits, then, be women's ideal solution for escaping from these repressive distinctions between "man" and "woman"? It is not necessarily the case. This is because the "androgynous clothing style" (for women) often points to the style with no apparent "feminine" traits, and is fundamentally based on male clothes.

Epicene Clothes

While the term androgyny means the combination of "masculine" and "feminine" traits (*andr-*, meaning man and *gyné*, meaning woman in Greek), in modern times, the "androgynous" look for women often involves men's clothes. For the "androgynous" look, Hollander writes as follows:

> …when we dress our little boys and girls alike to blur their sexuality—or ourselves in imitation of them—that means we dress the girls like the boys, in the manifold costumes that celebrate nonsexual physical prowess. At leisure, both men and women prefer to suggest versions of Adam alone in Eden before he knew he had a sex, innocently wearing his primal sweat suit made only of native worth and honor.[135]

"Female androgyny" as an aesthetically pleasing look, Hollander argues, may not aim to render women as looking fully "masculine", but its appeal lies in women's assumption of a kind of beauty associated with the sexual uncertainty of the adolescent boy.[136] This means that the look of an adolescent boy is perceived as connoting sexual ambiguity while that of an adolescent girl is not. In other words, the clothes that visibly connote "girlishness" are highly gendered, and are not considered "androgynous". Furthermore, women's intake of "masculine" styles, which is a part of the "androgynous look", might provide a sense of power that "girlish" fashion styles are believed to lack.

Particularly since the nineteenth century, the appropriation of "male" sartorial items by women has been notable. Some argue that this is because male clothes connote power and authority.[137] Since dress is inextricable from our inner "self", wearing clothes believed to be appropriate for the gender of power and privilege might indicate some women's desire to gainsay the negative attributes assigned to their gender.[138] Influential dress sociologist Fred Davis argued that this preconception that equates masculinity with power and femininity as dependence is culturally inscribed performance. He put it as follows:

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[135] A. Hollander, *Feeding the Eye*, Barkley and LA: University of California Press. 2000 p. 157. (hereafter, Hollander, *Eye*)

[136] Hollander, *Eye*, p. 153.

[137] See, for example; Negrin, *Appearance*, p. 148; Edwards, *Mirror*, p. 17; F. Davis, *Fashion, culture, and identity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1992.

[138] Negrin, *Appearance*, p. 31.

> Theoretically there is no need for women in business and the professions to opt for masculine dress insignia. They could conceivably move in a unisex direction that is avowedly neither masculine nor feminine (consider surgical gowns). However, the cultural linkage of "male = work, career, skill mastery, authority" is so formidable, it is not at all surprising that this is the symbolic trajectory the identity negotiation assumes.[139]

On the contrary, for men, the extensive incorporation of feminine sartorial items into their fashion could mean a diminution of their power and authority.[140] Ultimately, a very feminine appearance is interpreted and connoted as 'without power, and, indeed, as pathological'.[141] Hence, renouncing feminine appearance and adopting "masculine" or "boyish" appearance 'becomes an act of renouncing powerlessness, of claiming power for oneself'.[142] The idea Davis articulated affirms the performative nature of gender. "Gender" is, Davis' theory endorses, performed through the selection of clothes. Women's desire to claim power and authority, both of which are conventionally assigned to the "male" gender, is displayed through their incorporation of "masculine" clothing items. Arguably, the masculine-leaning "androgynous style" is a good example of this. The idea that associates male dress with power loops back to the debate of whether or not the clothes that visibly connote "femininity" are symbolic of gendered oppression. I argue that the Japanese fashion style of *Lolita* offers a highly useful case study. This is particularly evident in the tension between the critical reception of the public and the motivations of the wearer.

We might, for example, ask such questions as: To what extent does a "girlish" and emphatically "ornamental" fashion-look such as Japanese *Lolita* style signify such negative connotations? Could it instead offer an alternative to the somewhat monolithic idea that associates decorative girlish fashion with an undesirable passivity? Via a contextual analysis of the Japanese film *Kamikaze Girls* (2004), which centres around a teenage heroine who is dressed almost exclusively in the *Lolita* style, I examine these questions in Chapter 5. I argue that the film and its representation of the fashion style reinforce one facet of the theory of gender performativity, namely that women can "perform" both "masculine" and "feminine" acts alternately, while being (in this case) clad in the same dress adorned with flounces and ribbons. I ask, could this allude to a new way of conceptualising an "androgynous" look?

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[139] Davis, *op.cit.*, p. 48.
[140] Negrin, *Appearance*, p. 148.
[141] Paechter, *op.cit.*, p. 257.
[142] *Ibid.*,. 257.

Conclusion

It is simplistic to assume that clothes with the connotation of "femininity" are motivated for inciting and serving men's sexual pleasures while all "masculine" clothes are devoid of aesthetic pleasures. Many theories of dress and fashion crystallize this idea. This is particularly true for the perceptions concerning men's relationship with fashion and the connotations of women's (ornate) dress. Scholarly works analysing representations of (young) women and their fashion other than through the multiple binaries of (eroticised) assertiveness and fragility are still sparse. Although the conceptions that assume the completely separated motivations for clothes based on one's gender are becoming anachronistic, many of us still dress in "gendered" fashion. In this sense, Entwistle is right in saying:

> …while women enjoy wider freedom in terms of dress today and men, since the 1980s, are able to indulge in previously 'feminine' pleasures such as fashion, contemporary society remains preoccupied with sexual difference, defining particular styles of body and dress for men and women.[143]

The following chapters will calibrate how the questions mapped in this chapter can be understood within the Japanese cultural context. This journey begins with the analysis of men's relationships with fashion as represented in a group of Japanese fashion magazines targeted at young men.

[143] Entwistle, *Body*, p. 180.

Chapter 2

Model Takeshi Mikawai gazing at his reflection, fixing his hair in the window of a hair salon.
MEN'S NON-NO, February 2008.

Chapter 2: The Magic Virtue of A Glance

> …I saw Fujiki's face. The eyes of Fujiki –these two dark eyes are what have captivated my mind. Too pellucid and emitting glisters like icy crystals, his eyes pierce my body at once…these eyes are surely telling something. But I cannot, tantalizingly, decipher what they are, what they are telling.
>
> ---Takehiko Fukunaga, *Wildflowers*, 1954.[1]

> …Tetsuo smiled. He looked at me straight and nodded. That was such a stunningly beautiful smile that my eyes were fixed on him…in this night, I am gazing at Tetsuo through a new set of eyes, with my heart having been unfiltered for the first time after going through days with the new experiences.
>
> ---Banana Yoshimoto, *Sad Premonition*, 1988.[2]

A young slender man of about twenty is leaning slightly against an ivory coloured wall. His face is turned away, with the gaze dreamily focused faraway. He is neatly dressed in a Burberry checked shirt and a pair of grey trousers. Another young man, about the age of eighteen, is sitting at the poolside, dipping his willowy right foot in the glistering emerald-green water. His delicate, boyish face with a faint smile is also slightly turned away, again with the gaze drifting faraway. He is attired in a short-sleeved, grey check shirt with white collars, buttoned up to the neck, and a pair of tight-fitting, knee-length black shorts. A black-and-white striped tie cascades gracefully down his beautifully pressed shirt. The genres of young women's fashion magazines or romantic Hollywood cinema are where we might assume these suave men dwell. Yet, these images are what you encounter when looking at a group of Japanese fashion magazines targeted at young heterosexual men.[3]

Readers unfamiliar with contemporary Japanese media might be puzzled by the appearance of men in fashion magazines. This is particularly the case for images of young men whose almost narcissistic concerns over their appearance and slender physicality are seemingly presented as requirements for (heterosexually) desirability and attractiveness.[4]

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[1] T. Fukunaga, *Kusa no hana* (Wildflowers). Quote translated by Masafumi Monden. Tokyo: Shinchō-sha. 1989 [1954], p. 60.

[2] B. Yoshimoto, *Kanashii yokan* (Sad Premonition). Quote translated by Masafumi Monden. Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten. 1991 [1988], p. 112.

[3] The targeted readership of these publications is a heterosexual male. This is made obvious through the heterosexual discourse they deploy throughout. These magazines often run features with such titles as "The styles that attract girls" or "What fashion items girls like", and young women's perspectives on men's fashion styles are often incorporated. The absence of images or contents related to sexuality in many of these magazines including *POPEYE* and *MEN'S NON-NO*, particularly in their fashion contents, nevertheless may attract men regardless of their sexual orientations.

[4] In the strict sense of the term, narcissism means one's pathological attachment to or interest in one's own appearance. However, the word vanity, too, inevitably conveys negativity - excessive pride in or admiration

Since Japanese men's fashion magazines offer significantly lavish sources for the study of images of contemporary Japanese masculinity, I dedicate two chapters to the subject. In this chapter I argue that a complex and overlapping series of aesthetic priorities and interests captivate young male consumers in contemporary Japan. A rich study of subjectivity and aesthetics might be made via these Japanese men's magazines, where male aesthetic sensitivities at a cultural level and "the self" might be understood in different terms than they are in many Euro-American cultures. This is particularly evident in these magazines' acceptance of and even a pedagogy around men becoming the object of the appraising gaze, a status that has conventionally been assigned to women in Euro-American cultural contexts regardless of their will. Feminist theorists such as Laura Mulvey and Susan Bordo have set their arguments around whether or not the gaze is "male" whilst E. Ann Kaplan has said that women need to be in the "masculine" position in order to own the "gaze".[5]

It is arguable that in Japanese culture, not only women, but men too have been the object of the gaze. The two quotes from Japanese novels that opened this chapter, for instance, narrate that (young) men can be subjected to the gaze of both a man and a woman. This chapter draws upon that hypothesis. I argue that these magazines illuminate a group of Japanese young men who are in the position to be the object of the gaze. Importantly, positive evaluations of their appearance can enhance these young men's self-assurance.

This chapter proceeds in three sections. The first section gives a general overview of contemporary Japanese men's fashion magazines. I look briefly at six unofficial categories of fashion styles that have evolved around Japanese young men, and describes how the magazines correspond with each style. The second section offers a content analysis of three Japanese men's fashion magazines, with particular attention to their prioritisation of fashion over lifestyle contents and the specific age demographic of their readerships. This section also looks at characteristics such as reader-models and fictional narratives, which help maintain an extreme sensitivity to social change and trends as well as social affinity between the readership and the contents the magazines endorse. The final section seeks to establish the idea that these magazines' emphasis on the necessity of taking care of

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of one's own appearance. In this chapter, narcissism or narcissistic concern is used to describe one's strong concern for appearance, which does not necessarily invoke negativity.

[5] L. Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' in M. G. Durham and D. Kellner (eds) *Media and Cultural Studies: Key Works*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers. 2001 [1975];S. Bordo, 'Beauty (Re)Discovers the Male Body', in Z. P. Brand (ed) *Beauty Matters*, Indiana Bloomington: University Press. 2000; E. A. Kaplan, *Women and Film: Both Sides of the Camera*, New York and London: Methuen. 1983.

appearance, which is a requirement to render a fine impression, endorses for men the importance of being subjected to the viewing glance.

A General Review of Men's Fashion Periodicals

As elsewhere, clothing and cosmetic regimes are recurrent interests in Japanese fashion magazines. A shade of uniqueness is added, though, to the "gendered" distribution of the contents, that is, these interests are espied in magazines targeting both women and men. Sociologist John Clammer, in his study of contemporary Japanese print media and representations of the female body, briefly refers to men's magazines as follows:

> Interestingly, men's magazines such as *Fine Boys* [sic] are the almost exact masculine counterpart of female fashion magazines, full of images of the young male body, advice on hair, clothes, skins, diet, and accessories. And all this, almost absent in the western media, is aimed at decidedly heterosexual men. The parallels in the print media for women and for men are remarkable.[6]

It should be noted that Clammer's comments are now more than fifteen years old, and the validity of his comparison between Japanese and Anglophone magazines may no longer apply. I look, although briefly, at the theoretical literature on Anglophone men's magazines later in this chapter. That being said, Clammer's quote illustrates the particularity of Japanese men's magazines. This is especially notable in relation to their approaches to men's fashion and beauty consumption, which, I contend, reflect the images of the highly fashion-conscious men widely circulated in contemporary Japan. The emphasis of these Japanese publications is highlighted by the prevalent assumption in Anglophone studies of fashion that men prioritise functionality over aesthetics. In other words, men are assumed not to be affected by the "frivolity" of fashion, but only dress for necessity. As we have seen in Chapter 1, a considerable number of scholars such as Elizabeth Wilson, Joanne Entwistle, and Christopher Breward have challenged this *idée fixe*, claiming that men as much as women have been affected by fashion. Arguably, the recurrence of such a debate implies the persistence of the idea that men's "lack" of concern with clothes define their "masculine" identities.[7] Throughout this chapter, I argue that a group of Japanese men's fashion magazines offer a firm example that male fashionability can be interlaced with "masculine" identity.

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[6] J. Clammer, 'Consuming Bodies: Constructing and Representing the Female Body in Contemporary Japanese Print Media' in Skov. L. and Morean, B. (eds) *Women, Media and Consumption in Japan*, Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press. 1995, p. 210.

[7] See, for example; J. Craik, *The Face of Fashion: Cultural studies in fashion*. London and New York: Routledge.1994, p. 176; T. Edwards, *Men in the mirror: men's fashion, masculinity and consumer society*. London: Cassell.1997, p. 3. (hereafter Edwards, *Mirror*)

The significance of analysing magazines targeting male readership lies in the possibility that representations of "masculinity" found in magazines might both reflect and shape certain ideals and ideas of gender. Needless to say, further research on the readership and their reception would be necessary in order to argue how these representations are actually consumed and interact with the male readership of the magazines. However, one might also deduce that a collection of Japanese men's fashion magazines at least allow calibration of the ways in which Japanese conceptions of youthful masculinity are manifested.

Contemporary Japanese Fashion Magazines: A Brief History

Although there has been a decline in magazine sales recently,[8] the Japanese magazine market is known to be very dynamic.[9] A category of fashion magazines targeted at men, for instance, exemplifies this crowdedness; currently about 40 fashion magazines targeted primarily at men are sold monthly in Japan.[10] Likewise, since market categorisation, by gender, interests, tastes, and age, is very specific in Japan, 'the Japanese magazine market is overclassified'.[11] Accordingly, only a tiny selection of magazines has been selected for the primary subject of this chapter: *POPEYE*, launched in 1976; *MEN'S NON-NO*, launched in 1986 first as a special, male edition of *non-no*, a still popular fashion magazine for young women; and *FINEBOYS*, launched in 1986 (figures 2, 3 & 4).

Figure 2 A fashion spread in *POPEYE*, October 2010

[8] M. Morimoto and S. Chang, 'Western and Asian Models in Japanese Fashion Magazine Ads: The Relationship with Brand Origins and International Versus Domestic Magazines' *Journal of International Consumer Marketing*, Vol. 21, No. 3, 2009, p. 179.

[9] According to Brian Moeran (2006:229), more than fifty major new titles were launched in 2002 alone.

[10] *Fashion Magazine: men's fashion zassi gaido (Men's Fashion Magazine Guide)*. [http://www.magazine-data.com/menu/oyazi.html]. As of December 9 2011, this website lists 40 monthly men's magazines currently sold in Japan.

[11] B. Moeran, 'Elegance and Substance Travel East: Vogue Nippon' *Fashion Theory*, Vol. 10, Issue 1/2, 2006, p. 229.

Figure 3 A fashion spread in *MEN'S NON-NO*, November 2010

Figure 4 A fashion spread in *FINEBOYS*, March 2010

These three monthly magazines are selected via four commonalities. Firstly, they have an established, mainstream stature. *POPEYE* has been on the market for more than 35 years while *MEN'S NON-NO* and *FINEBOYS* maintain their popularity, occupying fifth and sixth places respectively in the category of men's fashion and information magazines in Bunkyō-dō's online magazine ranking as recently as in December 1st, 2011.[12] Secondly, they target young men in their late-teens to early twenties, particularly those who are in college. According to *FINEBOYS*' own survey conducted in 2007, 69 per cent of its male readers are aged between eighteen and twenty-one, 55 per cent of the readers are university students, and ten per cent are vocational college students.[13] It has also become

[12] [http://bignet2.bunkyodo.co.jp/bignet2/magranking.asp?id=dajoh]. Bunkyō-dō is currently one of the biggest chains of bookstores in Japan.

[13] *FINEBOYS*, August 2007, pp.121-128. According to the magazine, over 600 men participated in the survey. Since it is an informal survey with no information regarding survey methodology are provided, its credibility might be in question. However, it offers a picture of how the magazine's editors perceive and conceptualize their male readers.

an annual convention for *MEN'S NON-NO* and *POPEYE* to include a feature about business suits in their April issues, clearly intended for those who are finishing school and about to enter the next stage of their career (assumedly as office workers). Thirdly, they focus on similar neat and conservative styles of *kireime* (neat) or casual-high fashion; and fourthly, they have an almost complete absence of images of eroticised women, or sexually explicit materials. I look at all of these characteristics in more detail in this chapter. My analysis of these magazines is primarily based on the issues released between May 2007 and June 2008. However, in order to keep abreast of the currency of these magazines, newer editions of the magazines have also been acquired and are analysed where possible.

The history of contemporary Japanese men's fashion magazine began with *Otokono fukushoku* (Men's Dress). The magazine was published in 1954 by Fujingahou-sha, as the first Japanese young men's magazine for prêt-à-porter clothes as opposed to *Danshi senka* (Men's Special Course,1950), a magazine predominantly focused on bespoke clothing, which was targeted at tailors.[14] *Otokono fukushoku*, which was later renamed *MEN'S CLUB*, was particularly well-known for its close ties with the Japanese version of "Ivy-league" style, a fashion style inspired by students of American Ivy-league universities in the 1950s and 60s, and the VAN men's fashion brand. The current form of Japanese fashion magazines targeted at young individuals is said to have begun with *an an*, a young women's lifestyle magazine published by Heibon-sha (now Magazinehouse). The magazine was launched in 1970, initially targeting Japan's first baby-boomers.[15] This young woman's lifestyle magazine was born as a female equivalent of Japanese men's lifestyle magazine *Heibon Punch* (1964-the late 1980s) and as a Japanese edition of *Elle* magazine. *an an*, along with its follower and competitor *non-no* (launched 1971) marked a shift from young women's main roles as housewives and mothers 'towards a focus on women as consumers of fashion and luxury items'.[16] Its consumption and visual-oriented contents, with a significant emphasis on advertisements, 'has set various trends relevant to the men's magazines'.[17] *POPEYE*, a magazine for "city boys" with an emphasis on subcultural lifestyle with neat, sporty West-coast American fashions, was launched in 1976 by Magazinehouse. Popeye boys, who were believed to be influenced by the magazine

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[14] K. Ishizu, *Itsumo zero kara no shuppatsudatta (I always made my start from nothing)*. Tokyo: Nihon tosho centre. 2010, pp. 54-55.

[15] The magazine was originally published bimonthly and now weekly.

[16] F. Darling-Wolf, 'The Men and Women of non-no: Gender, Race and Hybridity in Two Japanese Magazines' *Cultural Studies in Media Communication*, volume 23, no. 3, 2006, p. 185.

[17] K. Tanaka 'The language of Japanese men's magazines: young men who don't want to get hurt' in B. Benwell (ed) *Masculinity and Men's Lifestyle Magazines*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing. 2003, p. 224.

and the styles it offered, came to symbolise the Japanised "Ivy" style in the late 1970s and early 1980s, with a polo shirt and a pair of golf trousers as their signature look.[18] 1986 saw a boom in young men's fashion, which coincided with the launches of such men's fashion magazines as *MEN'S NON-NO* and *FINEBOYS*.[19] After the launch of these magazines, Japan witnessed the rise and fall of many men's fashion magazines: *smart* (1995) *Street JACK* (1997) *men's egg* (1999) *Choki Choki* (2000) *Mens' JOKER* (2004), *MEN'S KNUCKLE* (2004) and so forth.

As we have seen, John Clammer has noted that magazines targeted at heterosexual men that feature appearance-related images and contents are almost totally absent in the Western media. Men's magazines in non-Asian contexts, such as Euro-American ones, have a long and diverse history. Thus they deserve a whole research study of their own. Nonetheless, it is useful to briefly survey the scholarly discussions surrounding contemporary popular print media for non-Asian men. Understanding the significant attributes of Euro-American men's lifestyle magazines will help to map the characteristics shared by both cultures as well as identify those that are culturally specific to the Japanese publications.

Two Sides of The Coin: Discourses of the "New Man" and "New Lad"

In recent times, it has become rather a convention in sociology and media studies to examine Euro-American, particularly British, men's magazines through two prominent marketing discourses –the "new man" and "new lad". Emerging in the 1980s, the "new man" is the term used to describe men who allegedly display feminine and masculine qualities of nuturance and caring at the same time as a concern about appearance.[20] Sociologist Federico Boni describes the "new man" as 'a man who retains several characteristics of the traditional, "hegemonic" masculinity and yet is concerned with new, more "feminine" issues such as body care and health'.[21] By contrast, the British "new lad" masculinity, which is strongly identified with sports, 'has been described as a rejection of [this] feminized and feminist "new man" masculinity…and a reactionary return to sexist attitudes and a binary and polarized conception of gender'.[22] Although young men, in reality, are not necessarily defined by either of these labels, these two discourses of

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[18] E. Miura, 'J J Girls/Popeye Boys' in Across Editorial Office (ed) *Street Fashion 1945-1995*. Tokyo: Parco. 1995, p.184.

[19] N. Ōi, 'DC Brand' in Across Editorial Office (ed) *Street Fashion 1945-1995*. Tokyo: Parco. 1995, p. 200-2002.

[20] T. Edwards, *Cultures of Masculinity*. New York: Routledge. 2006, p. 39. (hereafter Edwards, *Culture*)

[21] F. Boni, 'Framing Media Masculinities: Men's Lifestyle Magazines and the Biopolitics of Men's Lifestyle Magazines and the Male Body' *European Journal of Communication*, Vol. 17, No. 4, 2002, p. 469.

[22] B. Benwell, 'Ironic Discourse: Evasive Masculinity in Men's Lifestyle Magazines' *Men and Masculinities*, Vol. 7, No. 1, 2004, p. 3.

masculinity represent two dominant male images in contemporary Euro-American men's "lifestyle" magazines. Some authors argue that *Men's Health* (launched 1987 in the US) is the epitome of "new man's" magazines with its emphasis upon sturdy, "hegemonic" masculine body types and attitudes, its exclusion of pornographic images of women, and its embrace of designer clothing and other accessories in its advertising pages.[23]

First published in 1994, the British magazine *Loaded* might be considered as the "laddish" equivalent of *Men's Health*, as it is 'best described as a bargain bible for lager louts, being concerned with beer-swilling, shagging and looking sharp, or simply being objectionable, and often in that order'.[24] These "masculine" interests are perceived by some as "natural" and "authentic" British male interests. For instance, language and gender studies scholar Bethan Benwell argues that:

> The founders of *Loaded* magazine, James Brown and Tim Southwell had wanted to produce a publication that was rooted in the everyday pleasures and language of ordinary young men, a view endorsed by groups of readers interviewed by Jackson, Stevenson, and Brooks (2001), who frequently refer to *Loaded* in terms of "authenticity," "naturalness," and "honesty".[25]

The notion of "ordinary" British men identifying with the "new lad" is thus presented here.

Benwell also points out that the often homophobic and misogynist contents of such men's magazines are predominantly ironic, saying that 'irony is strategically employed in the constitution (and evasion) of a specific textual masculine identity'.[26] According to this logic, irony is an important factor in modern constructions of masculinity while the misogynistic and homophobic attitudes it accompanies might not necessarily be taken at face value. The magazine's actual influences upon its readers, however, might not necessarily reflect the editors' intentions. As cultural theorist Stuart Hall articulated, a given message might be decoded differently by different receivers, and hence the original intention of the message or the sender cannot be prescribed or guaranteed.[27] Hall's view outlines a danger that some readers may take the homophobia and misogyny found in these magazines at face value.

The success of *Loaded* has had some influence on other men's titles. Attwood has noted that British men's lifestyle magazines in the 1980s were partly modelled on 1950s

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[23] See, for example: Alexander, *op. cit.*,; Boni, *op. cit.*, p. 469.

[24] T. Edwards, 'Consuming Masculinities: Style, Content and Men's Magazines' in P. McNeil and V. Karaminas (eds) *The Men's Fashion Reader*. NY: Berg. 2009, p. 468. (hereafter Edwards, *Style*)

[25] Benwell, *op. cit.,* p. 5.

[26] *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

[27] S. Hall, 'Encoding/Decoding' in V. Nightingale and K. Ross (eds) *Critical Readings: Media and Audience*, Maidenhead: Open University Press. 2003 [1980], pp. 51-65.

American men's magazines such as *Playboy*, including its representations of "bachelor hedonism". Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, the distinction between upmarket men's lifestyle magazines such as *GQ* and downmarket magazines such as *Loaded* has blurred. With 'a tendency towards a more downmarket style across the board', magazines like *GQ* and *Arena* increasingly feature images of scantily dressed women and (semi)pornographic materials.[28] This tendency is still evident, as the photographic images of American actress Anne Hathaway in underwear seductively accompanying her interview in the April 2010 edition of Australian *GQ*, attest.[29] Although there are a variety of explanations for this shift towards the downmarket style in British men's lifestyle magazines,[30] the "new man" and the "new lad" can be perceived as two sides of the same coin, negotiating between "hegemonic" masculinity and "feminine" interests, and working in something of a productive cultural tension together to represent contemporary masculinity.

Following the socio-psychological analysis of gender articulated by Sandra L. Bem in Chapter 1, this can be interpreted as such: that in order to encourage men to actively participate in what has traditionally been believed to be reserved for females (i.e. fashion and fragrances), the magazines actively deploy images of "hegemonic" masculinity (i.e. muscled, hard body or laddishness). Thus, the magazines assure the their male readership that consuming these products connotes "masculinity". These are some of the ways in which young men's associations with fashion are perceived and crafted in contemporary mainstream Euro-American publications. The question now is, do representations of young men and their ways of engaging with clothes and fashion differ in Japanese magazines? One of the striking features of Japanese men's fashion magazines is the sartorial variations they offer.

Fashion Magazines for Japanese Men: Six Styles

The increasing visibility of fashion and appearance consciousness among Japanese young men has suggested sartorial variations. For instance, there are at least six unofficial categories to describe contemporary Japanese young men's styles, and there are fashion magazines that correspond to each style (table 2).[31]

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[28] F. Attwood, 'Tits and ass and porn and fighting': Male heterosexuality in magazines for men' *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, volume 8, issue 1, 2005, p. 85.

[29] *GQ Australia*, April/May, 2010, pp. 134-41.

[30] Attwood, *op.cit.*, p. 93.

[31] The categories offered here are strongly modelled on *Elastic*, a Japanese blog observing fashion, magazines, and trends. Its entry of October 14, 2008 is titled 'Categorisation and analysis of men's fashion magazines'. See: [http://taf5686.269g.net/article/13514077.html.].

Table 2 Unofficial Categories of Japanese Young Men's Fashion Magazines

Name of Style	Characteristics	Examples of Associated Magazines	Notes
Kireime	neat, tidy and rather conservative	*FINEBOYS, smart*	a fashion beginner
Salon-mode	individualistic, unisex, and layered-coordination	*CHOKI CHOKI*	a slightly ornamental style often inspired by stylish young hairdressers, a focus on hairstyles
Onii-mode or gal-o/gyaru-o	dark, hard yet gaudy and sexy clothes, ornate belts and accessories	*men's egg*, *MEN'S KNUCKLE*	working-class dominated, Host fashion[32]
Urahara/Street-mode	American-casual, skater-boy style inspired or a group of styles often found in a particular area of Harajuku	*Street JACK*	Often involves a mix of clothes from casual brands with second-hand clothing.
Casual-high fashion-mode	Combines casual and high fashion brand clothing	*MEN'S NON-NO POPEYE, Men's JOKER*	Stylistically similar to *kireime* but slightly more flamboyant and high-priced
Mode or high fashion-style	Luxurious brand clothing styles	*VOGUE HOMMES JAPAN*	Designer, Expensive

Unofficial categories of contemporary Japanese young men's fashion include *Kireime* (neat, tidy and conservative, *FINEBOYS*, *smart*), a fashion beginner (figures 5 & 6); *Salon-mode* (individualistic, feminine or unisex, and layered-coordination, *CHOKI CHOKI*), a slightly ornamental, hairdresser-inspired style with a strong focus on hairstyles (figures 7 & 8);[33] *Onii-mode or Gal-o/gyaru-o* (dark clothes, ornate belts and accessories, *men's egg*, *MEN'S KNUCKLE*), a sexy and wild, most likely associated with the private styles of hosts (figures 9 & 10); *Street-mode* (American-casual, skater-boy style or *Urahara*-style inspired, *Street JACK*), a style of mix clothes from casual brands and second-hand clothing, often found in a particular area of Harajuku, Tokyo called *UraHara* (Ura-Harajuku, literally the "back streets" of the Harajuku district, figures 11 & 12); *Casual-high fashion-mode* (prevailing casual-high fashion styles, *MEN'S NON-NO*, *POPEYE*, *Men's JOKER*), stylistically not dissimilar from *kireime* style, but involves more high-priced brand clothing (figures 13 &

[32] Japanese hosts are young men who pour drinks to their customers, mostly women, in clubs known as host-clubs. They are predominantly good-looking and are dressed and styled in a certain, distinctive way such as a European brand suit, tanned skin and a longish elaborate, John Bon Jovi-like hairstyle. Steele (2010: 56) describes their sartorial styles as 'sharp suits, sometimes with a rock or military feel, such as the use of zoot-suit-type long jackets'. The magazines such as *men's egg* and *MEN'S KNUCKLE* also feature classified advertisements for hosts. This kind of advertisements is absent in magazines focused on other styles, further endorsing the association between *garyu-o* magazines and hosts.

[33] In contemporary Japanese culture, a group of hairstylists, particularly those who are employed in posh hair salons in big cities, tend to dress in certain, distinctive fashions, which have come to be known as "salon-mode". This style has attracted a group of young men, making it an unofficial subcultural style.

14), and; *Mode or high fashion-styles* (luxurious brand clothing styles, *VOGUE HOMMES JAPAN*, figure 15).

Figure 5 Cover of *smart*, June 2010

Figure 6 Examples of *kireime* styles in *smart*, June 2010

Figure 7 Cover of *CHOKI CHOKI*, January 2010

Figure 8 Examples of *salon-mode* boys in *CHOKI CHOKI*, May 2011

Figure 9 Cover of *men's egg*, April 2011

Figure 10 Examples of *Gal-o* in *men's egg*, April 2011

Figure 11 Cover of *Street JACK*, October 2010

Figure 12 A Fashion spread in *Street JACK*, January 2011

Figure 13 Cover of *Men's JOKER* September 2010

Figure 14 A Fashion spread in *Men's JOKER*, September 2010

Figure 15 Examples of *Vogue Hommes Japan*, October 2010

Some of these styles are not dissimilar or distinctively marked from one another. It is important to recognize that there exist many kinds of magazines targeting males in their late teens to early twenties in Japan. This means that there exist many choices of style and modes of masculinity available for Japanese young men. I suggest that what makes these Japanese publications remarkable is the domination of fashion over lifestyle contents. I

examine these points through three selected magazines: *POPEYE*, *MEN'S NON-NO*, and *FINEBOYS*.

Neat, Conservative and Aesthetic: Three Japanese Men's Fashion Magazines

The three magazines that I have chosen enjoy a mainstream status in Japan, and, arguably, correspond to the widespread and accepted male fashionability, taken up by (ordinary/common) young men. *MEN'S NON-NO* is the most widely circulated of them all, with an average 223, 334 readership per month. It is followed by *FINEBOYS* with 129,059 and *POPEYE*, with 64,584.[34] Issues regarding fashion comprise more than 60 per cent of the total features in each of the three magazines (table 3). This is especially true for *POPEYE*, where more than 70 per cent of its contents are about clothes, bags, shoes and accessories. Most of these fashion photo pages provide details such as the name of the brand and its price, thus serving the dual functions of fashion catalogue and advertisement.

Table 3 Content Analysis of The Three Men's Magazines

		POPEYE	*MEN'S NON-NO*	*FINEBOYS*
Advertising:	**Fashion**	**8.06**	**7.61**	**5.35**
	Technology	0.92	1.73	1.77
	Automobile	0.53	0.74	0.26
	Sexual Health, Cosmetic Surgery, etc	0.96	3.42	5.87
	Cigarettes	1.46	1.44	0
	Other	2.06	4.05	3.11
Total		13.99	18.99	16.36
Features:	**Fashion**	**70.74**	**60.89**	**60.21**
	Beauty	**0.71**	**1.66**	**5.4**
	Sport	0.07	0.35	0.26
	Automobile	0.82	0.35	0.95
	Technology	1.56	0.35	1.77
	General Articles	2.34	5.92	3.24
	Horoscope	0.43	1.02	0.52
	Stock Listing	0.25	0.35	0.52
	Girls	0.78	0.81	1.64
	Culture/Interviews	4.83	4.69	4.66
	Other	3.48	4.79	4.49
Total		86.01	81.18	83.66
Total number of pages		284	235	193

Note: Results based on the average of 12 issues between May 2007 and June 2008
All figures except the total page numbers are given in percentages

[34] Shadan-hōjin nihon zasshi-kyōkai (Japan Magazine Organisation) [http://www.j-magazine.or.jp/].

If we combine the numbers of fashion advertisements and fashion features, 78.80 per cent of *POPEYE*, 68.50 per cent of *MEN'S NON-NO*, and 65.56 per cent of *FINEBOYS* are comprised of fashion and appearance-related images. Only a few decades ago, Sean Nixon considered British *Arena* and *GQ*, with approximately 30 per cent of the editorial space dedicated to fashion, as significantly extensive.[35] Indeed, a ratio of fashion-related materials in these Japanese magazines is significantly higher than Euro-American men's "lifestyle" magazines such as *GQ*, *Arena* or *Loaded* where fashion comprises about 35 per cent or less of their contents.[36] The Italian edition of *Men's Health* also devotes approximately 14.3 per cent of its contents to fashion.[37] Calling these Japanese men's publications *fashion magazines* is thus justified.

The price of *FINEBOYS* is the lowest of the three (590 yen in 2010, or approximately AUD $7.20) whereas both *POPEYE* and *MEN'S NON-NO* are priced as 650 yen or $7.95. Magazines such as *men's egg*, *MEN'S KNUCKLE* and *CHOKI CHOKI* cost even less, 500 yen or AUD $ 6.10 each. Perhaps corresponding to this, the fashion brands featured in *FINEBOYS* tend to be slightly more affordable, Japanese-oriented brands (although it also features foreign brands including NIKE, Gap and Lacoste). In addition to featuring famous Japanese brands such as Milk Boy, Journal Standard, Hysteric Glamour, and Nano Universe, *POPEYE* and *MEN'S NON-NO* are seemingly fond of such medium to high European fashion brand names as Ben Sherman, Louis Vuitton, Gucci, Giorgio Armani, Dolce & Gabbana, Paul Smith, Burberry, Christian Dior and Vivienne Westwood, among others. *men's egg* and *CHOKI CHOKI* further support this hypothesis about the relationship between the price of the magazine and the price of the endorsed items in the magazines. Both magazines predominantly feature "domestic" brand items and are lower priced than *POPEYE* and *MEN'S NON-NO* as already noted.

With regard to the concepts of British men's lifestyle magazines, Edwards contends that 'most of these newer and more 'feminine' concerns with fashion and grooming are concentrated within advertising or heavily promotional content while the assumed and traditional men's interests still dominate features and articles'.[38] This seems to contradict the surrounding text. In contrast to fashion, such issues as sports, cars, and alcohol are rarely featured in *POPEYE*, *MEN'S NON-NO*, and *FINEBOYS*. Each magazine devotes approximately one page each for technology and automobiles, but *POPEYE* has not a

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[35] S. Nixon, *Hard Looks:Masculinity, Spectstorship and Contemporary Consumption*. New York: St. Martin's Press. 1996, p. 167. (hereafter Nixon, *Hard*)

[36] Edwards, *Styl*e, p. 467.

[37] Boni, *op. cit.*, p. 469.

[38] Edwards, *Culture,* p. 42.

single regular feature page specifically dedicated to sports. As for representations of women, each magazine has one or two regular pages introducing a young female model, singer or actress (such as *POPEYE Girl* or *MEN'S NON-NO Girlfriend*, figure 16). However, as the titles indicate, these women tend to be presented as pseudo-girlfriends of the reader, and are interviewed in such a friendly manner that they might be objectified but are seldom eroticised. Their pictures accentuate their sweet and lovely qualities rather than their sensuality, thus reinforcing this idea.[39]

Figure 16 Actress Mina Fujii as "Girlfriend of the Month" in *MEN'S NON-NO*, April 2010

Occasionally these magazines run feature articles on sexuality and relationships. But they are concentrated within the black and white middle-section pages, which might indicate their less-important status compared to clothes. These contents are, moreover, focused on the purpose of instructing how to become accepted by, and hence popular among girls through adopting certain sets of manners and styles. It should be noted, however, that pornographic images of young women and sexuality-related materials are featured at greater length in some other Japanese men's fashion magazines. *men's egg* for instance, devotes nearly twenty per cent of its whole content to images of young women. Approximately 60 per cent of these images present young women in either underwear or topless.[40] Arguably, this defines the intended readership of *POPEYE*, *MEN'S NON-NO*, and *FINEBOYS* as educated middle-class and their intention to present themselves as "fashion" oriented publications. Again, these aspects illuminate the particularity of these Japanese men's fashion magazines, making a contrast to Anglophone men's lifestyle magazines where the assumed and traditional "men's interests" such as cars, alcohol, and women still dominate.

[39] The policies of *POPEYE*, when it was issued in 1976, included that the magazine would not include nude images (Shiine, 2008:46).

[40] Results based on my analysis of the April 2011 issue of *men's egg*.

One notable characteristic shared by these Japanese magazines is the presence of advertisements for cosmetic surgery and sexual health clinics. These advertisements are found towards the end of the magazine, and *MEN'S NON-NO* and *FINEBOYS* devote approximately ten to eleven pages to this kind of advertising. These advertisements range from cosmetic surgery clinics (particularly for eyelid surgery, hair removal and circumcision), (infamously) dubious tablets for growing height, 'coated with a smooth layer of fraud', to men's *esthétique* salons, attempting to bank upon young men's anxieties about masculinity.[41] Importantly, male fear of negative female evaluation of their physicality is frequently exploited by such advertisements, suggesting the influence of women on male appearance consciousness. I address this point in Chapter 3.

Significantly, *POPEYE* only includes one page of such an advertisement, just three or four pages before the back cover. This might imply the magazine's intention to present itself as slightly more "sophisticated" and fashion-oriented. *POPEYE* uses considerably glosser paper than *FINEBOYS* and *MEN'S NON-NO*. Its layout is more sophisticated with greater spaces between fashion photographic images and captions than the other two. *POPEYE*'s frequent deployment of international-based, professional models in contrast to the semi-professional or amateur models hired in other men's fashion magazines also corresponds with this quality. Another striking aspect of these Japanese magazines is the age of the target readership. They are significantly younger and more specifically defined than the estimated readership of Euro-American men's lifestyle magazines.

Defined Age Sensibility

Sociologist Susan M Alexander's analysis of American *Men's Health* magazine revealed that the median age of the male readership is 36, and 18 to 44 years olds comprise 71 per cent of its readership.[42] A wide age demographic of readership in Anglophone men's lifestyle magazines is reflected in magazine contents, where casually attired male models with youthful appearances (possibly in their 20s) feature in fashion spreads alongside sections about grooming, occupied by concerns to do with anti-aging and greying hair. By contrast, Japanese culture, including magazines, demarcates more specific age demographics.

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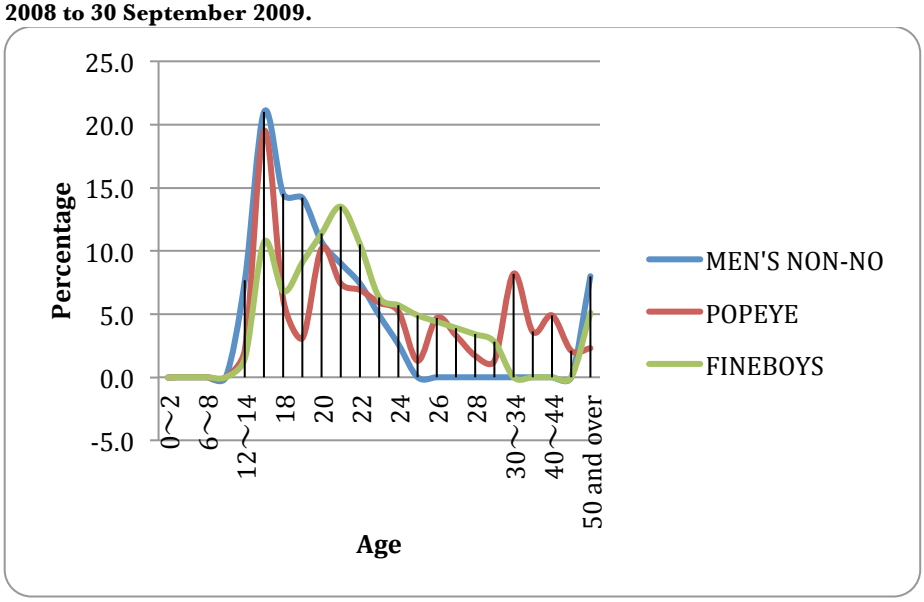
[41] L. Miller, *Beauty Up: Exploring contemporary Japanese body aesthetics*. Berkeley: University of California Press. 2006, p.147.

[42] S. M. Alexander, 'Stylish Hard Bodies: Branded Masculinity In Men's Health Magazine', *Sociological Perspectives*, Vol. 46, No. 4, 2003, p. 540. Her research is based on Mediamark Research (2002), and the age distribution is as follows: 23 percent ages 18-24, 25 percent ages 25-34, 23 percent ages 35-44, 18 percent ages 45-54, and 11 percent age 55+.

It is estimated that sixteen to twenty-four year olds comprise 84.3 per cent of *MEN'S NON-NO* readership, 64.3 per cent of *POPEYE* readership, and 74 per cent of *FINEBOYS* readership (figure 17).[43]

Figure 17 The Age Demographic of The Three Japanese Men's Magazines Surveyed by Shadan-hōjin nihon zasshi-kyōkai (The Japan Magazine Organisation), the survey period was 1 October 2008 to 30 September 2009.



High school, university and vocational college students consist of 61.6 per cent of *MEN'S NON-NO* readership, more than 41.7 per cent of *POPEYE* readership, and 68.7 per cent of *FINEBOYS* readership. Further, the guidelines for *MEN'S NON-NO*'s annual model audition stipulates that only men under the age of twenty-three are eligible to apply, while *FINEBOYS* limits applicants to ages fifteen to twenty-two. The median age of the former magazine's male models is 23 years old, with the age of 20 the highest (14.6 per cent), followed by 22 years old (12.5 per cent).[44] The presence of a group of fashion magazines targeted at older males further emphasizes the specificity of age demographic in Japanese publications.

Men's Joker (est. 2004) is seemingly targeted at men in their late twenties. *MEN'S CLUB* (est. 1955 as Otokono Fukushoku or Men's Dress), and *Gainer* (est. 1990) might appeal to men in their thirties (figure 18), while *UOMO* (est. 2005) is targeted at men in their 40s who prefer neat and elegant styles (figure 19 & 20). *LEON* (est. 2001) is a magazine for wealthy, middle-aged men who cultivate a wild, sensual look and a degree of "bad boy (*choiwaru*)" attitude (figures 21 & 22).

[43] Shadan-hōjin nihon zasshi-kyōkai (Japan Magazine Organisation), *op.cit.*. The survey period was 1 October 2008 to 30 September 2009.

[44] *MEN'S NON-NO* website offers the profiles of its models. 52 models are currently hired by the magazine, 48 of whom offer their date of birth. As of May 2010, the oldest model is 34 years old and the youngest seventeen.

Figure 18 Model Masashi Miura (b. 1970) in *MEN'S CLUB*, May 2010

Figure 19 Cover of *UOMO*, May 2010 with actor Hiroshi Abe

Figure 20 A fashion spread in *UOMO*, May 2010

Figure 21 Cover of *LEON* September 2010 with Panzetta Girolamo

Figure 22 A fashion spread of *LEON*, September 2010

Needless to say, the possibility of modest cross-readership between these magazines should not be disregarded. It is also noteworthy that men's fashion magazines targeted at older males tend to deploy older celebrities for their "faces".[45] Crucially, there is an obvious correlation between the three magazines' specific focus on young men between their late-teens to early twenties as their main readership, and the age of the models they hire.

What does the specific age demographic of these magazines convey? It is widely believed that youths, particularly adolescents, manifest distinctive behaviors and consumption patterns.[46] Adolescence is not merely a chronological age; it is also a socially constructed category. Cultural anthropologist Merry White, for instance points out that:

> Teenagers in any modern society are a composite construction: they are the products of biological development, of institutions (educational and occupational) preparing them for economic and social participation as 'appropriate' adults, and of their own negotiations with their environment, themselves creating new cultural models and goals.[47]

White suggests that the concept of "teenager" is defined by interactions between adolescents and the biological, economic, and social forces and expectations imposed upon them. As we have seen, half or more of the readership of these Japanese magazines are students. Their assumed prolongation of financial dependency and leisure time might

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[45] For instance, *LEON* features Panzetta Girolamo, an Italian celebrity in his late 40s living in Japan, as its "muse" while Hiroshi Abe, who was the first exclusive model of *MEN'S NON-NO* in the 1980s, now appears regularly in *UOMO*. Abe is 47 years old as of 2011.

[46] P. Hodkinson, 'Youth Cultures: A Critical Outline of Key Debates', in P. Hodkinson and W. Deicke (eds.), *Youth Cultures: Scenes, Subcultures and Tribes*, New York: Routledge. 2007, p. 1.

[47] M. White, 'The Marketing of Adolescence in Japan: Buying and Dreaming' in L. Skov and B. Moeran (eds) *Women, Media, and Consumption in Japan*, Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press. 1995, p. 225. (hereafter White, *Marketing*)

allow them to engage in lifestyle and consumption patterns more similar to teenagers than to adults, trends on which these magazines wish to capitalise. The well-defined demographic category these magazines articulate renders this objective more achievable. While the Japanese have recognised and capitalised on the benefit of narrowing consumer segments for quite sometime, it is a comparatively recent phenomenon in places like the United States.[48] Whether or not there will be a similar segmentation of the men's magazine market in Anglophone culture remains to be seen.

Figure 23 Reader-models in *FINEBOYS*, October 2010 (Left) and July 2010 (right)

There is also a trend in Japanese fashion magazines to use readers and other amateur models readers or professionals other than models are recruited as models. Reader models or *dokusha models*, are most common in magazines intended for young women.[49] Nevertheless, they are also found in men's magazines such as *CHOKI CHOKI*, *men's egg*, *MEN'S NON-NO*, and *FINEBOYS* among others (figure 23).[50] Compared to the professional models, reader models tend to be more personalized, with their names and occupations or college names accentuated. These magazines regularly feature snapshots of apparently young men, found in the streets, who have a keen fashion sense.

The significance of these Japanese magazines' attention to comparatively more "ordinary" male images stands in contrast to the ideas of rather "unordinary" male beauty prevalent in the Euro-American high-fashion culture. As theorized by Entwistle, '[t]he lack of correspondence between the male fashion model's "beauty" and ideas of male beauty outside' is often evident in Euro-American fashion scene, mainly due to the

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[48] R. Kelts, japanamerica: How Japanese Pop Culture Has Invaded the U.S. New York: PALGRAVE MACMILLAN. 2006, p. 164.

[49] *JJ*, women's fashion magazine launched in 1975, became popular by using posh yet "ordinary" female university students and young female office workers as its models. Such models made a stark contrast to *an an* and *non-no* both of which predominantly used non-Japanese or Eurasian models at that time.

[50] The majority of male figures appear in magazines like *men's egg* and *CHOKI CHOKI* are reader-models.

popularity of "heroin chic" aesthetic.[51] This implies a distance, or a gap, between the images the fashion world offers and actual consumers. While these "ordinary" Japanese male figures featured in magazines may reflect the interventions, selections, and even manipulation of editors, they may well also reflect the magazines' intention to maintain extreme sensitivity to social changes and trends, and to create a social affinity between the target reader, the models, and the contents of the magazines.

The sense of social affinity crafted between the models and the readership of these Japanese magazines points to the precarious balance upon which fashion is motivated, namely integration and individuality. Sociologist Georg Simmel notably contended in the early twentieth-century that fashion is motivated by the balance between two opposing forces: the desire to express both individuality and uniformity through the clothes we wear. For him:

> If one of the opposing forces is absent, or has been almost 'overcome' by its other…fashion will cease. If the desire for uniformity and imitation could reach fulfilment there would be no such thing as fashion, only mass similarity…an exacerbated individualism would also spell the end of fashion since 'the desire for integration' must be absent in a situation where self-assertion is so dominant.[52]

Thus, as Llewellyn Negrin neatly summarises, 'the fashioning of one's appearance in modernity has been a precarious balancing act between individuality and conformity'.[53] Simmel's theory of fashion is, quite straightforwardly, present in these Japanese magazines, and it is particularly evident in the fictional narratives these publications craft, which I discuss in the next section.

Two Ingredients of Fashion: Individuality and Conformity

Because most readers are presumed to be young and lacking disposable income, these magazines frequently feature different ways to coordinate a few trendy items. To do so, they conventionally create a narrative about an ordinary but stylish young man with whom readers can identify. This type of feature is most notable in *FINEBOYS*, whose target readership includes fashion beginners. For instance, the April 2010 issue of the magazine ran an eight-page story on how to coordinate fifteen items, the total value of which is under 30,000 yen (approximately AUD $391 as of October 2011), to create

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[51] J. Entwistle, 'From Catwalk to Catalog: Male Fashion Models, Masculinity, and Identity' in H. Thomas and J. Ahmed (eds) *Cultural Bodies: Ethnography and Theory*, Malden and Oxford: Blackwell Publishing. 2004, p. 60.The heroin chic aesthetic was a look especially popular in the 1990s fashion culture, often characterized by pale skin, dark circles underneath the eyes and emaciated body that are associated with a sick body or a drug-addict.

[52] M. Carter, *Fashion Classics: From Carlyle to Barthes*. New York and Oxford: Berg. 2003, p. 67.

[53] L. Negrin, *Appearance and identity: fashioning the body in postmodernity*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 2008, p. 16.

outfits for ten days (figure 24).[54] This story is synchronized with a narrative in which one of the magazine's exclusive models Tōri Matsuzaka appears as a college freshman who has recently arrived in Tokyo (figure 25). The first ten days of his life in Tokyo correspond with the ten aspects of coordination of the nominated items.[55]

Figure 24

Figure 25

The February 2008 edition of *MEN'S NON-NO* offers a similar feature.[56] Models Jun Yamaguchi and Takaeshi Mikawai play the roles of two fashionable eighteen year-olds who have recently come to Tokyo for employment (Mikawai) and education (Yamaguchi). Thirty days of their lives in Tokyo correspond with thirty combinations of ten items each, with Mikawai dressed in the "casual style" while Yamaguchi is identified with the "European, chic-mode" style. *MEN'S NON-NO* also runs a somewhat "simplified" version of this type of feature, following the fashion outfits over one week of popular fashion brand publicists,[57] or stylists.[58]*POPEYE* too, occasionally runs a similar feature but usually

[54] *FINEBOYS*, April 2010, pp. 42-49.
[55] *Ibid*, pp. 42-49.
[56] *MEN'S NON-NO*, February 2008, pp. 142-155.
[57] *MEN'S NON-NO*, May 2007, pp. 50-51.
[58] *MEN'S NON-NO*, January 2008, pp. 50-53.

without narrative. The April 2008 edition of the magazine included a seven-day coordination of three "popular" stylists, for example.[59]

As one would expect, this type of feature is intertwined with marketing, as often second-hand clothing shops or low budgeted clothing brands are introduced as the reader's saviours. Yet, these instructions can also easily be applied to the reader's own already existing wardrobes. This arguably concurs with what social anthropologist Brian Moeran argues of Japanese high-fashion publications. He says that magazines that include high and renowned brands, such as the Japanese edition of *Vogue*, aim to appeal to and acquire international recognition. At the same time, they offer their readership advice on 'how to coordinate clothes and how to make a limited wardrobe go a long way'.[60] Rather than merely promoting consumption habits and desires, these Japanese men's magazines offer practical advice and encourage engagement with down-to-earth, everyday fashion.

The deployment of fictional narratives in these Japanese men's magazines can be interpreted in several ways. One of the most prominent ones, I argue, is that clothing is about both self-assertion and integration, reinforcing the applicability of Simmel's theory of fashion. Through the fictional narratives of young models, and less explicitly, of older stylists and publicists, these magazines instruct the readership about to dress stylistically and impressively, and hence to stand out among their peers. At the same time, the readership is integrated into society by conforming to "acceptable" coordination of sartorial items on the market. The popular narrative themes these magazines use, such as young men newly arrived in a "global" city, anxiety about graduation and the future ahead, friendship, and romance, all involve a degree of integration. The assumed similarity of age between models and the readership further enforces the efficacy of the "identification" process between models and the readership. Crucially, these magazines enable the readership to assert themselves through being dressed immaculately, which also integrates them into society. This is done in economically feasible ways.

Now I proceed to look at the visual language these magazines speak, with particular attention to their cover images. My intention is to examine how images of masculinity are represented in these periodicals, and to determine the modes of masculine images they are trying to convey to their readership. I would moreover argue that the variety of ways in which male figures are captured reflect the magazines' relatively flexible perception of masculine images.

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[59] *POPEYE*, April 2008, pp. 236-239.

[60] Moeran, *op. cit.*, p. 248.

What the Magazines Say: Visual Analysis

The Face of the Magazines: First Impressions of The Encounter

What visual images do these magazines offer? Alexander, using Ellen McCracken's study of women's magazines, points out that one of the two purposes that magazine covers accomplish is that 'they are themselves advertisements that increase the publisher's sales and, perhaps more important, the sale of products and services promoted inside'.[61] The roles that covers play may be particularly important for Japanese magazines. This is because, unlike American magazines which tend to rely heavily on subscriptions, in Japan 'a very large number of readers buy a magazine on the basis of what they read each month while standing in a bookshop or convenience store (called "stand-reading" or *tachiyomi*, in Japanese)'.[62] Magazine covers are thus essential in attracting the audience and in introducing what the magazine conveys. One of the most notable qualities of the covers of *POPEYE* is that it regularly features a Caucasian male model, approximately in his early twenties (figure 26).

Figure 26 Cover of *POPEYE*, October 2010

Generally these cover models are photographed in close to medium close shot, with a few exceptions in which the models are photographed in medium long shot from the knees, from a low angle.

According to the theory of visual analysis articulated by semioticians Gunther Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen, the direct gaze of the participant is often read as demanding something from the viewer, while the indirect gaze can indicate that the participant is the object of the viewer's gaze.[63] The direct gaze of a male model in a men's style magazine, for instance, can be read as persuading the reader of 'identification with the look of the

[61] Alexander, *op. cit.*, p. 541

[62] Moeran, *op. cit.*, p. 245

[63] G. Kress and T. van Leeuwen, *Reading Images*. London and New York: Routledge. 1996, pp. 118-9.

male model', thus making them wish to purchase the products the model is endorsing.[64] A few models on the covers of *POPEYE* wear a faint smile or gaze into space, sitting with chin in hand. The majority of them, in contrast, gaze straight at the reader, which arguably alludes to what Susan Bordo refers as "Face-off" masculinity, a pose displaying a 'martial rather than sensual', traditional masculinity.[65]

These "armoured", sturdy masculine images are somewhat diminished by the neatly coordinated hair and dress, and particularly by the use of colour. In each issue, the title appears in different colours, including delicate, pastel colours such as light blue, yellow, and perhaps surprisingly, pink. The combination of the direct gaze of the models and the close-to-medium shot can be read as demanding that the reader look at the models, and thereby enter into a relationship of affinity with them. Reinforcing this reading is the size of frame, as close to medium close shots signify intimate to close personal distance.[66] Yet, as their "face-off" posture suggests, the relation might not be entirely sensual. It should also be noted that *POPEYE* has increasingly featured Japanese young celebrities in recent times, particularly since 2011, and some of them are captured in medium-long to long shot, thus the pattern is clearly flexible.

For their covers, *MEN'S NON-NO* and *FINEBOYS* both feature young male celebrities. Many of them belong to *Johnny's & Associates*, a Japanese talent agency that specializes in male pop idols. But the covers also feature young actors such as Satoshi Tsumabuki, Masaki Okada, and Junpei Mizobata (figures 27 & 28). *MEN'S NON-NO* originally featured its own model on the cover when it was launched.[67] With few exceptions, celebrities are featured in medium shot, gazing directly at the viewer. The size of the frame indicates that the celebrities are familiar but not too personal. They are objects of appraisal, but their direct gaze prevents them from being too passive. Apart from a few recognizable settings such as the Eiffel Tower (*FINEBOYS*, December 2007), the background of the cover image is generally white, and undefined. This is one aspect of the magazines, which parallels their female counterparts, for '[t]he lack of context means that the models are not doing anything other than posing for the viewers, a pattern typical of women's magazine images'.[68]

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[64] Nixon, *Hard*, p. 178.

[65] S. Bordo, 'Beauty (Re)Discovers the Male Body', in Z. P. Brand (ed) *Beauty Matters*, Indiana Bloomington: University Press. 2000, p. 129.

[66] Kress and van Leeuwen, *op.cit*, pp. 124-126.

[67] Hiroshi Abe, now famous actor, was crowned *NON-NO* Boyfriend (a male model position in *NON-NO*) and made his modeling debut in 1986, subsequently gracing the cover of *MEN'S NON-NO* 43 consecutive times until December 1989 (*MEN'S NON-NO*, 2006: 160).

[68] Alexander, *op.cit.*, p. 541.

Figure 27 Cover of *MEN'S NON-NO*, February 2010 with actor Masaki Okada

Figure 28 Cover of *FINEBOYS*, July 2010 with actor Junpei Mizobata

The use of celebrities has, I suggest, two possible interpretations. Firstly it might help attract readers because of familiarity, physical attractiveness and the cultured currency these celebrities carry. The presence of Japanese celebrities in such magazines as *MEN'S NON-NO* 'helps position them as representatives of contemporary Japanese popular culture'.[69] Secondly, the magazines also attract the fans of these celebrities, most of whom are (young) women, resulting in an increase of their circulation figures and revenue. As White notes, Japanese teenage girl fans are keen for any information about their favourite stars, and '[n]o detail is too trivial to be passed on to the thirteen-to fifteen-year-old'.[70] Although monthly "idol" magazines were in White's mind when she stated this, it could easily be extended to these young men's magazines with their favourite stars either on the cover or inside the magazines. The magazines' careful avoidance of eroticized images of women also enhances this hypothesis. This idea holds in relation to *POPEYE* and *MEN'S NON-NO* where the female readership comprises traditionally 17.1 and 18 per cent respectively. *FINEBOYS*, on the other hand, enjoys predominantly male readership as only two per cent of its readership is accounted for by females.[71] The presence of women is also evident in editorial sections of the magazines.[72] The high percentage of female readership might also point to the possibility that they consume these men's magazines either for their boyfriends, or for their own fashion interests.

The covers of these magazines, with the combination of "face-off" masculinity and neat appearance, correspond to the images of young, appearance-conscious Japanese men

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[69] Darling-Wolf, *op.cit.*, p. 187.

[70] M. White, *Material Child*. Berkeley and London: University of California Press. 1993, p. 121. (hereafter, White, *Material*)

[71] Shadan-hōjin nihon zasshi-kyōkai (Japan Magazine Organisation), *op.cit.*,

[72] As of 2010, *POPEYE* and *MEN'S NON-NO* have female chief editors while *FINEBOYS* has a male editor-in-chief.

who look comparatively "feminine" yet retain some conventional "masculine" attributes. In the fashion photo pages, young male models are presented in a myriad of poses. Apart from the "face-off" position, there are at least two other main postures in which male figures are presented in magazines and advertisements; these are what Bordo describes as the lean position –'reclining, leaning against, or propped up against something in the fashion typical of women's bodies',[73] or smiling boyishly, manifesting "wholesome masculinity" as Alexander calls it.[74] The gaze of the male model in the latter position is 'neither defiant nor passive; rather, the model smiles at the viewer, sometimes broadly, sometimes shyly' thus revealing a sense of vulnerability.[75] Some significant findings regarding my analysis of male figures' postures in the fashion spreads of the three Japanese magazines are as follows: *POPEYE* presents male figures in the lean position slightly more than the "face-off" position, while more than a half of the male figures in *MEN'S NON-NO* display "face-off" masculinity (figures 29 & 30). *FINEBOYS*, on the other hand, predominantly prefers to feature its male models in the "lean" position (figure 31). Nearly twenty per cent of the male models in *FINEOBOYS* are moreover smiling, in what Alexander calls the position of "wholesome masculinity". Such a representation is significantly rare in *MEN'S NON-NO* (figure 32).

Figure 29 Examples of "face-off" position in *MENS NON-NO*, November 2010

Figure 30 Example of "lean-position" in *MEN'S NON-NO*, October 2007

[73] Bordo, *op. cit.*, p. 131.

[74] Alexander, *op. cit.*, p. 541.

[75] *Ibid.*, p. 541.

Figure 31 Example of "lean position" in *FINEBOYS*, March 2010

Figure 32 Example of "wholesome" position, *FINEBOYS*, October 2010

Table 4 Three Postures of Male Models

	Face-off	Lean	Wholesome
POPEYE	**37.65**	**50.62**	**11.73**
MEN'S NON-NO	**50.18**	**48.77**	**1.05**
FINEBOYS	**14.38**	**67.81**	**17.81**

Note: Results based on the October 2010 edition of the three magazines.
All figures are given in percentages

In her analysis of *MEN'S NON-NO* and its female equivalent *non-no*, design and communication studies scholar Fabienne Darling-Wolf notes that *non-no* constructs a visual and verbal discourse focusing on female camaraderie and pleasure. In contrast, *MEN'S NON-NO* offers a visual discourse portraying models as 'distant and physically disconnected from one another—they look out to the distance and do not smile or touch'.[76] With a few exceptions, my analysis of the magazines reveals that this is relatively still the case in *MEN'S NON-NO*. However, other magazines including *FINEBOYS* and *POPEYE* feature models enjoying each other's company at a greater frequency. For example, the March 2010 issue of *FINEBOYS* has a spread titled 'With these layered techniques, a shirt is a million times as powerful'. In this feature, two male models are pictured as facing each other, playing cards, or walking with a smile in what appears to be a college campus. One of the male models is also captured standing very close to a young female model, smiling. Another male model is walking arm in arm with another female model, although they are not gazing at each other.[77] The July 2007 issue of *POPEYE* has a spread titled 'The Boys of Summer with Burberry Black Label'. This feature also offers images of male models engaging in male camaraderie, which is presented in a pleasurable fashion (Figure 33). Arguably, these elucidate the magazines' relatively elastic perception of masculine images.

[76] Darling-Wolf, *op.cit.*, p. 189.
[77] *FINEBOYS*, March 2011, pp. 24-55.

Figure 33 Male models enjoying each other's company in *POPEYE*

What significances does the fluid image of masculinity in *POPEYE*, *MEN'S NON-NO*, and *FINEBOYS* have? Bordo articulates that boys and very young men tend to be portrayed in "lean" positions, suggesting the social acceptability of them as the "object" of the observing and desiring gaze. Conversely, older men are almost forbidden to appear passive. Thus, there are still present 'somewhat different rules for boys and men'.[78] The models who appear in such magazines as *Men's Health* are 'estimated to be between the age of twenty-five and thirty-five'.[79] They are slightly older than the models who appear in the Japanese magazines I have been analysing in this chapter. Do the male models in Anglophone and European magazines, then, elucidate to the unfavourableness of men becoming objects of the gaze, whether the gaze belongs to men or women? As Boni writes:

> The 'new man' portrayed by certain advertisements and women's lifestyle magazines, in his representation as a young, somehow 'feminine' man, is not the kind of man *Men's Health* is devoted to: as the slogan of the magazine says, reading *Men's Health* means (re)discovering 'the pleasure of being a man'. The androgynous model of the 'new man' is firmly rejected as a 'passive, ambivalent and elusive' style (November 2000).[80]

Nixon argues that the interplay between the male readership's identification with and acquisition of visual pleasure in the male models takes place when he engages with men's "lifestyle" magazines.[81] Yet, even when these male models are presented as the object of a desiring gaze, overly "masculine" qualities such as the model's muscular physique, rugged or hard visual qualities of either the model or the context, or the presence of female figures, would preempt him from becoming a sole object of such gaze. This sentiment is

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[78] Bordo, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

[79] Alexander, *op. cit.*, p. 541.

[80] Boni, *op. cit.*, p. 472.

[81] S. Nixon, 'Exhibiting Masculinity' in Hall, S. (ed) *Representation: Culture Representation and Signifying Practices*. London: Sage. 1997, p. 314. (hereafter, Nixon, *Masculinity*)

articulated by Negrin who writes that despite the "feminine" gaze and posture displayed by male models:

> signs of traditional masculinity are still present to reassure us of their masculinity. Thus, the models are typically well muscled, projecting an air of strength and solidity, despite their apparent passivity. They are also well endowed, as the body hugging underwear makes clear, and their hair is often slightly dishevelled, indicating a rugged masculinity that is not overly narcissistic.[82]

These can be read as reflecting the ambivalent feelings men in Europe, Australia, and North America feel, or at least are expected to feel, about becoming an object of the gaze, whether it has a trace of heterosexuality or homosexuality. Thus, conventional ideas of "masculinity" and the restrictions they carry are still influencing the ways in which men and fashionability are represented. What I argue in the following sections is that the Japanese magazines' elastic approach to the representations of men cultivates a possibility that Japanese men are, at least to a certain extent, less preoccupied with conventional gender roles and restrictions they carry. Particularly through their notable applications of the "lean" and "wholesome" positions, the ways these magazines represent men problematize the established notion that men are bearer, not the object of the gaze.

Implications of A Glance

The assumption that men do not take serious interest in gazing at male figures, whether their own mirror-reflection, or other men, amplifies the stereotyped assumption that it is woman, not man who occupies the position of the one to be gazed at. It is useful to recall the theories of the gaze that I reviewed in Chapter 1. Greer articulates the hostility still present in Anglo-Western culture to appreciating male beauty.[83] Mulvey in her famous essay on cinema and the gaze, has argued that traditional narrative films are structured around masculine pleasure. This pleasure system is constructed on the pattern of the male/viewer and the female/object of the gaze. Consequently, unlike women who are displayed as erotic objects for both the male characters in the screen and the spectator, male characters are unlikely to be gazed upon as erotic objects precisely because men are reluctant to gaze at their more perfect ego.[84]

Kaplan argues that the gaze in cinema is not necessarily male, but is often based on the dominance-submission pattern, and to own and activate it is to be in the "masculine"

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[82] Negrin, *op.cit.*, p. 158.

[83] G. Greer, *The Beautiful Boy*. New York: Rizzoli. 2003, p. 7.

[84] L. Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' in M. G. Durham and D. Kellner (eds) *Media and Cultural Studies: Key Works*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers. 2001 [1975], p. 398.

position.[85] According to her, 'men do not simply look; their gaze carries with it the power of action and of possession which is lacking in the female gaze. Women receive and return the gaze, but cannot act upon it'.[86] Bordo argues that this conception of men as the bearer of the "gaze" and women as the objects of such a male gaze is reproduced and distributed through the media and advertisements, which instruct us to follow certain gendered behaviours.[87] Thus, the assumption of men as indifferent to the "gaze" is likely constructed through mediated images among others. This assumption is also closely tied to the expected roles of men as viewing subjects and women as the objects of their "gaze". This does not mean that men have never occupied the position of the gazed-upon. Art historian and film theorist Kaja Silverman, for instance, has argued that the position such as the object of the gaze, can indeed be more powerful and pleasurable than the bearer of the gaze in cinema. This is because the narrative is centred around the object of the gaze, and male characters in such films as Liliana Cavani's controversial *Il Portiere di notte* (1974), Silverman argues, occupy the "passive" position.[88]

The reverse of such roles is, however, considered to be inappropriate, unfavourable or even interdicted. As design historian Peter McNeil and fashion theorist Vicki Karaminas write, for many conservative straight men, being "gazed at" would be so distressing that they might even try to stop it with violence.[89] We can deduce from these authors that becoming an object of the gaze predominantly carries a negative attribute, and this is particularly strong for some men. Questions I wish to raise here are: must becoming an object of the gaze automatically involve negativity? Do men ever actively or willingly seek to be in the "passive" position? I attest that the gaze can be owned by both men and women. This means that men do not necessarily have to be controlling subjects nor do women always have to be passive objects, and this is particularly applicable to Japanese culture. For instance, Laura Miller suggests a possibility that Japanese women have also occupied the position of the "viewer". This interpretation has largely been ignored, possibly due to established assumptions that disregard the presence of a female "gaze". As Miller puts it:

> The beauty work of heterosexual men, after all, is intended at least partly to stimulate women's interest. Perhaps this point is overlooked due to widespread acceptance of the idea that all visual codes serve to position women as the objects

[85] E. A. Kaplan, *Women and Film: Both Sides of the Camera*, New York and London: Methuen. 1983, p. 30.
[86] *Ibid*., p. 31.
[87] Bordo, *op.cit*., p. 142.
[88] K. Silverman, 'Masochism and Subjectivity', *Framework* Volume 12, 1980.
[89] P. McNeil and V. Karaminas, 'Introduction' in P. McNeil and V. Karaminas (eds) *The Men's Fashion Reader*. Oxford and NY: Berg. 2009, p. 8.

> of a viewing "male gaze" (Mulvey 1975; Pollock 1988). Yet, according to M. Miller (1998:432), the position of the viewing subject in Japanese visual media is not exclusively male; she notes that "the female gaze is recognized and incorporated". In pre-Meiji prints, for example, men are often depicted as objects for the female viewer, particularly in erotic prints or *shunga*.[90]

Also, Japanese magazines such as *POPEYE* can be read as reflecting 'the assumed needs of men to shape themselves as acceptable and desirable to women', thus reinforcing Miller's view.[91] I contend, then, that Japan is a significant cultural site in which to examine the presence of a different kind of relationship between men and the gaze.

The April 2010 edition of *MEN'S NON-NO* offers a fashion spread under the title of "Chiaopanic's Culture Mix (*Chiaopanic no karuchā mikkusu*)" in which one of the oldest *MEN'S NON-NO* models Remi (b. 1979) is attired in Japanese clothing brand Chiaopanic. In the three pages, he is presented in a slightly leaning yet still face-off position, in profile with an indirect gaze in medium-long shot, and in a wholesome position in a long shot alongside another model. Remi's colourful clothes such as a pair of knee-length shorts and a cap, as well as the context of the images such as a beach, connote a seaside resort, and the casualness and leisureliness associated with it. Although all of these are situated outside conventional, hard and mature "masculinity", his abundant beard and dishevelled hair clearly accentuate his mature and rugged masculinity (figures 34, 35 & 36).

[90] Miller, *op.cit.*, p. 155.

[91] Tanaka, *op.cit.*, p. 233.

Figure 34, 35 and 36 *MEN'S NON-NO* model Remi in three different poses

Likewise, the model's passive gaze and smile signify his acceptance to serve the viewer's gaze, although perhaps not in an overtly sensual or intimate fashion (as the images' sizes of frame –medium long to long shots semiotically indicate a low level of intimacy shared by the viewer and the pictured model).[92]

Two significances can be deduced by reading this series of images. Firstly, the magazine's portrayal of the model in various positions (i.e., face-off/defiant, lean/passive and wholesome/vulnerable) illustrates its elastic approach to the representations of men. Secondly, and more importantly, representing a man with a rugged, masculine look in passive positions suggests that becoming an object of the viewer's glance does not automatically invoke the unfavourable passivity and submissiveness of the "gazed at". Does this hint at the possibility that, unlike what Bordo argues, not only younger men but older men could also be the "passive" object of the gaze?

It is also useful to pay attention to the Japanese magazines that are targeted at older males. Magazines targeted at middle-aged men such as *LEON* and *MEN'S CLUB* tend to deploy younger-looking models in their fashion spreads, as Anglophone men's lifestyle magazines do. For instance, a May 2010 fashion spread of *MEN'S CLUB* titled 'Burberry Black Label: Seductive Monotones' features an Austrian model, Gerhard Freidl, who was 26 years old at the time of shooting.[93] But these magazines are also full of images of middle-aged men. This is particularly notable in *LEON* where European-looking men who are clearly older than those featured in the three young men's magazines that I focus on, are featured extensively (figure 37).

[92] Kress and van Leewen, *op. cit.*, p. 130.
[93] *MEN'S CLUB*, March 2010, pp. 132-139.

Figure 37 Examples of older models in *LEON*, September 2010

Figure 38 *LEON*, September 2010

Many of these men are presented in a similar way to the "street snapshot" features in young men's magazines, that is, they are pictured in the streets (figure 38).

What is noteworthy about these images is that these men are often captured showing the indirect gaze. Many of them are facing away from the camera or looking out to the distance, as if they are unaware of being pictured. Yet, these men are also engaged in action, such as walking, talking on the phone, or smoking a cigarette. As we have seen earlier in this chapter, semiotically having an indirect gaze points to the passive status of the viewing subject, where the reader is in position of power, initiating the gaze. It is, however, also significant that in most of the cases where women are depicted with an indirect gaze, they tend to be in the "lean position"; reclining, seated or leaning against something, in contrast to the men featured in *LEON*.

It is arguable that these male images in *LEON* are considerably older and, as their abundant beards and rather sturdy physiques indicate, conventionally more "masculine" than the younger, more slender male images dominating the magazines like *FINEBOYS*. Instead of being presented in the "lean position", these men in *LEON* are depicted in motion. In addition, most of these men are fully clothed, and hence there is no explicit

sexual undertone. Combined with the strong heterosexual context of the magazine, the active stance and the masculinity and virility of the male images in *LEON* might prevent them from fully being in a "passive" position.[94]

A converse reading, however, suggests that magazines like *LEON* tell us that even with certain conditions and limitations, older men can also appear in less than "controlling" positions, serving someone's objectified gaze in Japanese culture. This suggests the possibility that these Japanese men's fashion magazines might encourage their male readership to at least acknowledge the pleasures of being gazed at and appreciated, particularly but not exclusively by women. This in turn raises the issue of vanity, which I explore below.

Through the Magic Looking-Glass

The image of a young man looking at his own reflection in a looking glass is not uncommon in Japanese men's fashion magazines like *POPEYE*. Indeed, the March 2008 issue of *POPEYE* ran a fashion story titled "Magic Mirror" in which TV personalities and actors Keita and Shōta Saito (twins) are presented as a young man and his mirror reflection, wearing identical brand clothes but in different colours. In a similar fashion, the May 2008 edition of *POPEYE* featured an image of the pop star Takuya Kimura with his mirror reflection (figure 39).

Figure 39 Keita and Shōta Saito in *POPEYE*, March 2008 (left) and Takuya Kimura in *POPEYE*, May 2008 (right)

What do these images tell us about contemporary Japanese men and their relationship to appearance? Gazing into a mirror traditionally symbolises vanity, and the practice has predominantly been associated with beautiful women, particularly in modern

[94] The heterosexual context of *LEON* is largely constructed through the image of Girolamo Panzetta, who is acting as the "muse" of the magazine. He has created the public image of an amorous philanderer.

European art history. One such example is found in George Frideric Handel's opera *Semele* (1744). Semele, a daughter of Cadmus and in love with Jupiter, is given a mirror by jealous Juno, disguised as Semele's sister. The enchanted mirror causes anyone gazing into it to become quite vain and self-absorbed. Accordingly, Semele, in self-absorbed fascination, sings an aria "Myself I shall adore", which foreshadows her (almost self-inflicted) death caused by her vanity. Charles Gounod's operatic adaptation of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Faust* (1859) gives another memorable example that connects a beautiful woman, a mirror and vanity. In act 3, the beautiful Marguerite finds a casket filled with exquisite jewellery and a hand mirror, which had been placed by the devil Méphistophélès. She adorns herself with the jewellery, gazes at her beautiful self in the mirror and sings the Jewel Song "Ah! je ris de me voir si belle en ce miroir" (figure 40). This moment is symbolic of seduction, and like the case of Semele, foreshadows her subsequent doom. Marguerite's vanity, although rather innocent, is indicated by her choice of jewellery over a humble bouquet of flowers left for her by her sincere admirer Sibele. As these paradigms indicate, in Euro-American culture, the idea of men gazing into mirrors is usually thought to be decidedly "unmasculine".

Figure 40 Romanian soprano Angela Gheorghiu gazes into the mirror in *The Jewel Song* (2004)

Figure 41 *Narcissus* by Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio (1594-6, left) and *Echo and Narcissus* by John William Waterhouse (1903, right)

Anne Hollander suggests that the rise of dandyism and French painter Honoré-Victorin Daumier (1808-1879) rekindled the looking-glass as an 'emblem of silly male pride' in the nineteenth century Europe.[95] This was because:

> a more overly expressed homosexual feeling is required in society before Narcissus may flourish in art. Wilde's Dorian Gray (to whom Lord Henry gives a mirror) is a latter-day Narcissus, a flower of the homoerotic fin-de-siècle atmosphere.[96]

Further, mirror-imagery is considered a positive danger to mainstream heterosexual masculinity by way of being connected to homosexual "self-love". Narcissus, a beautiful male figure in Greek mythology who loved his own reflection, represents perhaps the strongest link between homoeroticism and narcissism (figures 41).

To demonstrate the ongoing negativity associated with men and mirrors, I examine in this section "mirror scenes" from three films. The first is a scene from René Clément's celebrated film *Plein Soleil* (1960), a cinematic visualisation of Patricia Highsmith's classic *The Talented Mr. Ripley* (1955). The film includes a famous scene where Tom Ripley (Alein Delon) wears a pair of white loafers, a striped jacket, and a regimental striped tie, all of which belong to his higher-class acquaintance Philippe Greenleaf (Maurice Ronet). After combing his hair in front of the mirror, Tom gazes at his mirror reflection, pretending to be Philippe while his reflection is Philippe's beautiful companion Marge Duval (Marie Laforêt). Tom kisses the image (figure 42).

Figure 42 Alain Delon in *Plein Soleil* (1960)

As cinema studies scholar Chris Straayer indicates, this cinematic sequence might allude to Tom's homoerotic feelings towards Philippe. This reading is, she argues, presented as 'the modification of a triangle of homosocial desire toward homo-narcissism'.[97] According to Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis, homo-narcissism occurs when an individual locates the ego ideal and object of desire in a single sex, as in the film's portrayal of the mirror

[95] A. Hollander, *Seeing through Clothes*. NY: Avon Books,. 1978, pp. 411-2. (hereafter Hollander, *Clothes*)
[96] *Ibid*., p. 412.
[97] C. Straayer, 'The talented poststructuralist: heteromasculinity, gay artifice, and class passing' in P. Lehman (ed) *Masculinity: bodies, movies, culture*, New York: Routledge. 2001, p. 121.

sequence.[98] In the Freudian reading, then, appreciating one's own mirror-image can be interpreted as connoting homoeroticism and homosexuality.

Indeed, male narcissism and homosexuality are closely connected in psychoanalytic theory. This is based on the assumption that heterosexuality is about distinguishing self and other (his or her object of desire). For the male subject, women are their "others" while other men are the "same" as themselves. Consequently, both homosexuality and narcissism 'are seen as essentially an interest in self rather than in the other'.[99] Social theorist and scholar of English literature Michael Warner makes this point clear. He argues that 'Freud, for example, declares that the homosexual chooses "not another of the same sex, but himself in the guise of another."'[100] Unlike the "primary narcissism" where 'a child cathects itself in a vanity with its parent, without differentiation, without a developed ego', homosexual narcissism comes about in the later stage.[101] This occurs when:

> the individual seeks in another some ideal excellence missing from his own ego. And this is the type of narcissistic choice made by the homosexual, by which Freud generally means the male homosexual: the choice of what he himself would like to be.[102]

As we have seen, this equation that connects homoeroticism and narcissism is symbolically portrayed in *Plein Soleil* through the mirror-image. French Psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan's famous work *The Mirror-phase as Formative of the Function of the I* is also important when considering the relationship between man and his visual identity conceived in the mirror. Although his work is too complex to properly include here, it is appropriate to mention that Lacan contended that humans acquire the sense of "I" first through identifying themselves with their mirror-reflections. The visual identity obtained from the mirror, for Lacan, can be a metaphor of the other humans:

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[98] *Ibid.*, p. 117.

[99] M. Warner, 'Homo-Narcissism; or, Heterosexuality' in J. A. Boone and M. Cadden (eds) *Engendering Men: The Question of Male Feminist Criticism*. New York and London: Routledge. 1990, p. 190.

[100] *Ibid.*, p. 191.

[101] Warner, *op.cid.*, p. 192.

[102] *Ibid.*, p. 192.

> We have only to understand the mirror-phase as an identification in the full sense which analysis gives to the term: namely, the transformation which takes place in the subject when he assumes an image – whose predestination to this phase-effect is sufficiently indicated by the use, in analytical theory, of the old term *imago*.[103]

In this sense, the mirror-reflection of the self bestows on them a sense of visionary "wholeness" to their "fragmented" identity. In this reading, then, Tom is both taking pleasure at gazing erotically at and by empathizing with his mirror-reflection, which, through his impersonation of dominant and more opulent Philippe, gives back to Tom his more perfect mirror self.

The gloominess surrounding these psychoanalytic readings of the mirror-image and narcissism is the negative connotations they offer. For Lacan, the mirror-phase connotes immaturity. The child's process of identification through the mirror image, he argues, starts at sixteen months and is given up to the age of eighteen months. Leaning towards the mirror is also symbolic of infancy, connoting the child's motor incapacity and nurseling dependency.[104] Moreover, for Freud, homosexuality with which narcissism is deeply intermingled, is regressive. He 'concludes that homosexual desire *reduces* to narcissism without significant remainder and hence is a developmental misdirection'.[105] Lacan, too, describes 'homosexuality as a perversion, not because of the contingency of morals, nor because of the supposed needs of biology, but because of the narcissistic structure of homosexual desire'.[106] Warner articulates limitations found in these theoretical perspectives, saying that: '[e]veryone undergoes—and indeed requires—the kind of narcissism Freud describes' and hence '[h]omosexuality may indeed be a way of loving one's own ego, but so is heterosexual romance'.[107] But he also notes that Freud's psychoanalytic theory has been so influential that it is widely taken as common sense in modern Euro-American cultures. Therefore, we come to these "mirror" images with a sense of negativity or ambivalence. A very similar image but with a different context is presented in Jean Cocteau's *Orphée* (1950), a modern visualization of the classic Greek myth of Orpheus. Orphée (Jean Marais) attempts in vain to enter via the mirror, a passage to the underworld (figure 43).

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[103] J. Lacan, 'The Mirror-phase as Formative of the Function of the I' (trans. J. Roussel), in S. Žižek (ed) *Mapping Ideology*. London and New York: Verso. 1994 [1949], p. 94.

[104] *Ibid.*, p. 94.

[105] Warner, *op.cit.*, p. 194.

[106] *Ibid.*, p. 198.

[107] *Ibid*, p. 193, p. 198.

Figure 43 Jean Marais in *Orphée* (1950)

Although a homoerotic reading is possible here too, the scene is also about the falsity and vanity of gazing at the mirror, for it leads to somewhere unexpected and macabre (Hades).

A slightly different yet equally dark relationship between a young man and a mirror is shown in Martin Scorsese's film *Taxi Driver* (1976). In a famous scene, Travis Bickle (Robert De Niro) looks into a mirror at himself, imagining a violent confrontation, and draws his gun at his mirror-image. This scene can be construed as symbolic of Travis's deeply unsatisfied, self-obsessive, pathological, and lonely mental and social state, demonstrated intensely in a violent fashion. The absurdity of this "masculine" reinvention of "mirror" images is emphasized by De Niro's not so "hypermasculine" physique and Travis's isolated, rather marginalized social position. As the images of *Plein Soleil*, *Orphée*, and *Taxi Driver* tell us that what the looking-glass reflects may be dangerous and deceiving. This reading parallels our fear of vanity. As Hollander argues:

> Fear of vanity is very deep. Narcissus, loving his own reflection, is safe while he does not know it is his. When he knows he has created the image he loves, he dies. The existence of the myth illustrates how well people understand that a perfectly visible truth can be falsified when the eyes gazing straight at it are blinded by longing for something other than what is there, or by fear of it.[108]

Thus it is perhaps an understatement that an image of a young man appreciating his own reflection has not been a favourable theme in modern European history. As the cinematic sequences of *Plein Soleil*, *Orphée*, and *Taxi Driver* foreshadow death, such an image might, however, connote a sense of fatality.

'Vanity has traditionally (although not theoretically) been seen as primarily a feminine trait', says Steele.[109] This seems to have been particularly prominent after the period, which psychoanalyst J. C. Flügel called it "the Great Masculine Renunciation".

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[108] Hollander, *Clothes*, p. 398.

[109] V. Steele, *Fashion and Eroticism: Ideals of Feminine Beauty from the Victorian Era to the Jazz Age*. NY and Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1985, p. 29.

Although its accuracy is debatable, "the Great Masculine Renunciation" refers to a period at the end of the eighteenth century when European men were encouraged to renounce flamboyant, sartorial ornamentation. Such ornate styles became reserved for the upper-class women, whose financial dependency, as Thorstein Veblen had contended, demonstrated the pecuniary strength of the men who "owned" them.[110] As noted in Chapter 1, Breward has shown that men in the nineteenth century continued to be interested in sartorial matters. But he has also argued that the *idée fixe* that dissociates men from fashion caused this fact to be overlooked in later times. As he notes:

> Masculine fashion items have been subsumed by the familiar assumption that the discourse of separate spheres enforced a model of masculinity in which an overt interest in clothing and appearances automatically implied a tendency towards unmanliness and effeminacy.[111]

Hence, fashion and appearance-consciousness began to be seen as carrying highly "feminine" connotations.

This does not seem to be so different in the history of Japanese culture. Women have more likely been associated with mirrors than their male counterparts in Japanese culture, too (figure 44).

Figure 44 Examples from Utamaro Kitagawa's *Seven Women Applying Make-up in the Mirror* (1790s, left), Jun'ichi Nakahara's *A Young Woman through 12 Months* (1940, middle) and famous model Yūri Ebihara in a fashion spread of *CanCam*, February 2008 (right)

Rather than perceiving it as a magnifying glass that reflects and grotesquely inflates vanity, however, the pictorial images of men with mirrors in Japanese men's fashion magazines allude to the positive quality of mirror. Namely, the mirror can function as a device essential for achieving the fashionable "look", or perhaps even as an essential tool in the creation of certain kinds of masculinity. 'We assume that the mirror reflects our real

[110] M. Carter, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

[111] C. Breward, *The Hidden Consumers: Masculinities, fashion and city life 1860-1914*. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press. 1999, p. 10.

selves' Hollander has said, 'while using it to create a better look –dress, makeup, etc'.[112] Accordingly, in order to be successfully fashionable, and in order to maintain that look, a considerable length of consultation with a mirror is necessary.

What adds further significance is that Freudian psychoanalytic theories may not be as deep-rooted in Japanese society as in Euro-American societies. Warner, for instance, suggests that Freudian theoretical perspectives of homo-narcissism:

> would certainly not hold much intuitive force outside of the modern West, where erotic relations either among men or among women are imagined by most cultures as something other than relations of mere sameness.[113]

Similarly, in relation to the *Takarazuka* Revue and the concept of "non-lesbian female masculinity" in the Japanese context, cultural and visual anthropologist Karen Nakamura and journalist Hisako Matsuo argue that Japan is a nation that has not been structured via the lens of Freudian psychoanalysis. As a result, 'the possibility of asexualized relations or the transcendence of gender' is found in Japanese culture.[114] If we unpack their ideas and apply them to relationships between Japanese men and mirrors, this might suggest that men's fascination with their mirror-images does not necessarily have to invoke sexuality. This in turn suggests that the negativity associated with men and mirrors in Euro-American cultures, which is, as we have seen, largely ascribed to the connection between homoeroticism and narcissism, may not be intense in contemporary Japanese culture.

This hypothesis seems particularly true when men in younger generations who tend to demonstrate significantly high interests in beauty consumption and grooming practices are concerned. Ushikubo, for instance, introduces an episode that people often complain of long queues in men's rooms, created by young men who are spending hours in front of the mirror, restyling their hair.[115] The notable presence of mirror imagery in contemporary Japanese men's culture, then, alludes to the differences created between older and younger kinds of masculinity, which I examine in the next chapter. Here, it is fair to conclude this section by saying that the mirror is necessary for men to craft and maintain fashionable looks. In the next section, I look at the ways in which Japanese men's fashion magazines conceive male appearance as an object of the gaze. With a short

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[112] Hollander, *Clothes*, p. 391.

[113] Warner, *op.cit.*, p. 191.

[114] K. Nakamura and H. Matsuo, 'Female masculinity and fantasy spaces: Transcending genders in the Takarazuka and Japanese popular culture' in J. E. Roberson and N. Suzuki (eds) *Men and Masculinities in Modern Japan: Dislocating the Salaryman*, New York: Routledge. 2003, p. 61.

[115] M. Ushikubo, *Sōshoku-kei danshi [ojō-man] ga nihon wo kaeru (herbivorous men (Ladylike man) change Japan)*, Tokyo: Kōdansha +α shinsho. 2008, p. 121.

case study of Grooming/Beauty sections in *GQ Australia* and *MEN'S NON-NO*, I pose a question: do the two magazines manifest a transcultural similarity or difference in their attitudes toward the relationship between men and appearances?

Science versus the Art of Taking Care of Appearance

Perhaps it is no coincidence that in the "Grooming" section of the April/May issue of *GQ Australia*, the anti-aging cosmetic products are presented in a fashion redolent of scientific laboratory. The section features robot-like hands gripping well-known brand cosmetics like Chanel and Lancôme alongside a beaker, and a burnt and melted product dripping onto LAB SERIES age-less face cream (figure 45). Against a backdrop of such images, one of the magazine's contributing editors Alexandra Spring writes: 'A beginner's guide to the acids, peptides, oils and anti-oxidants you're slathering all over your skin'.[116] Words such as beauty, cosmetic, radiant or shimmering are carefully avoided in this feature. This echoes contentions made by Bordo and Negrin that different discourses are applied to the promotion of men's and women's beauty products in English.[117] As Bordo has noted, advertisements of men's products often adopt discourse that obscures the fact that their function is to enhance appearance. Instead, they imply that such products are 'for utilitarian or instrumental purposes'.[118]

Figure 45 'Youth Juice 101' in *GQ Australia*, April/May 2010

The extensive use of dark, metallic colours, as well as a scientific air, strongly suggests that the practice of gazing into the mirror and taking care of one's appearance is (supposed to be) done for or in search of (scientific) reason without emotional involvement. It is presented as an inevitable routine rather than a practice that a man might find delight in. This may be a visual endorsement of the fact that men have

[116] *GQ Australia*, Spring/May 2010, p. 91.
[117] Bordo, *op .cit.*, p. 137-8; Negrin, *op.cit.*, p. 158.
[118] Bordo, *op .cit.*, p. 137.

frequently been portrayed as machine-like: virile, hard-bodied yet apathetic.[119] This is a representation also, quite commonly, found in contemporary British men's lifestyle magazines. The connotation derived from such an instrumentalization of the male body is in line with 'an insistence on sexual difference and a refusal of male eroticization evident throughout the modern period'.[120] This "hypermasculine" visual discourse presumably reassures its male readers of their "masculinity" while aligning with or endorsing the conventional assumption that cosmetics and taking an interest in one's appearance are "feminine" concerns. Hence, it mirrors the ambivalence towards appearance-consciousness Anglo-western men are (imagined) to feel.

The April 2010 issue of *MEN'S NON-NO* offers a much more "organic" visual approach to men's skin care (figure 46). "A Beginner's Skin Care Lesson that Improves Your First Impression (*daiichi inshou UP no "debyu" sukin kea kouza*)" is aimed particularly at freshmen who make a new start in April, either as new students or as working members of society. The feature tells us that unlike women, men cannot rely on makeup to conceal dry, defective skin, and uneven skin tones. The aim of this feature is to help men obtain spotless, smooth naked skin by following a series of simple and easy lessons, which are divided into three basic segments: facial cleansing, toning, and moisturising. Earlier in this chapter, I referred to the characteristic strategy of these Japanese men's magazines of creating narratives, which help the reader to form closer identification and engagement with the magazines' models and the products they are endorsing. Following this tradition, the abovementioned feature proceeds with one of the magazine's exclusive models Hiroto Higa (b. 1987) who the text tells us was concerned with the increasing dullness of his complexion, and has gone through all the lessons it introduces.

[119] Attwood, *op.cit.*, p. 88.
[120] Attwood, *op.cit.*, p. 88.

Figure 46 'A Beginner's Skin Care Lesson that Improves Your First Impression' in *MEN'S NON-NO*, April 2010

The sophisticated layout in which the products are promoted is contrasted to the previous page in the magazine that has a series of cartoons, which comically tells why Higa is concerned with his skin and seeking advice. The colourful cosmetic products are, according to the magazine, created specifically for the age demographic of *MEN'S NON-NO* male readership and his skin. Some of these products are significantly less expensive than those promoted in the *GQ* grooming section, and are presented in a rather simple and saccharine fashion. The dominance of whiteness in the pages arguably signifies the importance of the spotless, clean and clear complexion that the feature emphasises. In a stark contrast to the stylishly scientific, almost mechanical image of *GQ*, *MEN'S NON-NO* adds green vines including Ivy, and thin layers of white sandstone, on which the products lean against each other. The description of one item, a toning water, even says 'floating inside is the flower petals of Calendula, whose scent flows every time you splash it'.

The combination of organic plants and substances, and slightly irregular placement of the cosmetic products connote nature. Arguably, these suggest that the magazine sees and promotes the practice of skin care as a "natural" rather than a systematic requirement of masculinity. Remarks from Higa (in speech bubbles) like "infiltrative, smooth toner. Feels awesome!" and "The balance between moistness and refreshment is V. Good." reflect the emotive approach the feature takes, further underlining its contrast to the scientific, descriptive and mechanical approaches of *GQ Australia*. Needless to say, *MEN'S NON-NO*, too, linguistically underlines the practice of skincare as "masculine", and hence does not undermine the masculine identity of the readership. By using such gendered discourse as "the scent preferred by men" and "3 basic steps for men's skincare", male interest in skincare is justified for the reason that men, unlike women, are unable to conceal their complexions with make-up. Yet, the feature's reference to the

model's positively emotive remarks on how he felt when applying these products, combined with the pleasingly neat and simple visual discourse, also teach the reader that skincare can be pleasurable.

Possessing an aesthetically pleasing appearance, and a clear, beautiful complexion as the foundation of such a look, is a requirement not only for women but also for young men who wish to crate a good impression. That is what the feature in *MEN'S NON-NO* tells us, and this in turn endorses for men the importance of being subjected to the gaze. Thus, the roles that equate men as viewing subjects and women as the objects of the gaze are less rigidly defined in Japanese culture. This problematises and possibly subverts the often assumed 'complete dominance of the so-called male gaze'. [121] Conversely, as my analysis of the magazines elucidates, men could also be positioned as the objects of the gaze in the Japanese cultural context. This approach is used, at least partially, by these Japanese men's fashion magazines in order to motivate fashion interests and consumption among the group of young men at whom these publications are aimed.

Conclusion

Through the analysis of three Japanese men's fashion magazines, this chapter highlighted three important points. These magazines prioritise fashion over lifestyle contents, and they cater to a specific age demographic, which helps them to maintain sensitivity to cultural change and trends. Their deployment of non-professional models, particularly in *FINEBOYS*, moreover seems to help create a social affinity between the readership and the contents of the magazines. In these ways, the magazines emphasise the importance of appearance, dress and scent. They tell the readership that not only women but men can be the object of the gaze, and moreover, that this may be delightful if done successfully.

The next chapter offers further insight into the three men's fashion magazines analysed in this chapter. In particular, I try to make sense of their deployment of Japanese as well as non-Asian male models and a suave and slender male aesthetic that these models display. Does such a mode of aesthetic sensitivity impose a challenge on more established, older and conservative masculinity?

[121] Miller, *op.cit.,* p. 155.

Chapter 3

Dutch model Vincent Hoogland looking elegant and classical in Tomoki Sukezane's formal themed fashion spread.
POPEYE, December 2006.

Chapter 3: Boy's Elegance

> SWEET: *Kawaii*, pale, slender. A sweetly feminine fragrance matches such "herbivorous" boys of today.[1] Its sweet scent enhances both the mood of ennui and slender image of the wearer…
>
> WILD: You want to act out a different, wild side on the important romantic date, putting aside the straitlaced, fresh boy persona you have at school. But there's no need to overstrain yourself by leaving open too many buttons of your shirt…
>
> ---*FINEBOYS* March 2010, pp. 126-129[2]

The March 2010 issue of *FINEBOYS* thus instructs the reader on how to create pleasant and favourable impressions through the use of fragrance. The magazine offers four different types of fragrances; fresh, sweet, wild and sexy, and selected products such as Burberry Sport (fresh) and Romeo Sweet Key (Sweet) are listed under each category. We might be surprised by the magazine's inclusion of conventionally "feminine" attributes such as "sweet" and "cute". Equally striking is that such terms are, to a certain extent, not seemingly imposing a threat to the "masculine" identity of the readership, who is decidedly heterosexual young men. In the previous chapter, I demonstrated that a group of Japanese men's fashion magazines encourage their male readership to recognize the importance of being subjected to the gaze. This chapter continues exploration of the three Japanese young men's publications I introduced in Chapter 2: *POPEYE*, *MEN'S NON-NO* and *FINEBOYS*.

J. C. Flügel famously contended in the 1930s that '[i]f heterosexual men were "to dress a little more to please women", rather than striving for respectability from their fellow males, some very concrete pleasures would result'.[3] For him, recognising and valuing the gaze of women would render men's fashion more progressive, more attractive. Are these men's publications a visual testament of Flügel's contentions? Or are they instead a demonstration of what Michel Foucault contended in 'The Concern for Truth'? In this interview conducted one month before his death, Foucault said in relation to morality in Greek and Roman antiquity that:

> It was a matter of knowing how to govern one's own life in order to give it the most beautiful form possible (in the eyes of others, of oneself, and of the future

[1] In recent times, young men who are sensitive and highly appearance-conscious with apparently no strong drive for sensual romance are called, particularly in the media, as *sōshoku danshi* (herbivorous boys). Their 'unassertive' behaviours and attitudes are often contrasted to *nikushoku-kei danshi* (carnivorous boys) who are assumed to display active and assertive attitudes toward women and sex. Carnivorous boys could be as appearance-conscious as herbivorous boys, and these binaries could also be applied to women.

[2] *FINEBOYS*. 2010. 'Haru debut ni tsukaitai fragrance! jibun no daiichi inshou ha kaori de nokosu!? (Fragrances for spring debut! Leaving your first impression with scents!?).' Trans. M Monden. March, pp. 126-129.

[3] M. Carter, *Fashion Classics: From Carlyle to Barthes*. Oxford: Berg. 2003, p. 116.

> generations for whom one could serve as an example). That's what I tried to reconstitute: the formation and development of a practice of self whose objective was to constitute oneself as the worker of the beauty of one's own life.[4]

Foucault's idea of 'the worker of the beauty of one's own life' is thus not motivated only for the eyes of others, but also for oneself. I argue that these two desires are what the Japanese men's publications negotiate in order to motivate fashion interests in their male readership. One of the significant strands that this chapter focuses on is the strong presence of a mode of slender, elegant male aesthetic sensitivities, which both Japanese and non-Asian models in the Japanese men's fashion magazines embody. I contend that this is a manifestation of masculinity different from either an emphatically muscular mode as favoured in mainstream European and particularly American culture, or dowdy, restricted and aesthetically not-so-pleasant mode of once hegemonic "salaryman" masculinity. In short, this chapter aims to substantiate that Japanese young men's almost "narcissistic" concerns about appearance and fashion as represented in men's fashion publications, might offer a different and more "relaxed" approach to understanding men's relationship with fashion.[5]

The first section of this chapter attempts to make sense of the magazines' deployment of non-Asian along with Japanese and Eurasian models. I identify both practical and aesthetic reasons to explicate this point. Transcultural differences in male aesthetics highlighted by the magazines' models, are the focus of the second section. By using the theory of "format" and "product", which I will explain, this section pays attention to male slenderness, which is so predominant in these Japanese magazines. With a short case study of the boyish reinvention of the "Neo-Edwardian" dandy style in Japan, the final section seeks to establish the idea that stylish and sophisticated styles of the suit serve as an alternative to the established image of Japanese masculinity as epitomised by worn-out "salarymen". I also explore two factors that the magazines deploy and negotiate in order to motivate and increase fashion interests in their male readers, namely a desire to attract admirers and a desire to dress for their own pleasures.

The images of masculinity these magazines offer, while not entirely subverting the expected gendered looks, elucidate the aesthetic importance of dress. Instead of merely making and sustaining a clear gender distinction, sartorial styles can be appreciated and incorporated, even if they disagree with the socially or culturally expected masculine identity of the wearer.

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[4] M. Foucault, 'The Concern for Truth' in S. Lotringer (ed), *Foucault Live (Interviews, 1966-84)* (Trans. J. Johnston). New York: Semiotext(e). 1989 [1984], p. 298.

[5] As in the previous chapter, narcissism or narcissistic concerns are used in this chapter to describe one's strong concerns for appearance, which does not necessarily invoke negativity or pathology.

Fusion of European and Japanese Aesthetic Sense

The first European sartorial style that the Japanese adopted and appropriated from outside was a male dress form. European style clothing was officially and actively adopted by the Japanese towards the end of the Tokugawa and the early Meiji (1868-1912) periods 'as part of the drive for modernization of the country'.[6] It was not solely a practice of random, sudden or forced adoption. There were cultural affinities between European and Japanese sartorial aesthetics, which I will refer to later in this chapter. Since contemporary Japanese men's fashion has its basis in European dress forms, whether or not these magazines signify or endorse the "Westernisation" of Japanese youth is a question I pose here. Indeed, the presence of non-Asian looking male models in these men's fashion magazines is highly suggestive of this contention. Many of the models appearing in *POPEYE*, for example, are non-Asian, including those who are Caucasian and black (figure 47). This ratio is slightly changed in *MEN'S NON-NO* where among non-Asian models, some Japanese or Eurasian models are visible (figure 48).

Figure 47 Examples of non-Asian models in *POPEYE*, March 2010.

Figure 48 Caucasian, half-Caucasian and half Japanese, and Japanese models in *MEN'S NON-NO*, November 2010

[6] K. Hirano, 'The Westernization of Clothes and the State in Meiji Japan' in K. Hirano (ed) *The State and Cultural Transformation: Perspectives from East Asia*. Tokyo: United Nations University Press. 1993, p. 123.

Figure 49 Japanese model Masahiro Taniguchi in *FINEBOYS*, March 2010

In *FINEBOYS* the presence of Japanese models is increased and Japanese models Shunsuke Daitō and Atsushi Harada are exclusive to the magazine (figure 49). In addition, *FINEBOYS* tends to feature reader-models more frequently than the other two magazines.[7] We might ask whether the presence of non-Asian looking models in these magazines recreates a long-existing debate in which 'many critics and scholars interpret the new physical aesthetics as emanating from an imported racist beauty ideology that denigrates Asian physical appearance'.[8]

Media and cultural studies scholar Meredith Jones points out that Japanese women's preference for a pallid complexion is not about trying to look "Caucasian" but rather about a desire to look different and hence more "refined" than both other Asian and non-Asian women.[9] Scholar of Japanese culture Sharon Kinsella explains how a subcultural group of Japanese teenage girls in the late 1990s were criticized for their acquisition of a dark complexion. As she points out, '[f]or tanning their skin and adopting new attitudes, hair color, and clothes, girls were indiscriminately accused of African mimicry and in fact of being, or becoming, tribal, primitive, black, or a new ethnic breed'.[10] In either case, the idea of cultural imperialism is arguably in operation. [11] According to cultural sociologist John Tomlinson, cultural imperialism 'gathers in a number of fairly discrete discourses of domination: of America over Europe, of the "West over the rest" of the world, of the core

[7] Reader-models (*dokusha model*) are amateur models whose occupations are other than professional models (e.g., students, retail sales assistants and hairdressers).

[8] L. Miller, *Beauty Up: Exploring contemporary Japanese body aesthetics*. Berkeley: University of California Press. 2006, p. 149.

[9] M. Jones, *Skintight: An anatomy of cosmetic surgery*. NY: Berg. 2008, p. 41.

[10] S. Kinsella, 'Black Faces, Witches, and Racism against Girls' in L. Miller and J. Bardsley (eds) *Bad Girls of Japan*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 2005, pp. 147.

[11] Although cultural globalisation is a vast area of study and deserves its own analysis, I do not have the space to examine it in detail in the present setting. Therefore, my reference to the concept will be simple and brief.

over the periphery, of the modern world over the fast-disappearing traditional one, of capitalism over more or less everything and everyone'.[12]

Undoubtedly, the Japanese women's attempts to obtain a look that does not evoke conventionally "Asian" qualities, whether or not it might be (unintentionally) associated with the physical characteristics of Black, Caucasian, or "imagined-Japanese" is criticised as "unnatural" and extreme. Such a response inevitably points to the hierarchy in which Black and Asian individuals are thrust down to a lower status.[13] Does the presence of non-Asian-looking models in these Japanese men's fashion magazines, then, allude to their Westernised nature? It might be so, since *POPEYE* was launched as Japan's first lifestyle magazine to introduce many trendy American youth lifestyles and sports, such as skateboarding in the 1970s.[14] We might also consider other interpretations.

A Patchwork of Male Images

It is simplistic, and perhaps shallow, to assume that the deployment of non-Japanese-looking models solely represents the range of Japanese desires to emulate and identify with Westerners. The presence of Japanese men in all of these magazines, for instance, needs to be recognised. As we have seen in Chapter 2, many of *Johnny's* stars and young actors as well as employees of well-known Japanese brand clothing shops appear in every issue of these magazines, often with interviews and photo shoots.[15] As for *MEN'S NON-NO* and *FINEBOYS*, the celebrity who appears on the cover would also be featured in three or four pages of fashion and interview (figure 50).

Figure 50 Actor Satoshi Tsumabuki appears in the cover and fashion spread, *MEN'S NON-NO*, November 2010

[12] J. Tomlinson, *Globalization and Culture*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1999, p 80.

[13] Here it is necessary to consider the different hierarchical positionings of each of these racialised identities. That is, the meanings attached to the aesthetics apparently evoking European/Caucasian looks and the meanings attached to the aesthetics apparently evoking African/African-American looks could be different. For instance, as Kinsella argues, those girls with bleached hair, overly tanned skin, and vivid makeup are often referred to in terms of African styles and are accused of being "primitive" in the late-1990s Japan.

[14] Y. Shiine, *Popeye monogatari (The Story of Popeye)*. Tokyo: Shincho-sha. 2008, p. 12.

[15] For instance, August 2007 issue of *POPEYE* runs a short interview with Jun'ichi Okada, member of *V6*, a *Johnny*'s boys band, and five-paged fashion shoots.

Figure 51 Campus Snap with students of Seijo University, *FINEBOYS*, May 2010

Photographic images of selected, ordinary, young men found in the streets or university campuses across Japan are moreover presented in such regular two-paged features as "Fashion Snap" (Fashion Snapshots, *MEN'S NON-NO*) and "Campus Snap" (Campus Snapshots, *FINEBOYS*, figure 51). This type of feature is periodically developed at an international level. "Snap the World" (Snapshots of the World, *MEN'S NON-NO*) and "World Snap" (World Snapshots, *POPEYE*) sometimes include young men (and to a lesser extent, young women) in such internationally recognized, fashion capitals as New York, London, and Paris. This type of feature lends itself to at least two readings. Perhaps the obvious one is that these magazines present the reader with the idea that their country is part of the larger fashion world.

Yet, if we look at the images more closely, we can see some sartorial differences between photographs taken in the Euro-American and Japanese cities. For instance, these features show the tendency of dressing Euro-American young men more trimly and conservatively (figures 52 and 53). The Japanese men selected for this type of feature, by contrast, appear to be dressed more elaborately, even flamboyantly, with layers of sartorial items and accessories like scarves in vivid colours (figure 54).

Figure 52 Street Snap in Paris, *POPEYE*, January 2008

Figure 53 Street Snap in Stockholm, *POPEYE*, January 2008

Figure 54 Street Snap in Tokyo, *POPEYE*, January 2008

Whether it reflects a transnational fashion sense or the editors' intention to distinguish between men of different nationalities, these subtle differences arguably remind the Japanese readership that their fashion culture is not entirely standardized with their Euro-American counterparts.

Indeed, the presence of Japanese men in these magazines suggests that even though Japanese readers consume fashion that are largely associated with Europe and America, their lives are not likely to be utterly standardised or "Westernised". This amplifies social-cultural anthropologist Arjun Appadurai's argument; in relation to the widespread popularity of renditions of American popular songs in the Philippines, he has stated that:

> But Americanization is certainly a pallid term to apply to such a situation, for not only are there more Filipinos singing perfect renditions of some American songs (often from the American past) than there are Americans doing so, there is, of course, the fact that the rest of their lives are not in complete synchrony with the referential world which first gave birth to these songs.[16]

In other words, even if individuals adopt a transnational cultural form, this does not necessarily mean that their lives are completely infiltrated and standardised by the culture where the transnational cultural form originated. The presence of Japanese men in these magazines indicate that the readership is constantly reminded that these magazines are Japanese fashion magazines targeted at Japanese men. Thus, their lives are inseparable from their "local" cultures. There is also a more practical reason to explain the co-presence of Japanese and non-Japanese men.

Advertising scholar Mariko Morimoto and independent researcher Susan Chang point out that foreign advertisers tend to prefer foreign-titled publications in Japan, where 'these advertisements are likely to be standardized to convey the Western images to

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[16] A. Appadurai, 'Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy' in B. Robbins (ed), *The Phantom Public Sphere*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 1993, pp 271-2.

Japanese consumers'.[17] In contrast, Japanese advertisers tend to prefer Japanese magazines, often emphasising "Japaneseness". One method, according to them:

> for international advertisers to maintain congruency between their culture and images is to use models from their home culture. Western models can convey Western values and images that are preferred by Japanese consumers.[18]

This idea at least partially explains why the magazines with a considerable amounts of European luxurious designer wear, such as *POPEYE*, prefer to feature non-Asian-looking models while Japanese models are more prevalent in *FINEBOYS*, where Japanese designer clothes are more frequently featured.[19]

Laura Miller convincingly argues that the new male physical aesthetics in Japan, including a large eye shape and brighter hair colour, represents Japanese young males' rejection of older modes of male identity rather than a rejection of their own ethnicity. She argues:

> When American ravers or cyberpunks appropriate non-Western forms of body modification, such as nose piercing or tattooing, we do not hear anyone accuse them of trying to turn themselves into Dani warriors or Maori islanders. Of course, Dani and Maori never occupied the United States in the way Americans occupied Japan in the postwar era through the military and imported media. Even so, if looking Euroamerican includes having a hairy body, I doubt that very many young Japanese men would be interested. It seems to me that this is an aesthetic that combines many features and is not merely "failed Western" or "faux-American." It pulls in ideas from outside Japan for inspiration in certain of its traits, but it also draws on local concepts and proclivities.[20]

This sentiment is shared by Jones who puts it beautifully that fair complexion, which Japanese women endeavor to obtain is 'influenced by global (Western) notions of beauty but have a distinct Japanese flavour'.[21] Respecting the contentions of the above authors, I argue that images of the Euro-American culture presented in these Japanese men's magazines, including the non-Asian-looking models, are more precisely described as being about an imagined Europe/America. Indeed, both non-Asian and Japanese models deployed in the Japanese magazines outline a preferred mode of masculinity in contemporary Japan. This differs from the modes generally favored in European and particularly in American cultures; namely, it values ideals of extreme slenderness and

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[17] M. Morimoto and S. Chang, 'Western and Asian Models in Japanese Fashion Magazine Ads: The Relationship with Brand Origins and International Versus Domestic Magazines' *Journal of International Consumer Marketing*, Vol. 21, No. 3, 2009, p. 178.

[18] *Ibid*., p. 178.

[19] This tendency is also supported by other men's magazines such as *men's egg* and *CHOKI CHOKI*. These magazines predominantly feature "domestic" brand items and are full of Japanese reader-models.

[20] Miller, *op.cit.*, 149.

[21] M. Jones, *op.cit.*, p. 41

youthfulness.

In Praise of Youthful Slenderness: Preferred Mode of Male Aesthetics in Japan

With a 26 inch Waist: Slenderness as the Flower of Japanese Male Beauty

The presence of different models of masculinity preferred in Japan, particularly the slender and "androgynous" model, is compelling. Slenderness among young Japanese men has been prominent in recent times, but this does not mean Japanese young men are increasingly losing weight. For example, annual surveys conducted by The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare point to the steadiness of the percentage of Japanese men between the age of twenty and twenty-nine who are considered to be too thin according to Body Mass Index (BMI, table 5). The statistics show that most men in this age group are in the "average" range.

Table 5 BMI of Japanese young men between the ages of twenty and twenty-nine, 2006 and 2007(*Kokumin kenkō/eiyō chōsa no gaikō ((The survey results of health and nutrition of the nation))*, The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare 2006: 7; 2007: 174; 2008: 186; 2010: 15))

	1986	1996	2006	2007	2008	2010
Too Thin	9.4	9.9	9.5	10.6	9.6	12.3
Average	77.5	76.6	70.9	68.1	75.8	69.2
Obese	13.1	13.5	19.6	21.3	14.6	18.5

Writer Megumi Fukumitsu says that these images allude to an increase in the preference for a slender "look" and fashion among young men rather than thinness for nutoritional or medical reasons. This has led to a blurring of the boundaries between women's and men's dress sizes, as some young men increasingly seek slighter silhouettes and they wear outfits like trousers and T-shirts, which are designed for women, setting trends for some clothing brands to sell men's clothes in even smaller sizes.[22] We should keep in mind some variations in male physicality in addition to race are evident in *MEN'S NON-NO*.[23] Nevertheless, the models gracing these Japanese men's fashion magazines, it is fair to say, possess slender physiques, which are considered to be barely normal or slightly underweight. The average height and weight of *MEN'S NON-NO* models is 182.64 cm and 63.26 kg (6 ft. and 139 Ibs.).[24] These magazines promote attractively healthy bodies,

[22] M. Fukumitsu, 'yase & usui danshi nanka ōishi (skinny and thin boys are somehow increased)'. *Asashi Shinbun Weekly*, 15 January 2007, pp. 38-41.

[23] F. Darling-Wolf, 'The Men and Women of non-no: Gender, Race and Hybridity in Two Japanese Magazines' *Cultural Studies in Media Communication*, volume 23, no. 3, 2006, p. 186.

[24] Based on my calculation of all the models with their height and weight listed in *MEN'S NON-NO* website. See: [http://www.mensnonno.jp/data/modelfile/].

These data are based on 35 models whose height and weight are mentioned in *MEN'S NON-NO* website. The tallest model is 192 cm with the weight of 63 kg, the shortest model is 170 cm, 52 kg who is also the lightest model as of May 2010. The heaviest model weights 75 kg whose height is 189 cm.

as the magazines concurrently feature instructions on how to exercise and body build.[25] However, as the feature in April 2008 issue of *FINEBOYS* notes, it is "the adequately muscled, beautiful (*tekido ni hikishimatta utsukushii*)" body that the magazine promotes, not the steroid-induced "Adonis-complex-obsessed" body so often found in Euro-American men's publications such as *Men's Health* and even *GQ*.[26]

It has been noted that the increase in more androgynous male images is also visible in many European-American countries, particularly in women's magazines or fashion advertising and runways.[27] Susan M Alexander, for instance, argues that despite the fact that all the models in *Men's Health* magazine she examined have well-developed muscles, they clearly are not as muscular as those "supermales" featured on the covers of magazines devoted to bodybuilding. For her, '[t]he cover images present the image of masculinity, at least for white males, as a well-toned but not overly muscled body'.[28]

However, the models who adorn the covers of Euro-American men's lifestyle magazines, let alone *Men's Health*, have overtly muscled bodies. As noted in Chapter 2, Llewellyn Negrin has pointed out that these male models tend to accentuate rugged, "manly" characteristics even when they are presented in the "feminine" way.[29] This leads us to wonder if the word "slender" is connoted differently in Japanese and European, North American and Australian contexts.

Entwistle offers a standard body size of male fashion models in contemporary New York and London. She states, 'the required height for most agencies is between 180 and 191 cm (5 ft 11 in. -6 ft 3 in.) and the standard measurements are, usually: chest, 96-107 cm (38-42 in.), and waist, 76-81 cm (30-2 in.)'.[30] Male models in *MEN'S NON-NO* demonstrate some significant differences in body size (table 6).

Table 6 Body Size of Male Models in UK/US and Japan

	Height	Chest	Waist
London & NY	180-191 cm	96-107 cm	76-81 cm
MEN'S NON-NO	170-192 cm	73-95 cm	63-81 cm

[25] See, for example, the September 2007 issue of *MEN'S NON-NO*, pp. 128-133; the April 2008 issue of *FINEBOYS*, pp. 134-136.

[26] This word describes, particularly a male physique that is skinny but fit, and is often referred by these magazines as the ideal male physique.

[27] J. Entwistle, 'From Catwalk to Catalog: Male Fashion Models, Masculinity, and Identity' in H. Thomas and J. Ahmed (eds) *Cultural Bodies: Ethnography and Theory*, Malden and Oxford: Blackwell Publishing. 2004, p. 60; S. Alexander, 'Stylish Hard Bodies: Branded Masculinity In Men's Health Magazine', *Sociological Perspectives*, Vol. 46, No. 4, 2003, p. 541.

[28] Alexander, *op.cit.*, p. 541.

[29] L. Negrin, *Appearance and identity: fashioning the body in postmodernity*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 2008, p. 158.

[30] Entwistle, *op.cit.*, pp. 59-60.

As the above table indicates, *MEN'S NON-NO* models have significantly smaller or less developed chests than male models in the US and the UK. Also, *MEN'S NON-NO* models vary in body size and shape significantly more than their British and American counterparts where '[t]he male fashion model's body is a very standard one in terms of size and shape'.[31] This is particularly evident in the waist size of male models in *MEN'S NON-NO*; few models have waist as thin as 63 or 65 cm (25 in.). This all indicates that models in Japanese men's fashion magazines like *MEN'S NON-NO* tend to have much less muscled bodies than standard male models in the US and UK, who are themselves very thin by Euro-American standards.[32]

The presence of less conventionally "manly" models also outlines senses of ambivalence and negation found in Euro-American popular culture towards slender male physiques.[33] Paul Smith's 2010 Spring/Summer advertising campaign for its bag range features British model Robbie Wadge (b. 1991). Wadge's notably youthful, androgynous appearance is emphasised in contrast by the rugged, mature, and muscular look of German actor Til Schweiger (b. 1963) who poses for Bally Spring/Summer 2010 collection (figures 55 and 56).

Figure 55 Paul Smith Bag Spring/Summer 2010 advertising campaign with Robbie Wadge

Figure 56 Bally Spring/Summer 2010 advertising campaign with Til Schweiger

Importantly, the Paul Smith advertisements with Wadge do not seem to be circulating widely at an international scale whereas in Japan, his images are featured in such magazines as *POPEYE* and *MEN'S NON-NO* and widely circulated. The significance of Paul Smith's advertisements are also highlighted by such advertising campaigns as Armani Jeans with Canadian model Simon Nessman (b. 1990), which is circulating widely at international level (figure 57).

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[31] *Ibid.*, p. 59.

[32] *Ibid.*, p. 60.

[33] See, for example: F. Boni, (2002) 'Framing Media Masculinities: Men's Lifestyle Magazines and the Biopolitics of Men's Lifestyle Magazines and the Male Body' *European Journal of Communication*, Vol. 17, No. 4, 2002,p. 472; S. Bordo, 'Beauty (Re)Discovers the Male Body', in Z. P. Brand (ed) *Beauty Matters*, Indiana Bloomington: University Press. 2000, p. 186.

Figure 57 Simon Nessman in Armani Jeans Spring/Summer Collection advertising campaign

What we can deduce from these differences is that "androgynous" males are either marginalised (as Wedge in Paul Smith advertisements) or required to display a muscled body (as Nessman in the Armani advertisement).[34] Indeed, the idealised male body image in the United States, as circulated widely in the media, has continued to be the muscular ideal originated in ancient Greece. This mode of ideal male image comes 'with a consistent focus on taller frame, broad shoulders, slim hips and waist, and well-defined (but subtle) musculature in the chest, legs, and arms'.[35] To put it simply, these male figures with a boyish-looking face need to have a body that resembles a Greek god in order to be recognised widely as "ideal". Thus, we can deduce that a muscled physique is still part of preferred male aesthetics in mainstream non-Asian cultures. This male body is moreover displayed frequently without clothes, adding further significance to its physical muscularity.

To Be or Not to Be Clothed: Significant Meanings attached to Nude Males

Male models are frequently (partially) unclothed when they are deployed in order to advertise clothes and fragrances. One only needs to glance at such advertising campaigns as Calvin Klein Jeans with the Northern Irish model, singer and actor Jamie Dornan (b. 1982), and that of Armani with Portuguese soccer superstar Christiano Ronaldo (b. 1985) to see the legitimacy of this contention (figure 58 and 59, see next page). What are the significant meanings derived from this emphasis on the nude male body? Such images are capable of several readings, including the intention to capture and serve the desiring gaze of gay men, who are often conceived (stereotypically) as the primary (and solely active) consumers of male fashion. These male figures are moreover pictured in the lean position with medium to medium-close shot frames, which accentuate their well-articulated, upper-body muscles, further suggesting their status as the object of the viewer's gaze.

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[34] See, for example famous male models like Mathias Lauridsen, and Garrett Neff who is renowned for his work with Calvin Klein. They have a boyish semblance and considerably masculine physique.

[35] T. S. Freson and L. B. Arthur, 'Fashioning Men's Bodies: Masculinity and Muscularity' in A. Reilly and S. Cosbey (eds) *The Men's Fashion Reader*. New York: Fairchild Books. 2008, p. 339.

Figure 58 Calvin Klein Jeans Spring/Summer 2010 collection advertisement with Jamie Dornan

Figure 59 Portuguese soccer player Christiano Ronaldo poses for Armani

It is noteworthy that as sociologist Beth Eck points out, heterosexual men tend to display either strong forms of rejection or strongly stated disinterest in looking at such images of male nudes. According to her, this kind of reaction mirrors these men's strong urge to reactively construct and accentuate their "hypermasculine" heterosexuality.[36]

Or could it be simply that the virile physicality of a male and its aesthetic qualities diminishes as it is clothed? And conversely, would clothing not appear attractive on such physicality? Anne Hollander articulates the idea that European civilizations have long been fascinated by human nakedness, and modish fashion of each era has left traces on how nudity was (artistically) conceived.[37] In other words, the favoured visualisation of the human nude has always been influenced by contemporary fashion. The naked body did not, however, always enjoy the stature of fascination in Japanese culture. Nudity and the shape of the body have not been important in Japanese aesthetics.[38] In the Heian period of Japan, for instance, the nobility wore elaborate layers of silk robes carefully selected through the art of matching colours.[39] As noted in the Introduction, the clothes and how they were coordinated had much more importance than the actual physicality of the wearer in this era. Sequentially, general disinterest in the body was noted. Japanese studies scholar Ivan Morris had stated that:

> The humanist idea that the naked body can be a thing of aesthetic joy and significance is alien to the Japanese tradition…Murasaki [the author of *The Tales*

[36] B. Eck, 'Men are Much Harder: Gendered Viewing of Nude Images' *Gender & Society*, Vol. 17, No. 5, pp. 691-710.

[37] A. Hollander, *Seeing Through Clothes*. New York: The Viking Press. 1978. (hereafter, Hollander, *Clothes*)

[38] L. Skov. 'Fashion Trends, Japonisme and Postmodernism' in J. W. Treat (ed) *Contemporary Japan and Popular Culture*. London: Cuzon. 1996, p. 155.

[39] The Heian Period lasted approximately 390 years between AD 794-1192.

of Genji] comments, 'Unforgettably horrible is the naked body. It really does not have the slightest charm'.[40]

The dissociation between fashionability and emphasis on the male nude body in Japanese culture is also evident in an October 2010 feature story of *FINEBOYS*, titled "No-no styles that would turn girls off". Four "stylish" young women are invited to discuss what girls like and dislike about young men's fashion styles in this story. Significantly, one of the women does not like men wearing their shirt open too much, for when they bend down, their chest is shown. She says 'I don't like that odd sexiness'. Her comment is followed by another participant, who claims 'I would think, what do they want to do by showing that much. Basically, girls don't want to look at boys who reveal their body too much!'.[41] Needless to say, nudity, particularly female nudes, are conceived as erotically charged in contemporary Japanese culture, too. However, if we invert the point made by Hollander that modish fashion influences the portrayal of the nude in European culture, the emphasis on the male nude and his muscularity might have its reflections in the currency of men's fashion. Although any generalisation should be avoided, contemporary American and European men may be encouraged to have a muscular body frame and to dress in a very simple fashion, so a trace of their (well-built) physicality is visible on his clothed body. Hence, the emphatically muscled male physique is still seen as a "requirement" for these men to be considered attractive.

The context in which such unclothed male images is presented, that is, in men's lifestyle magazines such as *GQ*, *Loaded* or *Men's Health*, would allow the heterosexual male readership to assume that the primary purpose of these images is to sell the product, not to sensually allure the bearer of the gaze. This implicit message might offer the reader another way to engage with the image of an unclothed male other than displaying strong forms of rejection or stated disinterest. Sartorial styles proposed in these Japanese magazines, on the other hand, often involve layering of a number of items. In order to effectively and attractively present layered styles, thus, a slender physique, like a hanger or a mannequin, is more desirable. What adds further significance to this slender male physique is that this male image is perceived as aesthetically pleasing if not sensually alluring by Japanese young women, and importantly, it is not the only mode of male aesthetics existent in the culture.

Hidetoshi Nakata (b. 1977), Japanese former soccer player known to be a "fashionista", is one of the four celebrities endorsing 2010 Calvin Klein underwear

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[40] I. Morris, *The World of the Shining Prince: Court Life in ancient Japan*. NY, Tokyo, London: Kodansha International. 1994 [1964], p. 202.

[41] *FINEBOYS*, October 2010, p. 82.

advertising campaign with American actors Mehcad Brooks, and Kellan Lutz, and Spanish tennis player Fernando Verdasco (figure 60).

Figure 60 Hidetoshi Nakata poses for Calvin Klein Underwear advertisement campaign, 2010

He appears to be slightly less muscular than the other three but still displays a visibly muscled, athletic physique. His body utterly corresponds with, as contended previously, a preferred mode of male physicality in the Euro-American tradition. Presumably, this image is targeted primarily at male viewers who would actually wear the product he is endorsing. His direct, piercing gaze and slightly leaning, but otherwise hard, "face-off" posture, and the context of the model as a star soccer player, all connote his nude body as athletic rather than sensual. Significant divergence is illuminated by the images of nude males that are ostensibly targeted at (heterosexual) Japanese women.

Japanese singer and actor Teppei Koike (b. 1986) appears unclothed in his photo book (2006, figure 61). Similarly, in 2010, Sho Sakurai (b. 1982), singer, actor, and member of *Johnny's* boy band *Arashi*, appears naked in well-established women's lifestyle magazine *an an* (figure 62).[42]

Figure 61 Teppei Koike in his photo book *kiss me, kiss me* (2006)

Figure 62, Sho Sakurai poses for *An An*, January 2010

[42] Many actors and singers publish photobooks in Japan. Photobooks of actresses, swimsuits models and singers are predominantly targeted at the heterosexual male market, with the images of the stars in swimsuits are often included. The publication of photobooks of male celebrities is also on an increase, aiming primarily to the heterosexual female market.

The medium shot and the lean position of the young men suggest their statures as personal and familiar objects of the desiring gaze. Koike and Sakurai clearly have unthreateningly slender and undeveloped, almost "androgynous" physiques, making a stark contrast to the more muscular bodies of Nakata, Jamie Dornan (figure 58), Christiano Ronaldo (figure 59) or even Simon Nessman (figure 57). Although the images of Koike and Sakurai may take on different connotations for gay or heterosexual male consumers, they officially target the heterosexual female market. This reinforces Miller's contention that such a slender, "androgynous" male can be aesthetically (and sexually) alluring to Japanese women.[43] The firmly established presence of two different types of male physicality in Japanese popular culture (one muscular and the other slender) also signals a degree of ambivalence involved in male slenderness in Euro-American mainstream culture where one body image of muscular male still tends to be preferred. The images exuding these different aesthetic sensitivities are also present in the three Japanese magazines. I proceed to examine this transcultural difference through a D&G advertisement campaign for the summer 2010 collection.[44]

Elegant Cowboys: D&G Garments and the Theory of "Format" and "Product"

Such internationally distributed advertisements as Dolce & Gabbana, Chanel (e.g. Allure Homme Sport) and Diesel are also featured in these three Japanese magazines. Although both have a non-Asian-appearance, the male figures appearing in these advertisements differ visually from the actual models adorning the fashion photo pages. Undoubtedly, well-developed, muscled bodies are shared by the models appearing in these advertisements. One such example is a series of D&G's advertisements for their summer 2010 collection (figure 63).

Figure 63 Advertisement campaign for D&G 2010 Summer Collection

[43] Miller, *op.cit.*, p. 151.

[44] D & G is a slightly more casual line of Dolce & Gabbana brand.

At first glance, the male models in the D&G advertisements appear more boyish, or at least less "hypermasculine" than their counterparts in other advertising campaigns (figure 64).

Figure 64 Advertisement campaign for Dolce & Gabbana 2010 Summer Collection

Except for one model in the far right, the indirect gaze of the models connotes a degree of passivity, which might diminish their "hypermasculinity".[45] Yet their very short hairstyles and postures, particularly theose of the model in the middle who has his left foot on the sofa and his right hand in his trouser pocket, connote a more conventional and confident masculinity. Inclusion of women in the background, although vaguely visible, also alludes to the intention to accentuate a normative heterosexuality of an otherwise homosocial image. On closer observation we see the well-developed, muscled bodies of the models, such as strong facial features and broad shoulders. This is reminscent of the male models who appeared in *Men's Health*.[46] We can deduce that these qualities reflect the European and American "ideal" masculine physical image. Arguably, these qualities reflect the negotiation process between "hyper-masculine" and the more "androgynous" kind of male images.

In contrast, the April 2010 issue of *POPEYE* and *MEN'S NON-NO* offer an illustrated story with the same D&G collection. The fashion spread of *POPEYE* is of great significance for my argument. In the story, the same D&G sartorial items that appeared in the advertisement campaign are worn by Australian model Benjamin Wenke, but are styled, photographed by Japanese artists and targeted at the Japanese readers (figure 65).[47] In comparison with the D&G advertisement campaign (figure 63), Wenke in *POPEYE* appears significantly younger, boyish, slender and elegantly dressed than the models in this campaign.

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[45] G. Kress and T. van Leeuwen, *Reading Images*. London and New York: Routledge. 1996, pp. 118-9.
[46] Alexander, *op.cit.*,; Boni, *op cit*.
[47] *POPEYE*, 'The Cowboy Way', April 2010, pp. 166-173.

Figure 65 Benjamin Wenke dressed in D&G 2010 Summer Collection in *POPEYE*

The photographic aesthetics of these images, notably a type of dreamy, melancholic and soft-focused effect also highlight the credibility of my reading. Wenke's youthful, androgynous appearance corresponds with his "lean" posture, presented in a medium-to-medium long shot, all of which connote his stature as an "object" to glance at and appraise. The title of the fashion spread, "The Cowboy Way" adds further significance. As fashion scholar Shaun Cole theorizes, such sartorial styles as the cowboy traditionally connoted a virile masculinity and the qualities of toughness, aggression, and strength associated with it.[48] However, the cowboy is reinvented as a youthful, elegant male fashion in *POPEYE*.

In order to make sense of these differences, it is useful to refer to the theory of "format" and "product" as articulated by Okamura. This theory allows a cultural form to be seen as a "format" when becoming transculturally accepted. This standardised "format" becomes a carrier of a local culture, making its characteristics visible, and

[48] S. Cole, 'Macho Man: Clones and the Development of a Masculine Stereotype' in McNeil and Karaminas (eds) *The Men's Fashion Reader*. Oxford & New York: Berg. 2009, p. 392.

comparable with those of other cultures.[49] In line with this theory, a Caucasian male model in the D&G clothes (the "formats") become transnational, and then "localised" in Japanese culture (as in the form of *POPEYE*). When the "format" is then combined with local aesthetic ideals, it engenders a male image largely favoured in Japan. The "product" of this transcultural flow reflects an emphasis on the fusion of a youthful and slender male image, a quality yet to be favoured in European and American mainstream fashion scenes. These differences perceived in modes of male aesthetic sensitivities allude to the ideas articulated by theorists who recognize cultural hybridization and "glocalisation" such as Jan Nederveen Pieterse, Roland Robertson, and Arjun Appadurai.[50] These differences remind us that we should not disregard local aesthetics projected upon models gracing Japanese men's fashion magazines regardless of the models' nationality or race. At the same time, such view also rings an alarm bell and reminds us that we should not fall into simple cultural essentialism.

As I demonstrated in Chapter 2, the target readerships of these three Japanese publications are in their late teens to early twenties. Therefore, the male images that flow within these Japanese magazines tend to be situated between boyhood and manhood. Such youthful masculine aesthetics might imply Japanese young men's attempts to reject an older mode of masculinity. As Miller puts it, '[t]he model of maleness being opposed [to the youthful, suave one] is age-graded, associated with an older generation of *oyaji* (old men) with different values and aspirations'.[51] The images of males embellishing these Japanese men's fashion magazines, including the "ordinary" young men pictured on the streets of Japan, make a stark contrast to the widely-circulated images of uniformly worn-out, older men in Japan. Here the mode of masculinity associated with older males is most likely points that of the "salaryman".

The "salaryman" masculinity has embodied the dominant discourse around masculinity in modern Japan, particularly since World War Two with such qualities as 'loyalty, diligence, dedication, self-sacrifice, [and] hard work'.[52] Idealized portrayals of the "salaryman" as masculine, austere and sexually virile, are prevalent in Japanese popular

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[49] K. Okamura, *Gurohbaru shakai no ibunka-ron (Cross-cultural Theory in Global Societies)*. Kyoto: Sekaishiso-sha. 2003, pp. 137-149.

[50] Nederveen Pieterse, *op. cit.*; R. Robertson, 'Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity' in M. Featherstone, S. Lash and R. Robertson (eds), *Global Maternities*. London: Sage Publications. 1994, p. 34; Appadurai, *op.cit.*

[51] Miller, *op.cit.*, p. 127.

[52] R. Dasgupta, 'Performing Masculinities? The 'Salaryman' at Work and Play' *Japanes Studies*, Volume 20, No. 2, 2000, p. 193.

culture, particularly the ones targeted at middle-aged men.[53] As scholar of Japanese cultural studies Romit Dasgupta argues, such representations are the mirror-image of the ridiculed and caricatured images of tired, weak and shabby middle-aged man.[54] Typically, a "salaryman" devote his time to his company, and thus would have little time to spend with their families, let alone on their appearances.

Significantly, some scholars argue that younger generations of Japanese men believe this lifestyle to be inadequate.[55] The burst of the bubble economy in 1991 and subsequent recession in the early 1990s, along with changes in the status and rights of women, are often given as direct causes of the decline in the legitimacy of this once hegemonic, "salaryman" masculinity.[56] One way Japanese young men show their opposition to this "salaryman" masculinity is through fashion. Although there are stylistic variations in *POPEYE*, *MEN'S NON-NO*, and *FINEBOYS*, the concept of elegance associated with the "Neo-Edwardian Dandyism" is one style associated with this rebellion.

Boyish Reinvention of the "Neo-Edwardian" Dandy Style

As exemplified by such figures as Cecil Beaton, "Edwardian Dandyism" appreciated elegance, grace, and sophistication with a handful of mannerisms retrieved from the past (particularly from the Regency period). Although it is not completely a unified style, the orthodoxy of the style, as Nixon describes of the 1980s revival of "Edwardian male style" in the UK fashion scene, consists of 'taupe, cream and beige jackets and trousers set off with coloured silk ties, cravats and waistcoats. Courduroy [sic] and brogues compliment the soft edges of a cream raincoat and a straw hat'.[57] In this section, I compare the photographs of renowned fin-de-siècle dandies such as Oscar Wilde and Lord Alfred Douglas with images of the models found in the three Japanese magazines. This comparison aims to demonstrate that the "Edwardian Dandy styles", once ascribed to certain social classes in England, have been claimed in contemporary Japan as elegant yet rather casual men's fashion.

Burberry Black Label, for instance, is a casual clothing line of the famous UK designer, offering "British Traditional" fashion style, as in the feature fashion photo pages

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[53] Examples include comic book series Kenshi Hirokane's Kachō Shima Kōsaku (Section Chief Kōsaku Shima) and Kimio Yanagisawa's *Tokumei Kakarichō Tadano Hitoshi* (Mission Section Chief Hitoshi Tadano), both of which are later made into TV series and films.

[54] *Ibid.*, p. 199.

[55] K. Kumada, *Otoko rashia to iu yamai? (A pathology called Masculinity?)*. Nagoya: Fubai-sha, 2005.

[56] M. Ushikubo, *Sōshoku-kei danshi [ojō-man] ga nihon wo kaeru (herbivorous men (Ladylike man) change Japan)*, Tokyo: Kōdansha +α shinsho. 2008; Taga, Futoshi, 'Rethinking Male Socialisation: Life histories of Japanese male youth' in K. Louie and M. Low (eds) *Asian Masculinities*, Oxon: RoutledgeCurzon. 2003, p. 142.

[57] S. Nixon, *Hard Looks: Masculinity, Spectatorship and Contemporary Consumption*. New York: St. Martin's Press. 1996, p. 189. (hereafter, Nixon, *Hard*)

in December 2006 edition of *POPEYE*.[58] The first page of the feature comes with a caption, which says:

> Wishing to spend some graceful time for this winter, with the coordinates that give an elegant air. This season's items by Burberry Black Label are filled with such feelings.

In one of the pages Vincent Hoogland, an eighteen-year-old, boyish looking Dutch model, is attired in a knee-length black trench coat, a red v-necked cotton cuffed sweater, a white shirt, a pair of cotton grey-checked pants, a narrow checked-tie, suede gloves, and a pair of black, wing-tipped short boots (figure 66).

Figure 66 Vincent Hoogland dressed in Burberry Black Label

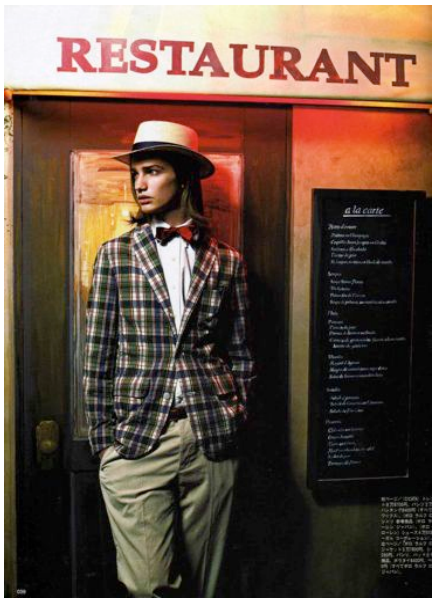

Figure 67 "Bon Nuit, Le Baron!"

The model is presented in long shot, shows the "face-off" position but is lightly leaning against the table. The April 2007 issue of the same magazine runs a fashion story under the title of "Bon Nuit, Le Baron!", in which a model is attired in a checked Ralph Lauren jacket, white shirt, a red bow tie, a pair of off-white trousers, and a straw hat (figure 67).[59] The model is presented in a medium long shot in the "lean" position with an indirect gaze. The elegant aesthetics conveyed in these images are reminiscent of famous Edwardian dandies, notably Oscar Wilde and Aubrey Beardsley in the case of former, and the young Lord Alfred Bruce Douglas in the latter (figure 68). More "relaxed" appropriation of this Edwardian dandy style with a modern nuance is also found in the April 2010 issue of *MEN'S NON-NO*.[60] In a fashion spread titled 'United Arrows White Label: Wearing the Suits Freely! Daily!', one of the models is pictured wearing a black

[58] *POPEYE*, December 2006, pp. 95-106.
[59] *POPEYE*, April 2007, pp. 36-43.
[60] *MEN'S NON-NO*, April 2010, p. 149.

jacket with a *gilet*, a blue shirt, a pair of indigo corduroy pants, completed with a checked-bow tie and a hat (figure 69).

Figure 68 Lord Alfred Bruce Douglas

Figure 69

Figure 70 Takuya Kimura in POPEYE, May 2008

Figure 71 Oscar Wilde

The adoption of elegant fashion as a form of revolt against other notions of masculinity has been exemplified by Takuya Kimura, singer, dancer, actor, and member of the longtime Japanese boy band *SMAP*. Kimura is captured in a distinct fashion in the May 2008 issue of *POPEYE*.[61] He is dressed in a loud Gucci check suit, shirt, tie, knit sweater and shoes, completed with a straw hat (figure 70).

In the black and white photo, Kimura is sitting cross-legged on a modern chair, holding a walking stick. Except for the chair, all of these qualities, even his long hair, resemble "the most notable practitioner" of Edwardian dandyism, Oscar Wilde (figure 71).

According to Ellen Moers, author of *The dandy: Brummell to Beerbohm*, Oscar Wilde made sartorial transitions in the 1880s as "Professor of Aesthetics" with a costume of 'knee breeches, drooping lily, flowering green tie, velvet coat and wide, turned-down

[61] *POPEYE*, May 2008, p. 78.

collar which first made him famous'.[62] In the 1890s, with fame and notoriety achieved, his dress 'became coldly and formally correct. He was content to express individuality (aside from his enormous and oddly proportioned bulk) with a single detail: a green boutonnière, a bright red waistcoat or a turquoise and diamond stud'.[63] In either case, the fin de siècle dandyism appreciated elegance, grace, and sophistication with a handful of mannerisms retrieved from the past. What is its relevance to Japanese contemporary men's fashion? There is a significant link between dandyism and contemporary Japanese men's fashion. Indeed, as I have noted earlier in this chapter, the formal introduction of the European sartorial style to Japan, which was initially a male phenomenon, coincided with the eve of the revival of dandyism in the UK in the late nineteenth century.[64]

Art historian Toby Slade moreover suggests that there existed an equivalent to European dandyism in the Japanese context, which allowed Japanese men to adopt and appreciate the aesthetics of the suit. Upon Japanese aesthetic concepts of *iki* as articulated by philosopher Shūzō Kuki,[65] Slade argues that:

> While some reservations can be placed on its exact equivalence, it can be concluded that some of the aesthetic factors that shaped the suit's development in Europe were at work in the Japanese experience as well.[66]

This cross-cultural affinity of dandyism reinforces the claim made by Nederveen Pieterse that cultural hybridisation expresses cultural affinities rather than "exoticism" or difference.[67] Rather than blindly following the modes of the past in their untouched form, the elegant styles offered by these publications show a degree of innovation. I argue that the significance of these magazines' elegant aesthetics is twofold: firstly, they have modified and restyled "Edwardian" dandy aesthetics as slightly more casual by combining them with other, more nonchalant styles. This has rendered the "elegant" styles both more youthful and accessible. Secondly, young men's embrace of these elegant yet youthful, classic yet attainable styles imposes an (indirect) repudiation of the worn-out,

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[62] E. Moers, *The dandy: Brummell to Beerbohm*. London: Secker & Warburg.1960, p. 298.

[63] *Ibid*., p. 299.

[64] T. Slade, "Clothing Modern Japan". PhD Thesis, University of Sydney, unpublished. 2006 (hereafter, Slade, *Clothing*); K. Hirano, 'The Westernization of Clothes and the State in Meiji Japan' in K. Hirano (ed) *The State and Cultural Transformation: Perspectives from East Asia*. Tokyo: United Nations University Press. 1993, pp. 121-131.

[65] *Iki* is a traditional aesthetic ideal, believed to have emerged from the worldly and urbane merchant classes in the late-Edo period in Japan (in the 1800s). Often roughly translated in English as chic or stylish, *iki* is often used to describe a simple, nonchalantly refined and stylish thing, behaviour or appearance.

[66] T. Slade, 'The Japanese Suit and Modernity' in P. McNeil and V. Karaminas (eds), *The Men's Fashion Reader*. Oxford and New York" Berg. 2009, p. 295. (hereafter Slade, *Suit*)

[67] Nederveen Pieterse, *op.cit.,* p. 72.

dowdy and "mature" image of masculinity predominantly ascribed to Japanese men. I explore these points below.

The elegant style considered by these magazines also includes "European Traditional", "Mod", "Ivy", and "preppy". The "Ivy" style in particular, has occupied a special place in contemporary Japanese men's fashion. The Japanese adoption and appropriation of the style first appeared in Tokyo in the early 1960s, and was largely ascribed to the popularity of the Japanese Ivy-League-inspired clothing brand VAN Jacket.[68] The popularity of "Ivy style" in Japan, and the Japanese fascination with the style, is immortalised in the form of *Take Ivy* (1965), a picture book, which was presumably intended to serve as a style guide for Japanese youth of American Ivy-League styles.[69] There has been a regular appearance of the "Ivy style" ever since. The style corresponds well with the *kireime* (neat) and high-casual styles preferred by the three Japanese magazines, and thus these publications quite frequently introduce variations of "Ivy style". Notably, the November 2007 issue of *MEN'S NON-NO* introduced "Neo-Ivy style" with a tighter silhouette (figure 72).

Figure 72 Model Takeshi Mikawai dressed in "Neo-Ivy" style, *MEN'S NON-NO*, November 2007

[68] Y. Akagi, *Heibon Punch 1964*. Tokyo: Heibon-sha. 2004, pp. 112-3.
[69] G. Trebay, 'Prep, Forward and Back' *The New York Times*, July 23, 2010. [http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/25/fashion/25Prep.html].

Although in 1965, *Take Ivy* defined the Ivy-leaguers as uncouth dressers who 'don't' bother looking neat for classes', today's "Ivy style" boys are, judging from the pictures, significantly more suave.[70] *FINEBOYS* even articulates a style named "school style", which is a "blanket" term for styles including "Ivy", "preppy style", and a European traditional, school-boy look (figure 73).[71]

Figure 73 Example of "School Style" in *FINEBOYS*, March 2008

Compatibility of the Japanese concept of male elegance with other styles, such as "Military", "Rock", or even "Working Clothes" styles, is another significant quality. These magazines show commingled styles, which add elegance and neatness to rather rough, dishevelled, and real styles. We can see this process in the March 2008 issue of *MEN'S NON-NO*, which offers paradigms of elegant or chic coordination for the flannel shirt. The feature suggests that wearing it with a tie achieves a chic look, with a matching jacket and pants comes an elegant look, and layering it with a pastel-coloured pinstripe shirt completes an innocent look.[72] Crucially, this sartorial concept of male elegance is not only appreciated in its pristine, classical style but also combined with and incorporated in other, perhaps more practical dress styles in Japan.

Almost all these magazines include the styles coming with the coordination of a shirt and tie, jacket, letter sweater or pea coat. However, as Hollander has indicated, the suit has undergone only slight stylistic modifications since 1820, the time when it was virtually established.[73] Thus, the dominance of the elegant male aesthetics presented in these magazines privileges an allusion to turn of the century Europe, and fin-de-siècle dandyism. What is significant is that such a privileged, suave male aesthetic has been recreated as everyday elegance in Japan. In other words, whether it is an Edwardian-dandy elegance or the insignia of elite Ivy-Leaguers, the Japanese have incorporated it into their everyday style, making it available for virtually everyone who can afford it.

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[70] T. Hayashida, S. Ishizu, T. Kurosu, and H. Hasegawa, *Take Ivy*. NY: powerHouse Books. 2010 [1965], p. 66.

[71] *FINEBOYS*, December 2007, p. 13.

[72] *MEN'S NON-NO*, March 2008, pp. 66-7.

[73] A. Hollander, *Sex and Suits*. NY: Knopf. 1994, p. 55. (hereafter, Hollander, *Suits*)

The elegant, fin-de-siècle male aesthetics are also found in some European men's magazines. Sociologist Sean Nixon mentions that the look of "Edwardian Englishness" was prominent in British men's magazines in the 1980s, particularly in *GQ*.[74] More recently, the July-August 2005 edition of *L'UOMO VOGUE* offers Steven Klein's fashion photo story 'Magnificence', which features an androgynous looking male model attired in dandy style (figure 74). Images of suit-clad men in various period styles are also featured throughout the magazine.[75]

Figure 74 'Magnificence' by Steven Klein, *L'UOMO VOGUE* July/August 2005

Yet, unlike in Japan, the appreciation of such elegant aesthetics is seemingly limited to up-market high-fashion publications in many European countries.[76] Crucially, as we have seen, this sartorial concept of male elegance is not only appreciated as an intact, classical style but is also combined with and incorporated in other, more practical dress styles in Japan. What significance does the prevalence of male sartorial elegance in Japan, then, suggest? I would argue that the youthful, sophisticated male styles conceptualised in these men's publications point to the recreation of the suit-clad male image as more aesthetically pleasant. Whether consciously or otherwise, such youthful and elegant images of masculinity repudiate the older, and by implication more established image of masculinity as embodied by a middle-aged, worn-out and suit-clad "salaryman". Do these suave males suggest the formation and development of Foucault's theory of a practice of self? If so, can their acquisition of 'the beautiful form in the eyes of others and of themselves' through governing their lives with a set of fashion principles indicate their repudiation of the preconception that men dress for utility rather than aesthetics?[77] If such a preconception reflects conventional sex role ascriptions, do appearance-conscious men

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[74] Nixon, *Hard*, p. 188.

[75] *L'UOMO VOGUE*, July/August 2005, pp. 252-273.

[76] It should be noted that the recent revival of "Ivy styles" in non-Asian countries, including the US, with the establishment of fashion brands such as Rugby Ralph Lauren and the popularity of TV series *Mad Men*, might impose a change to this tendency.

[77] Foucault, *op.cit.*, p. 298.

who are portrayed in the three Japanese magazines point to images of masculinity that are less preoccupied with conventional gender roles?

Boy's Elegance: Young Men and Gender Performance

The June 2007 issue of *POPEYE* runs six pages of a fashion story titled "Mister Boy: Boy's Elegance of Emporio Armani (*Emporio Armani no boy's elegance*)" (figure 75).[78]

Figure 75 "Mister Boy" with Lucas Mascarini in *POPEYE*, June 2007

Photographs show Brazilian model Lucas Mascarini attired in suits and jackets in a boyish fashion, and captions describe his look as "adding sensuality to boyishness", "formal", "pure", and "subtle", and as being part of the "boyish-dandy style". In a combination of direct and indirect gazes, the model poses in both "face-off" and "lean" positions, wearing a classical jacket, bowtie, clerical shirt and a pair of black-and white striped trousers, all of which are designed by Armani. Mascarini was then twenty-one years old. His youthful, boyish appearance makes a contrast to an odd combination of cigarette and a pair of knee-length shorts, *gilet* and slightly dishevelled short hair, a pair of framed glasses and casually worn pale blue pinstriped shirt. This oddly combined "boyish/dandy" style creates an air of a boy or very young man playing dress-up. The title of the feature story "Mister Boy" furthers this idea. What is striking is that an elegant, classical mode of mature masculinity is performed by a very young man.

This reading echoes the cultural and a social-psychological analysis of the performance of gender. As most famously articulated by Butler, such analysis argues that much of what we regard as "gender" is not biologically determined but is instead created and sustained by collective performances.[79] Significantly this series of images shows that a

[78] *POPEYE*, June 2007, pp.170-175.

[79] J. Butler, 'Bodily Inscriptions, Perfomative Subversions' in S. Salih and J. Butler (eds), *The Judith Butler Reader*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers. 2004 [1990], pp. 90-118.

type of masculinity can be adopted and playfully yet manifestly parodied, not only by women, but also by men. The perfomative nature of gender is thus underscored at a more elemental level, hence is rendered more effectively. Sophisticated parody of classical masculinity is aligned with the assumption that Japanese young men are rejecting the more established, and largely dowdy, mode of "salaryman" masculinity.

The regalia of clichéd, worn-out "salarymen" is a 'white shirt, dark business suit, lack of 'flashy' clothing and accessory items, [along with a] neat hair style'.[80] It is the conceptual blend of boyish youthfulness and elegance as evinced in the boyish reinvention of "Neo-Edwardian" dandy styles that manifests these young men's likely desire to part from the established and perhaps not-so-aesthetically-pleasing masculine norms (figure 76) in favour of a more stylish and delightfully sophisticated "look" (figure 77). Although stylistically different, such elegant suit styles offered by these magazines correspond conceptually to the mid-1880s British Wildean costume, 'open to the influence of taste, which dictated a return to the Regency ideals of grace, youthfulness, and elegance'.[81] Rather than affirming the relationship between fatigued, unattractive masculinity and the suit, these magazines show their male readership that they can look youthful, elegant, and sophisticated even when dressed in the sober business suit.

Figure 76 Stereotypical image of a worn-out salaryman

Figure 77 Takeshi Mikawai wearing low-priced Suits in *MEN'S NON-NO*, April 2008

These Japanese men's fashion magazines are able to, then, encourage their male readership to acknowledge the pleasures of looking pleasant. Furthermore, I argue that the fashionability of Japanese young men conveys, and even uplifts both (hetero)sexual attractiveness and self-confidence.

[80] Dasgupta, *op. cit.*, p. 193.

[81] Moers, *op.cit.*, p. 289.

Negotiating Romantic Desire and Narcissistic Impulses

The three Japanese men's publications analysed here point to at least two possible factors contributing to the rise of fashion-consciousness among Japanese young men. As Miller argues, '[a]n emphasis on male appearance counters the salaryman reification of men as workers, while women appreciate these new styles because they are aesthetically pleasing and erotically charged'.[82] In similar fashion, Ushikubo notes that Japanese women in their twenties to thirties are likely to find overtly fashion-minded men, whom they take to be unassertive, calm, and willing to share domestic work, to be more attractive romantic partners than older men who tend to be framed within rigidly defined gender roles.[83] Ushikubo suggests that the appearance-consciousness among these young men reflects their attempt to gain self-confidence rather than to attract the attention of women.[84] That being so, I suggest that two factors are the keys to understanding this rise of fashion consciousness; the influence of Japanese women who find such well-attired men aesthetically pleasing, and an attempt to gain self-confidence.

These two factors are prominent, for example, in TV commercials like Shiseido *UNO Fog Bar* (2009) and Kose *Facio* (2010) (figures 78, 79, 80 and 81).

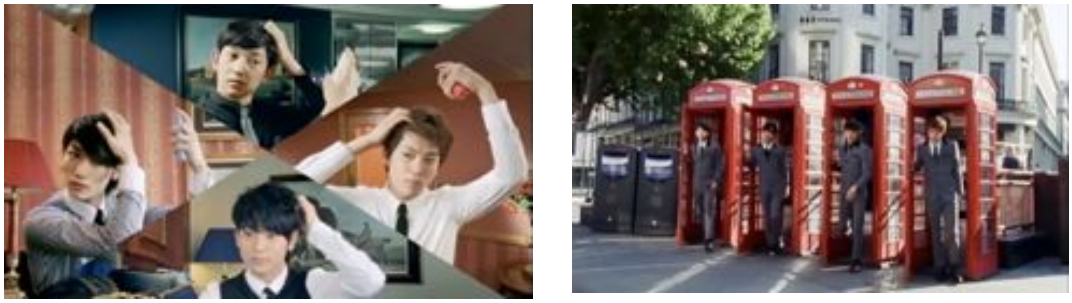

Figure 78 and 79 Shisēdō *UNO Fog Bar*

Figure 80 and 81 Kōsē *Fasio*

These are TV commercials for cosmetic products, with the former promoting a hair styling product for men and thus targeted at males, while the latter markets a mascara,

[82] Miller, *op.cit.*, p. 127.
[83] Ushikubo, *op.cit.*, pp. 41, 44-5.
[84] *Ibid.*, pp. 126-7.

and is targeted at females. *UNO Fog Bar* is endorsed by four young Japanese actors: Haruma Miura (b.1990), Eita (b.1982), Shun Oguri (b.1982), and Satoshi Tsumabuki (b.1980). Six versions of the advertisement were created in the first half of 2010, in which these actors saunter down the streets of London, playing tennis, or ride in a taxi, with obvious references to the Beatles. Although the actors were aged between nineteen and twenty-nine at the time the commercial was created, their longish hair with a fringe, and clothes, such as neat grey Mod suit with a tight silhouette and slightly short length of trousers exposing the shoes, undoubtedly exude boyishness. This is further accentuated where the boys wear a white shirt with rolled-up sleeves and a pair of knee-length shorts in the tennis sequence.

Jun Matsumoto (b.1983), a member of *Johnny*'s boys band *Arashi*, appears as an "eyelasher", supposedly a barber only taking care of eyelashes in *Facio*. The setting is a somewhat dreamy, European fairytale-like atmosphere as aged furniture, a rocking-horse, and a gold ornate hand-mirror might suggest. Matsumoto is dressed in a white shirt with fringes at the cuff, dark, silky *gilet* and a black bow tie. In comparison with the boyish spiritedness displayed by the actors in *UNO Fog Bar*, Matsumoto is slightly more composed, in the manner of a well-trained butler. Despite the different target audiences, these two commercials deploy young male celebrities, all of whom epitomise slender male aesthetics. These celebrities are moreover dressed and presented as endorsing the concept of male elegance and boyishness as we have seen earlier in this chapter. Do these two clips correspond to the two possible driving forces of fashion consciousness among Japanese young men?

It is noteworthy that this particular image of young men is perceived in the latter clip as heterosexually desirable while in the former clip, it promotes a grooming practice as considerably detached from heterosexual economy. Indeed, even when the newer version of this commercial introduces the famous actress Aoi Miyazaki (b. 1985), she does not play the role of a romantic interest of any of the four men. Instead, in one of the versions, Eita gazes at his reflection in a shopwindow, (re)arranging his hair while the other three boys are impatiently yet comically waiting for him, saying 'you're only thinking about your hair, aren't you?' (figure 82).

Figure 82 Eita gazing his reflection in *UNO Fog Bar* TV advertisement

Figure 83 '"No-no" Styles that Turn Off Girls', *FINEBOYS*, October 2010

Arguably, we can interpret these commercials as endorsing the idea that the image of an elegant male can be (hetero)sexually attractive while taking care of appearance can also be for themselves. This perception is also present in the three men's fashion magazines.

Importantly, male fears that women will criticize their appearance are frequently the subject of magazine features, such as the 'No-no styles that turn off girls' (figure 83).[85] In this feature, the reader is instructed how to avoid coordinating pieces in unflattering looks. For example, it tells the reader that wearing a loose-fitted top and pants together would make an unattractive silhouette. Instead, the reader is advised to wear a tight-fitted top and a loose-fitted pants or vice versa. This story also features a group of young women and their spicy, scrutinizing comments on each of outfit. These magazines, particularly *FINEBOYS*, are predominantly concerned with the looks and styles that presumably attract young women. At the same time, a fashion feature in the April 2010 issue of *MEN'S NON-NO* introduces styles and coordinates that are designed to make pleasant impressions on both men and women.[86]

In similar fashion, a feature story about bodybuilding, which these magazines offer sporadically, particularly in the summer, is often framed within the discourse of the heterosexual, and young women's evaluations are frequently used as motivations.[87] But the April 2008 issue of *POPEYE* offers a kickboxing feature that instructs the readership to build a slender body that fits tight-silhouetted clothes.[88] In other words, this *POPEYE* feature tells us that Japanese young men dress not only to attract admirers but also for

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[85] *FINEBOYS* October 2010, pp. 79-86.

[86] *MEN'S NON-NO*, April 2010, pp. 62-9.

[87] For example, the May 2011 edition of *CHOKI CHOKI* (pp.71-78) runs a story titled 'Build an attractive body that looks good even when unclothed! Pump up only the parts girls love♥', in which the magazine allegedly surveyed 100 young women about which part of a male body they are attracted to. The story then offers training methods for the five most popular areas each: abdomen, arms, back, hip, and chest.

[88] *POPEYE*, April 2008, pp. 195-199.

their own desire and pleasure. This not only indicates that these Japanese young men's magazines persuade their readers to dress to make themselves feel attractive, along with presenting a good impression on other individuals, and that taking pleasure in clothes enhances their self-assurance. These publications' pedagogy around crafting a fashionable self for both the eyes of the other and for themselves by following a set of principles and regulations, and hence governing one's life endorses Foucault's idea of a practice of self.[89]

Steele emphasizes, in relation to Victorian women's fashion, that 'attractive dress gave its wearer considerable self-confidence, which contributed to an improved appearance'.[90] Arguably, this is what these Japanese men's fashion magazines attempt to convey. These two possible driving forces of male fashion-consciousness are also in the process of negotiation. A prime example is a 2007 *FINEBOYS* article on fragrances that offers a number of the latest colognes for specific situations, including those to be worn at school and on dates.[91] In this sense, these men's fashion magazines revolve around the negotiation process between these two forces of romantic desire and narcissistic impulses.

Whether Japanese young men's fashionability is inflected by desires to attract and impress peers/admirers, or to make themselves feel good, the influence of or references to a gay subculture is not usually considered. This is significant when we consider the tendency in Anglophone culture, in which the correlation between men's appearance consciousness and homosexual influence is often assumed.[92] For instance, Susan Bordo articulates this idea as follows:

> Despite their bisexual appeal, the cultural genealogy of the ads I've been discussing and others like them is to be traced largely through gay male aesthetics, rather than a sudden blossoming of appreciation for the fact that women might enjoy looking at sexy, well-hung young men who don't appear to be about to rape them.[93]

These indicate the established (mis)conception that despite (young) males increasingly becoming "objects" of the gaze, women are still not generally considered as primary originators of the "gaze" or "influencer". This makes an interesting contrast to Japanese men as argued by Miller that 'gay culture is probably not the inspiration for female

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[89] Foucault, *op.cit.*, p. 298.

[90] V. Steele, *Fashion and Eroticism: Ideals of Feminine Beauty from the Victorian Era to the Jazz Age*. NY and Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1985, p. 142. (hereafter, Steele, *Victorian*)

[91] *FINEBOYS*, August 2007, pp. 152-5.

[92] See, for example: J. Beynon, *Masculinities and Culture*, Phildelphia: Open University.
2002, p. 13; Bordo, *op.cit.*, p. 122; S. Nixon, 'Exhibiting Masculinity' in Hall, S. (ed) *Representation: Culture Representation and Signifying Practices*. London: Sage. 1997, p. 314. (hereafter, Nixon, *Masculinity*).

[93] Bordo, *op.cit.*, p. 122.

preferences in male appearance'.[94] As she notes, the popularity of the slender male aesthetic in Japan has predominantly female influences. The fact that the ideal male image flourishes in (young) women-oriented cultures, whether they are girls' comic books or boy idols, reinforces this theory. As sociologist and cultural historian of Japan Mark McLelland articulates in his analysis of the "boy love" comic genre, the ideal male image in men's comic book culture, whether they are targeted at straight or gay men, tends to emphasise 'the masculinity of the male figures…by drawing attention to body hair and bulging muscle and groins'.[95] The "hypermasculine" muscularity of the male body believed to be favoured in Japanese gay media is thus in stark contrast to the almost elf-like beautiful, slender young men so predominantly preferred by girls and young women.[96] Quite manifestly, this male image is what we encounter when looking at the Japanese men's fashion magazines I have been studying throughout this chapter (figure 84).

Figure 84 Example of "androgynous", boyish and slender male image in *POPEYE*, June 2008

Figure 85 an example of *kawaii* aesthetics in *MEN'S NON-NO*, April 2010

The established heterosexual influence on (young) men and their fashion consumption might explain the significantly different attitudes Japanese men display towards fashion compared to their Euro-American equivalents, where the strong ties between fashion practices and a gay subculture are assumed. If we recall the idea put forward by Bem that a group of men customarily marginalise homosexual men, let alone women, in order to affirm and strengthen their "male" identities, it is intelligible that these men tend to have ambivalent feelings for fashion consumption. This is because fashion consumption is conventionally perceived as being associated with their "others".[97] This also seemingly

[94] Miller, *op.cit.*, p. 151.

[95] M. McLelland, 'No Climax, No Point, No Meaning? Japanese Women's Boy-Love Sites on the Internet' *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, Volume 24, issue 3, 2000, p. 277. The "boy love" genre is a female-oriented and targeted genre in Japanese comic book culture where two beautiful young men are romantically (and sexually) involved.

[96] Miller, *op.cit.*, p. 151.

[97] S. L. Bem, *The Lenses of Gender: Transforming the Debate on Sexual Inequality*, New Haven & London: Yale University Press. 1993, p. 151.

offers an explanation for the allegedly ironic yet strong emphasis on "conventional" masculinity and on heterosexuality (e.g. predatory attitudes towards women) found in the "new lad" magazines.

Japanese men's fashion magazines, too, do not entirely disregard these "hegemonic" masculine tones (as, for example, *MEN'S NON-NO* often accentuates this by saying "if you are a man…" in its feature stories). However, '[h]istorically, attention to male beauty [has] not [been] unusual in Japan'.[98] As for the relative lack of these Japanese magazines' emphases on "hypermasculine" traits and activities, there may 'be less stigma attached to men looking feminine in Japan'.[99] Thus, within a broader historical context, fashion has not necessarily been a "female-only" trait in Japan. The presence of the cute (*kawaii*) aesthetics, which is increasingly becoming applicable to male aesthetics, has also created a context where "feminine" or at least less conventionally "masculine" appearance, to a certain extent, can be tolerated or even favoured in Japan (figure 85).

Boys Be Slender, Small and Soft

Evidently, one of the active and elegant style patterns offered in the May 2008 issue of *FINEBOYS* is "feminine", along with "trad" or European traditional, "mode", and "marine" look.[100] Similarly, the same issue introduces the concept of "3S boys" -3S stands for skinny, small, and soft with their height not exceeding 173cm or 5 feet 8.

Figure 86 "3S Boys" captured in the streets, *FINEBOYS*

[98] Miller, *op.cit.*, p. 127

[99] K. Tanaka, 'The language of Japanese men's magazines: young men who don't want to get hurt' in B. Benwell (ed) *Masculinity and Men's Lifestyle Magazines*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing. 2003, p. 228.

[100] *FINEBOYS*, May 2008, pp. 26-31. In the magazine, these English names are written in *katakana*.

In this feature, the magazine describes the concept as compatible with "feminine" and "cute" styles, with such words as "pink", "naïve" and "elegant".[101] It even suggests ways to combine women's items, such as a pair of jeans and a jacket into men's styles (figure 86).[102] It should also be noted that magazines such as *FINEBOYS* and *CHOKI CHOKI* instruct their male readers not to be too fashion conscious. This is particularly notable in "what girls like/dislike about boys' styles" kind of feature stories. These features repeatedly cite young women as saying that although they like men who take care of their appearances, they do not like men who are exceedingly and explicitly appearance conscious, or who wear items that explicitly connote "femininity" or "girlishness". For instance, the "No-no styles for girls" feature story in *FINEBOYS* tells the reader that college-aged women have voted for a frilled shirt and a skirt as the items they want men to wear the least. According to the magazine, young women find the frilled shirt too "girlish (*onnanoko-ppoi*)", and they think the skirt does not look good on men unless worn by those with an exceptional sense of fashion.[103] While the skirt is rarely featured as a men's outfit in men's fashion magazines like *FINEBOYS* and *MEN'S NON-NO*, the frilled shirt is sometimes depicted as an "elegant" item.[104] Nonetheless, what is striking is that such descriptive terms as "feminine" and "cute" are not degrading when applied to heterosexual young men, and this indicates that the boundaries between "masculine" and "feminine" are placed differently in Japanese youth culture. The significance of these representations is further emphasised by a fundamental role of dress to demarcate and manifest gender distinctions as an imaginative necessity.

As we have seen in Chapter 1, the desire of men and women to express a clear sartorial distinction between the two gender categories, which has occurred periodically in the European history of dress, would usually emerge when the visual differences between men's and women's clothes are blurred.[105] Slade, moreover, argues that one of the appeals the European three-piece-suit had to Japanese men in the late nineteenth century was its ability to offer transparent sartorial distinctions between male and female. This would be appealing to Japanese men, since Japanese kimono was perceived as relatively vague about gender distinctions.[106] In other words, the existing notion that assumes male indifference to fashion, and unfavourableness in male interests in fashion or appearance possibly reflect the instable nature of "masculinity", or more precisely, of gender.

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[101] Again, these words appear in English written in *katakana*.
[102] *Ibid*., pp. 129-35.
[103] *FINEBOYS*, December 2010, pp. 82-3.
[104] *FINEBOYS*, July 2007, p. 19.
[105] Hollander, *Suit*, p. 40.
[106] Slade, *Suit*, p. 293.

"Masculinity" might be so flimsy that it needs visual (and hence explicit) divides from "femininity" in order to sustain it.

As both a cultural and a social-psychological analysis of gender demonstrate, there are no clear definition of the terms "masculinity" and "femininity", except in relation to each other.[107] Moreover, as we have seen in Chapter 1, dress is, quite patently, one of the most crucial elements supporting the construction and maintenance of the gender categories. This further highlights the effectiveness of dress to demarcate (the imagined boundary of) gender. Since the requirements of sartorial distinction point to the instability of gender, in this case "masculinity", "feminine" sartorial elements, when excessively adopted or incorporated in men's fashion, might be perceived as inflicting a threat to men's heterosexual "masculine" identity. As the editor of now discontinued British men's magazine *Loaded Fashion* Adrian Clark says in 2005:

> Experimenting with colour is one of the few opportunities men have today to freely express themselves without ridicule. It is, therefore, a pity that many choose to limit their palettes to stereotypical masculine hues, such as black, grey, indigo and natural shades.[108]

Arguably, *FINEBOYS* and its representations of the young, heterosexual male offers an alternative to this tendency.

A degree of visual "androgyny" among Japanese young men, importantly, does not necessarily undermine or contradict their heterosexual appeal. Consequently, it implies that for the male readership of these magazines, the necessity to "other" what is assumed to be not traditionally "masculine" is considerably lower than their Anglophone counterparts. The concepts such as the "3S boys", and the inclusion of "elegant", or even "feminine", while not entirely subverting the expected gendered looks or boundaries, elucidate the aesthetic importance of dress. We can thus deduce that fashionability is intertwined with personality and inner identity, and concerns for appearance are prominent among individuals regardless of gender and sexual orientation.

To what extent does this change in Japanese male aesthetic sensitivities reflect the actual conception of gender relations among Japanese youth? Miller suggests that although Japanese young men have changed in their appearances and their aesthetic sensibility, 'it has done little to alter the structure of basic gender relations'.[109] A young

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[107] See, for example: C. Paechter, Masculine femininities/ feminine masculinities: power, identities and gender' *Gender and Education* Vol. 18, No. 3, 2006, p. 257; D. Reay, "Spice Girls', 'Nice Girls', 'Girlies', and 'Tomboys': gender discourses, girls' cultures and femininities in the primary classroom' *Gender and Education*, Vol. 13, No. 2; Bem, *op.cit.*

[108] A. Clark, 'editor' *Loaded Fashion*, Spring/Summer 2005, p. 25. *Loaded Fashion* was originally an offshoot of *Loaded*.

[109] Miller, *op.cit.*, p. 157.

man 'will still expect the women in his life to fulfil traditional and subservient gender roles'.[110] More optimistically, Ushikubo suggests that both Japanese men and women of younger generations are considerably less concerned with traditional gender roles.[111] There is, however, one thing that is clear through studying these Japanese young men's fashion magazines: a stylish outfit gives its wearer pleasure and confidence, and men too, wish to be aesthetically appreciated. Dress is, to recall what Wilson has said, the cultural metaphor for the body through which we manifest our identity into our cultural context, and it constantly demarcates our conceptions of gender and its boundaries.[112] The influences of the suave male aesthetics flourishing in contemporary Japanese culture on the structure of actual gender relations, thus remains to be seen.

Conclusion

At the beginning of this chapter, I referred to Flügel who contends that recognising and valuing the gaze of women would make heterosexual men's fashion more progressive and attractive. As we have seen, the male aesthetics flourishing among young Japanese men, as evinced in Japanese men's fashion publications, are highly favoured by Japanese young women. Yet, fashion is not only based on their wish to attract the female gaze, but also their desire to look good and to increase their self-confidence through their enhanced physical appearance.[113] For example, as I have argued, the popularity of elegant, "Neo-Edwardian" dandy aesthetics indicates that a group of young men hope to identify themselves with a mode of masculinity other than the more established "salaryman" masculinity. At least for younger generations, chic, fashionable, elegant, and even feminine outward appearance, to a certain degree, does not necessarily threaten "masculine" identities. Instead it recasts notions of masculinity for a new age. Thus, readers of men's fashion magazines are able to engage with what is traditionally perceived as "feminine" practices. Their incorporation of some of "feminine" sartorial items into their styles suggests that the boundaries between the two gender categories are placed differently in Japanese youth culture.

Since male heterosexuality does not necessarily conflict with beauty consumption in contemporary Japanese society, young men do not need to justify their engagement with fashion. At the same time, through the negotiating process between the readership's desire to attract admirers and their own hedonistic pleasures, these publications present fashion

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[110] *Ibid.*, p. 157.

[111] Ushikubo, *op.cit.*, p. 88.

[112] E. Wilson, 'Fashion and Postmodern Body' in Ash, J. and Wilson, E. (eds) *Chic Thrills: A Fashion Reader*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press. 1992, p. 6. (hereafter, Wilson, *Body*)

[113] Ushikubo, *op.cit.*, pp. 126-8.

interests and consumption as both enjoyable and a strategy to enhance self-esteem. Thus, adoring oneself in nice clothes, with stylish hairstyles and delightful perfumes, at least for a certain group of young men, provides confidence and a sense of pleasure. Importantly, this repudiates the anachronistic yet persisting preconception that men are less concerned with clothes than women, and prioritise functionality over aesthetics. It is also noteworthy that slender body types are also gaining popularity despite the prolonged preference of the "hypermasculine" muscularity of male physique in Anglophone cultures. Whether or not this type of male image becomes mainstream is yet to be seen.

My analysis of these Japanese men's fashion magazines underscores that Japanese adoption of Euro-American male clothing styles and male models does not manifest a simple, cultural imperialism in which one cultural aspect infiltrates the other. Rather they unearth the different modes of male aesthetic sensitivities present in Japan. This offers a potential for different approaches to men's fashion and the possibility to create a new, more practical aesthetics. The next chapter will address the Japanese aesthetic concepts of *kawaii* (cute) and *shōjo* (girls). With a case study of Japanese female performers' appropriations of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* in their music video-clips, it will examine the given aesthetic concepts' potential to affirm "infantile" cute fashion while sustaining senses of agency and autonomy.

Tommy Heavenly[6] (Tomoko Kawase) as "dark" Snow White.
From her album *Heavy Starry Heavenly*, 2007.

Chapter 4: Glacé Wonderland

Bloomin' flowers dance with me
So darling, you're my fantasy
Shower of jelly beans pouring heavily
My lips are here to stay

Tonight…if the stars flow
Fate forbids us to part Ah Ah

—Tommy February6, *Bloomin'!* 2002[1]

The saccharine voice of Tomoko Kawase flavours this slightly kitsch, overly sweet candy-box of lyrics. Whether she sings it on stage, or in the famed music video where she takes up the image of Lewis Carroll's immortalised heroine "Alice", she wears an air of cuteness, or *kawaii* as it is called in Japan.[2] What renders her performance puzzling for the eyes of those unfamiliar with Japanese culture is perhaps the almost complete absence of sexuality or assertiveness. The 27 year-old Kawase, in the guise of one of her alter-egos Tommy February6, crafts a look that unites the girlishness of the school girl and the infantile cuteness of the preadolescent. Significantly, whether wearing a flowing, baby pink knee-length tunic or a lace-trimmed, tight-silhouetted pastel grey pinafore dress, Kawase's girlish style is not about overt sexual allure. The significance of such a cute representation is dramatically different to the vogue of "porno-chic" style in Euro-American culture, where women, presumably young, are represented in scantily-clad ways, with explicit references to pornography and pole dancing.[3] The concept of cuteness, particularly when it is mingled with sweet, girlish and "infantile" qualities is, deemed as unfavourable, demeaning, or even pathological in Euro-American culture. In this chapter, I argue the opposite, namely that a certain kind of the Japanese concept of *kawaii* can be interpreted as a "delicate revolt" that softly and implicitly opposes and subverts stereotyped preconceptions connected to sexuality and gender.

I explore the particularly Japanese concepts of *kawaii* and *shōjo* (girls), which allow Japanese young women to retain a girlish, almost "infantile" cuteness without emphasising mature female sexuality. A group of Japanese mainstream female performers have taken up the performative nature of these concepts, crafting and parodying the cute "look", which consequently enables them to operate in a position that moves between

[1] The lyrics of the song were written by Tommy february6, and the music was composed by Malibu Convertible. The Japanese parts of the lyrics were translated by Masafumi Monden.
[2] In order to make distinctions, *Alice* stands for the children's story and "Alice" for the character.
[3] A. McRobbie, 'The rise and rise of porno chic' *The Times Higher Education*. [http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/story.asp?storyCode=182087&sectioncode=26]. 2 January 2004.

sweet, non-sexual, and autonomous conditions. In short, I argues that the sweet and largely asexual representations of young women as demonstrated by the performers, might offer a representation of youthful femininity that is neither too sexualised, too demurely "feminine", or too "masculine" but comfortably situated somewhere between these three positions.

This chapter begins with a general overview of the Japanese aesthetic concept of *kawaii*, explaining how this concept is a manifestation of interactions between Japanese and Euro-American cultures. The first section also looks at another Japanese aesthetic concept of *shōjo* (girls), which might refer to the subtle state between "child" and "adult", "male" and "female" and is comparatively detached from heterosexual economy. The significance of *shōjo*, which I argue, lies in the possibility that it allows Japanese young women to appear girlish and cute while being segregated from obvious sexualisation. Through an analysis of three Japanese music video clips, the second section develops these ideas further. In particular, by examining how these three female performers adopt and appropriate the imagery of Carroll's "Alice", this section argues that "infantile" cute and girlish appearances do not automatically invoke passivity, vulnerability or sexualised objectification. The final section aims to explore the idea of the *kawaii* aesthetic as a "soft revolt". It seeks to establish the idea that the amalgamation of "asexual" cuteness and girlish reinvention of "authenticity" can serve as an alternative to the established multiple binaries of aggression, sexualisation and subservience in which young women tend to be represented.

In the name of *kawaii*

For many both in and outside Japan, the character of *Hello Kitty* (1974) embodies the concept of *kawaii*, which has come to represent, at least partially, the quintessence of Japanese popular culture (figure 87).

Figure 87 *Hello Kitty* from Sanrio Official Website

Fashion magazine *Numéro Tokyo* has stated that *Hello Kitty* embodies a particular concept of cuteness that is loved and appreciated by adults and children both in and outside Japan.[4]

The application of the Japanese word *kawaii* is, however, contested, contentious and above all amorphous. As Laura Miller points out, 'although literally the word kawaii means "cute" it has a much broader semantic meaning than does the English term "cute"'.[5] Film studies scholar Inuhiko Yomota notes that, in Japan, the word *kawaii* can be applied in order to describe, for example, an elderly man or a hot spring, which in other languages, he argues, would sound strange if grammatically correct.[6] This sentiment is shared by McVeigh who argues of Japanese cuteness that:

> …there is baby cuteness; very young cuteness; young cuteness; maternal cuteness; teen cuteness; adult cuteness; sexy cuteness; pornography cuteness; child pornography cuteness; authority cuteness; and corporate cuteness.[7]

Kawaii is not only used to describe straightforwardly over-the-top cute but can also combine the elements of both cute and grotesque.[8] The diversity of *kawaii* aesthetics can also be illustrated by young women's fashion in which different kinds of *kawaii* seemingly exist for different purposes. For example, fashion scholar Reiko Koga points to the diversity of the concept found in two groups of Japanese young women's fashion magazines.[9] According to her, the concept of *kawaii* displays different connotations depending on the styles endorsed by different fashion magazines (figure 88).

Figure 88 Conservative *CanCam*, November 2010 (left) and more individualistic *Zipper*, October 2010 (right)

[4] *Numéro Tokyo*, Vol. 13, April 2008, p. 81.

[5] L. Miller, 'Perverse Cuteness in Japanese Girl Culture', paper presented at Japan Fashion Now Symposium at The Museum at Fashion Institute of Technology, 2010. (hereafter, Miller, *Cute*)

[6] I. Yomota, *Kawaii-Ron (Theory of Cute)*. Tokyo: Chikuma Shobo, 2006.

[7] B. J. McVeigh, *Wearing Ideology: State, Schooling and Self-Presentation in Japan*. Oxford and New York: Berg. 2000, p. 135.

[8] L. Miller, *Cute*. Yomota, *op.cit*.

[9] R. Koga, *Kawaii no teikoku (The Empire of Kawaii)*. Tokyo: Seido-sha. 2009, pp. 134-135.

She articulates that in *CanCam*, the magazine known for "conservative" styles, *kawaii* signifies an aesthetic quality that is precisely woven together with the concept of *mote-kei*, a "conservative" style, which, without displaying obvious sexual allure or individuality, is designed to attract men. In the other group of magazines such as *CUTiE*, the concept is used to describe a more mainstream-individual style with kitsch accessories. To put it simply, the aesthetics of *kawaii* in the former case signify the "uniform" qualities that are believed to attract desirable men whereas *kawaii* becomes more individualistic in the latter case.[10] But in simple definitional terms, *kawaii* refers to an aesthetic that celebrates sweet, adorable, simple, infantile, delicate, and pretty visual, physical or behavioural qualities.[11]

One of the core elements of the *kawaii* aesthetic is to appreciate "youthfulness", and one archetype of *kawaii* fashion is that it is 'deliberately designed to make the wearer appear childlike and demure'.[12] This includes bright-coloured clothes for boys and pastel shades with lace for girls.[13] Not unexpectedly, the concept of *kawaii* is applicable to men as much as to women, and this is increasingly obvious. The "epicene" qualities of *kawaii* aesthetics are also evident in styles favoured by *Olive*, a now discontinued subcultural magazine for "cosmopolitan" girl culture, which in Koga's opinion, marks the beginning of *kawaii* as a mode of fashion in the 1980s.[14] Two of the three main styles subscribed to by *Olive* were frill and lace-adorned, romantic girlish dresses and cute "boyish" style with very short hair, the latter of which was said to be influenced by such popular icons as The Checkers, an all-male rock/pop band, and the pop idol Kyoko Koizumi.

The elaborately flounced fashion styles of *Lolita/Gothic & Lolita* (or sometimes shortened to *GothLoli*) might come to mind when picturing these sartorial aesthetics. However, fashion styles with notable *kawaii* essences have been present in Japanese culture for a long time, at least from the 1970s as evident in the popularity of the clothing brands such as Hitomi Okawa's Milk (1970), Isao Kaneko's Pink House (1972), and Rei Yanagikawa's Shirley Temple (1974).

Acknowledged as the first shop in Japan to stock and sell Comme des Garçons, Milk has set a modern example of "glocalising" European fashion forms and adding "Japanese" style to them.[15]

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[10] This may no longer be valid. *CUTiE* now offers styles that would "attract boys" quite frequently.

[11] S. Kinsella, 'Cuties in Japan' in L. Skov and B. Moeran (eds) *Women, media, and consumption in Japan*. Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press. 1995, p. 220. (hereafter, Kinsella, *Cuties*)

[12] *Ibid*., p. 229.

[13] M. White, *Material Child*. Berkeley and London: University of California Press. 1993, p. 129.

[14] Koga, *op. cit*., p. 56.

[15] Roland Robertson (1995: 28) explains that the term "glocal" is derived from the Japanese term *dochaku-ka*, 'originally the agricultural principle of adopting one's farming techniques to local conditions'.

Fashion editor and consultant Tiffany Godoy articulates this point as follows:

> Milk took in all of fashion's disparate parts and made its own combination on looks, creating something entirely new. Before Milk, no one would ever say that punk is cute. But in Okawa's hands, it really was. She took tracksuits from the States and punk fashions from the U.K., redesigned them to fit smaller Japanese bodies and revised them into something entirely new and of the moment.[16]

Moreover, Milk integrated *kawaii* fashion aesthetics with their emphasis on sweetness, without overly hinting at sexual allure or seeking the objectifying male (figure 89). 'Milk clothes were—and continue to be—girly, romantic, and feminine but not sexual. All these elements are the base for what would later become *kawaii* culture', notes Godoy.[17]

Figure 89 Alisa Mizuki dressed in the clothes of Milk (1991)

Figure 90 Cover of *Olive*, March 1987

[16] T. Godoy. *Style Deficient Disorder: Harajuku Street Fashion Tokyo*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books. 2007, p. 37.
[17] *Ibid.*, p. 38.

The mid-seventies, moreover, saw the vogue of romantic folklore style among young women. A "Japanaised" hippy style, this fashion embraced a simple, dreamy aesthetic resembling the worlds of Lucy Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables* (1908) and Johanna Spyri's *Heidi* (1880).[18] The subculture of *Olive* in the 1980s and 1990s, and its apparent scion *Mori Girls* in the twenty-first century followed (figure 90).[19]

Although the concept of *kawaii* is most prominently ascribed to Japanese culture, these fashion styles often combine some European elements, be they romanticised or realistic. In this chapter, I focus largely on this type of *kawaii* aesthetics, perhaps with a faint "twist", which can softly challenge and even subvert the common ways in which young women are perceived, understand and represented.

What is noteworthy is that Euro-American cultural influences are perceived as important ingredients of *kawaii* aesthetics.[20] Alessandro Gomarasca, for example, implies that '*Kawaii* appears in the moment in which the *shōjo bunka* (culture of teenage girls) encounters the Euro-American culture of *cute*, the playful, childish aesthetic imported to Japan from the West'.[21] Although Gomarasca was referring to the postwar period when making this statement, the case of the illustrator, doll maker, fashion designer and stylist Jun'ichi Nakahara indicates that Euro-American influences, and subsequent Japanese appropriation shaped the modern concept of *kawaii* even before the 1940s (figures 91&92).

Figure 91 Designs by Jun'ichi Nakahara (1940), from *Utsukushiku ikiru: Nakahara Jun'ichi sono bigaku to shigoto* (1999).

[18] E. Miura, 'Folklore' in Across Editorial Office (ed) *Street Fashion 1945-1995*. Tokyo: Parco. 1995, pp.152-3.

[19] *Mori Girls* (Forest Girls) is a style, which emerged in the twenty-first century Japan. It involves individuals, mainly young women, who prefer to dress in flowing, loose and layered styles like a lace A-line dress or tunic of predominantly white or earthy-toned colours, vintage and folklore clothes. The "Mori Girl" phenomenon is said to have begun when a woman called choco＊＊ started her community in *mixi*, a Japanese social network service, in August 2006. She was described by a friend as dressing like a girl in a forest (*mori ni isou*), and that is where the name "Mori Girl" came from (*Bessatsu spoon*, 2009: 50).

[20] Kinsella, *Cuties*, p. 226.

[21] A. Gomarasca, 'Under the Sign of Kawaii' in F. Bonami and R. Simons (eds) *The Fourth Sex: Adolescent Extremes*. Milan: Charta. 2003, p. 262.

Figure 92 Illustration of Nakahara from his magazine *Himawari (Sunflower)*, published by his own publishing company Himawari-sha, 1951

Nakahara (1913-1983), particularly celebrated for his illustrations and fashion designs in girls' magazines, continuously promulgated the European-inspired visual images of elegantly dressed, lady-like young women. His ideal girls are exquisitely dressed, upper-class European with delicately waved short hair, tiny ribbons, thin waists and long limbs.[22] Nakahara has also imposed a degree of influence upon Japanese fashion designers. Such fashion figures as Hanae Mori, Kenzo Takada and Isao Kaneko have declared their admiration of, if not influence by, Nakahara.[23]

Significantly, the girlish art of Nakahara points to the Japanese adoption and interpretation of European cute culture even before the post war period. There is also a possibility that an aesthetic concept similar to *kawaii*, one that admires anything young, small, fragile and cute, was present in Japanese culture as far back as the Heian period (AD 794 to 1185).[24] Indeed, Japanese culture has probably always placed aesthetic importance on the state of youthfulness. Japanologist and scholar Donald Keene has noted that one of the four characteristics in Japanese culture that he thinks have special importance is "suggestion", which grants immense importance to the beginning and ends, such as the crescent and the waning moon, the buds and the strewn flowers.[25] This is because 'the full moon or the cherry blossoms at their peak do not suggest the crescent or the buds (or the waning moon and the strewn flowers), but the crescent and the buds do

[22] Koga, *op. cit.*, pp. 26-28.

[23] *Utsukushiku ikiru: Nakahara Jun'ichi sono bigaku to shigoto (Live Beautifully: The Aesthetics and Works of Jun'ichi Nakahara)*. Tokyo: Heibon-sha. 1999, p. 40, 45, and 54.

[24] Yomota, *op. cit.*, pp. 33-36.

[25] Keene mentions irregularity, simplicity, and perishability as the other three characteristics.

suggest full flowering'.[26] Thus, this concept of *kawaii*, which predominantly appreciates something small, fragile and young, could be deep-rooted in Japanese culture rather than a more recent phenomenon.

With regard to Euro-American influences, Walt Disney is seemingly a dominant force in moving the Japanese aesthetic into its modern form. Osamu Tezuka's legendary girls' comic book series *Ribon no kishi* (Princess Knight, 1953-6; revised version, 1963-6), Gomarasca argues, was 'the moment of encounter between *shōjo* culture and the fascination with Walt Disney'.[27] This 'marks, in effect, the moment of convergence between *shōjo* culture and the "cute" aesthetic' (figure 93).[28] As a matter of fact, this kind of girlish, *kawaii* aesthetic might be seen as closely related to the concept of *shōjo* (girls) and its slightly anachronistic sister "otome (maiden)".

Figure 93 Osamu Tezuka's *Princess Knight* (1964)

Maiden's Garden: Japanese Concept of Shōjo

Japanese culture offers a subtle definition of "girls". Of Japanese author Banana Yoshimoto's early novels, scholar of Japanese literature John Wittier Treat notes that:

> It is probably incorrect and certainly misleading to translate the term *shōjo* with any single English phrase. 'Young girl' is not only redundant but can refer to

[26] D. Keene, 'Japanese Aesthetics' in N. G. Hume (ed) *Japanese Aesthetics and Culture: Reader*, New York: State University of New YorkPress. 1995, p. 31.

[27] Philosopher Shunsuke Tsurumi suggests that there may have been a mutual creative interaction between Japanese and American/ European cartoons. For example, the *Scroll of Frolicking Animals* by Abbot Toba (AD 1053-1140), the first Japanese cartoonist, may have had some influence on Disney (1987: 31) while such comic book artists as Osamu Tezuka, the legendary figure in Japanese comic book and animation culture, had openly admitted his admiration for and influence from Walt Disney and Max Fleischer (Schodt, 1983: 63).

[28] Gomarsca, *op. cit.*, p. 264.

infants, and 'young woman' implies a kind of sexual maturity clearly forbidden to *shōjo*.[29]

His idea of *shōjo* assigns a degree of independence to the category of adolescent girls and hence separates them from both older and younger women under the name of *shōjo*. The concept of *shōjo* had originally an ideological purpose, constructed by the Meiji government in the late nineteenth century in order to educate girls to embody the ideology of *ryōsai kenbo* (good wife, wise mother). The government characterised three natures as embodying the virtue of *shōjo* –"affectionate", "chaste", and "aesthetic" in order to discipline the female students of ages between twelve and seventeen who, until modernization of the state, would have been put to either marriage or domestic work.[30] Cultural studies scholar Catherine Driscoll points out that this formation of late modern Japanese girlhood somewhat resembled the emergence of feminine adolescence and the establishment of a distinct girl culture in late nineteenth-century England, some forty to fifty years earlier than in Japan.[31] Thus, '[i]f distinct cultures have specific conceptions of feminine adolescence, late modern girls are nevertheless a global formation'.[32]

Regardless of the effectiveness of the concept as a regulatory principle, *shōjo* can refer to certain mannerisms, behaviours, and states of being in Japanese culture. Scholar of Japanese literature Sarah Frederick interprets the concept of *shōjo* as the embodiment of 'a hyper-feminine ideal' in the early 1900s.[33] A common image of the *shōjo* 'was often defined in literature and art by qualities associated with femininity at the time—sentimentality, interest in flowers, clothing, dolls, and dreamy thoughts of the moon and stars' (figure 94, see next page).[34] Notably, many of these are parodied by Kawase in her songs. This is the case in the quote which opens this chapter. The core ingredients of the *shōjo* aesthetics are unchanged, and this image of the *shōjo* is valid even in the present day. A common form of the *shōjo*, for instance, 'focus[es] on reversion to a prepubescent girlhood with ribbons and frilly skirts'.[35]

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[29] J. W. Treat, 'Yoshimoto Banana Writes Home: The Shôjo in Japanese Popular Culture.' in J. W. Treat (ed) *Contemporary Japan and Popular Culture,* Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press. 1996, p. 282.

[30] S. Watabe, *Shōjo-zō no tanjō –kindai nihon ni okeru 'shōjo' no keisei (The Birth of the Images of Shōjo –The Construction of Shōjo in Modern Japan)* Tokyo: Shinsen-sha. 2008.

[31] C. Driscoll, *Girls: Feminine Adolescence in Popular Culture & Cultural Theory*. New York: Columbia University Press. 2002, p. 289.

[32] *Ibid.*, p. 301.

[33] S. Frederik, 'Not That Innocent: Yoshiya Nobuko's Good Girls' in L. Miller and J. Bardsley, (eds) *Bad Girls of Japan*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 2005, p. 67.

[34] *Ibid.*, p. 68.

[35] K. Nakamura and H. Matsuo, 'Female masculinity and fantasy spaces: Transcending genders in the Takarazuka and Japanese popular culture' in J. E. Roberson and N. Suzuki (eds) *Men and Masculinities in Modern Japan: Dislocating the Salaryman Doxa*, New York: Routledge. 2002, p. 69.


Figure 94 *Flowering Rose* by Jun'ichi Nakahara (1940, left) and *A girl who has a cupid as a pet* by Koji Fukiya (1935, right)

In Japanese popular music culture, female "pop idols" in the early 1980s were closely associated with *shōjo* aesthetics. Pastel-coloured, frilly and lace dresses were their unofficial uniform, connoting innocent, girlish femininity as well as artificiality. [36] Similarly, cultural anthropologist Matt Thorn points out that especially in the 1970s, aesthetic expressions of the "maidenesque" in Japanese girls' comic books 'were heavily infused with a dreamy, 1970s-style femininity characterized by frilly cotton dress [sic], straw sun bonnets, herbal tea, and Victorian houses'.[37] Needless to say, these aesthetic qualities are reminiscent of the *kawaii* fashion style. It is clear that a clothing form that is adorned with frills and lace has occupied a special place in Japanese girl cultures for at least a century.

What is striking about this girlish concept is its presumed "asexual" qualities. One of the three virtues of *shōjo* that the Japanese government imposed in the late nineteenth century, as sociologist Shūko Watabe points out, was chastity.[38] Over a hundred years, this has seemingly been modified to connote a kind of innocence and "asexuality". For instance, Treat claims that:

> In English, gender is binary – at every stage one is either 'male' or 'female'. But in Japan, one might well argue that *shōjo* constitute their own gender, neither male nor female but rather something importantly detached from the productive economy of heterosexual reproduction.[39]

As Driscoll says, caution with such a claim is required.[40] But it is no coincidence that Tezuka's *Princess Knight*, which Gomarasca perceives as an original Post-World War Two incarnation of the modern *kawaii* concept, centres around a cross-dressing princess who

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[36] K. Koizumi, *Panda no An-An*. Tokyo: Magazine House. 1997, pp. 112-3.
[37] M. Thorn 'Shoujo Manga: Something for Girls' *Japan Quarterly*, July-September 2001, p. 48.
[38] Watabe, *op. cit.*
[39] Treat, *op. cit.*, pp. 281-2.
[40] Driscoll, *op. cit.*, p. 296.

was born with both a boy's and girl's "heart". Accordingly, her gender is unstable and frequently shifts, suggesting the performative nature of gender, a view made famous by Butler.[41] Elaborating upon Treat's idea, the anthropologist Karen Nakamura and the journalist Hisako Matsuo further contend that '[p]erforming *shōjo* is one active and dynamic way that Japanese women can control their sexuality'.[42]

Although not strictly *shōjo*, White argues that under the deployment of "innocent" and "asexual" persona Japanese youth can be sexually active at a young age. She refers to a young Japanese female undergraduate in Boston, who noted in her interview that though she engages in sexual relationships with several men for pleasure, marriage should be more realistic and practical. If she could not find a prospective husband by the age of 25, she would try *o-miai* (arranged meetings with a prospect of marriage) saying: 'I can always pretend to be innocent, if I must, so there's no problem'.[43] Here the young woman assumes her masque of "innocent" femininity would conceal her active (and by implication promiscuous) sexuality, and hence would exonerate her from being stigmatised. An echo of this view is found in Riviere's text *Womanliness as a masquerade*, in which she argues that a certain group of women who wish for power/authority put on a masque of exaggerated femininity in order to avert anxiety and retribution feared from men.[44]

When the concept of *shōjo* was initially implemented, the girls from certain class backgrounds, for whom this concept of *shōjo* were most likely created, took advantages of this "good-wife, wise mother" ideology and secured their opportunity to be educated. This is because they could argue strongly that education was a requirement for becoming a "wise mother".[45] Czarnecki has noted that the position of schoolgirls in the era allowed for latitude and self-establishment for some girls, and drew both fierce criticism and racy curiosity from the public. Their wish for freedom was sometimes equated with sexual deviancy, but as Czarnecki argues, that should be read as '…the desire for an education was such that some girls would willingly prostitute themselves to obtain one'.[46] The concept of *shōjo*, therefore, can be read as having two faces –one being an idealised construction imposed by older males, and the other being embraced and possibly

[41] J. Butler, "Bodily Inscriptions, Perfomative Subversions" in S. Salih and J. Butler (eds), *The Judith Butler Reader*, Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers. 2004 [1990], p. 114.

[42] Nakamura and Matsuo, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

[43] White, *op. cit.*, p. 189.

[44] J. Riviere, 'Womanliness as Masquerade' in A. Hughes (ed) *The Inner World and Joan Riviere: collected papers: 1920-58*. London: Karnac Books. 1991[1929].

[45] M. Saito, *Modern-Girl Ron (The Theory of Modern Girls)*. Tokyo: Bunshūb-bunko. 2003, first published 2000.

[46] M. Czarnecki, 'Bad Girls from Good Families: The Degenerate Meiji Schoolgirl' in L. Miller and J. Bardsley, (eds) *Bad Girls of Japan*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 2005, p. 61.

manipulated by girls themselves. With the latter explanation, crafting and performing *shōjo* through gestures, and particularly, clothes, allows Japanese women to present themselves as beings segregated from obvious sexualisation. The concept of *kawaii* shares this conceptual duplicity of *shōjo*. As Miller contends, there is a difference between "cute" as a cultural aesthetic circulating in Japanese girl culture, and "cute" as an aesthetic appropriated or manufactured by companies such as Sanrio.[47] Within Japanese girl culture, 'cuteness often gets modified, parodied, or deliberately inflated in diverse ways', thus implying autonomous controls of girls.[48]

A certain degree of risk is, however, involved when one is perceived as acting or appearing too innocently cute or girlish. The term *burikko* (or its predecessor *kamatoto*) is a Japanese label used to describe women who exhibit feigned and sugary innocence and cuteness, particularly via manipulation of vocal pitches and gestures.[49] This label can be derogatory. Although sometimes considered an obsolete word, the concept has nevertheless survived to the present day. Referring to Japanese pop star Seiko Matsuda who achieved fame both as "the pop idol" and "the queen of feigned innocence" in the early 1980s, Miller says:

> Wearing the hair of Gidget and the petticoats of Marie Antoinette, Matsuda with her pigeon-toed impersonation of a 14-year-old is still remembered as the epitome of the type more than 20 years later, even though she has since reinvented herself as a more mature celebrity.[50]

Miller's insights into *burikko* indicate three significances: that it is a performance of exaggerated girlish femininity, that this 'downplays or masks the adult sexuality of the woman doing it', and that it is a double-edged sword.[51] Performing *burikko* might allow a woman to assert her position in an appropriate situation. It might also stigmatise her for being cunningly pretentious and immature, if done inappropriately.

It might be tempting to consider *shōjo* as a clearly established, "organic" category –the third gender perhaps, as authors like Treat are inclined to do. However, we must acknowledge that the term *shōjo* is a very ambiguous one, as the term is often used for its literal meaning of a "maiden/girl" as well.[52] Nevertheless, as these authors argue,

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[47] Sanrio is the company that designs and manufactures products such as Hello Kitty.

[48] Miller, *Cute*.

[49] L. Miller, 'You are doing burikko!: Censoring/scrutinizing artificers of cute femininity in Japanese' in J. Shibamoto Smith and S. Okamoto (eds) *Japanese Language, Gender, and Ideology: Cultural Models and Real People*, New York: Oxford University Press. 2004. (hereafter Miller, *Burikko*)

[50] *Ibid*., p. 149.

[51] *Ibid*., p. 148.

[52] H. Tsuchiya Dollace, 'Early Twentieth Century Japanese Girls' Magazine Stories: Examining Shojo Voice in Hanamonogatari (Flower Tales)' *Journal of Popular Culture*, vol. 36, issue 4, 2003, p. 727.

"*shōjo*/girls" are often considered as asexually "pure", comparatively autonomous beings though it does not necessarily mean *shōjo* are immune from either eroticisation or the objectifying male gaze. But as Kinsella indicates, often it is the contrary that is suggested.[53] Lewis Carroll's "Alice" in his two famous novels might be described as an embodiment of an idealised *shōjo*. Although she was a creation of Victorian England, "Alice" has enjoyed a long lasting popularity in Japanese culture. In the next sections I look at "Alice" and analyse her as an embodiment of the Japanese concept of *shōjo*. I ask, what has made "Alice" popular in Japanese culture, as an icon of *shōjo*? Then I proceed to examine contemporary Japanese performers' appropriations of the character "Alice" in their music video clips. Particular attention will be paid to how they demonstrate "innovative" representations of cute yet "asexual" femininity through their performances of "Alice".

Alice Travels to Japan

Lewis Carroll's two books featuring the heroine "Alice", *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the looking-glass* (1872) have achieved immense popularity in Japanese culture since the first Japanese translation of *Alice* (i.e. *Through the looking-glass*) in the late nineteenth-century. Their popularity is largely accounted for via associations with Sir John Tenniel's celebrated illustrations and Walt Disney's now classic film *Alice in Wonderland* (1951). There are nearly two hundred editions of Japanese *Alice* (including re-issues) published between 1908 and 2004.[54] In addition to the translations, there are a considerable number of contemporary fictions, which demonstrate, at least partially, the influences and appropriations of Carroll's books in the culture.[55] This fascination with Carroll's books of wonder and nonsense is not limited to the literary world. Notebooks, pens, pen cases and rulers, which featured Tenniel's *Alice* illustrations, occupied stationary shops in early 1990s Japan, and attracted primary and high school students (figure 95).

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[53] S. Kinsella, 'What's Behind the Fetishism of Japanese School Uniforms?' *Fashion Theory*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 2002. (Kinsella, hereafter, *Uniforms*)

[54] K. Sakakibara, *Alice no hon'yaku-shi 1899-2004 (The History of Alice Translation)*. [http://homepage3.nifty.com/nada/alice01.html].

[55] See, for example; Ryo Nakahara's young adult novel "Alice" series, 1987-2000 or Sakura Kinoshita's comic book (2007).

Figure 95 Cover of an "Alice" notebook sold in Japan in the early 1990s

One of the arenas where the imagery of "Alice" has been a colourful and enduring inspiration is in the world of fashion. Most notably, Japanese *Lolita* fashion, which I examine in Chapter 5, has displayed the compatibility of the elaborate version of historic little girls' dress and the style's sartorial philosophy. In a less "extreme" example, the October 2007 edition of *Sō-En*, one of the oldest Japanese high fashion magazines, offered 22 pages of fashion spread and feature articles on the theme of *Alice*. With particular regard to Czech filmmaker Jan Švankmajer and his surreal cinematic visualisation of *Alice* (1988), this feature story tells how Japanese fashion brands such as Jane Marple derive inspirations from Carroll's little girl.[56] The feature story in *So-En* moreover endorsed the idea of "Alice" embodying the idealised image of *shōjo*, saying 'even after 142 years since its publication, Alice exists as the ideal of *shōjo*'.[57] Another Japanese fashion brand known for its girlish styles, Emily Temple Cute, affirms the link between "Alice" and saccharine sartorial aesthetics.[58] In 2009, the brand published *Wonderland*, an eighteen-page catalogue-book in which its 2009-10 winter collection was photographed according to the images of *Alice* (figures 96).[59]

Figure 96

[56] *So-En*, 2007, pp. 26-47

[57] *Ibid.*, p. 26.

[58] Emily Temple Cute is a brand division of Shirley Temple. It was established in 1998 in order to cater for slightly older consumers.

[59] Emily Temple Cute, *Wonderland*. Tokyo: Kadokawa Publishers. 2009.

Filled with layers of tight yet flowing knee-length dresses, long-sleeved polo necks with delicate lace trims, knit cardigans with patterns of ribbons and flowers, striped high socks and a lace headdress, fragments of the girlish sartorial aesthetics envisaged in Emily Temple Cute's *Wonderland* are also captured in the music video clips of a number of Japanese young female singers, particularly since the early 1990s. Before proceeding to the analysis of these performances, it is useful to look at the imagery of "Alice" and the possible factors that have contributed to her popularity in Japan. The popularity of "Alice" among the Japanese, especially as an icon of the idealised *shōjo*, is undoubtedly due to the heroine's intricate combination of aloofness, autonomy and girlish appearance.

An Independent Young Victorian Lady

Although she is a child of seven (and seven and a half in *Looking-Glass*) in Carroll's books, "Alice" tends to be represented, particularly in illustrations, as a girl in her early adolescence.[60] One of the reasons for this visual "misrepresentation", apart from the absence of depictions of the heroine's appearance in the original books, can be found in the fairly independent personality of "Alice". If we consider the typical concept of *shōjo* as sweet and innocent on the outside, and considerably autonomous on the inside, the imagery of "Alice" displays similar characteristics. Despite her appearance of being a demure, young Victorian maiden, Alice is depicted as a rather emotionally flat, yet autonomous character. As television and film studies scholar Will Brooker points out:

> the heroine never seems troubled by them [the grotesque inhabitants]. There is no sign that she is terrified, that she fears she won't escape Wonderland alive, that she is ever praying to get out of this place and go back home to the river bank…she remains calm, and so the adventure never sinks fully into the "darkness" that some contemporary critics see in the text.[61]

Driscoll interprets the complexity of "Alice", saying she 'is as self-interested as she is generous and is not unambiguously a good girl (i.e., loving, courteous, or trustful)…the little girl in Carroll is marked by curiosity and delight'.[62] Author, poet and translator Sumiko Yagawa in the afterword to her Japanese translation of *Alice*, offered her interpretation of "Alice" as a symbol of loneliness attached to autonomy, indicating that this reading is also shared in Japanese culture.[63] Carroll's "Alice" is thus neither assertive nor passive, but is rather positioned comfortably in between these two.

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[60] W. Brooker, *Alice's Adventures*. New York and London: Continuum. 2005.

[61] *Ibid.*, p. 145.

[62] Driscoll, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

[63] S. Yagawa, *Fushigi no kuni no Alice (Alice's Adventures in Wonderland)*. Tokyo: Shincho-sha. 1994, p. 181.

"Alice"'s sense of agency is further conveyed by her dress. Elizabeth Ewing, an author of numerous books on fashion history, elucidates this point as follows: 'Alice is a spirited, uninhibited, outspoken little girl, though always a polite one, and her clothes too are unrestricting'.[64] Little girls' dresses were, even with certain restrictions, slightly more practical than adults' and the dress "Alice" wore in Tenniel's illustrations was even more practical than the actual dress contemporary girls would wear.[65] Tenniel's "Alice" is particularly important since the imagery of "Alice" as cultural icon was largely fixed by his illustrations.

The visual qualities that shape our imagination of "Alice" are not solely the creation of Carroll. This is because the contextual analysis of Carroll's books indicates that they are 'surprisingly vague about the appearance of [their] characters and settings, and [were] designed from the outset to rely on illustrations rather than written description'.[66] In other words, "Alice"'s visual descriptions, let alone the clothes she wears, are rarely delineated in Carroll's original work. Rather, the imagery of "Alice" now so familiar to us is mostly a creation of John Tenniel whose illustrations accompanied the first edition of *Alice* (figure 97). This image is further circulated by the animation of Walt Disney in 1951, which was first released in Japan in 1952. Of Tenniel's influences over other *Alice* artists, Brooker claims that many:

> worked in the shadow of John Tenniel, whose slightly sulky miss is still the girl we call to mind when hearing the name Alice. Even the blander version from the Disney studios owes much to his template...[67]

The immortalised vision of "Alice" was not what Carroll imagened. Indeed, illustrations of "Alice" by Carroll's own hands in his original *Under Ground* showed her wearing 'a soft, clinging tunic' and he allegedly 'begged Tenniel, "Don't give Alice so much crinoline"' (figure 98, see next page).[68] This illustrates the author's desire to clearly distinguish his "Alice" from the fashionable young "lady" of his time. If our images of "Alice" have been fixed by the illustrations of Tenniel, how exactly did his "Alice" dress? His "Alice" is apparently dressed in a fashion current to the time of the book, with a faint hint of the practical future.

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[64] E. Ewing, *History of Children's Costume*. London: B. T. Batsford Ltd. 1977. P. 96.

[65] Ewing, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

[66] Brooker, *op.cit*, p. 143

[67] *Ibid.*, p. 105.

[68] J. Jones and J. F. Gladstone, *The Alice Companion: A Guide to Lewis Carroll's Alice Books*. New York: NYU Press. 1998, pp. 74-75.

Figure 97


are ferrets! Where can I have dropped them, I wonder?" Alice guessed in a moment that it was looking for the nosegay and the pair of white kid gloves, and she began hunting for them, but they were now nowhere to be seen — everything seemed to have changed since her swim in the pool, and her walk along the river-bank with its fringe of rushes and forget-me-nots, and the glass table and the little door had vanished.

Soon the rabbit noticed Alice, as she stood looking curiously about her; and at once put in a quick angry tone, "why, Mary Ann! what are you doing out here? Go home this moment, and look on my dressing-table for my gloves and nosegay, and fetch them here, as quick as you can run, do you hear?" and Alice was so much

Figure 98 Lewis Carroll's Illustration of *Under Ground*

Ewing offers detailed descriptions of the dress his "Alice" wore:

> Alice has none of the velvets and furs, trimmings and frills, ribbons and flowers, laced-up boots and prim gloves of fashion-plate girls of her time. She wears a simple dress with a simple bodice and a straight, full skirt with some rows of tucks at the hem, to allow for her growth. The dress has short puff sleeves and a tiny turn-down collar. Over it goes a pinafore, also with small sleeves, plus two pockets. Her hair is simply brushed back, uncurled, and she has plain, light stockings and flat ankle-strap shoes with rather square toes…
>
> Six years later, when *Through the Looking-Glass* was published, Alice has changed considerably in appearance, but keeps her freedom of dress. The actual dress itself is similar, but the apron is frilled and tied with a large bow at the back, whereas previously it was simply buttoned at the waist. Her hair is now caught back with what has become generally known ever since as the Alice band. Another change is that she now wears wide striped stockings. These were a new development in the wear of both boys and girls from the 1850s.[69]

Tenniel's "Alice" and her dress thus convey Victorian girlhood. How do we, then, make sense of the popularity of *Alice* in Japan, since the story does not evoke any immediate cultural or periodical similarities to contemporary Japanese culture? Subtly nuanced, sweet aesthetics with no overt hint of female sexual allure is what we notice when viewing the music video clips of three Japanese female performers in their homage to "Alice". I contend that the imagery of "Alice" as an independent girl with "infantile" cuteness is a highly appropriate vehicle for these singers to perform and negotiate a compromise between female autonomy and the concept of *kawaii*.

Transcribing Alice in Japan

Although since the 1970s, several Japanese singers have performed songs with the theme of *Alice* this chapter focuses on three singers who appeared in their own music video clips

[69] Ewing, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

dressed in the fashion redolent of "Alice".[70] Alisa Mizuki (b. 1977, figure 99), Tomoko Kawase (b. 1975, as Tommy February6 and Tommy Heavenly6, figure 100) and Kaela Kimura (b. 1985, figure 101) offer similar yet distinctive portrayals of Carroll's heroine (see table 7).

Figure 99

Figure 100

Figure 101

Table 7

	Title of the Song	Date Released	Age of the Performer	Japanese Music Chart Peak Position
Alisa Mizuki	*Eden no machi*	1991	14	5
Tommy February6	*Bloomin'!*	2002	27	10
Kaela Kimura	*Snowdome*	2007	23	6
Tommy Heavenly6	*Wait For Me There*	2009	34	No position

Figure 102

One of the earliest examples of *Alice* adaptation in Japanese music video is found in Alisa Mizuki's *Eden no machi* (Town of Eden, 1991, figure 102). Mizuki (b. 1976), child actor

[70] Japanese singers who have performed a song about *Alice* include:
Yoshimi Iwasaki, *My Name is Alice* (1980); Seiko Matsuda, *Alice in Time-Land* (1984); Asami Kobayashi, *Lolita Go Home* (1984); Shoko Nakagawa, *through the looking-glass* (2008).

and fashion model since the age of five, made her successful singing debut in 1991 with the CD titled *Densetsu no shōjo* (Legendary Girl).[71] Her second single, *Town of Eden* was released in Japan in August same year. At the time of release, she was fourteen. The lyrics tell a story of innocent, fleetingly romantic memories that are seemingly lost, and the melody is rather cheerful and pop. [72]

Figure 103

Ten years later, the imagery of "Alice" made another appearance, this time with Tommy February6 in her song *Bloomin'!* (figure 103). Tommy is an alter ego persona of Tomoko Kawase (b. 1975), vocalist for Japanese pop rock band *The Brilliant Green*.[73] Known for its sweet synthetic-pop sound and over-the-top romantic lyrics inspired by and playfully parodying American teen films and eighties American and British pop music, Tommy is a part of Kawase's solo project.[74] February6 is contrasted by her other alter ego, Tommy Heavenly6, who is characterised as darker, slightly more aggressive, and has a goth sound and demeanour.[75] Five years after Tommy, in 2007 Japanese pop rock singer and model Kaela Kimura (b. 1984) released her third album *Scratch*, which topped the charts in February of that year. One of the songs in the album, *Snowdome*, whose music video was initially included in the limited edition of the album, offers Kimura's visual rendition of "Alice" (figure 104).

[71] *Oricon Style Website*. [http://www.oricon.co.jp/prof/artist/198535/ranking/cd_single/].

[72] The lyrics were written by Shun Taguchi, a renowned music producer. Kaori Okui, the former vocalist for Japan's best selling only-girls band wrote the music and co-produced the song.

[73] The band was once chosen as one of the top ten contemporary bands outside the US by Time magazine (http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1000784,00.html).

[74] *MARQUEE*, Vol. 71, 2009, pp.50-1.

[75] Preppy fashion with a pair of glasses (February6) and candy-coated goth punk look with excessive maquillage (Heavenly6) distinguish the two personas although the differences are now blurring.


Figure 104

Kawase adapts the imagery of "Alice" again in 2009. She previously appeared as "dark" *Snow White* (*Heavy Starry Chain*, 2007) and Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz* (*PAPERMOON*, 2008). In the music video clip of her song *Wait For Me There* (from the album *I Kill My Heart*), she, as both Tommy Heavenly6 and February6, is seen dressed almost exactly like Disney's Alice.[76]

Table 8

The Imagery of *Alice* in Music Video Clips						
Alisa Mizuki	Presence of a rabbit	Falling down into darkness				
Tommy February6	Presence of a rabbit	Falling down into darkness	A cookie that makes the consumer grow taller			Animate playing cards
Kaela Kimura		Falling down into darkness		Sitting on the floor her head almost reaching the ceiling	Tea Party	
Tommy Heavenly6					Tea Party	

As table 8 above indicates, the imagery of *Alice* adopted in these music videos comes with variations. Apart from the obvious image of falling down into dark, which is present in three of the four clips, these video clips do not straightforwardly visualise the narrative of *Alice*. This reflects the nature of music video clips, which lack narrative structures like those found in classic Hollywood films.[77] Thus, other aspects such as clothes might be of greater significance. As film and media studies scholar Carol Vernallis elucidates, in music videos:

> clothing functions as a signpost and a means of separation among figures. Like the use of color in music video, which immediately signals mood, song identity,

[76] Kawase dresses stlightly differently in the February version and Heavenly version.

[77] C. Vernallis. *Experiencing music video: aesthetics and cultural context*. New York: Columbia University Press. 2004, p. 3.

and timbre, clothing here quickly shows a character's role and its relation with others.[78]

These musicians perform "Alice" through the repertoires of clothes they wear. These clothes also show variations. As Hollander has pointed out, the absence of sartorial descriptions in literature might cause a "mis-visualisation".[79] According to this logic, apart from Tommy's *Wait For Me There*, the three music videos do not present the singers dressed exactly like either Tenniel's or like Disney's "Alice" (figures 105).

Figure 105 Tenniel's "Alice" (left) and Disney's "Alice" (right)

Figure 106

Figure 107

Figure 108

Partly due to the vagueness of the sartorial details of the characters in the original books, the manifestation of some differences between the dresses worn by these three Japanese singers is evident. Mizuki is attired in a black, knee-length, puff-sleeved flared pinafore dress with a white collar and white gauzy apron. The layers of what appear to be

[78] *Ibid.*, p. 101.

[79] A. Hollander, *Seeing Through Clothes*. New York: The Viking Press. 1978, p. 427.

white lace panniers are shown under the dress, with white stockings and a pair of black ankle boots. A black ribbon adorning her long hair brings to mind the ears of a rabbit (figure 106). Apart from the colour of the dress and the boots, Mizuki's outfit displays the influence of Tenniel's and Disney's "Alice". Kawase's version of "Alice" involves a half-sleeved, tight-silhouetted silky grey apron dress, worn over a layer of white lace petticoats, with two lace trims running vertically from the top to the bottom of the dress. Under the dress, she wears a long-sleeved black polo-neck, and a pair of high-heeled, black boots. Her blondish, rolled and permed hair is adorned with a red velvety ribbon (figure 107). The vertical, tight-silhouette of Kawase's dress might suggest the influence of young girls' princess dresses in 1880s Europe, but a sash is worn knotted at the waist with no sign of the bustle. Undoubtedly, it has modern nuances, as wearing a pinafore over a blouse is a style that became common after the 1930s with the introduction of gymslips, and a black polo neck was a sign of intellectuals in the 1940s and 1950s.[80] This makes a subtle contrast to the outfit of the white rabbit who is dressed in a beige tweed "University" jacket and knickerbockers, Argyle-patterned grey socks, and a pair of large brown shoes, a clear reference to those worn by social reformers and members of the Aesthetic movement in late Victorian England.

Kimura is attired in a flared blue dress with red floral patterns, the collars of the dress and chemise worn underneath are trimmed with white lace, and a pair of two thin and long red ribbons cascade from the collar. She wears a black cardigan on the dress, with black and red striped stockings, and a pair of black high-heeled boots (figure 108). Since the cardigan commenced its life as military wear, allegedly invented by James Brudenell, 7th Earl of Cardigan during the period of the Crimean War, it was a part of male attire in Victorian England until interest in European folk art introduced a "tyrolean" cardigan to girls' fashion in the late 1930s.[81] Hence the cardigan adds a modern nuance to Kimura's otherwise late-Victorian girl look. In short, the summary of the differences from Tenniel's and Disney's "Alice" is as follows: Mizuki is dressed in black instead of blue, Kimura wears a cardigan instead of an apron dress, and Kawase's apron dress is grey and tight-silhouetted. In addition to the dress, all three wear a pair of black boots instead of "Alice's" traditional Mary Janes. These sartorial variations indicate these performers' or stylists' artistic interventions, showing that they have created their own "Alice". We can deduce that the aesthetic of historical European girls' clothing forms is what unites these performers' perceptions of "Alice". Indeed, Carroll's "Alice" including her dress is

[80] *Ibid.*, p. 387.

[81] C. Rose, *Children's Clothes since 1750*. London: B. T. Batsford Ltd. 1989, p. 131.

symbolic of Victorian upper-class girlhood, as novelist Will Self noted, '[c]ertainly Tenniel's Alice is a plangently Victorian miss' and 'Tenniel's Alice is dressed in the conventional "at home" clothes of a middle-class girl of the 1860s'.[82]

As a matter of fact, these dresses modestly trimmed with frills, ribbons, and lace as worn by the Japanese performers clearly show they are crafting a *kawaii* "look" that, by Euro-American standards, would only be worn by young girls. In other words, seen through a Euro-American lens, they are dressed in rather "infantile" fashion, and their clothes refer to children's dress of upper-class, late-Victorian England. This is particularly evident with the calf length of the skirt. Up until the 1920s, an age hierarchy of female dress style in Europe was largely maintained through the length of skirts. Young girls would wear short skirts whereas the length of skirts increased with the age of the wearer, and the skirts of teenage girls would approach ankle length (figure 109).[83] Thus, the "infantile" qualities of these Japanese performers, which are one kind of the *kawaii* fashion aesthetics as already noted, are emphasised by their short, "little girl" dresses.

Figure 109 Women's fashion plate from *The Iris*, 1853

French philosopher and semiotician Roland Barthes argued in *The Diseases of Costume* (1972) that good costume 'had a powerful semantic value; it was not there only to be seen, it was also there to be read, it communicated ideas, information, or sentiments'.[84] 'The costume is a kind of writing', he noted:

[82] Brooker, *op. cit.* 100; Taylor, referred in Jones and Gladstone, op. cit., p. 75.

[83] Rose, *op. cit.*, pp.126-7.

[84] R. Barthes, 'The Disease of Costume' in *Critical Essays* (R. Howard, trans.). Evanston: Northwestern University Press. 1972, p. 46.

> and has the ambiguity of writing, which is an instrument in the service of a purpose which transcends it; but if the writing is either too poor or too rich, too beautiful or too ugly, it can no longer be read and fails in its function.[85]

It is not my intention here to judge whether or not the dresses that these Japanese performers wear are good costumes in the Barthesian sense. Rather, I pay attention to his idea that (good) costumes convey signs. If the "Alice" costumes carry signs, what are the meanings they convey? It is my belief that the *kawaii* appearances of these Japanese performers in the music videos have two symbolic significances. Firstly, they signify the possibility of detachment of eroticism from both the representation of cute femininity as well as from "infantile" sartorial style. Secondly, they show a degree of creative authority being exercised.

No Romance Required

I assert that the "infantile" cuteness enacted by the Japanese performers is detached from the heterosexual economy. This is evident in the embrace of predominantly young girls' period dress, the absence of male figures, and the obvious "girlish" qualities such as the dreamy, fairy-tale narratives and sugary voices, in these video clips. In other words, their almost saccharine cuteness does not primarily operate in order to accentuate a normative heterosexuality in their music videos. Whether because of the tendency in which stars' sexual or romantic relationships are kept low profile, or because '"giving off the scent" of sexuality is publicly frowned upon' in Japanese culture[86], (hetero)sexual narratives are generally less visible in Japanese music videos than in their American counterparts. These three Japanese performers' video clips are no exception. Of Mizuki's twenty clips created between 1991 and 2003 there is only one clip that faintly refers to the narrative of a heterosexual romance with a male lead (her debut single in 1991).

This becomes even more significant for Kimura and Kawase, as none of their music video clips, of which sixteen (between 2004 and 2008) and twenty-one (both as February6 and Heavenly6, between 2001 and 2009) have been created respectively, display overt romantic narratives. Despite their lyrics narrating innocent and romantic love, these Japanese performers' renditions of "Alice" are not entirely framed within heterosexual romance, either. For example, in *Town of Eden*, Mizuki travels briefly through the narratives of *Snow White and The Seven Dwarfs*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Cinderella*, all of which are known for their heterosexual romantic narratives. But significantly, the singer is impersonating "Alice", not the love-struck princesses, and hence deliberately eschews

[85] *Ibid.*, p. 49.

[86] White, *op. cit.*, p.123, 185.

being a romantic object of the male figures in the video. Hence, these performers are, at least in these video clips, not defined in relation to male figures. This lack of romantic narrative marries well with a degree of "infantile" qualities manifested through the demeanours of the singers as previously mentioned.

As Slade convincingly articulates, the sexualisation of female clothing is about accentuating the nuances of the female form whereas its desexualization is to remove its element of seduction, its mystery.[87] The Japanese versions of "Alice" do connote sexualisation as well as desexualisation of dress. The Alice dresses, especially the ones worn by Mizuki and Kimura, with their knee-length full skirts connote a "female" quality meaning that limbs and waist are accentuated. Yet their "demure" forms do not emphasise or reveal other parts, notably, bust and shoulders. Despite the emphasis on girlishness—or perhaps because of it—the representations of these Japanese singers do not evoke sexual qualities strongly. And in the music videos, they do not engage in gestures or dance movements with pronounced erotic overtones. Kawase's *Bloomin'!* frequently cuts back to a segment where she sings and dances, wearing a pale pink mini tennis dress, blue socks and a pair of high heeled platform shoes. However, Kawase, not seemingly trained as a dancer, dances in a rather halfhearted fashion, and two chubby Caucasian cheerleaders who dance with her add a comical, rather than erotic touch. Her slender physique as accentuated by her tight, mini tennis dress moreover suggests a type of androgyny most famously identified with Twiggy. The 1960s British fashion icon was accredited with querying 'several parameters of female sexuality and attractiveness of the time through blurring the distinction between child and adult, male and female, as well as emaciated and skinny'.[88] Like Twiggy, these three Japanese performers do not invoke either strongly "feminine" or "masculine" visual qualities.[89]

The striking nature of such "asexual" representations of young women is highlighted by the "sexualised" culture of American music videos. It might be contested that significant differences in the representation of youthful feminine identities have been manifested within Japanese and American music video cultures. Central to this difference is the degree to which young women are visually sexualised, particularly through clothes.

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[87] T. Slade, *Japanese Fashion: A Cultural History*. Oxford and New York: Berg. 2009, pp. 115-6.

[88] J. Wyatt, 'Weighing the Transgressive Star Body of Shelley Duval' in E. Meehan and E. R. Riordan (eds) *Sex & Money: Feminism and Political Economy in the Media*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 2002, p.155.

[89] It is noteworthy that Kimura has stated that her "muse" is Twiggy. Indeed, Kimura has short hair, which is reminiscent of Twiggy's short, androgynous haircut, making a contrast to the long hair displayed by the other two performers.

Alice vs Barbie: Sexualisation of femininity in American Music Videos

As noted previously, mainstream Japanese music video culture tends to avoid the use of romantic narratives or strong sexual references. In contrast, it has been noted in non-Asian societies like the United States that there is a tendency to encourage even small girls in elementary school to dress in mature clothes.[90] With a few exceptions, American music video culture is one of the arenas where this tendency is most visible.[91] One predominant argument regarding the music video culture, particularly the American one, is that it is a cultural arena where images of powerful and dominant men and of sexually objectified women are prevalent. For 'love and sex predominate as themes'[92] in music videos, and such programs 'tend to depict women as thin and beautiful, scantily clad, and involved in implicitly sexual and subservient behavior'.[93] Indeed, psychology scholar Jeffrey Jensen Arnett even goes further by saying:

> Although music videos are fairly diverse in themes and scenes, if there is a such [sic] thing as a typical music video it features one or more men performing while beautiful, scantily clad young women dance and writhe lasciviously. Often the men dance, too, but the women always have fewer clothes on. The women are mostly just props; not characters, not even people, really.[94]

In this sense, American music is conceived as reflecting "real world" gender stereotypes in that male singers are assumed to be aggressive while female singers are assumed to be coquettish and fragile.[95] The sexually alluring "mature" female look is, however, another subject of controversy. Styles such as "porno-chic", which is strongly identified with "Barbie doll" musicians who represent an ideal, sexualised female type and are dominant in contemporary American popular music,[96] are perceived either negatively, as endorsing female eroticisation or positively, as articulating 'women's sexuality with individual autonomy'.[97] Thus, this sort of sexualisation of young women might not need to be read as wholly negative. As noted in Chapter 1, Feona Attwood implies that if seen through a positive lens, this kind of fashion can be symbolic of

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[90] White, *op.cit.*, p. 172.

[91] It needs to be remembered that young people interpret music video imagery differently 'based on a variety of factors, including social class, ethnicity, gender, interests, and experiences' (Christenson & Roberts, 1998, mentioned by Arnett, 2002:257).

[92] L. M. Ward et als, 'Contributions of Music Video Exposure to Black Adolescents' Gender and Sexual Schemas' *Journal of Adolescent Research*, Vol. 20, no. 2, 2005, p. 144.

[93] M. Tiggemann and A. S. Pickering, 'Role of Television in Adolescent Women's Body Dissatisfaction and Drive for Thinness' *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, Volume 20, No. 2, 1996, p. 200.

[94] J. J. Arnett. 'The Sounds of Sex: Sex in Teens' Music and Music Videos' in J. D. Brown et als (eds) *Sexual teens, sexual media : investigating media's influence on adolescent sexuality*. Mahwah, N.J.: L. Erlbaum. 2002, p. 256.

[95] J. Anderson, cited in Martin, Brough & Orrego, *Get It On*, 2004.

[96] S. Burman, cited in *Get It On*, 2004.

[97] McRobbie, *op. cit.*; L. Duits and L. van Zoonen, Headscarves and Porn-Chic: Disciplining Girls' Bodies in the European Multicultural Society' *European Journal of Women's Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 2. 2006, p. 112.

feminine pride and confidence, emphasizing a positive and empowering version of female sexuality.[98]

The negativity surrounding styles such as "porno-chic", however, is that they tend to be "mandatory" rather than matters of individual choice in Euro-American culture.[99] Music videos like American pop musician Katy Perry's *California Gurls* (2010) offer good examples of an amalgamation of cute aesthetics and highly sexual overtones in order to connect young femininity and empowerment. Unlike the rather "infantile" mode of *kawaii* look resonant in the three Japanese performers' video clips, Perry's "cupcake" bikini, for instance, obviously accentuates her body, including bust, waist, hip and legs. Another American country singer-songwriter, Taylor Swift's music video to *Love Story* (2008), with its allusion to the romanticised past including a Jane Austen inspired Regency period can be read as the extreme opposite to "porno-chic" styles. Although at the time of recording only eighteen years old, Swift's mature femininity is emphasised by the heterosexual romantic narrative and the focus on her bare shoulders when wearing only a corseted petticoat. The corset also accentuates her bust and waist as well. These two paradigms of the mainstream American music video-clips suggest that the (erotic) display of "mature" femininity has been somewhat mandatory for many young female performers.

The aim to challenge "normative", "passive" "femininity" through clothes can be seen in "porno-chic", in subcultures such as contemporary Goth subculture, and in contemporary Punk. "Punk girls" attempt to resist mainstream adolescent femininity and normative feminine beauty through the adoption of punk style, which is (stereotypically), and historically characterised by an aggressive, rebellious and dominantly masculinist aesthetic.[100] What these styles elucidate is a cultural construction of young women's fashion through a set of extreme binaries. As noted in Chapter 1, Duits and van Zoonen elucidate this point in relation to the Dutch public debate about Muslim headscarves (hijab) and "porno-chic" fashion. They argue that the permeation of the virgin-whore dichotomy reflects the conflicting approaches of Euro-American popular culture to young women: ideals of virginity and innocence in girls, and obsession with overt female sexuality.[101] This dichotomy has contributed to the difficulty of achieving the concept of the "nice girl", an idealistic social standard girls often feel the need to live up to. Such standards could be achievable by managing to 'balance her sexuality on the decency

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[98] Attwood, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

[99] A. Wilkins, 'So Full of Myself as a Chick: Goth Women, Sexual Independence, and Gender Egalitarianism' *Gender & Society*, Vol. 18, No. 3, 2004, pp. 328-349; McRobbie, *op. cit.*,

[100] L. Leblanc, *Pretty in Punk: Girls' Gender Resistance in a Boys' Subculture*. New Brunswick, New Jersey, and London: Rutgers University Press. 2001.

[101] Duits and van Zoonen, *op.cit.*, p. 111.

continuum; neither showing too much of it (G-string) nor denying it (headscarf)'.[102] But this balance is nearly impossible because girls in particular are most often represented as being defined by either extremity, with nothing in between.[103]

For the three Japanese "Alices", the predominant lack of "typical sexual" qualities, combined with the absence of heterosexual narrative, enables a manifestation of an "infantile" kind of cuteness without being subject to overt sexualisation. Arguably, the comparison with mainstream representation of young women in American popular music culture demonstrates that this kind of representation of youthful femininity can offer 'a place somewhere in the middle of this decency continuum'. Such a *kawaii* look can enable young women to appear cutely and sweetly but not sexually suggestive.[104] But it is not without controversy. Their impersonation of preadolescent girl "Alice" via the clothes of little girls brings forth the issue of negative female "infantilisation".

Guilty Pleasure to be Cute

The concept of *kawaii* has attracted its fair share of criticism. For some, the concept endorses asymmetrical gender relations as women are evaluated and judged within it, and are sexually commodified by being reduced to vulnerability, submissiveness, and immaturity.[105] Furthermore, Japanese female idols' emphasized youthfulness and *kawaii* aesthetics have been dismissed as only covering their lack of talent while serving Japanese men's pedophilic gaze. As international journalism scholars Anne Cooper-Chen and Miiko Kodama claim of young Japanese female stars:

> Popular female stars (*tarento*) do not cultivate overt sexiness, which men find threatening and young women do not wish to emulate. According to Kinoshita (1991, 92): "Just barely past puberty, a *tarento* is a young girl who is plucked from the ranks of amateur pageants and made into a star, with a recording contract, TV appearances, and ad campaigns. No need to be able to sing or act: these girls have the only thing that matters-*kawaii* [cuteness].[106]

This is rather a monolithic, stereotypically one-dimensional view of *kawaii* aesthetics as well as of Japanese singers and actors. As noted previously, the concept of *kawaii* is multiple and diverse. This view also claims that even a lack of overt sexual allure in young women is perceived as serving the objectifying male gaze, while this kind of view should

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[102] *Ibid*., p. 111.

[103] *Ibid*., p. 111.

[104] *Ibid*., p. 111.

[105] For the criticism of *kawaii*, see, for example; Koga, *op. cit*., pp., 206-7; K. Akita, 'Cuteness: The Sexual Commodification of Women in the Japanese Media' in T. Carilli and J. Campbell (eds) *Women and the Media*. Lanham: University Press of America. 2005.

[106] A. Cooper-Chen and M. Kodama, *Mass Communication in Japan*. Ames: Iowa State University Press. 1997, p. 20.

instead point out that almost no individual, regardless of their age, gender, race and physicality are thoroughly immune from the eroticisation of the gaze. Nevertheless, Japanese female performers, particularly those who are young and considered physically attractive, have frequently been deprived of serious attention due to their apparently marginal amount of creative contribution and emphasis on their appearance. Thus, being 'a performing tool, as they were seen to be, is a feminized, devalued, and inauthentic role in rock and pop'.[107] Likewise, these three Japanese performers, with their "Alice" dresses and *shōjo* mannerisms, might be subjected to the criticism of favouring unhealthy "infantilisation" of young women. As influential feminist Andrea Dworkin had been cited as saying:

> Infantilizing women is society's way of keeping women inferior, weaker, smaller and dumber…It would be a lie to think that this is about adult women. It's about children, about having a sexual interest and obsession with children. Women are choosing to do something that's very detrimental by letting this preoccupation continue.[108]

Merskin endorses Dworkin's point. She warns that the sexualisation of teen and preteen girls as well as the "infantilisation" of young women, particularly in American fashion advertising, is exclusively for an objectifying male gaze (figure 110, see next page). Consequently, such representations signify the objectification and infantilisation of women, and furthermore, the willingness, passivity, and availability suggested by these images have the potential to fuel paedophilic desires.[109] Such concerns and criticism point to the tendency prevailing in Euro-American cultures that perceives "infantile" cuteness as highly unfavourable and demeaning, even when applied to very young women.

Figure 110 "Charming Lolita": Kate Moss by Ellen von Unwerth for *Italian Glamour*. 19 years old Moss portrays the preadolescent Lolita.

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[107] B. Cogan and G. Cogan, 'Gender and authenticity in Japanese popular music: 1980–2000' *Popular Music and Society*, Vol. 29, Issue 1, 2006, p. 82.

[108] K. Schomer and Y Chang, ' The Cult of Cute' *Newsweek*, August 28, 1995.

[109] D. Merskin, 'Reviving Lolita? A Media Literacy Examination of Sexual Portrayals of Girls in Fashion Advertising' *American Behavioral Scientist* Vol. 41, No. 1, 2004 , p. 123.

Performing "Alice" carries a significant risk in this regard as the character is sometimes seen as a "Lolita", a sexual nymphet. This ambivalence is evident in North-American performers' appropriation of "Alice" in their music video clips. At this point it is useful to look at how non-Japanese (in this case North-American) performers perceive, adopt and interpret "Alice" in their music videos. As noted in the previous chapter, the theory of "content" and "format" can demarcate both differences and similarities through the shared "format" ("Alice" in the present setting) when it becomes transculturally understood and accepted.

Gloomy Wonderland

There is a certain curiosity ascribed to the character of "Alice". For example, Brooker refers to the "duality" associated with Carroll's books. He has pointed out that *Alice* can be understood on the basis of two schools of thought:

> those who choose to enjoy them merely as a pretty nonsense (broadly speaking, the nineteenth-century approach) and those who insist the text has hidden meanings that they want to shake out (to generalise, the twentieth-century method).[110]

This tendency in Western culture to inspect the "dark side" of *Alice* has increased in recent times. 'Rather than offbeat speculation' Brooker notes, 'the idea that Alice has adult overtones and a dark heart seems to have become key to the way the story resonates in the broader public imagination'.[111] This duality is largely due to the "enigmatic" sexuality of the author. The tendency to perceive Carroll in dualistic terms as 'a national treasure and a vaguely suspect enigma' includes the speculation on his paedophilic attachment to children, which is largely unproven.[112] Like her creator, "Alice" herself has been perceived and interpreted with variations from 'a child of her time and class', to a brashly sexualized Lolita, for example.[113] The idea of "Alice" as being steeped in sexual overtones is arguably endorsed by the fact that Vladimir Nabokov, (in)famous for his creation of *Lolita* (1955), translated *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* into Russian in 1923.[114] The influences of *Alice* on *Lolita* is further assumed, for Nabokov allegedly said that 'I always call him Lewis Carroll Carroll because he was the first Humbert Humbert'.[115]

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[110] Brooker, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

[111] *Ibid.*, p. 72.

[112] *Ibid.*, p.64.

[113] H. Haughton, 'Introduction' in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking-Glass*. London: Penguin. 1998, xli; D. Thomas, *Lewis Carroll: A Portrait with Background.* London: John Murray. 1996, p. 365.

[114] Thomas, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

[115] Appel, quoting Nabokov, *The annotated Alice: Alice's adventures in Wonderland & Through the looking-glass*. Harmondsworth: Penguin. 1970, p. 377.

Accordingly, 'whether intentionally or not, Humbert's style has distinct Carrollian echoes in *Lolita*'.[116] Thus, the contemporary perception to parallel "Alice" and Lolita, and Carroll and Humbert Humbert was born. While the Japanese performers perceive "Alice" as an incarnation of the *kawaii* aesthetics, the North-American performers seemingly prefer the adult overtones projected on the character and her world.

Although the mainstream illustrations of *Alice* after Tenniel are not overtly sexualised, embroidering the "darker" sides of "Alice" is a practice recognisable in the arenas of Euro-American popular culture.[117] American psychedelic rock band Jefferson Airplane's song *White Rabbit* (1967) includes comparisons of the hallucinatory effects of illicit drugs with the imagery of *Alice*. In more recent times, American singer-songwriter Gwen Stefani's famous video for *What You Waiting For?* (2004) offers visual references to *Alice*. In comparison to the visual aesthetics of the Japanese music videos analysed in this chapter, the dominant sexual overtone of Stefani's references to *Alice* is illuminated (figures 111 & 112). Arguably, Stefani offers a dominantly kitsch yet more mature visualisation of *Alice*. She both appears as the heroine and Red and White Queens in dresses possibly designed by (in)famous John Galliano, for example (figures 113 & 115, see next page).

Figure 111

Figure 112

[116] E. Prioleau, 'Humbert Humbert: Through the Looking Glass' *Twentieth Century Literature*, Vol. 21, No. 4, 1975, p. 434.

[117] Significantly, when the imagery of *Alice* is adopted by Euro-American male performers, the helplessness and passivity of the heroine tend to be emphasised. Whether or not the woman who plays the role of "Alice" is young, they tend to be dressed girlishly apart from British duo Erasure's *Breath of Life* (1991), in which adolescent, sylphlike "Alice" takes the role of the white rabbit. Alices in such music videos as Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers' *Don't Come Around Here No More* (in which then twenty-one years old actress Wish Foley played the role of "Alice", 1985) and German industrial rock band Oomph!'s *Labyrinth* (2008) are portrayed as submissive and in fear compared to the male performers, whose vocalists are often dressed as the mad hatter. In contrast to the passivity of their "Alice", these male performers are much older and authoritarian positions. In these music videos, Alices are dressed in the fashion of Victorian girls, obviously referring to Tenniel's pictures (and Foley was dressed very similar to Disney's animated version with blue apron dress). Arguably, these treatments of "Alice" reflect, deliberately or otherwise, the asymmetrical gender relations that allocate power and authority to the male and passivity to the (young) female. It needs to be noted that this kind of representation is also present in Japan, where Japanese rock band Buck-Tick's music video to *Alice in Wonder Ground* (2007) offers an equally disturbing but more aesthetically sophisticated version of the similar concept.

Figure 113

Figure 114

Figure 115

Figure 116

One of her Japanese/Japanese-American "Harajuku Girls" backup dancers is dressed as a white rabbit in a somewhat "Playboy Bunny-style" and her dancing movements invokes obvious sexual overtones (figure 114).

Darker and less kitsch, Canadian singer-songwriter Avril Lavigne sings the soundtrack to Tim Burton's film *Alice in Wonderland* (2010). In the music video of her song *Alice* (2010), Lavigne follows the narrative of Carroll's *Alice* –following the white rabbit, falling into the hole, and appearing at the tea party (figure 116). The video-clip cuts back to the segments of the film frequently. What is noteworthy is that, like Stefani, Lavigne is dressed in a casual style at the beginning; t-shirt, mini skirt on skinny jeans, and a pair of black, Dr Martens boots. After the fall, however, she is dressed in a black, late-Victorian full dress and white stockings imprinted with patterns of playing cards (figure 117). Trimmed with a frill of keyboard patterns, the front of the skirt is shortened to look like

the dress of Tenniel's "Alice", while from the side, Levine appears to be dressed like a mature late-Victorian lady in the fashion of Madame X, the Parisian socialite Virginie Amélie Avegno Gautreau immortalised in a portrait by John Singer Sargent (1884).


Figure 117

Figure 118

Lavigne, as signified by her "normal" clothes, follows the rabbit and transforms into "Alice". Here the sartorial transformation signifies an identity transformation. A brief comparison between Japanese and North-American female performers' visualisations of "Alice" suggests two strands of significance. Firstly, the almost complete absence of male characters is a shared characteristic by both Japanese and North American female performers' interpretation of "Alice". Arguably, this reflects "Alice's" independent and autonomous character, which made her distinctive from other girlish heroines in the late nineteenth century.[118] Secondly, the "infantile" cuteness that the Japanese performers so visibly embraced is absent in the North-American appropriations.

Indeed, neither Stefani nor Lavigne wear "little girls' dresses". Lavigne's visual rendition of "Alice" is obviously less "sexualised" than Stefani's, as she is fully clothed throughout the video and rarely engages in explicit, sexually alluring movements or gestures. But her dress might signify an ambivalence towards maturity and infantility,

[118] *Sō-en*, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

perhaps echoing the film whose "Alice" is nineteen years old with an emphasised sense of agency. Crucially, Lavigne's interpretation of "Alice" manages a balancing act—it both respects the image of the original books' "Alice" and emphases a distinction from the mainstream Euro-American representations of "mature" femininity. Nevertheless, Levigne dresses in a more mature manner than the Japanese performers, perhaps to avoid the accusation of "infantilisation", that would be perceived unfavourably in North-American societies.

One might deduce that these video-clips highlight the unfavourablility of young women to be dressed in an "infantile", sweet look. This point is further endorsed by the tendency in which North-American female performers' "Alice" clips concludes with their departure from the "wonderland" and return to their normal, real selves. On the contrary, Japanese performers do not clearly leave the wonderland. Kawase in *Bloomin'!* loops back to the wonderland while we see Mizuki and Kimura still dressed like "Alice" at the end. This might be reflective of the conceptual difference. In North-American culture, the wonderland, and performing a preadolescent "girl" is like a dream that needs to come out of at the end. It is acceptable only if it is ephemeral and the individual returns to her real, mature self. In Japan, even if there are certain criticisms attached to it, being 'infantile' can be prolonged.[119] Thus, adopting and appropriating the imagery of "Alice" highlights cross-cultural differences in perceiving the aesthetic concept of "infantilisation".

Furthermore, like the concepts of *kawaii* and *shōjo*, these three Japanese singers' appropriations of "Alice" likely manifest their capabilities to modify, parody, or deliberately inflate the "infantile" cuteness their "little girls' dresses" connote. By failing to see the diversity in a state of "infantility", authors like Dworkin are underestimating the complexity of women's subject position. This is because, in contrast to its apparent docility, the *kawaii* aesthetic can be compatible with senses of autonomy and agency, like the character of "Alice" herself. Indeed, the concept of *kawaii* can operate as a revolt, although not a "Wagnerian" but rather a "subtle" one.[120]

Delicate Kind of Revolt

What is striking about the Japanese concept of *kawaii* is, indeed, that it can be interpreted as a "delicate revolt" that softly and implicitly subverts established stereotypes and cultural preconceptions. Kinsella articulates this point as follows:

> Cute fashion was…a kind of rebellion or refusal to cooperate with established social values and realities. It was a demure, indolent little rebellion rather than a

[119] See, for example: White, *op.cit.*, p. 126; McVeign, *op.cit.*, p. 146.

[120] By Wagnerian I mean very loud.

> conscious aggressive and sexually provocative rebellion of the sort that has been typical of western youth cultures. Rather than acting sexually provocative [sic] to emphasise their maturity and independence, Japanese youth acted pre-sexual and vulnerable in order to emphasise their immaturity and inability to carry out social responsibilities. Either way the result was the same.[121]

In this sense, the concept of *kawaii* can operate like a masquerade in Riviere's terms, for women can use it to their own advantage by obtaining favours and attention from those hierarchically above while their apparently "non-threatening" manners might gain control over those who are their subordinates.[122] This idea enables a reading that such saccharine cuteness displayed by the Japanese performers in their music videos might be telling of something more than a submissive, docile femininity. For example, through crafting the "Alice" look, these three performers manifest an implicit parody of Japanese female "idols", which is a conceptual embodiment of the *kawaii*, *shōjo* aesthetics in Japanese music culture.[123] The most typical image associated with female pop idols, particularly in the 1970s and 1980s is that of Miss Sweet and Innocent with a ballerina-like flared dress, an image largely believed to be manufactured and controlled by male producers.[124] The dominant image of "idols", moreover, were those who do not or are not expected to contribute to any creative or production process of their music.[125]

This has led Japanese female pop musicians, let alone Japanese pop music itself to be seen by both Japanese and non-Japanese critics, as lacking in authenticity. For those critics, authenticity is largely predicated on a do-it-yourself aesthetic and emphasis on creative control.[126] However, paying particular attention to Miller's theory of "feigned innocence", I would argue that the music videos of Mizuki, Kawase and Kimura narrate three stages of *kawaii* specifically as a means to exercise creative control. While Mizuki's "Alice" was still showing the influences of Japanese "idol" images and her (or her managing agent's) attempt to move away from them, Kawase and Kimura had careers performing in rock bands prior to their solo careers, and write most of their own lyrics. They have established themselves as songwriters, not "idols", and their creative control over their repertoires allow them to embrace and parody the cute aesthetics freely.

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[121] Kinsella, *Cuties*, p. 243.

[122] McVeign, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

[123] The term "idol" 'has a specific meaning in Japan different from the one native English speakers know. Generally speaking, idols are young performers targeted at teenagers'. In addition to their youthfulness, they usually sing bubblegum pop and their physical attractiveness is a very important ingredient of their "idolness". See, P. Brasor and M. Tsubuku, 'Idol Chatter: The Evolution of J-Pop', *Japan Quarterly*, Issue 44, No. 2, 1997, p. 55.

[124] Cogan and Cogan, *op.cit*, pp. 73-4.

[125] *Ibid.*, p. 82.

[126] *Ibid.*, p. 71.

Three Stages of Delicate Revolt

Compared with Kimura and Kawase, Mizuki's version of "Alice" is perhaps the most straightforwardly cute. She was only fourteen years old and was one of the top "idols" at the time the music video was filmed. It was also the aftermath of the end of the sweet female "idol" era.[127] Given that the dominant image of Japanese idols is of performers who do not and are not expected to contribute to any creativity to the production of their music, her cuteness does not demonstrate subversive or rebellious aspects/intentions.[128] For this particular video clip, Mizuki herself later commented: 'The theme of this clip is *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. Why? Why Alice? Is it because my name is Alisa? Isn't it too simple? These were what I was thinking when shooting this clip', indicating the absence of her agency in creating this particular video clip.[129]

However, she was not merely a commodified object either. In the video, she does not manifest a doll-like docility or inactivity. Instead, she propels the narrative, passing through famous fairy-tales and the Shakespeare play *Romeo and Juliet*, making each story happier by slapping the dead Romeo awake, for instance. This corresponds with her public image at the time, which was a "wonder girl" or "legendary girl (*densetsu no shōjo*)", an image further endorsed by the title of her debut song and her first feature film *Chōshōjo Reiko* (AKA Reiko, Psyche Resurrected, the literal translation of the Japanese title is Reiko the Super Girl, 1991) suggest.[130] This is largely attributed to her tall, slender physique with long limbs and a general aura of maturity, as well as her prior career as a fashion model, all of which inverted, if not subverted, the typical girl idol images of charming but ordinary girls next-door, the image engraved in the 1980s.

Challenging the stereotyped image of Japanese female musicians, communication arts scholar Brian Cogan and Asian religion scholar Gina Cogan argue that these musicians do make their contributions 'in ways that they are not usually recognized'.[131] What they are referring to is the visual production and presentation.[132] This includes singing as well as creating, sustaining and circulating the visual image via appearing in music videos, interviews and fashion magazines. According to Cogan and Cogan, these musicians are simultaneously commodified objects and producers of 'a commodity that

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[127] C. Stevens, *Japanese Popular Music: Culture, authenticity, and power*. London and New York: Routledge. 2008, p. 53.
[128] Cogan and Cogan, *op.cit.*, p. 82.
[129] *Avex Record Website*. [http://www.avexnet.or.jp/alisa/special/history_dvd/].
[130] *Alisa Mizuki Official Website*. [http://www.avexnet.or.jp/alisa/special/history_dvd/].
[131] Cogan and Cogan, *op. cit.*, p. 85.
[132] *Ibid.*, p. 74.

can be said to be authentic'.[133] According to this logic, Mizuki did contribute to the visual aspect of her commodified public image via her rather exceptional looks, and her frequent appearances in music television programs, television dramas, advertisements, and in fashion magazines. Importantly, Mizuki's face is moreover captured close-up smiling shyly and self-consciously as the video concludes. This self-reflexivity can be interpreted as implying that Mizuki is actually performing the role of "Alice". This underscores a parody of cuteness, and hence the fabricated and performed nature of *kawaii*.

More than a decade after the fadeout of sweet female idols from the mainstream music stardom of the early 1990s, Kimura's version of "Alice" appears to accentuate the saccharine qualities more than Mizuki's. This is particularly evident in her mannerisms such as smiling and waving to the camera (audience), and clasping a teddy bear. This renders her almost thoroughly an object of the viewer's gaze. However, her intentional, performed nature of this *kawaii* aesthetics is suggested by the contrast made in her "public" image. Unlike the sugary innocent images manifested in her *Snowdome* video, she has in public established something of cute yet cheeky, independent and boyish character.[134] "Hyperfemininity" is not a quality she is usually associated with. A few months after the release of *Snowdome*, for instance, she included the song in her concert tour but wore a black dinner jacket and a white shirt like her male supporting musicians.[135]

Kimura also emphasises her contribution to her music. According to her, the music of *Snowdome*, which was one of the pieces composed for her by the Japanese rock/punk band Beat Crusaders, sounded like an "idol" pop song. Since sweet "idol" pop was not her usual style, she took up the challenge, choosing it and wrote lyrics that would suit the music, which also influenced the video-clip.[136] As Miller has pointed out, the performing nature of *kawaii*, or *burikko* (feigned innocence) in her case, is highlighted when done by those who are not customarily identified with those sorts of gestures or behaviours.[137] Thus, Kawase's performed nature of "infantile" cuteness is highlighted.

The parodied nature of *kawaii* is further evolved in Kawase's version of "Alice", which is more aloof compared to the former two. First of all, she was twenty-seven years old when she first appeared as "Alice" in *Bloomin*'! When she reappeared as "Alice", she was 34. Ian Buruma, author of *A Japanese Mirror* (1984), and Kinsella have both stated that

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[133] *Ibid*., p. 85.
[134] *SWITCH*, Vol. 23, No. 8, 2005, p. 107
[135] It needs to be noted that her make-up as well as gestures do not completely erase her girlish cuteness.
[136] *EYESCREAM*, February 2007, p. 30-31.
[137] Miller, *Burikko*, p. 155.

the Japanese seemingly lack a sense of irony, and hence a camp sensitivity.[138] I argue that this is not an entirely correct statement, and that Kawase's intake of "Alice" exemplifies this. On the one hand, Kawase's performance of "Alice" does not seem overly camp. She appears to be considerably younger than her age, and is dressed as such. One American user of youtube, for example, left her comment on Kawase's *Wait for me there* video clip: 'she looks like she could be the japanese [sic] version of alice [sic]'.[139] This indicates Kawase's intention to appear seriously like "Alice", and hence no exaggerated, humorous or theatrical effects regarding her craft of the "Alice" look are obviously evident. On the other hand, however, her serious attempt itself reflects a cleverly placed self-awareness.

Masayuki Matsumoto, the editor of music magazine *MARQUEE* points out that the saccharine intensity of Tommy reflects Kawase's composed ability to craft and self-produce the exaggerated "idolness".[140] The term "idolness" likely refers to the (girlish) sweetness and innocence whose manufactured nature is tacitly understood. Kawase herself mentions that the kitsch yet saccharine world of Tommy is comprised of her roots and favourite things, and reflects her own creative control.[141] Moreover, the constructed and performed nature of Kawase's "Alice" is further emphasised by Miller's theory that an accentuated *kawaii* look performed by 'those clearly beyond an age of innocence, unmasks the artifice of the maneuver' and neutralises adult sexuality.[142] We can deduce, then that these performers' "Alice" looks demonstrate three different stages of *kawaii* aesthetic as a "revolt". Whereas in Mizuki's version *kawaii* shows a degree of inflection, a compromise between the expected cute "idolness" and the desire to establish a more independent and distinguished identity, in Kimura's version, the *kawaii* concept illuminates her playfulness, which is made clear via the vivid comparison with her cheeky, independent public image. Kawase's rendition of *kawaii* enacted through "Alice" further demonstrates her own individuality and creative controls via the construction of the "infantile" cute image without a hint of camp sensitivity or sexuality. The performance of *kawaii*, particularly by those who have surpassed an age of innocence, carries a risk of being penalized through labelling as *burikko*. While Mizuki was in her adolescence when the music video-clip was created, Kimura and particularly Kawase were well beyond adolescence when they adopted the imagery of "Alice" in their music video-clips. Are

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[138] I. Buruma *Japanese Mirror*. New York: Pantheon Books. 1984, p. 117; Kinsella, *op. cit.*, p. 228.
[139] [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S72-Lxn0zSA&feature=related].
[140] *MARQUEE*, Vol. 50, 2005, p. 17.
[141] *MARQUEE*, Vol. 71, 2009, p. 52-54.
[142] Miller, *Burikko*, p. 156.

these three Japanese performers subjected to such a "penalty"? If not, how are they exonerated from it?

The Equilibrium of Cute and Sober

I contend that these Japanese performers are largely exonerated from the criticism of being too sweet, pretentious or fake. There are two possible reasons for this hypothesis. First of all, the absence of heterosexual narrative, along with the performers' rather cheeky, independent public images, creates an impression that they are not doing this *kawaii* performance exclusively for the male gaze. The performance of *burikko* 'is thought to most often be elicited in the presence of powerful males', and such a performance is often perceived as having an intention to flatter men.[143] Combined with their popularity among female audiences, these three Japanese young women's music videos do not, at least explicitly, seem to have the intention to primarily attract male audiences. Secondly and more importantly, this is because the *kawaii* aesthetics manifested in these videos are kept at a considerably moderate level.

None of these performers display overly childish or stereotypically girlish manners or gestures such as standing pigeon-toed. Their dresses are delicately but not extensively ornate, and the colours fall on the sober side. If we recall the common image of cute clothes for girls as embodied by pastel shades with lace, their preference for earthy colours is important. Sober colours did not contradict the trend of girls' dresses in Victorian England.[144] But whether it connotes the sinister, the macabre, elegance, individual distinction, dignity, maturity, substance, or probity, the colour black would not be the best choice to display "infantile" cuteness.[145] The past TV footage of Seiko Matsuda, who has often been identified as an incarnation of the *burikko*, also revealed that she would often wear virginal white or pastel yellow and pink when she was in the flower of youth.[146] Thus, in addition to their deliberate lack of "(hyper)feminine" qualities, the deployment of darker and sober colours in these three Japanese performers' "Alice" dresses would maintain an intricate balance between "infantile" cuteness and "asexuality".

The three Japanese female performers may not be representative of Japanese women in general. Not all Japanese female performers are devoid of eroticism. It is, however,

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[143] *Ibid.*, p. 152.

[144] Ewing, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

[145] For the historical and cultural implications of colour black, see; Hollander, *op. cit.*, p. 374, 380.

[146] By contrast, another contemporary idol singer, somewhat the antithesis of *burikko* Akina Nakamori would wear a black tutu-like dress when she was singing "rebellious" songs. It is also worth noting that female pop idols in the later 1980s were increasingly seen wearing dresses with sober colours and symmetrical hems, such as black, brown or dark green. This might have coincided with the increasing notability of such designers as Rei Kawakubo and Yohji Yamamoto.

striking to see that there exists a group of young female performers who can embrace "infantile" cuteness that points to a lack of mature, sexual allure although they are not necessarily puritanical in their real lives. Such representations demonstrate that the idea that 'fashion is not inevitably produced to render the wearer attractive to the opposite sex' and challenges the idea that ornate clothes function solely for men's erotic pleasures.[147] As already mentioned, Duits and Zoonen point out that schizophrenic demands of the virgin-whore dichotomy tend to define women's clothing styles at either extreme of the decency continuum.[148] As a result, the cultural construction of women's fashion is unstable, and largely problematic. Ultimately, the girlish yet asexual, innocent yet autonomous "cute" fashion displayed in these Japanese music videos possibly serves as an alternative to the established multiple binaries of aggressive sexualisation and subservience in which young women tend to be represented, particularly in but not exclusive to American culture.

Conclusion

Through crafting the look of "Alice", the three Japanese performers demonstrate a compatibility between *kawaii* fashion aesthetics and senses of agency and autonomy. Emphasising sweetness, demureness and femininity without hinting at sexual allure or seeking the objectifying male gaze serves to repudiate the stereotyped representation of femininity as passive, compliant, and powerless against the sexual objectification of women. I suggest that this is more effective than such approaches as "porno-chic" or "girl punks". These two styles are seemingly defined, at least in part, through the "othering" of more demure and perhaps "normative" modes of femininity. Thus, these styles, as long as they exist as the antithesis of "conventional" femininity, 'do not seem to disrupt but rather appear to endorse existing gender hierarchies'.[149] In contrast, the significance of Japanese *kawaii* and *shōjo* aesthetics as demonstrated by the Japanese performers lie in their abilities to reaffirm "infantile" cute and apparently saccharine fashion aesthetics and values, which tend to be denounced in Euro-American societies, as positive and desirable. The compatibility of autonomy and decorative girlish fashion will be further explored in the next chapter through the analysis of the Japanese film *Kamikaze Girls* and the Japanese fashion trend of *Lolita*.

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[147] Bruzzi, *op. cit.*, p. xvii.

[148] Duits and van Zoonen, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

[149] D. Reay, "Spice Girls', 'Nice Girls', 'Girlies', and 'Tomboys': gender discourses, girls' cultures and femininities in the primary classroom' *Gender and Education*, Volume 13, No 2, 2001, p. 163.

Lolita Reader Model and Ambassador of *Kawaii*
Misako Aoki, 2011.

Chapter 5: Glittering with Lace and Ribbons

'There's one thing about you,' Maudie said. 'You always look ladylike.'

'Oh God,' I said, 'who wants to look ladylike?'

---Jean Rhys, *Voyage in the Dark*,1934.[1]

…for the aesthetics of the rococo, the more delicate a girl becomes, the higher her value.

--- *Kamikaze Girls*[2]

A girl of seventeen drives a scooter fast. In the blurred images, her white, delicately flounced dress flutters on wind. She then collides with a greengrocer's truck and soars high in the beautiful sky, a bunch of cabbages waltzing and whirling behind her. She falls gracefully in a fashion redolent of Alice falling down into the rabbit hole in Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. This is what we encounter immediately after the opening, brief animated scene of Himiko, the "legendary" female bikie gang in the Japanese film *Shimotsuma Monogatari* (Shimotsuma Story or Kamikaze Girls, 2004). Clair Hughes argues that '[t]raditionally, aspects of dress have been used to portray aspects of personality, particularly when a character first enters the story'.[3] A young heroine attired in a white, lace calf-length puff-sleeved dress, known as Japanese *Lolita* or *Gothic Lolita* dress, with a pair of Vivien Westwood's Rockin' Horse Ballerina-like shoes, rides a scooter fast with a serious mien. If what Hughes argues is applicable to films, this sequence alone is enough to hint that *Kamikaze Girls* offers a portrayal of adolescent girls that is full of juxtapositions and contradictory images. These are revolutionary and striking.

In the previous chapter, I argued that through utilizing a certain kind of *kawaii* (cute) aesthetics, some Japanese female performers manifest the possibility of a detachment from the eroticism often associated with "infantile" cute and apparently sweet fashion styles. In this chapter I pay attention to the established idea that female sartorial ornamentation is a stable signifier of dependency and subservience, the view made famous by sociologist Thorstein Veblen at the turn of the last century, and taken up and developed further by such authors as philosopher Simone de Beauvoir (1949) and museum curator James Laver (1950). This idea continues to the present day, most notably via feminist scholars like Sheila Jeffreys (2005). For them, women's engagement with beauty practices, including fashion, operates for the purpose of attracting and serving the objectifying gaze of men. These ideas substantiate one facet of the theory of gender performativity, articulated by

[1] J. Rhys, *Voyage in the Dark*. London: Penguin Books. 2000 [1934], p. 10.

[2] From the film dialogue, translated by Masafumi Monden.

[3] C. Hughes, *Dressed in Fiction*. Oxford and New York: Berg. 2006, p. 7.

Butler.[4] The culturally or socially inscribed dress of "femininity" creates, demarcates and distinguishes the gender category from "masculinity", which is symbolically embodied by the austere, sober, and supposedly more functional men's suit. To what extent does a "girlish" and emphatically "ornamental" fashion-look such as Japanese *Lolita* style, then, inevitably signify such unfavourable connotations? Is it instead a visual embodiment of Valerie Steele's view that '[h]istoricizing, glamorous fashion could be subversive, not nostalgic'?[5]

The functionalist idea that construes decorative femininity as symbolic of oppression has been critiqued and challenged by scholars of dress, particularly since the 1970s. Works by Anne Hollander (1978), Bonnie G. Smith (1981), Elizabeth Wilson (1985), Valerie Steele (1985) and Joanne Entwistle (2000) are but a few examples. Following these works, what I hope to achieve with this chapter is to offer an alternative to the somewhat monolithic idea that amalgamates decorative girlish fashion and unfavourable feminine passivity. I deploy *Kamikaze Girls* and its predominantly positive representation of the *Lolita* fashion as an exemplary case study of this aim.[6] This in turn reinforces another facet of the theory of gender performativity, that a young woman can "perform" both "masculine" and "feminine" acts alternately, while being clad in the same, white (in the case of *Kamikaze Girls*) puff-sleeved dress adorned with flounces and ribbons. Thus, the film demonstrates the idea of performative gender even more effectively and credibly.

I begin the above operation with a general overview of *Lolita* fashion. I explain how this concept is a manifestation of a complex cultural commingling between European and Japanese cultures. In this section I also look at the predominantly negative feminist views linking (decorative) feminine dress forms and passivity. The second section consists of a textual analysis of *Kamikaze Girls*. In particular, by examining what roles clothes play in the film, this section argues that fashion is much more than a mere embellishment to the narrative, and that the film's representation of *Lolita* fashion is therefore eloquent. The subversive qualities of *Kamikaze Girls* that problematise traditional negative views about decorative femininity are the focus of the third section. I argues that the *Lolita* style does not necessarily symbolise unfavourable passivity or inferiority in the film. I also identify three significant aspects of the film –the heroine's sense of independence, the almost absence of romantic narrative, and the blurring of gender roles. In the final section I aim

[4] As noted in Chapter 1, the theory of gender performativity understands gender as a construction created and sustained by series of performances including gestures and dress.

[5] V. Steele, *Gothic: Dark Glamor*. New Haven: Yale University Press. 2008, p. 73. (hereafter, Steele, *Gothic*)

[6] Japanese *Lolita* fashion is also known as *Gothic & Lolita* or *GothLoli* in Japan, particularly among those who are neither the actual wearer of nor familiar with the fashion. It is also frequently used as the blanket term for all the *Lolita* styles. In this chapter, I follow *Kamikaze Girls*, in which the style is clearly named as *Lolita* style.

to explore the socio-psychological analysis of "androgyny", which the heroine's fluent demonstration of both "masculine" and "feminine" attributes arguably endorses. I seek to establish the idea that "androgyny" does not necessarily have to be manifested through "masculine" clothes, and that the ornamental and "girlish" sartorial style could be equally effective in its performance.

The Aesthetic of A Bisque Doll Princess

Japanese *Lolita* fashion is characterised by its self-consciously girlish style, often with the extravagant opulence of lace, flounces and ribbons. Although there is no clear definition of *Lolita* style, it functions as a blanket name for various *Lolita* fashions with subtle differences. These include *Kuro-Loli* or *Gothic/Black Lolita* (black and white dominated, sometimes with "Goth" motifs such as bats, skulls and coffins); *Ama-Loli* or *Sweet Lolita* (with preference for animal, sweets or fruits motifs in pastel shades); *Classical Lolita* ("maiden" style with slightly less lace and less elaborate clothes); *Gothic Aristocrat* (dark but frilled and elaborate 'Count' style for both men and women) and; *Punk Lolita* (the combination of punk and *Lolita* styles, e.g. a punkish T-shirt, frilly *Lolita* skirt and a pair of Dr Martens). This style sometimes deploys characteristics of Asian dress forms such as the cheongsam dress or kimono, and some minor variations include *Gro-Loli* (Grotesque *Lolita*) and even *Ero-Loli* (Erotic or Sexy *Lolita*). The orthodoxy of the fashion style is, however, largely fixed by the combination of *Black*, *Sweet* and *Classical Lolita* styles. It consists of a highly elaborate, Victorian "little girls" calf-length dress hooped with layers of pannier, frilly knee-length socks, and "Mary Jane" or strap shoes including Vivien Westwood's Rockin' horse ballerina. The look is completed with exquisitely made headdresses or bonnets (figure 119, see next page).

Lolita fans adopt sweet and dreamy aesthetics and admire the highly "romanticized" lives of the European nobility and upper class girls in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Marie Antoinette of France, figure 120, and "Alice" in Lewis Carroll's two classical children's books are most obvious and accessible examples). This fashion look, when worn in its "full-on" form, is often accompanied by demure mannerisms by the wearer. Akinori Isobe, the owner of the renowned *Lolita* style fashion brand Baby, The Stars Shine Bright once said that the image of the individual for whom BABY's clothes are designed, is a pure, pretty and spirited girl who possesses a degree of physical strength. This is because the opulent use of lace and frills makes his garments both heavy and unwieldy. Kyoko Fukada who wears *Lolita* garments including BABY in *Kamikaze Girls*, on

the other hand, has commented that they were not as physically impeding as she thought.[7]

Figure 119 Snaps from *Kera MANIAX* (left, 2007 Special, p. 82; right, 2009, vol. 13, p. 134)

Figure 120 Portrait of Marie Antoinette at the age of twelve by Martin van Meytens (1767-8)

Some writers argue that *Lolita* has two different sartorial roots: namely the romantic, doll-like style and the black-dominated, gothic fashions. The former embodies one facet of *kawaii* aesthetics, as we have seen in the previous chapter, while the latter embraces a darker taste. The *Lolita* style is often described as resembling European historical dress styles, particularly the Rococo and Romantic traditions, and to a somewhat lesser extent, contemporary Goth sub-culture. Yet, to what extent does the *Lolita* style embrace and

[7] *Kyoko Fukada in Shimotsuma Story*. Tokyo: Pia. 2004, p. 112.

appropriate historic European dress styles? The style's appropriation of European dress forms of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries appears to be more conceptual than stylistic, embroidered with certain aesthetic essences of these periods. As Japanese cultural studies scholar and historian Vera Mackie has precisely described, it is a 'transtexual' style, and definitely not a straightforwardly accurate and monotonous replication of period dress.[8] In addition to the aesthetic sensibilities conceptualised and romanticised by the Japanese, the influence of Japanese pop culture is also woven into Japanese understandings of historic European styles.

Embroidering the Romantic Past

Steele writes of the *Lolita* fashion in her book *Japan Fashion Now*, noting '[t]he look as a whole is often said to resemble a nineteenth-century French doll or *jumeau*'.[9] Thus, the Japanese style has some historical references to period clothes.[10] The European fashion aesthetic represented in this style is, however, not always periodically or stylistically precise. Historical accuracy gives way to aesthetic preferences in *Lolita* style. This somewhat relaxed embrace of European dress styles corresponds to *Lolita* proponents' appreciation of the highly "romanticised" elegance of European princesses and upper class girls in these periods. In other words, the images of Europe presented via this style might be more precisely described as images of a romanticised Europe that never existed.

The notable promulgation of European women's clothing forms in Japan did not occur until the early twentieth century, during the Taishō period (1912-1926), with the prevalence of European-style physical environments, the emergence of "modern girls" and the "Neo-Empire" look.[11] Thus, the Japanese knowledge of fashionable dresses of eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe, whether it is the Rococo, the Regency or Victorian, relies solely on art and cultural representations. *Lolita* fashion does, however, have a history. As noted rather briefly in the last chapter, the intensive saturation of lace and frilly aesthetic sensitivity through Japanese girls' comic book culture and pop idols in the 1970s and 1980s was a significant historical influence (figure 121, 122 & 123). Supporting this idea is the long lasting popularity of Riyoko Ikeda's comic book series

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[8] V. Mackie, 'Transnational Bricolage: Gothic Lolita and the Political Economy of Fashion', *Intersections: Gender and Sexuality in Asia and the Pacific*, Issue 20, April 2009. [http://intersections.anu.edu.au/issue20/mackie.htm]. (hereafter, Mackie, *Bricolage*)

[9] V. Steele, *Japan Fashion Now*. New York: Yale University Press. 2010, p. 34. (hereafter Steele, *Japan*)

[10] It is significant that the childlike doll of the late-nineteenth century and early-twentieth century often led or acted as a trendsetter of contemporary fashion (Peers, 2004: 78).

[11] T. Slade, *Japanese Fashion: A Cultural History*. Oxford and New York: Berg. 2009, p. 101. (hereafter Slade, *History*)

Berusaiyu no bara (The Rose of Versailles, 1972-3) in which Marie Antoinette is portrayed as a tragic yet sympathetic princess adorned with lace and ribbons (figure 124).[12]

Figure 121 Images from Yumiko Oshima's *Banana Bread Pudding* (1977-8, right) and *Pascal no mure* (A Crowd of Pascal, 1978, left).

Figure 122 A popular idol Yoshie Kashiwabara (b. 1965) singing her song *Tiny Memory* (1983)

Figure 123 A popular idol Yoko Minamino (b. 1968) singing *Akikaramo sobani ite* (Stay by my side even after the autumn, 1988) on a weekly music hit program

[12] R. Ikeda, *Versailles no bara (The Rose of Versailles)*, Volumes 1-5, Tokyo: Shūei-sha.1994 [1972-3].

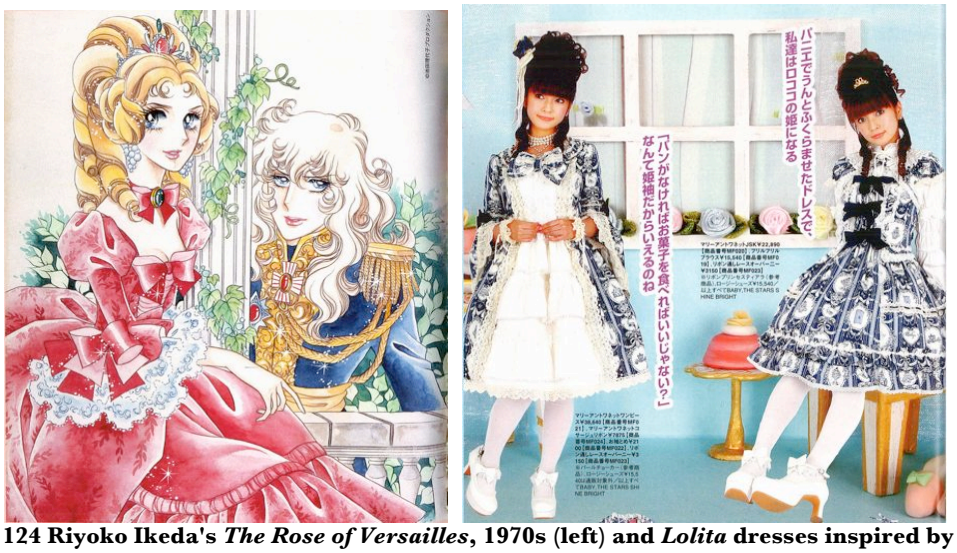

Figure 124 Riyoko Ikeda's *The Rose of Versailles*, 1970s (left) and *Lolita* dresses inspired by Marie Antoinette, Baby, The Stars Shine Bright (right, *Kera MANIAX Special*, 2007, p. 139)

Figure 125 Cover of Bisco Hatori's *Sennen no yuki*, vol. 2 (Millennium Snow, 2002)

Fumiyo Isobe, designer and co-founder of BABY, whose husband is the owner of the brand, for example, reveals the influences of girls' comic books. For her, Yumiko Oshima's comic books such as *Wata no kuniboshi* (The Star of Cotton Land, 1978-87) and *Banana Bureddo no Pudding* (Banana Bread Pudding, 1977-78) are the roots of her designs.[13] Such appropriation and restylisation displays a degree of creativity and hence authority exercised by Japanese designers. This in turn supports the view of Maynard that transcultural appropriation of dress can be systematic and tactical rather than chaotic.[14] And indeed, close observation of the *Lolita* style dresses tells a rich story of transtextuality.

BABY's "Gingham Check Creeping Rose Dress" (2010) seemingly exudes an air of the mid-eighteenth century *robe à la française* style (figure 126, see next page) at a glance.[15]

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[13] Street Mode Kenkyukai 'History of BABY, THE STARS SHINE BRIGHT' in *STREET MODE BOOK*. Tokyo: Graphic-sha. 2007, p. 66.

[14] M. Maynard, *Dress and Globalization*. Manchester: Manchester University Press. 2004, p. 22.

[15] Baby, The Stars Shine Bright official website. [http://www.babyssb.co.jp/shopping/baby/onepiece/134317.html].

Figure 126 Gingham Check Creeping Rose Dress (front and back) by Baby, The Stars Shine Bright

Steele offers a neat précis of what the French dress style was like:

> The little bustle characteristic of late seventeenth-century dress was abandoned in favor of hooped petticoats called panniers, which extended on either side. Increasingly, the skirt was open in front to reveal a decorative petticoat that was part of the garment while the front of the bodice displayed a triangular stomacher. Court dress was stiff-bodied, highly decorated, and worn over enormous panniers. Even an "ordinary" *robe à la française* was highly decorated, made of patterned silks covered in ribbons, ruffles, furbelows, and lace.[16]

BABY's cotton dress has sleeve flounces and a design that emulates the frilled robe and matching petticoat (the white lace trims separate the skirts in three parts, as if revealing a matching petticoat in front). It is likely to be worn with several separately-sold cotton organdie or tulle panniers, in order to form and accentuate the bell-shape, all of which creates a feeling of the *robe à la française* style (figure 127).

Figure 127 Baby, The Stars Shine Bright's Tulle Pannier

Judging from its appearance, BABY's pannier might be described more precisely as a hooped petticoat of the twentieth century rather than the authentic eighteenth-century pannier. What is important for the style is, however, the opulent feeling created through

[16] V. Steele, *Paris Fashion: A Cultural History*. Oxford and New York: Berg. 2nd ed. 1998, p. 35. (hereafter Steele, *Paris*)

the emphatically hooped silhouette of the skirt by wearing layers of filmy gauze undergarment à la Marie Antoinette. In this sense, the dress represents the quintessence of Rococo aesthetic sensibilities, which art and dress historian Aileen Ribeiro precises as 'frills, ribbons and flounce'.[17] The knee-length of the dress, on the other hand, is obviously not from this period, possibly referring to a ballerina's romantic ballet skirt or Victorian "little girls' dresses" (figure 128 &129).

Figure 128 Marie-Élisabeth (Lise) Noblet wearing the Costume of Effie in ballet *La Sylphide* (1832)

Figure 129 BABY's Original Tartan Ribbon Shirring Princess Dress, arguably resembling Noblet's ballet costume

[17] A. Ribeiro, *Dress in Eighteenth-Century Europe 1715-1789*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press. 2002 [1985], p. 136. (hereafter Ribeiro, *Dress*)

Figure 130 Pompadour Bustle Dress (front and back) by Innocent World

Another Lolita dress, designed by Innocent World is called a "Pompadour Bustle Jumper Skirt (dress)" (figure 130).[18] Its name alone connotes the Rococo reference. Pompadour refers to Jeanne Poisson (1721-1764), known as the Marquise de Pompadour, a famous mistress of French king Louis XV who had 'come to be the personification of the rococo in costume with its curving serpentine lines and riotous decoration'.[19] Accordingly, the échelle of three detachable ribbons placed vertically on the bodice of this twilled cotton dress corresponds with 'the three-dimensional ornamentation of the dress that was an essential part of the rococo'.[20] Combined with the classical rose patterns and the *robe à la française* emulated skirt, these qualities of the dress bear resemblances to the dress the Marquise wears in the famous portraits by François Boucher (figure 131 & 132).

Figure 131 Portrait of Marquise de Pompadour by François Boucher (1756)

Figure 132 The Pompadour Bustle Dress worn by reader-model Misako Aoki

[18]Innocent World official website.[http://innocent-w.jp/shopping/093709/index.html].

[19] A. Ribeiro, 'Fashion in the eighteenth Century: Some Anglo-French Comparisons', *Textile History*, Vol. 22, No. 2, 1991, p. 331. (hereafter Ribeiro, *Anglo-French*)

[20] A. Ribeiro, *Dress,* p. 140.

The back of the dress, however, is bustled. Although it was not an invention of the Victorian period[21], the bustle became a fashionable part of women's dress between 1882 and 1889.[22] Slade has argued that Japan's first attempt to incorporate European women's dress in the 1880s was unsuccessful largely due to the bustle style and its 'extreme deviation' from the body's natural shape.[23] Therefore, it is deducible that the bustle has a connotation of the late nineteenth century European dress forms in Japan.

The bustle was often paired with a long skirt, and even influenced children's dress in the late-Victorian period. From today's perspective, young girls' dress styles in this period have an air of maturity. Ewing described the dresses of young girls in Europe at the time as 'tight, cramping and devoid of youthfulness, down to the elaborate tight, buttoned boots or the even more elaborate ones made of satin and laced up over open fronts'.[24] As noted in the previous chapter, until the 1920s, an age hierarchy of female dress style in Europe was largely maintained through the length of skirts. Only very young girls would wear short skirts and skirts lengthened as the age of the wearer.[25] Thus, unlike adolescent girls' dress in 1880s Europe whose skirt would reach ankle length, the short "little girl" skirt emphasises the "infantile" qualities of this *Lolita* dress, and hence accentuates "youthfulness" or "girlishness". Needless to say, this elucidates the *kawaii* aesthetics notable in Japan.

Further significance of the "Pompadour Bustle Dress" is added by the way in which reader model Misako Aoki wears it in the volume 13 of magazine *KERA MANIACS*.[26] She is pictured wearing the dress over a white, flounced blouse named Ribbon Crown Tucked Blouse and an organdie pannier.[27] Unlike the French court dress, the *Lolita* dress has no sleeves, and wearing it over a blouse might avoid the exposure of cleavage as the décolletage would do. Wearing a pinafore over a blouse rather points to a style common after the 1930s with the introduction of gymslips. To further add to this mix of appropriation, one might argue that the silhouette of the dress *per se* is stylistically closer to 1950s American garments for girls, as immortalised by the "prom dress", than to the eighteenth century French court robe.

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[21] The *robe à la polonaise* in the 1770s with the skirt bustled at the back was considered as practical.

[22] V. Steele, *Fashion and Eroticism: Ideals of Feminine Beauty from the Victorian Era to the Jazz Age*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1985, p. 65. (hereafter Steele, *Victorian*)

[23] Slade, *History*, p. 100.

[24] E. Ewing, *History of Children's Costume*. London: B. T. Batsford Ltd. 1977. P. 96.

[25] C. Rose, *Children's Clothes since 1750*. London: B. T. Batsford Ltd. 1989, pp. 126-7.

[26] A reader model (*dokusha model*) is a semi-professional or amateur model hired by magazines in Japan.

[27] *KERA MANIACKS*, Volume 13, 2009, p. 16.

The 1950s American hooped calf-length dress is not unfamiliar in Japanese culture. As a matter of fact, it was a popular style for young women in the mid to late 1950s Japan, and had a brief revival in the late 1970s.[28]. The influence of Christian Dior's "New Look" and the popularity of such American actresses as Debbie Reynolds in the 1950s were significant. However, the *Lolita* style has almost never been described in relation to 1950s American culture, either by the brands or the wearers. Instead, the *Lolita* style is frequently correlated with historical Europe, with such descriptive terms as a princess, maiden, and ballerina.

Scholar of dance studies Judith Chazin-Bennahum once described women's romanticised view of the ballerina as that of 'an extraordinarily beautiful dream girl, an ethereal being, wearing costumes of rich fabrics and embroideries and that she would live in a gloriously romantic world'.[29] To borrow the words of Chazin-Bennahum, *Lolita* style symbolises an extraordinarily beautiful princess, adorned in dresses of delicate fabrics and lace, signalling that she would live in a privileged, dreamy world. These innovative qualities add a sense of timelessness to the dress of the Innocent World brand.

For more Victorian references, Victorian Maiden's "Rose Lace Blouse Dress" offers a long-sleeved, bell-shaped calf-length dress with tulle-lace and a tucked yoke made of cotton lawn cloth (figure 133).

Figure 133 Rose Lace Blouse Dress by Victorian Maiden

The tucked yoke and long sleeves of a blouse allude to the style of the Victorian era, particularly in the 1890s. But the outfits suggested by the brand include wearing a puff-sleeved dress over the very dress and layers of pannier under it in order to further

[28] See, for example; Across Editorial Office (ed) *Street Fashion 1945-1995*. Tokyo: Parco. 1995, pp. 68-69, p.172.
[29] J. Chazin-Bennahum, *The Lure of Perfection: Fashion and Ballet, 1780-1830*. New York and London: Routledge. 2005, p. 238.

accentuate a bell-shaped effect, thus again highlighting the style's "appropriated" quality. This does not, however, necessarily mean that the Japanese designers are unfamiliar with European dress history.[30] Rather, it indicates the degrees to which Japanese designers are able to make decisions and exercise creative control.

The *Lolita* style also manifests its cultural "mélange" condition. For instance, Apart from dresses, many of these brands also sell blouses, knee-length skirts, cardigans, T-shirts, pullovers with cute animal ears, and other more casual yet equally frilled items. Through the concept of syncretism, Jan Nederveen Pieterse articulates that a cultural mélange occurs when two religions blend. It is a fusion of religious forms in which the two religions have changed and a "third" religion has developed.[31] In the development of the *Lolita* style, the appropriated, European dress form is altered while it offers a frilly and lace, European aristocratic dress form historically non-existent in Japan, and develops a "third" style (*Lolita*). The style's saccharine girlishness can even be harmonised with feminine maturity of the bustle. It successfully adds to the European historical dress forms a shade of girlish aesthetic sense favoured in Japan, notably a *kawaii* aesthetic. These commingled qualities of European dress forms and *kawaii* aesthetics reinvent European dress forms as something novel and largely girlish. The projection of the *kawaii* aesthetic, particularly embodied by the shortened length of skirts, alludes to the fact that this cultural adoption is chosen rather than imposed. The demure aesthetics of the style can evoke a sense of docility for those who are not familiar with this fashion. In that case, it is logical to wonder whether or not this opulently ornate, girlish fashion endorses female subservience and eroticisation.

Derogatory Views on Decorative Femininity

As argued in Chapter 1, the decorative woman has been perceived as carrying negative attributes in the European history of dress since the end of the eighteenth century. This is explicated in two ways: firstly, the economic dependency of bourgeois women rendered them a property, a living index of the pecuniary strength of men, by being adorned in lavishly ornamental dresses. This has contributed to the assumption that such sartorial ornamentation was a stable signifier of female dependency and subservience.[32] Secondly, in order to attract such financially stable men, women were, it is believed, forced to rely on their physical allure, and their clothes would serve that purpose to the maximum

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[30] Kumiko Uehara, a designer of BABY, for instance, says she studied European dress history at university, and it benefits her designs (Street Mode Kenkyukai, 2007: 69).

[31] J. Nederveen Pieterse, *Globalization and Culture: Global Mélange*. Maryland: Roman & Littlefield Publishers. 2004, pp. 72-3.

[32] M. Carter, *Fashion Classics: From Carlyle to Barthes*. New York and Oxford: Berg. 2003, p. 48.

degree.[33] As a result, the decorative woman was presumed to symbolise female subservience as well as assumed to represent the source of the man's erotic pleasure. We may ask here, does the *Lolita* style's opulent use of lace, ribbons and flounces, which imposes a degree of physical restraint, then, endorse similar preconceptions? The question is made more pertinent by the dominantly girlish aesthetics of the fashion. This is because, not only feminine sartorial style but also girlish femininity itself has been perceived negatively, particularly in but not exclusively in Anglo-Western cultures.

Adolescent girls, and the connected concept of "girlhood" are frequently perceived as being associated with passivity and vulnerability. For instance, the American media tend to portray young women and adolescent girls as vulnerable beings who need adult intervention.[34] This brings to mind education scholar Diane Reay's examination of "tomboy" girls in a British primary school. She shows how, in order to claim a position of power and status, some girls adopt overtly "masculine and boyish" demeanours and "differentiate" themselves from more "girlish" or "normatively feminine" girls. This points to a general tendency found even among children in which such modes of girlish femininity are regarded as dull and unfavourable.[35] Conversely, what we can deduce from these ideas is that despite the largely constructed nature of both genders, conventional "masculinity", even if it is on the side of "hypermasculine", tends to be seen as a "natural" quality of human beings. By contrast, conventional "femininity" is seen as "gendered", and hence is "crafted". Indeed, as Drucilla Cornell has convincingly argued, the concept of "genderless" is itself often adjusted to one particular image of white, heterosexual, and "masculine". Blindly seeking and attempting to apply this concept to any individuals who do not fit into that type can, therefore, result in undermining their senses of freedom and individuality.[36]

Although this kind of political interpretation of women's dress, particularly the ornate kinds, has been challenged in recent times as I have reviewed in Chapter 1, it is nevertheless still prevalent. Sheila Jeffreys, for instance writes as recently as in 2005 that:

> …whatever changes take place in fashion there are always differences written into what women and men may wear. These differences enable the sex class of women to be distinguished from that of men and, in recent decades, turn a full

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[33] S. de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*. Translated by H. M. Parshley, 1953. Middlesex: Penguin Books. 1975, p. 543; J. Laver, 1950, cited in Carter, op.cit., p. 137.

[34] S. R. Mazzarella and N. O. Pecora, 'Girls in Crisis: Newspaper Coverage of Adolescent Girls' *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, Volume 31, No. 1, 2007, pp. 6-27.

[35] D. Reay, "Spice Girls', 'Nice Girls', 'Girlies', and 'Tomboys': gender discourses, girls' cultures and femininities in the primary classroom' *Gender and Education*, Vol.13, No 2, 2001.

[36] D. Cornell, *At the Heart of Freedom: Feminism, Sex, and Equality*. Princton: Princeton University Press. 1998, p. 16.

> one-half of the human race into toys to create sexual excitement in the other half.[37]

The ideas that assign negative attributes to "feminine" fashions, as clear indicators of the "passive gender", reinforces one facet of the theory of gender performativity.

Judith Butler is renowned for theorizing the vagueness of the gender binaries of "masculinity" and "femininity". Butler considers gender to be a collective performance that is designed primarily to sustain the legitimacy of heterosexuality. For Butler, gender is not a fact but a generalised construction, a regulatory fiction that aims to maintain the "order" in the binary frame of "gender". It thus also works to punish those who fail to perform their "gender" roles correctly.[38] This is because 'the various acts of gender create the idea of gender, and without those acts, there would be no gender at all'.[39] The conventional "masculinity" and "femininity", or the "gender reality" as Butler calls it, is therefore created through sustained and repeated social performances. As I have mentioned in the preceding chapters, it might be too extreme to deduce the whole existence of gender identity to a construction and fabrication. However, Butler's idea that (the conventional ideas of) gender are largely performative, and indeed rely on collective performance, is highly useful. This is particularly so when we consider that not every individual acts or behaves strictly according to the conventional idea of his/her gender.[40]

Bem further endorses this point. She indicates that children, and even adults, tend to distinguish gender not by individuals' actual biological gender, but how they dress or appear.[41] She points out that much of what we consider "masculine" or "feminine" is created, acted or enforced via certain gestures, activities, experiences and dress, which, when analysed, signify their performative nature. From the perspective that sees "feminine" clothes as creating and recreating a conventional, negative image of "femininity", the *Lolita* style is a reification of unfavourable female passivity and objectification. However, most of those who indulge in this romantic sartorial aesthetics, regardless of their nationality, strongly deny these assumptions.[42]

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[37] S. Jeffreys, *Beauty and Misogyny: Harmful Cultural Practices in the West*. London and New York: Routledge. 2005, p. 87.

[38] J. Butler, 'Bodily Inscriptions, Perfomative Subversions' in S. Salih and J. Butler (eds), *The Judith Butler Reader*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers. 2004 [1990], p. 114.

[39] *Ibid*., p. 114.

[40] C. Paechter, Masculine femininities/ feminine masculinities: power, identities and gender' *Gender and Education* Volume 18, Issue 3, p. 254.

[41] S. L. Bem, *The Lenses of Gender: Transforming the Debate on Sexual Inequality*, New Haven & London: Yale University Press. 1993, p. 148. (hereafter, Bem, *Lenses*)

[42] S. Dorfield, 'Brisbane 'Lolitas' change fashion landscape' *The Age*, November 5, 2010. [http://www.theage.com.au/lifestyle/fashion/brisbane-lolitas-change-fashion-landscape-20101105-17grh.html]; M. Monden, 'Transcultural Flow of Demure Aesthetics: Examining Cultural Globalisation

Being subjected to physical and verbal abuse is quite frequently discussed in relation to women dressed in the *Lolita* fashion, particularly if they are outside Japan. The concept of "Lolita", based on Vladimir Nabokov's controversial novel, and the deviant sexual connotations associated with it also casts negative shadows on *Lolita* fashion outside Japan and especially in Euro-American societies. As we have seen in Chapter 1, there is a preconception that emphatically "girlish" fashion styles like *Lolita* first and foremost operate for the erotic pleasure of male spectators. Such negative connotations associated with fashion styles like *Lolita* in Euro-American societies are explained by theorists like Merskin, who is alarmed by the increase in the eroticised Western "Lolita" representation in the American media. For them, such representations are likely to enforce sexualisation and exploitation of girls as well as infantilization of young women.[43]

Perhaps not surprisingly, the *Lolita* style has attracted its share of criticism in Japan, too. But these criticisms seem to be focused more on the flamboyant and "infantile" aesthetics of the fashion, that would often be perceived as mirroring the wearer's rejection of maturity and social "conformity" to the normative mode of "feminine" beauty. In other words, the fashion stirs criticism in Japanese society not because it embodies a sense of female subservience or "infantile" eroticisation/fetishisation, but because it signifies a form of subversion and resistance.[44] This is striking, particularly when we consider the well-documented Japanese middle-aged men's paedophilic attachment to teenage girls, known as the "Lolita Complex".[45] We might find an exegesis of this transcultural-nuance in interpreting the highly ornate dress style in the theory articulated by Davis. As he has convincingly demonstrated:

> what some combination of clothes or a certain style emphasis "means" will vary tremendously depending upon the identity of the wearer, the occasion, the place,

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through Gothic & Lolita Fashion' *New Voices*, Volume 2, 2008, pp. 21-40; M. Matsuura, *Sekai to watashi to Lolita fashion (The world, Lolita Fashion and I)*. Tokyo: Seikyu-sha. 2007.

[43] D. Merskin, 'Reviving Lolita? A Media Literacy Examination of Sexual Portrayals of Girls in Fashion Advertising' *American Behavioral Scientist* Vol. 41, No. 1, 2004. See also, M. G. Durham, *Lolita Effect:The Media Sexualization of Young Girls and What We Can do About it*. Woodstock and New York: The Overlook Press. 2008. The Euro-American *Lolita* look and *Lolita* fashion style emerged from Japan are stylistically different.

[44] For example, in her book, self-claimed *Lolita* Momo Matsuura says that what annoys her for being dressed in this fashion and walking in the streets of Japan is to be photographed without her permission. She does not mention any abuse relating to the fashion's "infantile" aesthetics and presumed sexual implications.

[45] See, for example: J. Hongo 'Child Porn Scantily Disguised as Art? Photos of preteen girls in thongs now big business', *Japan Times* 3 May, 2007, http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/nn20070503f1.html; S. Kinsella, 'What's Behind the Fetishism of Japanese School Uniforms?' *Fashion Theory*, Volume 6, Issue 2, 2002, pp.216-38; J. W. Treat, 'Yoshimoto Banana Writes Home: The Shôjo in Japanese Popular Culture.' in J. W. Treat (ed) *Contemporary Japan and Popular Culture*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press. 1996, p. 281; M. White, *The Material Child*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press. 1993, p. 133.

> the company, and even something as vague and transient as the wearer's and the viewer's moods.[46]

This means that while the signifier of a clothing style or fashion is generally believed to be unchanged, 'what is *signified* (connoted, understood, evoked, alluded to, or expressed) is initially at least, strikingly different for different publics, audiences, and social groupings'. This is because it 'is highly differentiated in terms of taste, social identity, and person's access to the symbolic wares of a society'.[47] Hedetoft has moreover demonstrated, in his cross-cultural readings of Hollywood cinema, that different interpretations of culture can occur trans-nationally.[48] Indeed, this point is notable in the process of cultural interaction as '…mixing carries different meanings in different cultural settings'.[49]

It is significant that the wide circulation of European women's dress forms in Japan started with the Empire Look in the early 1900s. For many women in that time and place, such characteristics as bobbed hair carried a sense of (sexual) liberation from the old, pre-modern "Japanese" feminine aesthetic regimes.[50] In other words, the idea that linked decorative femininity and passivity was not inscribed historically in Japanese culture, and European women's dresses might have had a connotation of liberty and independence. Thus, while in one culture the ornate girlish dress style might carry a persistent connotation of female objectification, in another, it might signify and reify '[a]bstinence, girlishness, and virginity' or independence and freedom.[51]

The transcultural difference in the mode of representing girlish femininity is also present in American and Japanese popular cultures. Anthropologist Anne Allison points out that the assumption of a "masculine" demeanour is required not only for male heroes but also for female heroes in American cultural texts. According to her:

> the preferred model of superheroism (in both fantasy and "real" realms) remains strongly masculine in the United States and strongly biased against a female hero, particularly one who behaves in a feminine or girlie manner. There is also

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[46] F. Davis, *Fashion, Culture, and Identity*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press. 1992, p. 8.

[47] *Ibid.*, p. 8.

[48] U. Hedetoft, 'Contemporary Cinema: Between cultural globalisation and national interpretation' in M. Hjort and S. Mackenzie (eds.), *Cinema and Nation.* London: Routledge. 2000, p. 279.

[49] Nederveen Pieterse, *op.cit.*, p. 53.

[50] Slade, *History*., p. 125.

[51] M. Suzuki, in T. Godoy. *Style Deficient Disorder: Harajuku Street Fashion Tokyo*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books. 2007, p. 135.

an implicit message that even if a superhero is a girl, she is expected to act, and even look, like a boy.[52]

In contrast, "feminine", "girlie" or "cute" appearances are not necessarily incompatible with independent strong women in Japanese popular culture.[53] Allison's interpretation of the Japanese animated series *Sailor Moon*, for example, illustrates that in contrast to the singular, masculine model of American heroism, 'there are two different hero models operating, one male and one female' in Japanese culture.[54] It is my belief that Tetsuya Nakashima's film *Kamikaze Girls* and its portrayal of an adolescent girl who is almost totally dressed in *Lolita* fashion offer a visual rendition of this point.[55] Such a representation, it is argued, can serve as a largely positive and favourable alternative to the monolithic idea that perceives girlish/feminine appearances as endorsing passive objectification. I examine this film in the next section in order to substantiate this point.[56]

Figure 134 An image from *Kamikaze Girls*

[52] A. Allison, 'Sailor Moon: Japanese Superheroes for Global Girls' in T. J. Craig (ed), *Japan Pop!* New York: M.E. Sharpe. 2000 p. 275.

[53] See, for example, Allison, *op.cit.*; S. J. Napier, 'Vampires, Psychic Girls, Flying Women and sailor Scouts: Four faces of the young female in Japanese popular culture' in D. P. Martinez, (ed) *The World of Japanese Popular Culture*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1998, pp. 91-109.

[54] Allison, *op. cit.*, p. 275.

[55] For some participants of the *Lolita* fashion, the film and Takemoto's original novel do not offer an accurate portrayal of the fashion. Some of them are also critical of these texts' stereotypical representation of a young woman who is devoted to the *Lolita* fashion (see, for example; Matsuura, *op.cit.*, pp. 14-5). It seems that the film has been received more favourably by *Lolitas* outside Japan. When VIZ Media, an American entertainment company specialised in distributing *anime* DVDs and *manga* in North America, announced the release dates of the film, and the translated version of the novel in 2005, it attracted positive comments from the participants of The EGL Community, an English-speaking online community for *Lolita* fashion lovers.

[56] In this chapter, I focus mainly on the film version of *Kamikaze Girls* because of its intricate position between mainstream and cult films. I believe the film is a significant example of a cult-theme brought into the mainstream cultural arena, and has acquired both popularity and recognition.

Wardrobes of Kamikaze Girls

Mapping Kamikaze Girls

Tetsuya Nakashima's *Shimotsuma Monogatari* (Kamikaze Girls, 2004) is a film adaptation of Novala Takemoto's novel of the same title (2002), which has sold more than 130,000 copies in Japan alone.[57] The film was a success at the box office and has established a somewhat cult status outside Japan. The story of the film can be minimally summarised in the following way. Momoko Ryūgasaki (played by pop idol and actress Kyoko Fukada) is a seventeen-year-old schoolgirl, and a daughter of a failed *yakuza* and bar hostess. Although she lives in the rural Ibaraki Prefecture with her good-for-nothing father and his mother, Momoko dresses in the clothing of Baby, The Stars Shine Bright.[58] She identifies with French Rococo culture, and despite the curious eyes of the locals, lives according to her Rococo aesthetics (e.g. she refuses to ride a bicycle simply because it is against her aesthetic principles, and she carries a parasol whenever she is outside in order to avoid sunburn). One day, after falling into a financial crisis that prevents her from purchasing expensive BABY garments, she decides to sell off the cheap and illegal imitations of Versace goods her father had produced earlier. Her advertisement attracts the attention of Ichigo Shirayuri (played by model Anna Tsuchiya), a seventeen-year-old student and a member of an all-girls bikie gang (*yankee*) "the Ponytails".[59] Seemingly situated almost at the other end of *Lolita* fashion, *yankee* style is generally known for its brazen gaudiness. Describing it as elegant and bizarre, Steele gives a neat summary of the style as follows:

> …the style combines elements from working-class clothing, such as construction workers' jackets and overalls (often dyed red, purple, or pink), together with elements of gangster (*yakuza*) subculture, modified school uniforms, and American punk, surfer, and rock-and roll gear.[60]

Despite the fact that these two girls seem to be the exact opposite in character and in sartorial taste, they somehow get closer as they spend time together, and embark on a journey to find a legendary embroiderer in Daikanyama, in order to ask him to stitch a design on Ichigo's bikie garment.[61]

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[57] D. McNeill, 'NOVALA TAKEMOTO: Lolitas' bard is sitting pretty' *Japan Times*, November 21, 2004. [http://search.japantimes.co.jp/print/fl20041121x4.html]

[58] The Ibaraki Prefecture is located in the northeast of the Kantō region on Honshū island.

[59] As Ikuya Satō (1991:108) notes, the origin of the word *yankee*, which is used to describe delinquent youth in Japanese culture, is unknown, and a certain synonymity between a *yankee* and a *bōsōzoku* (bikie gang) is sometimes assumed. That is the case in *Kamikaze Girls*.

[60] Steele, *Japan*, p. 29.

[61] Daikanyama is an area in the Shibuya district, Tokyo. It is known for luxurious boutiques, pastries and leafy, relaxing environment.

Dress functions in *Kamikaze Girls* as much more than a mere visual embellishment of the narrative. As Hughes notes, dress is only one of the ways to approach a text.[62] Yet, fashion in fictional texts is like a 'language' that might 'illuminate the structure of that text, its values, its meanings or its symbolic pattern'.[63] This is pertinent to *Kamikaze Girls*. From the very beginning, fashion propels the narrative. Momoko's father produces and sells cheap, "knock-off" merchandise, which bears the misspelled name of Versach, thus incurring the family's financial crisis and subsequent retirement to rural Shimotsuma. We learn that Momoko was born and raised in the city of Amagasaki, which the film calls the "track suits paradise (*jāji tengoku*)".[64] The hideously made "Versach" garments introduce Momoko and Ichigo, who are initially, mutually surprised by the former's out-of-date *sukeban* (delinquent girl) sartorial style and the latter's frilly, "infantile" fashion. Embroidery brings the two heroines closer; Ichigo's determination to find a legendary embroiderer in Daikanyama forces Momoko to spend time with her, while their friendship seriously develops when Ichigo offers to Momoko to embroider the design on Ichigo's garment instead.[65] Momoko becomes anxious after being asked by the owner of BABY to embroider a design on a white lace *Lolita* dress. She reveals her vulnerability, only to be encouraged by Ichigo in a strong, loud voice. Manifestly, clothing functions as an essential driving force of the narrative in *Kamikaze Girls*. In order to examine the significant meanings of *Lolita* fashion in this film, it is useful first to observe what roles dress in general plays in it, and how it is connected to the identity and ideology of the wearer.

Dress and Identity

Do the clothes that Momoko and Ichigo don represent their "true identities" or do they instead offer the two protagonists a means to play with their identities? In the era of postmodern-thinking, we tend to assume that identity is a masquerade and has an essentially instable and fragmented nature. This means that rather than being inherent, 'one's identity is defined in terms of the image that one creates through one's

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[62] Hughes, *op.cit.*, p. 5.

[63] *Ibid.*, p. 2, 6.

[64] Amagasaki is a Japanese industrial city located in the Hyōgo Prefecture, the southern-central region of the main island.

[65] One of the notable characteristics of *bōsōzoku* costumes is *tokkōfuku*, a jacket with long hems upon which 'A group name is usually sewn with gold or silver thread on the backs of *tokkōfuku* jackets. It may also be stitched into the upper sleeve or onto the upper left pocket' (Satō, 1991:63). Such embroidery often used 'complicated Chinese characters with multiple meanings, much as American fraternity boys use Greek letters to create a sense of mystery and exclusivity' (Steele, 2010: 30). Steele (2010:29) argues that 'their "outrageous paraphernalia" is intended primarily to enhance their tough image'[65].

consumption of goods, including the clothes one wears'.[66] Negrin argues that this is not an entirely accurate reading because '[r]ather than just being about the creation of a "look", the way one adorns oneself should reflect one's values and beliefs'.[67] In other words, one's style of appearance refers to 'the ideology of the wearer'.[68] Somewhat more cautiously, Wilson writes that:

> Dress could play a part, for example, either to glue the false identity together on the surface or to lend a theatrical and playacting aspect to the hallucinatory experience of the contemporary world…Either way, we may still understand dress as one tool in the creation of identities.[69]

Here she seems to suggest that dress and demeanours may allow us to assume a false or disguised identity. However, even our intention to don particular garments in order to disguise or adopt a false identity itself is a part of our identity. This is because it reflects, and is intertwined with our desires and wills. Thus, I argue that ultimately, dress is inextricable from our inner "self". Likewise, *Kamikaze Girls* predominantly endorses the idea of fashion/appearance as carrying 'the ideology of the wearer'. For example, in a sequence during their first encounter, Momoko is dressed up for a meeting with a new person, Ichigo. Beginning with a red velvet headdress trimmed with white lace, roses, and red ribbons, she is attired in BABY's red velvet "Elizabeth" dress with white flounce sleeves. Its stomacher-like bodice has a lace and flounced yoke with the échelle of a red ribbon and white lace roses, while the bell-shaped calf-length skirt has five tiers of white lace, revealing a pair of frilly high socks (figure 135).

Figure 135

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[66] L. Negrin, 'The Self as Image A Critical Appraisal of Postmodern Theories of Fashion' *Theory, Culture & Society*, Volume 16, No. 3, 1999, p. 111. (hereafter, Negrin, *Image*)

[67] L. Negrin, *Appearance and identity: fashioning the body in postmodernity*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 2008, p. 30. (hereafter Negrin, *Appearance*)

[68] *Ibid*., p. 31.

[69] E. Wilson, 'Fashion and Postmodern Body' in J. Ash and E. Wilson (eds) *Chic Thrills: A Fashion Reader*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press. 1992, pp. 8-9. (Hereafter, Wilson, *Postmodern*)

Ichigo surprises Momoko with her school uniform worn in a *démodé sukeban* style. With a short black jacket, which has rolled-up sleeves revealing a leopard-patterned lining, Ichigo's *sukeban* look consists of a white shirt with a loosely-knotted black tie, a very long black pleated skirt reaching to ankle level, kitsch red sunglasses and heavy make-up with particular attention to her drawn eyebrows (figure 136).[70]

Figure 136

Ichigo is in turn surprised by learning that a girl who glitters with lace and ribbons is in fact seventeen-years-old, the same age as herself, saying :'I figured only a child would wear that kind of frilly dress. But I shouldn't judge by appearance'. Momoko gently yet decidedly replies: 'But appearance says everything', reinforcing the idea that she conceives fashion/dress as reflective of identity.

Momoko does almost anything to continue to purchase her favourite BABY items, even after falling into financial crisis. This alone indicates her perception of *Lolita* fashion (and more precisely Baby, The Stars Shine Bright garments) as something much more than merely inessential, consumable pieces of cloth detached from her identity or the self. As for Ichigo, her purple *tokkofuku* is represented as almost synonymous with her soul. In the sequence where Momoko offers to embroider a design on Ichigo's bikie garment after they had a quarrel, Ichigo accepts the offer, giving Momoko her garment. When Momoko asks Ichigo: 'Can you really trust me?', Ichigo, sitting astride her scooter in the rain, seriously replies: 'To entrust your bikie garment to someone means to entrust your soul to that person'.

Unlike their school peers, and despite their visible sartorial differences, BABY and *yankee* garments might also function as signifiers of the similarities between Momoko and Ichigo in *Kamikaze Girls*. Ichigo, like Momoko, has light brown hair with rather embellished makeup, and rides a pink scooter, all of which undoubtedly render her comparable to Momoko despite their clearly different sartorial preferences. Their

[70] According to Ikuya Satō (1991:110), heavy makeup, including "terribly sharply" drawn eyebrows and black rouge on their lips, bleached hair, and gaudiness are typical characteristics of female *yankee* style, the qualities which Ichigo endorses in the film.

commonalities are most evinced in a sequence where the two girls are seating face to face in "Forest of the Aristocrats", a local tearoom. Momoko's demure posture, illuminated by her pale pink classical dress with frilled yoke and machine brocaded ribbon-type textile, her matching straw-hat adorned with a gauzy ribbon and rose corsages are strikingly juxtaposed with Ichigo's casual posture. Ichigo's deportment corresponds well with her hip-hop-meets-*yankee* fashion consisting of a loose, red track suit, a matching hooded sweatshirt, and a black singlet. Despite these sartorial differences, the two girls are equally shown in a medium shot, which, significantly, implies their equality (figure 137). In this sense, as Simmel stated in *The Philosophy of Fashion*, their fashion 'establishes uniformity within itself, as well as differentiation from outsiders'.[71]

Figure 137

It is useful to compare this sequence to Terry Zwigoff's film adaptation of Daniel Clowes's comic book *Ghost World* (1997). The film (2001) involves the friendship of two teenage girls, Enid and Rebecca. The two young women are originally unified by their shared sarcasm, comparatively rebellious nature, and dissatisfying high-school lives. But Rebecca's conservatively conventional clothing style foretells her easy integration into society, contrasting with Enid's individualistic fashion and her subsequent struggle and failure in terms of social integration. Thus, as the differences in their sartorial styles show, they are not so similar or close, and perhaps inevitably, their friendship is threatened. In contrast, Momoko's strong sense of independence impresses Ichigo, while Momoko begins to understand and respect Ichigo as an individual who strictly follows her own "principles". Both heroines express their stringent loyalty to their philosophies, and hence their individuality through the styles of (rather) minor subcultures. This very practice, however, provides a sense of commonality, which draws the two girls visibly if moderately

[71] G. Simmel, 'The Philosophy of Fashion' Trans. K. H. Wolff in D. Frisby and M. Featherstone (eds) *Simmel on Culture*. London: SAGE Publications. 1997 [1905] p. 191.

closer.

If clothes are interrelated with identities in *Kamikaze Girls*, what is the significance of the frilly and lace *Lolita* dress that Momoko is so fervently captivated by? As we have seen earlier in this chapter, considering the functionalist analysis of dress, the emphasised girlishness and the frilly and lace ornamentation of *Lolita* fashion might suggest it endorses a passive, restricted girlish femininity. Ichigo's comparatively aggressive demeanour and rather epicene, loose-fitted silhouette of the *yankee* garments further accentuate the sweetness and girlish femininity of the *Lolita* fashion Momoko wears. Is Momoko a passive heroine who lacks a sense of autonomy/agency? Earlier in the film, Momoko claims that: 'I've got a puny grip, I can't run fast or swim. But for the aesthetics of the rococo, the more delicate a girl becomes, the higher her value increases'. This principle echoes Veblen's perception of the "Leisure Class" in which '[t]he more the style and construction of a person's clothes indicates a complete unsuitability for work…the greater would be "reputability" of their wearer'.[72] Carter notes that for Veblen, women's dress 'goes even farther in the way of demonstrating the wearer's abstinence from productive employment'.[73] On one level, the *Lolita* fashion in which Momoko is thoroughly attired is a tailor-made embodiment of Veblen's philosophy of women's dress. What makes the film and its portrayal of Momoko subversive of such a political interpretation can be explained in two ways. Firstly, Momoko's perception of Rococo principles is largely a romanticised version of aristocratic aesthetics, and secondly, these do not pose any serious restriction of her sense of activity.

Sugary Reveries of the Rococo: The Rococo Aesthetics of Momoko

According to Momoko's narrating voice-over, her rococo aesthetics teach one that life is like candy, and that one should immerse oneself in a world of sweet dreams. For instance, Momoko explains that aristocratic ladies of the Rococo period in eighteenth century France had their waists laced as tightly as possible solely for aesthetic purposes. This would be regarded as a virtue even when they fainted due to dyspnea or suffocation. This almost "idiotic" prioritisation of aesthetics and apparent lack of functionality accords with *Lolita* fashion, although *Lolita* fashion displays some practical reinvention of the period costumes.[74] In fairness, we need to acknowledge that Momoko's understanding of the

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[72] Carter, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

[73] *Ibid.*, p. 48.

[74] The knee-length dress of fabrics such as cotton with the pannier can be lighter and less restrictive than the long, full velvet or wool dress with a heavier crinoline. This is important since the fashion's elaborate qualities can impede the movement of the wearer. The fashion's avoidance of a more flexible, light and hence more practical structure to craft and sustain the bell-shape, like plastic hoops as implemented in Vivien Westwood's famous Mini-Crini skirts (1987) is worthy of attention. The deployment of pannier can

Rococo culture is a romanticised version of the cultural movement. 'The most luxurious and elegant' period as Momoko describes, the Rococo movement became notable in France in the 1730s, fully bloomed in the 1740s and began to wilt with the flowering of the neo-classical movement in the late 1760s. Ribeiro remarks that the Rococo is the 'most "feminine" period in the history of dress'[75] and 'was a princely and urban art form, which demonstrated a kind of opulence in taste sympathetic to absolute rule'.[76] According to Ribeiro:

> It was a style characterised by wit and fantasy, by playful ornamentation, asymmetry and three-dimensional decoration…In terms of costume, the new style exemplified every fantasy about the essence of the feminine; everything undulates and curves, from the tightly curled hairstyles (a popular style was named *tête de mouton*, like a sheep's fleece) decorated with a tiny, frivolous headdress called *pompon* (a few flowers, a scrap of lace, a glittering *tremblant* jewelled ornament which shivered as the wearer moved) to the dress itself, usually a *sacque* or a robe *à la française* with floating back drapery, and trimmed with ribbons and flowers in serpentine curves. With the aid of small hoops or hip pads, the silhouette formed a graceful pyramid.[77]

Thus, the qualities of the Rococo movement can be summarised more or less as "feminine", artificial, and elegant, all of which correspond well with Momoko's understanding of Rococo aesthetics. Unquestionably, however, not only the aristocrats in the eighteenth century France enjoyed the blessing of the Rococo movement. Although the movement was most strongly identified with the court (particularly with the mistresses of Louis XV, Madame de Pompadour and Madame Du Barry, to be followed in the next reign by the iconic Marie Antoinette), Steele has demonstrated that the influences and presence of urban society were also notable in the Rococo movement.[78] Indeed, according to historian Stephen Jones, 'not only the aristocracy, but the prosperity of the upper middle classes also made them ideal patrons of the arts'.[79] How did the Rococo dresses differ from the dresses of peasant women? Social and cultural historian Daniel Roche's study of popular dress in eighteenth-century Paris gives a picture of what the labouring-class or peasant women in 1770 would have worn. According to him, women in this class were dressed in a fairly uniform way, many of them:

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create more opulent, aristocratic feel than the plastic hoop. For aesthetic reasons, the layers of cotton tulle or nylon sheer bear a striking resemblance to a ballerina's bell-shaped classic tutu.

[75] Ribeiro, *Dress*, p. 165.

[76] *Ibid.*, p. 136.

[77] *Ibid.*, p. 53.

[78] Steele, *Paris*, pp. 24-25

[79] S. Jones, *The Eighteenth Century*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1985, p. 17.

> …wore petticoats (or skirts, for the distinction between *jupon* and *jupe* is not always clear) loose smock and shirt; a corset indicated the superior ways of servants, girls working in the world of fashion, or the wives of good artisants. There were camisoles, some slightly superior low-cut dresses, a few mantlets, not many cloaks, but they all wore stockings, a good number of checked aprons, and the pairs of pockets essential to good housewives.[80]

Thus, Momoko's idea of France of the Rococo period as an opulently romantic, aristocratic aesthetic comes only from the limited and idealised space of the aristocracy of the period. Further, superficiality at least, it seems that Momoko's own version of Rococo aesthetics both enhances and reinforces the assumed correlation between women's ornate dress and their imposed subservience.

However, what is significant about *Kamikaze Girls* is that Momoko's dress does not operate to render her submissive or the object of the male gaze. I argue that three main factors contribute to this significance: firstly, the independence in the characterisation of the heroine, secondly, the almost absence of romance in the narrative and the subsequent lack of objectifying male gaze, and thirdly, Momoko's abilities to travel between both established "masculine" and "feminine" activities effortlessly without undergoing any sartorial metamorphosis. I examine these factors below, beginning with the independent personality of Momoko. As we have seen, one of the points that assigns a negative attribute to elaborate "feminine" fashion is that such a fashion signifies female restriction. But despite the *Lolita* fashion's signified impracticability and demure girlishness, Momoko's activities are neither fully restricted nor impeded.[81] On the contrary, Momoko demonstrates a considerably independent personality.

Three Key Facets of Kamikaze Girls

A Curious Case of Individuality

As the director Tetsuya Nakashima himself comments, Momoko has achieved a status of "independence".[82] As described by Ichigo, 'Momoko always stands up for herself. She follows only her own rules'. In one scene she even proclaims that 'Humans are alone. We are born alone, think alone, and die alone. If we can't live alone…then I don't want to be a human. I'd rather be a water flea. It's far more independent than us humans who are dependent'. According to this proclamation, her sense of independence is well observed in the school lunch sequence, where we see Momoko having her lunch alone in the

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[80] D. Roche, 'Popular Dress' in P. McNeil (ed) *Fashion: Critical and Primary Souces the Eighteenth Century*. Oxford and New York: Berg. 2009, p. 90.

[81] As noted earlier in this chapter, Fukada writes that she did not find the fashion either too heavy or too restricting while filming the film.

[82] *Kamikaze Girls* US Official Site. [www.kamikazegirls.net/interviews.html]

classroom. First and foremost, Momoko is visually distinct from her peers. In the medium close shot, she faces the window whereas her classmates are having their lunch in groups, portrayed in the long shot behind Momoko. Her blondish ringlets, delicate makeup, and even her pink heart-shaped lunchbox filled with colourful sweets mark her "difference" from the uniformly black haired, simple-looking, and thus more conservative classmates (figure 138).

Figure 138

Since Momoko is presented in contrast to her classmates, the film's intention is clearly to affirm her "alienation". This also positively highlights her independent mentality, as she is able to stand alone if necessary, in order to live by her own values and judgements.

Momoko's sense of independence and individuality does not originate from her actual rejection of conformity, but predominantly from her aesthetic principles. When Ichigo attempts to persuade Momoko to join her bikie gang, Momoko, refusing decidedly, states that 'I won't be a *yankee*, ride a bike, get in a fight or be in a group, and I won't be shedding this [*Lolita*] dress' because 'it [the *yankee*] just looks tasteless'. This implies that her activities, including her sense of individuality and independence, are largely predicated on her own aesthetic principles. Unlike their middle-class American counterparts, the two high school girls in *Kamikaze Girls* do not, as a consequence of acquiring their individual identities, win acclaim or social popularity among their peers.[83] Their individuality does not, therefore, operate to integrate them into society. This is significant because, in contrast to the conventional "girl" film genre of Hollywood cinema as analysed by Driscoll, *Kamikaze Girls* does not impose the necessity of conformity on the audience.[84] Rather, it affirms "difference" without social popularity and acceptance as its justification.

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[83] The protagonists in American suburban public high-school films, for example, attain social recognition as a result of the demonstration of their individual quality. See, for example; R. C. Bulman, *Hollywood Goes to High School: Cinema, Schools, and American Culture*, New York: Worth Publishing. 2005, pp.1-15, 145-161.
[84] For the girl film genre in Hollywood and social integration, see; C. Driscoll, *Girls: feminine adolescence in popular culture and cultural theory*, New York: Columbia University Press. 2002, pp.203-234.

Momoko's individuality and independence is, however, not as flawless as it appears. Towards the climax of the film, she reveals her weakness and vulnerability, seeking encouragement from others (notably Ichigo) rather than handling her anxieties by herself. It is possible to interpret Momoko's adherence to *Lolita* fashion as a symbol of both her independence and vulnerability. Director Nakashima, for instance, notes that although Momoko rigorously follows her *Lolita* way of life, her strict independence can also be interpreted as her "iron armour" that hides and protects her vulnerable inner self.[85] In other words, she might immerse herself in the *Lolita* style and strictly follow her romanticised Rococo principles in order to avoid being hurt by interacting with other individuals. Indeed, she (comically) reveals that: 'Ideally, I would have been born in France of the Rococo period', which might indicate her dissatisfaction with and isolation from the mainstream way of life in her own society. In this interpretation, Momoko's adherence to the fashion style (and hence her "conformity" to a (minority) fashion trend) symbolises both her independence and her vulnerability. This intricacy manifested through the character of Momoko gainsays the image of dependent women who are visually opulent trophies of their male breadwinners. Her independent status is further highlighted by the almost entire absence of romantic narrative in the film. This is significant because the lack of romantic narrative alludes to the conclusion that Momoko's immaculately crafted "look" does not operate primarily for the male gaze.

Fashion Dolls in Action: Female Figures Propelling the Narrative

Kamikaze Girls challenges a common conception that youthful romance is an essential aspect of culture concerning adolescent girls. The combination of girls and romance is often regarded as a quintessence in girl cultures, let alone films.[86] Romantic heterosexual elements in *Kamikaze Girls* are, in contrast, largely absent. The only romantic element that involves the two protagonists is the episode of Ichigo's first love.[87] The comical visual elements of Ryūji (Sadao Abe), Ichigo's romantic interest, prevent him from being perceived as an attractive male character in a traditional sense by the audience. On the contrary, those elements trivialise the romantic element in the film, with the exception of

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[85] T. Nakashima, 'Cinema' in *MEN'S NON-NO* June 2006, P. 147.

[86] See, for example; C. Driscoll, *Girls: feminine adolescence in popular culture and cultural theory*, New York: Columbia University Press. 2002; G. Fournier,*Thelma & Louise and Women in Hollywood*, Jefferson: McFarland & Company. 2007, p. 375-6.

[87] When the two girls are accused of cheating at a local "pachinko" parlour, a young yakuza called "Unicorn" Ryūji comes to their rescue. After meeting him for the second time, Ichigo falls in love with him. Traditionally, physical attractiveness in the role of Ryūji would be assumed and emphasised, as he is supposed to be a cool loner who leaves as soon as he rescues the girls when they are in trouble. Contrary to the original novel's depiction of Ryūji, he is portrayed (intentionally) as very comical if not ridiculous in the film. This is via visual elements such as his fashion sense and especially his highly exaggerated "rockabilly" hairstyle.

the sequence where Ichigo cries after learning that he is in fact the fiancé of Akimi, the respected leader of Ichigo's bikie gang. This sequence in turn highlights the bond between Momoko and Ichigo. From this moment, Momoko begins to understand and respect Ichigo as an individual who strictly follows her own "principles" such as "girls shouldn't cry in front of anybody".

Like Ridley Scott's renowned film *Thelma and Louise* (1991), the activities of the two protagonists are predicated almost entirely on their mutual friendship and personal desires in *Kamikaze Girls*. Significantly, this endorses the point made by Merry White in her cross-cultural study of teenagers in the United States and Japan. She argues that at any age, Japanese tend to find emotional stability in a range of more "permanent" relationships than sexual relationships, such as friendships and group memberships, than Americans are believed to do.[88] In contrast to the portrayal of Ryūji, Ichigo frequently engages her status as a "romantic" hero. Although neither intelligent nor clever, Ichigo is portrayed as violent, rough, ardent, straightforward, masculine, and loyal. Her habits of spitting and head butting are unquestionably associated with men and conventional "masculinity". Ichigo also comes to Momoko's rescue when she is in trouble, first when she faints with bliss after meeting her "god" Isobe (figure 139), and more significantly, when Momoko is troubled by Isobe's request to stitch a rose pattern on his latest product sample.

Figure 139

Frustrated and anxious, Momoko calls Ichigo, saying: 'I want to see you, Ichigo'. Ichigo, in reply, says with a smile: 'where are you now? I'd go anywhere for you'. In this scene, Momoko resembles a typical damsel-in-distress who calls a hero for her rescue, whereas Ichigo resembles a romantic hero who will offer her the help and encouragement she needs. The film's celebration of female camaraderie in these scenes might carry different connotations for certain groups of lesbian, heterosexual female, or heterosexual male

[88] White, *op.cit.*, p.194.

audiences. Although such a reading is not completely absent, an analysis of the film as a lesbian romance does not seem to be mainstream. I believe this is predicated largely on the film's rather unsentimental portrayal of the female friendship, combined with its avoidance of (Momoko's) misandrist attitudes, which are present in the original novel, and the integrated nature of "female friendship" in Japanese popular culture. The original novel by Novala Takemoto, on the other hand, arguably has stronger homosexual tones, to which I refer later in the chapter. It may be argued that the relative absence of heterosexual romance in *Kamikaze Girls*, just like the Japanese music videos analysed in Chapter 4, exonerates the two protagonists from obvious eroticisation.

Momoko and Ichigo are the ones who are in charge of controlling and propelling the narrative, and they are the ones with whom the audience is most likely to identify. Applying Mulvey's famous theory of the gaze, this enables the (female) audience to engage with Momoko and Ichigo in the egolibido way –taking pleasures by empathizing with the protagonists in the film. In addition, since the two protagonists are young women, the female audience is not likely to be required to be involved in the process of "masculinisation" in order to derive pleasures from empathizing with the protagonists. Thus, *Kamikaze Girls* refuses to allow Momoko and Ichigo to become objects of the camera's traditionally male gaze.

In contrast to Simone de Beauvoir's contention that women's preoccupation with fashion and appearance symbolised their enslavement by the objectifying male gaze, Momoko is absolutely portrayed as not preoccupied with attracting the gaze of men.[89] It is useful here to recall the work of Samantha Holland, which I have referred to in Chapter 1. Holland's female interviewees demonstrated their preference for the "evil" queen over the fairy-tale princess such as Snow White. This is because of the assumed passivity ascribed to the characterization of the princess.[90] If the apparent compliance of the princess is due to her role as a damsel-in-distress waiting for her "prince on the white horse" to rescue and marry her, this creates a sense that the connotation of the "princess" in our contemporary imagination of the fairy-tale is only complete when it is paired up with the prince. In other words, the identity of the princess is defined and emphasised through her position as the object of the romantic affection of the prince. As a result, the princess cannot exist without the prince, and hence her identity becomes considerably dependent.

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[89] Beauvoir, *op.cit.*, p. 543. The original novel portrays Momoko's dislike of boys and men as almost "pathological" level. This point is made clear in Mackie's analysis of the novel (2010). In the film this part is almost omitted completely.

[90] S. Holland, *Alternative Femininities: Body, Age and Identity*. Oxford and New York: Berg. 2004, p. 58.

By contrast, Momoko's aspiration, and I believe this is shared by many of those who actually dress in this style, to appear and live like a Rococo princess is largely constructed by the imagery of the princess itself, not by her position achieved through her fairy-tale marriage to the prince. This point is reinforced by how the figure of Marie Antoinette of France, who has been a favourite icon of the *Lolita* culture, is represented in Japanese girls' culture, especially in Riyoko Ikeda's *The Rose of Versailles*, which undoubtedly has contributed to the popularity of the tragic French queen in Japan. Readers of the comic books would notice that Ikeda portrays young Marie Antoinette as a girlish, sympathetic, mischievous yet dignified born-princess, to whom the marriage (to the dauphin/prince) means not so much the elevation of her social status, but rather a "setting" to glamourise her tragic image as a "fallen princess" who comes to struggle between her duty and true love.[91] Here the importance lies in the fact that Marie Antoinette was born an Archduchess and a princess, whose privileged social origin is further highlighted by her confrontation with Madame du Barry, a woman who climbed the social ladder from position of illegitimate daughter of a seamstress to the last *Maîtresse-en-titre* of King Louis XV.

It is not to say that for those who dress in the *Lolita* style, romance is unnecessary. But what is significant is their apparent separation of the imagination of the princess from the romantic object of the prince. For this reason, the princess and the qualities of extravagantly opulent girlish aesthetics associated with her are given senses of independence and autonomy. This renders the theories of Smith and Steele that decorative feminine dresses (in their cases nineteenth century Europe) would often reflect the choices and autonomy of the wearers considerably more convincing. These dresses are therefore not necessarily always read as symbolic of female oppression.

Importantly, Momoko's *Lolita* fashion itself may be operating against eroticisation. As Mackie argues of *Lolita* fashion:

> It could also be commented that the frills and decoration actually draw attention away from the body, obscuring rather than accentuating the shape of the body, and making the clothes into an especially dense border between the body and the outside world.[92]

Moreover, the *Lolita* fashion might be 'deliberately non-sexualized' and, as Mackie articulates, operates to repel, rather than to serve the male gaze in the original novel.[93]

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[91] R. Ikeda, *Versailles no bara (The Rose of Versailles)*, Volumes 1, Tokyo: Shūei-sha.1994 [1972-3].

[92] Mackie, *Bricolage*.

[93] V. Mackie, 'Reading Lolita in Japan' in T. Aoyama and B. Hartley (eds) *Girl Reading Girl in Japan*. London and New York: Routledge. 2010, p. 189. (hereafter, Mackie, *Lolita*)

This idea that ornate feminine dress diminishes eroticism is also applicable to films. As film studies scholar Stella Bruzzi argues of Jean Paul Gaultier's costumes in Pedro Almodóvar's *Kika* (1993), elaborate feminine fashion in cinema can "diminish" heterosexual allure and sexual desirability of the wearer. This is because 'the more sensational clothes become, the less they signify the beauty and desirability of…the female characters who wear them. This contravenes directly the traditional interpretation of adornment as something which accentuates and complements the feminine'.[94] According to these logics, clothes in the film, let alone Momoko's highly ornate dresses, are not 'dictated by the fundamental desires of the opposite sex' as Laver contended.[95]

It is, however, also possible to read the *Lolita* dress in a different, almost opposite way. Clothes can sexualise the body of the wearer, for instance, not only by revealing but also by hiding the body, and hence adding a sense of mystery.[96] Although contemporary Japanese culture locates sexuality in the body, as I mentioned in Chapter 2, nudity has not been important in the history of Japanese aesthetics. Traditionally, the nape (*unaji*) was an anatomical part of woman's body that exuded sensuality to the highest degree. The kimono silhouette focused attention on the neck by wrapping the body and making a flat, straight look while de-emphasizing other body parts such as the breasts, waist, and limbs.[97] According to this logic, putting intricate layers between the gaze and the object hardly draws attention "away" from the object, because if that object is understood as "hidden" – it might merely serve as a promise, or titillation. Considering these cultural complexities, I believe it is safe to contend that the ornate, girlish fashion in *Kamikaze Girls* is not a device to *intentionally* render the wearer an exclusive object of the male gaze although some viewers might find the fashion, or more precisely the image of Fukada in the *Lolita* dress, to be erotically charged.

The romantic chemistry between the two female protagonists in this film, with Ichigo's apparent assumption of the "masculine" role, displays a distinct influence of Japanese "shōjo" novels, which can be traced back to the early 1900s.[98] It is worthwhile to observe this tradition in the present setting. This is because the film's modern take of this

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[94] S. Bruzzi, *Undressing Cinema: clothing and identity in the movies*. London and New York: Routledge. 1997, p. 14.

[95] J. Laver (1950), cited in Carter, *op.cit.*, p. 137.

[96] Slade, *op.cit.*, pp. 115-6.

[97] K. Cherry, *Womansword: What Japanese Words Say about Women*. Tokyo: Kodansha International. 1987,p. 21; L. Miller, *Beauty Up: Exploring Contemporary Japanese Body Aesthetics*. Berckley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press. 2006, p. 78.

[98] This tradition of romantic friendship between girls can be observed in *Kamikaze Girls*. The fact that Novala Takemoto, author of the original novel, is said to be a fan of Yoshiya enforces this idea. For example, his first novel *Missin'* (2000) involves a heroine who fantasises the literature of Yoshiya and the girl-girl relationships in her novels.

tradition sometimes inverts, and even subverts assumed gender roles.

Tales of Maidenly Camaraderie

The romantic friendship between girls is an ongoing theme in Japanese girl culture. The genre of Japanese "shōjo" novels with romantic relationships between girls is most obviously associated with "shōjo" literature in the early 1900s, with the author Nobuko Yoshiya (1896-1973) the main exponent of the genre. Yoshiya, who openly had a female partner, was a tremendously popular writer in her time.[99] Japanese girls' comic book culture has explored this theme of female friendship quite frequently, especially since the 1970s.[100] These romantic relationships often involve two girls—one of them being tall, active, independent, and handsome while the other one is petite, girlish, sweet, and innocent.[101] To some extent, these girls represent idealised images of ideological "masculinity" and "femininity". Traditionally, such relationships are short-lived, as these girls are soon integrated into heterosexual romance or if the story ends tragically, the former girl dies for the latter girl.[102]

The paring of "masculine" and "feminine" girls is prominent in many of the "shōjo" fictions. As Frederick notes, Yoshiya's *Yaneura no ni shojo* (Two Virgins in the Attic, 1919) involves two young women –timid Akiko and spirited and rebellious Tamaki.[103] From the 1990s, the main theme of this genre has shifted from the tragic, "sublime" love to "familiar" or "casual" love.[104] This kind of romantic relationship often engages two close girls (romantically) involved with each other without much objections or oppositions. As a result, this romantic friendship among girls is integrated more casually into the narrative context with decidedly less tragic consequences. Although there might be different interpretations of the reasons for this change, the decline of the necessity of "pseudo-heterosexual" romance embodied by the "masculine" representation of the "masculine" girl, seems to explain the shift to more "casual" girl-girl relationships.[105]

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[99] When the question of "Who is your favourite writer" was asked in a survey conducted by *Mainichi Shimbunsha* in 1946, Yoshiya was ranked fifth, making her the highest ranked woman writer in the survey (Frederick, 2005:66).

[100] See, for example: *Glass Castle* (1969-70); *The Funeral Procession of Maya* (1972); *Dear My Brother* (1974); *Maidens of Aries* (1973-4); *Come Rain or Come Shine* (1993-5); *The Moon Princess* (1993-2005); *Nana* (1999-present).

[101] Y Fujimoto, *Watashi no ibasho wa doko ni aru no? Shojo manga ga utsusu kokoro no katachi (Where do I belong? The shape of the heart as reflected in girls' comic books)*, Tokyo: Gakuyo Shobo. 1998, pp. 177-189.

[102] In many cases, these girls are long-separated sisters, and their romantic feelings are thus justified as sisterly affections.

[103] S. Frederick, 'Not That Innocent: Yoshiya Nobuko's Good Girls' in L. Miller and J. Bardsley (eds) *Bad Girls of Japan*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 2005, p. 69.

[104] K. Kumata, *Otoko rashia to iu yamai? (A pathology called Masculinity?)*. Nagoya: Fubaisha. 2005, pp. 75-6.

[105] The shift of romantic relationship between girls from tragic, "sublime" love to "casual" love becomes particularly prominent when we compare Oyuki Konno's *The Virgin Mary is Watching* and Riyoko Ikeda's comic book series *Onīsama e* (AKA Dear My Brother) (1974). Both stories are strikingly similar in settings,

The friendship between the two protagonists in the film version of *Kamikaze Girls* might not be as romantic and sensual as the one found in the novels of Yoshiya.[106] It is, however, clear that the two protagonists exhibit notable aspects of the convention of "masculine"-"feminine" girls (figure 140).

Figure 140 A French poster of *Kamikaze Girls* highlighting the roles of "masculine"-"feminine" girls

Visually, Momoko assumes the role of the "feminine" girl in the tradition of romantic relationships between girls. She is portrayed as highly feminine and girlish with demure demeanour. Most of the time she is dressed entirely in *Lolita* fashion, which is a signifier of an exaggerated girlish femininity. This fashion matches her use of polite language in a softly spoken voice. The casting of Japanese pop idol Kyoko Fukada whose public image is often described as gentle and quiet, further enforces this image. In contrast, Ichigo, played by popular fashion model Anna Tsuchiya, is characterised by her (relatively) tall, slender build with manly attitudes and frequent use of rough, masculine language, spoken in a deep, husky voice. All of these qualities signify her status as the "masculine" girl in the tradition of girl-girl romantic friendship. What makes this film unique is, however, its play on this tradition, as the two protagonists' "gender" roles are frequently switched.

Performing Masculin Féminin

It is significant that the film's two protagonists sometimes assert themselves through (reaffirming) traditionally feminine qualities and values, which are presented as positive and powerful (such as caring, girlish fashion, and embroidery), while they also engage in activities traditionally associated with men (fist fighting, spitting, reckless driving, and gambling). In other words, Momoko and Ichigo assume conventionally "masculine" and

involving average, relatively middle-class heroines who attend a prestigious girls high school and are given an exceptional status in their school.

[106] Takemoto's original novel is significantly closer to Yoshiya's shōjo fictions

"feminine", active and passive roles alternately.[107] This is particularly notable in the bonding scenes between the two girls, which are recurrent in *Kamikaze Girls*. In these sequences, the "masculine" concept of bonding is nearly always interlaced with (traditionally) "female" qualities. We might question whether or not the concept of "bonding" is only a masculine attribute. Although female friendship and bonding, let alone bonding between men and women, are common in reality, female bonding is, unlike male bonding, still rarely depicted in mainstream Hollywood films (with the notable exception of *Thelma and Louise*).[108] This is because rather than showing female friendships, 'traditionally, films portray women mainly in terms of their relationship to men'.[109] Furthermore, most mainstream films that show female friendship are "sentimental" films where women's friendship is depicted largely as a means of integrating them into society.[110] It must be noted that depictions of female friendship and bonding, particularly in relation to young women, are more common in contemporary Japanese cinema than they are in Hollywood.[111] And, as the commentary of the director suggests, the bond between Momoko and Ichigo in *Kamikaze Girls* is significantly less "sentimental" than more stereotypical, sentimental girl friendships. For this reason, Momoko and Ichigo's bonding likely has a "masculine" tone even in Japanese culture.

The most significant of these "masculine/feminine" juxtapositions is found in the climax sequence, which I examine in considerable detail. We see Momoko clad in a simple, puff-sleeved, lace trimmed white pinafore dress with decorative ribbon lacing on the bodice, wearing a white headdress, frilled high socks and a pair of white platform shoes similar to Vivien Westwood's Rockin' Horse boots (figure 141). She is driving her grandmother's scooter fast. Her mission is to rescue Ichigo who is facing the danger of severe punishment by her fellow bikie members for not fully conforming to the gang's rules.[112]

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[107] As Carrie Paechter (2007) points out, we need to recognise that the term "masculinity" and the attributes that are associated with it do not represent all men, and the same can be said for "femininity". Thus, my aim here is to use the terms "masculinity" and "femininity" as codes to describe certain attributes and activities that are conventionally believed to be, but are not necessarily, associated with either gender.

[108] For further reading on the rarity of female bonding in mainstream Hollywood cinema, see, Fournier, *op.cit.*,; B. K. Grant, *Film Genre: From Iconography to Ideology*, London: Wallflower Press. 2007, p.81; K. Hollinger, 'From Female Friends to Literary Ladies: The Contemporary Woman's Film' in S. Neal, (ed) *Genre and Contemporary Hollywood*, London: British Film Institute. 2002, pp. 77-90; M. O'Shaughnessy, *Media and Society: an Introduction*. South Melbourn: Oxford University Pres.1999, p. 98.

[109] O'Shaughnessay, *op.cit.*, p. 98.

[110] Hollinger, *op.cit.*, p. 79.

[111] See, for example; Nami Iguchi's *InuNeko* (Dogs & Cats, 2004), Nobuhiro Yamashita's *Linda Linda Linda* (2005). Yuichi Sato's *Simsons* (2006), Sang-il Lee's *Hula Girls* (2006).

[112] In the original novel, the reason why Ichigo faces the punishment is because she missed the group meeting and instead followed Momoko to Tokyo when Momoko completed her embroidery, which was requested by Isobe. There, after a minor incident Ichigo is asked to replace a model who was hired to appear in a photo shoot wearing the dress.

Figure 141

After seeing her, Ichigo valiantly confronts and fights the bikie members, who are uniformly clad in *tokkofuku*, and is then seriously bashed by them. Momoko just stands there in utter amazement when Ichigo's blood splashes onto her and her white, frilly *Lolita* dress. She screams in a rather girlish fashion with her hands on her ears and cheeks, "Shut-up!" One of the bikie gangs throws Momoko into a large puddle. "Momoko!" Ichigo shouts. Momoko, her entire body plastered with muddy water, rises with a sharp glare in a medium close shot (figure 142).

Figure 142

Followed by a brief medium long shot, the film offers a very close-up shot of Momoko's face, initially with her eyes lowered, then looking up and staring straight, displaying a very furious mien. Against the exuberant elegance of Strauss's *The Blue Danube* and her softly-spoken narration, which repeats 'Ideally, I would have been born in France of the Rococo period', Momoko reveals her aggression (figure 143).

Figure 143

She confronts the gang alone, first in a violent act (by flourishing a metal baseball bat), then by using lies and manipulations, and eventually saves Ichigo. Significantly, one scene after the fight sequence, we see Momoko return to her normal, girlish self. This highlights her smooth transformation from "girlish" to "masculine", and back to "girlish". The film ends with a close-up of the two girls smiling girlishly, with their faces covered with bruises, blood, and mud—another juxtaposition of "masculine" and "feminine" qualities while their physical closeness might signify their emotional closeness (figure 144).

Figure 144

What draws my attention here is that Momoko's transformation from "girlish" to "masculine" and back to "girlish" in the fistfight scene involves no sartorial metamorphosis. The significance of sartorial transformation is accentuated in the convention of American superhero genre. Fashion and popular culture scholar Sarah Gilligan points out that in the film *The Matrix* (1999), the hero Neo's sartorial transformation 'from casual jackets and black suits to the flowing excesses of the trench coat' might illustrate 'the transformation of a geek into an icon of incomparable cool'.[113] This seemingly affirms the tradition of comic-book superheroes, for whom costume operates as 'a conductor for channelling powers'[114], and 'in which changing "into costume" functions as a "sign of inner change" from wimp to superhero'.[115] Moreover, as cultural historian Friedrich Weltzien argues, in this genre:

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[113] C. Springer, 2005, p. 89 cited in S. Gilligan, 'Becoming Neo: Costume and Transforming Masculinity in the Matrix Films' in P. McNeil, V. Karaminas, and C. Cole (eds) *Fashion in Fiction*, Oxford and New York: Berg. 2009, p. 154.

[114] V. Karaminas, 2005, p. 6 cited in Gillian, *op.cit.*, p. 153.

[115] R. Reynolds, 1994, p. 32 cited in Gilligan, *op.cit.*, p. 153.

> The historical examples of changing dress as a presentation of masculinity come into view, in most cases, in the context of a fight. Manliness is defined by the virtues of the warrior, at the same time tested and confirmed by violence.[116]

Following this logic, I deduce that Momoko's transformation from girlish-to-(violently) masculine-and back-to-girlish in this sequence without any significant sartorial change (apart from the stains of her dress with mud water and blood) elucidates her inner changelessness. This means that both "girlish" and "masculine" attributes are present in the character of Momoko.

If we recall what Butler has said about gender performativity, neither "masculinity" nor "femininity" is fixedly inscribed on one's body:

> If the inner truth of gender is a fabrication and if a true gender is a fantasy instituted and inscribed on the surface of bodies, then it seems that genders can be neither true nor false, but are only produced as the truth effects of a discourse of primary and stable identity.[117]

Kamikaze Girls and its portrayal of Momoko endorses Butler's theory in a less radical but perhaps more effective fashion. The absence of sartorial metamorphosis in *Kamikaze Girls* offers an alternative to the idea that "gender" is defined and redefined through clothes, while Momoko's smooth crossing between the borders of the two gender categories substantiates the idea of the "gender" boundary as both precarious and undefined.

Equally significant is *Kamikaze Girls*' portrayal of a teenage girl dressed in a highly girlish fashion engaging in the conventionally "masculine" activity of aggression.[118] This significance is further emphasised by such recent American films as Tim Burton's *Alice in Wonderland* (2010) and James Mangold's *Knight and Day* (2010). The principal female characters in these films, played by Mia Wasikowska and Cameron Diaz respectively, wear dresses with bell-shaped, over calf-length skirts at times in the films. When they are seriously engaged with fighting, however, they undergo sartorial transformation either into a "masculine" armour (in *Alice*) or a black, stylish trouser suits (in *Knight*). The implicit message that we might encode here is that despite the rather "unrealistic" settings of these films, certain activities such as engaging in a fight while wearing highly "feminine" or "girlish" attires are next to unthinkable. This is particularly notable in *Alice* in the sequence where Alice wears a medieval or Renaissance-style armour in order to fight the dragon-like Jabberwocky (figure 145). The medieval/Renaissance-style armour is

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[116] F. Weltzien, 'Masque-ulinities: Changing Dress as a Display of Masculinity in the Superhero Genre.' *Fashion Theory*, Volume 9, Issue 2, 2005, p. 243.

[117] Butler, *op.cit.*, p.111.

[118] Needless to say, aggression is not restricted to men in reality. Yet, it is often (stereotypically) perceived as "masculine" particularly in contemporary popular culture.

integrated into the costume of American superheroes, which 'is reminiscent of imperial Roman armor but with apparent Renaissance influences'.[119] Thus, as Weltzien has argued, it can be a signifier of heroic masculinity. And this raises the question: if a film is set in the world of nonsense where the heroine can shrink and grow tall or animals and other creatures can speak a human language, why can the heroine not defeat a monstrous creature while wearing the gauzy, blue or red dresses with flounces that she had on earlier in the film?

Figure 145

Arguably, the idea that assigns power, activity and authority to the concept of "masculine" and inactivity to the concept of "feminine" is in operation. In reality, a heavy renaissance armour could be more physically impeding than a filmy dress, but the discomfort associated with men's clothes has conventionally been overlooked.[120] Hence, these examples from American cinema uphold the validity of Allison's contention that in American popular culture, female heroes tend to dress and act in a "masculine" fashion. On the contrary, as several authors have pointed out, even if with certain limitations, girlish/feminine appearances and traditionally "masculine" attributes such as fighting are more compatible in Japanese popular culture. With a young woman in a white gauzy dress who valiantly fights in order to save her friend, *Kamikaze Girls* is a vivid endorsement of this point.

It is simplistic to assume that these are only fictions, thus not mirroring reality in any ways. As Crane and Bulman assert, the constructed ideals/biases/distortions demonstrated in cinema can themselves be part of the society/culture which first

[119] Weltzien, *op.cit.*, p. 238.

[120] J. Entwistle, *The Fashioned Body: Fashion, Dress and Modern Social theory*. Cambridge: Polity Press. 2000, p.158.

produced them.[121] 'Although the fantasy world of the cinema is obviously separate from the actual conditions of everyday life', writes sociologist Joanne Finkelstein also:

> the intermingling of fashions with aesthetic injunctions about femininity and masculinity suggests that such images function mimetically…The close correspondence between women's fashions and cinematic depictions of femininity illustrates how the imagined and the imitated flow into one another.[122]

As these ideas affirm, the comparison between the American films and *Kamikaze Girls* illustrate transcultural differences in conceiving the relationship between "feminine" clothing forms and strong activity. Further affirmation of this point can be found in the fact that *Kamikaze Girls* is not a single example in Japanese popular culture.

Kozueko Morimoto's comic book series *Deka One-ko* (Detective One-ko or Wan-ko, 2008-present) is a new addition to this plethora of "girlish" heroines dwelling in conventionally "masculine" genres in Japanese popular culture. It centres around a newly recruited young female detective, Ichiko Hanamori, who is blessed with olfaction as acute as a police dog, a genetic inheritance from her father. This unique mastery seemingly compensates for her lack of fighting abilities or the intelligence that her male colleagues seem to have.[123] She is dressed in a frilly dress all the time, which is stylistically not dissimilar to *Lolita* fashion (figure 146).

Figure 146 The cover of *Deka One-ko* volume 1 (left) and Mikako Tabe wears a PUTUMAYO dress in the live action version of the story (right)

An earlier TV drama series *Fugō Keiji* (Multi-millionaire Detective, 2005-6), in which a young granddaughter of a multi-millionaire joins the police force, might have inspired the

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[121] D. Crane, *The production of culture: media and the urban arts.* Published Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage Publications. 1992; R. C. Bulman, *Hollywood Goes to High School: Cinema, Schools, and American Culture*, New York: Worth Publishing. 2005.

[122] J. Finkelstein. *After a Fashion*. Carlton South, Vic.: Melbourne University Press. 1996, p. 36.

[123] One-ko is a pun. It is a slang for a dog in Japanese while the name of the heroine, Ichiko, is written as 一子, which can be pronounced as wan(一 is one in Japanese)-ko (子).One-ko is thus her nickname in the story.

comic book series. The heroine Miwako, also played by Fukada, is dressed in a less frilly but equally, opulently "feminine" fashion.[124] Although the author Morimoto has never described the heroine's style as *Lolita*, and perhaps it is not the genuine *Lolita* style in the strict sense, Ichiko's style is often named as *Lolita*.[125] When the story was adapted for the small screen in 2011, such renowned *Lolita* brands as Putumayo (*punk-Lolita*) and Angelic Pretty (*sweet-Lolita*) offered their clothes, further circulating the conception that this is the story of a female detective clad in the *Lolita* fashion.[126] Like *Kamikaze Girls*, *Deka One-ko* further reinforces the idea that in Japanese popular culture, a young woman does not necessarily leave her opulent, highly "girlish" clothes at home in order to engage in traditionally "masculine" activities.

The manifestation of conventionally "masculine" and "feminine" attributes through the character of Momoko in *Kamikaze Girls* poses another question: does the characterisation of Momoko, for whom the *Lolita* fashion is a fundamental component, delineate a sense of "androgyny"?

Redesigning the "Androgynous" Look

The *Lolita* fashion, perhaps with the exception of the "count" style, accentuates "hyper-girlish femininity". Apart from the visual aesthetics of the style, magazines and brand websites of the fashion frequently use such gendered terms as "princess", "maiden" and "ballerina" in order to emphasise its idealised girlishness. *Lolita* fashion can moreover be understood as 'exclusively a culture for girls – boys are not allowed'.[127] All of this implies that Momoko could not be understood in terms of "androgyny". In the social-psychological definition of "androgyny", however, the answer can be affirmative. Such analysis implies a possibility that the concept of "androgyny" might be manifested through women with fairly "feminine" appearances or men with comparatively "masculine" appearances. By making distinctions from biological hermaphrodites, the social-psychological analysis conceptualises androgyny as a psychological state.[128] It refers 'to a specific way of joining the "masculine" and "feminine" aspects of a single human

[124] In the original novel of Yasutaka Tsutsui, published in 1978, the principal character was a young man, not a young woman.

[125] The author writes in the first volume that she merely wanted to create a heroine who is dressed in a frilly dress, and wanted to place her in the least likely workplace where men would feel uneasy about working with such a female colleague.

[126] *Sō-En*, February 2011, p. 35.

[127] Kumiko Uehara, interviewed by Valerie Steele, March 2010, in Steele, *Japan*, p. 38.

[128] Derived from Greek mythology Hermaphroditus, a son of Hermes and Aphrodite, the term belongs 'to the classification of intersexuals, in whom there is a significant shift of one or more of the sex qualities in the direction of the opposite sex. These qualities include the external genitals, the internal sexual apparatuses, the nature of the chromosomes, the hormonal states and the secondary sexual characteristics' (Singer, 1976:30).

being'.[129] And this unison takes place largely in an idealistic way. For instance, Jungian analyst June Singer argued that:

> Men and women function in certain ways; each has masculine and feminine functioning capacities. In the process of living, these qualities, which for want of a better name we call "masculine" and "feminine," are also convertible. The difference is that the conversions may proceed in a single direction as with our plane, or the conversions may move backwards and forwards, oscillating so swiftly that it is impossible to discern when "masculine" functioning is in the superior position, and when "feminine".[130]

This is significant since '[t]he inner sexual duality has nearly always been taken for granted'.[131] Bem, who is noted for her influential work on androgyny, defines "androgynous" individuals as possessing both stereotypically "masculine" and "feminine" qualities, unlike strongly sex-typed individuals.[132] Her research indicates that "androgynous" individuals are able to 'engage freely in both masculine and feminine behaviours' and thus 'come to define a new and more human standard of psychological health'.[133] Such analysis of "androgyny" does not by any means subvert the concept of gender. It can be deduced from these ideas that "androgynous" individuals psychologically possess and display attributes of both gender categories without much conflict.

Although these psychological analyses of "androgyny" date from the 1970s, they are still of considerable relevance for the conception of gender today. Carrie Paechter, for instance, points out that we are unlikely to diverge from two main genders despite the indefinable nature of gender. Each of us knows whether we are biologically male or female, or otherwise, something different or in between.[134] However, as argued by Bem and Singer, many individuals possess both conventionally "masculine" and "feminine" qualities. Thus, it is important to treat masculinities and femininities 'only as aspects of identity, and…not insist that [identity] depends on them entirely, with one's sense of oneself as male or female as somehow secondary'.[135]

In simplest terms, "androgyny" describes a psychological state that is not strongly or dominantly assigned to one category of gender. Bem also notes that '[d]efined as gender

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[129] J. Singer, *Androgyny: Toward a New Theory of Sexuality*. New York: Anchor Press. 1976, p. 22.

[130] *Ibid.*, p. 27.

[131] E. Zolla, *The Androgyne: Reconciliation of male and female*. New York: Cross road. 1981, p. 15.

[132] S. L. Bem, 'Sex Role Adaptability: One Consequence of Psychological Androgyny' *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 31, No. 4, 1975, pp. 634-643. (hereafter Bem, *Adaptability*)

[133] *Ibid.*, p. 635, p. 643.

[134] Paechter, *op.cit.*, p. 254; D. Cornell, *At the Heart of Freedom: Feminism, sex, and equality*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press. 1995, p. 80.

[135] Paechter, *op. cit.*, p. 261.

inappropriate for females, for instance, is the desire for autonomy and power; defined as gender inappropriate for males are feelings of vulnerability, dependency, and affection for same-sex others'.[136] As I have demonstrated, all the qualities Bem noted are unified in the characters of Momoko and Ichigo. The emphasis of this "androgynous" representation is highlighted by an established idea of androgynous appearance. As we have seen in Chapter 1, when it is applied to describe clothing styles or the "look", "androgynous" appearance is, first and foremost, based on male clothes.[137] Conversely, *Kamikaze Girls* endorses the ideas that despite the fixity in our biological gender, all of us have both conventionally "masculine" and "feminine" attributes. Hence, young women can display a sense of "androgyny" while being fully clad in a highly ornate girlish fashion, without voluntarily embracing unwanted passivity or eroticisation.

In addition, the film's portrayal of an adolescent girl in full activity, dressed in highly ornamental dress, suggests that exquisitely frilled mini-dress, platform shoes, or a lace, white headdress are by no means less facilitative of movement, less worthy, less essential than more "masculine" kinds of garments as preferred by functionalist ideas. This inverts utilitarian considerations where 'beauty became equated with or reduced to utility, the two being indistinguishable'.[138] The sense of agency combined with a highly girlish fashion style, on the other hand, endorses a point made by Wilson. As she argues, 'to understand all "uncomfortable" dress as merely one aspect of the oppression of women is fatally to oversimplify, since dress is not and never has been primarily functional and is certainly not natural'.[139] Moreover, 'what may be considered "functional" dress in one epoch or culture may not be so in another'.[140] As Anne Hollander points out, '[c]omfort, which in clothing is a mental rather than a physical condition, was no more likely to be a matter of course in skimpy clothes than in voluminous ones'.[141] This means that the length of a skirt or the decorativeness of a dress might not, at least significantly, influence the utility of the clothing.

Like the Victorian women in Steele's study with their (ornate) dresses, most women who wear the *Lolita* style, both in film and in real life, do so by their own choice, for their

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[136] S. L. Bem, *The Lenses of Gender: Transforming the Debate on Sexual Inequality*, New Haven & London: Yale University Press 1993, p. 146. (hereafter Bem, *Lenses*).

[137] L. Negrin, *Appearance*, p. 148; A. Hollander, *Feeding the Eye*, Barkley and LA: University of California Press. 2000 p. 157. Hereafter, Hollander, *eye*.

[138] Negrin, *Image*, p. 102.

[139] E. Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and modernity*. London: I. B. Tauris. 1985, p. 224. (hereafter, Wilson, *Dreams*)

[140] Negrin, *Image*, p. 106.

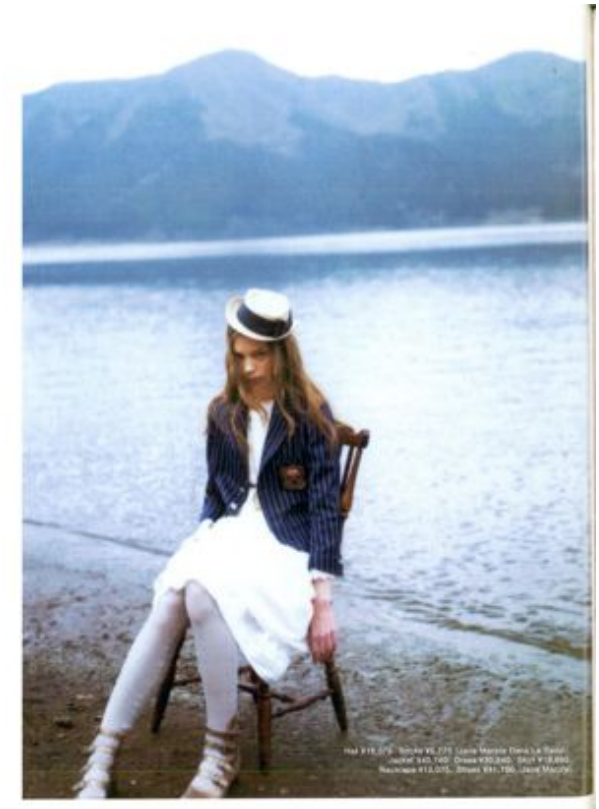
[141] A. Hollander, *Seeing Through Clothes*. New York: The Viking Press. 1978, p. 339. (hereafter, Hollander, *Clothes*)

own pleasures.[142] *Kamikaze Girls* and its portrayal of *Lolita* fashion, thus subvert the idea that women's fashion has a primary role to serve and please men's erotic pleasures. This in turn repudiates the preconceived equation of decorative girlish dresses with unfavourable female passivity. It is fair to say that the film sheds positive light upon our understanding of the disparaged feminine clothing style.

Conclusion

Far from recreating the established idea that links female sartorial ornamentation with subservience and repression, *Kamikaze Girls* offers a portrayal of an adolescent girl who is glittering with lace and flounces while also being active and autonomous. In this film, dress not only functions as a visual embellishment of the narrative, but it also represents the identity of the wearer. It is, then, significant that unlike the tradition of the American comic book superhero, the heroines display both "masculine" and "feminine" gender attributes without undergoing any sartorial transformation. Two significant meanings that the film makes can be deduced here: firstly, contrary to the apparent fixity in our biological gender, most of us have both conventionally "masculine" and "feminine" attributes. Secondly, girlish and ornamental dresses do not have to be devoid of significance, essentiality or substance. The emphasis of this film is particularly highlighted by the notion that films and dress can both reflect and shape the culture that creates them. In conclusion, my analysis of *Kamikaze Girls* suggests that the film sheds positive light upon our understanding of the disparaged ornamental and "girlish" sartorial style. This film offers us a new way to consider such emphatically girlish fashion styles with the extravagant opulence of ornamentation, and the aesthetic pleasures they manifest.

[142] Steele, *Victorian*, p. 143.



Jane Marple's girlish "Trad" style, *spoon*, March 2009 (above) and Lacoste's sporty, casual yet neat "preppy" school styles, *FINEBOYS*, April 2010 (below).

Chapter 6: Conclusion

"I will become sleek and beautiful for my prince"

"Oh, I will refresh my self"

---TV Commercial for Shiseido *Shower Soap*, 1991.[1]

Two beautiful mermaid princesses, "Princess Silky (*shittori hime*)"and "Princess Refresh (*sappari hime*)" impersonated by Rie Miyazawa at the height of her pop idol career, thus explain their motivations for the use of liquid shower soaps. The narratives hitherto constructed of the analysis of contemporary Japanese clothing culture have two central intellectual concerns: firstly, clothes are important for both men and women, and secondly, modern styles of Japanese fashion manifest a process of transformation through the reinvention of tradition. By appropriating and reinventing traditional styles of European clothing, such fashion styles create new meanings. This dissertation begun with the quotation from Hozumi's *IVY Illustrated* (1980), an illustrated book about the Japanese version of "Ivy style". In this concluding chapter, I try to unite these two concerns by looking at the "Ivy style". I introduce new material as a form of epilogue, in order to further the argument.

The significance of the "Ivy style" embraced by the Japanese is twofold: firstly, it is an "American" style adopted and localised in Japan, and secondly and more importantly for the purpose of this thesis, the style exists for both men and women. In other words, the Japanese "Ivy style" is a unique interpretive illustration of the following two ideas: social-cultural approaches of cultural globalisation that transnational appropriation of culture reflects "local" characteristics as well as of reverse flow of culture, and that fashion acts on both men and women equally.

Although my analysis of Japanese fashion culture indicates that the signs of "gender" distinctions may be less visible than in mainstream European and American fashion cultures, this does not mean such distinctions are absent or in the process of extinction. Rather, Japanese fashion culture also strongly manifests different "rules" for men and women. What the Japanese uptake of the "Ivy style" illuminates is, however, the presence of a certain degree of similarity between men's and women's styles, particularly their embracing of similar fashion aesthetics. In this sense, the style is a reification of what I have been arguing throughout this dissertation: that fashion is important for both men and women, and that gender distinctions might be, even if only in very subtle degrees, differently understood in contemporary Japanese culture.

[1] The lines translated by Masafumi Monden.

The final act of this thesis begins with a general overview of the "Ivy-league" style. It is followed by my brief examination of Japanese adoption and appropriation of this style, paying particular attention to the processes of cultural "glocalisation", hybridisation, and counter-current (or the reverse flow) as manifested via a comparison of two Japanese publications, *Take Ivy* (1965) and *IVY Illustrated* (1980). The presence of the "Ivy-league" style for women in Japanese fashion culture is then observed. Although it is not entirely a Japanese phenomenon, the significance of the Japanese "Ivy Girl" style lies in its amalgamation with "local" senses and aesthetics such as *kawaii*, and its demonstration of stylistic changes to reflect and suit the wearer's motivations or desires. Finally, suggestions for future research and the summary of the main findings relating to representations of dress in contemporary Japanese cultural texts bring the discussion to a conclusion.

Regalia of Conformity and Privilege

What is the "Ivy style"? Strictly speaking, the "Ivy look" was a natural shouldered grey-flannel suit introduced as the "new look" for men in the late 1940s.
As illustrator and fashion historian Daniel Delis Hill documents:

> men's suits…reflected the conservative tilt of American society, and the masculine new look was a shapeless, tubular sack with natural shoulders, narrow lapels, and the straight-hanging lines of fifty years earlier, though without the exaggerated Edwardian padding…Because the new forms of subdued, single-breasted suits were adopted by the collegiate crowd (and young college-graduate businessmen), the style was soon labelled the 'Ivy League look". It was the archetypal uniform and ideal dress identity for the army of traditionalist American men of the early postwar era.[2]

In other words, "Ivy style" was the regalia of privileged, conservative and conformist masculine identity. But what we call to mind when hearing the name "Ivy style" are perhaps the styles reputedly worn by "Ivy Leaguers" in the 1950s and 1960s (figure 147).

Figure 147 American actors Anthony Perkins (left) and Paul Newman (right) are described by *IVY Illustrated* as the epitomes of the Ivy Boys.

[2] D. D. Hill, *American Menswear: From the Civil War to the Twenty-first Century*. Texas: Texas Tech University Press. 2011, p. 215.

In a recent resurrection of the "American traditional" styles, David Colman writes in *The New York Times* that:

> Alongside the familiar L. L. Bean duck boots, Brooks Brothers shirts and Ray-Ban Wayfarers, there are Filson duffel bags, Gokey boots, Alden dress shoes, Gitman oxford shirts, Quoddy Trail moccasins, Wm. J. Mills canvas totes — to name but a few. Moribund brands like Southwick and Woolrich are being revived with new designs. And the old-school look has been furthered by popular American fashion labels — small houses like Thom Browne, Band of Outsiders and Benjamin Bixby along with megabrands like J. Crew and Ralph Lauren.[3]

Although the "Ivy style" has seemingly been recognised as a mode of style in Japan, it seems rather vaguely specified outside the culture, particularly in the United States where the style "originated". The term "Ivy" does not automatically evoke the clothing style there. Rather, it is often described as the "American traditional" or "trad" styles, which are often equivocally exchanged with the term "preppy" despite some arguments that "Ivy-League" styles and "preppy" styles are different in kind.[4] Hill, for example, offers his definition of the "preppy" style as follows:

> The preppies of the past few decades have been the heirs of the 1950s Ivy League look. Named for the plain, conservative clothing allowed by prep (preparatory) school dress codes, the preppy look includes basic navy blazers, striped ties in school colors, button down collar shirts, gray flannel trousers, and Weejums. The quintessential casual uniform of the preppy has been the poloshirt (double-layered in contrasting colors in the 1980s and with the collar flipped up in the 1990s) worn over a white crewneck T-shirt and with chinos and deck shoes.[5]

It does not require a great effort to see the similarities between what many people regard as the "Ivy style" today and Hill's illustration of the preppy style. In this chapter, I predominantly use the term "Ivy style" as a blanket term for these styles.

What makes the "Ivy style" significant for my argument is the influence of Japanese culture in its popularity today. This is precisely described by Colman in relation to the modern day "renaissance" of the "Ivy style" in the United States as follows:

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[3] D. Colman, 'The All-American Back From Japan' *The New York Times*, June 17, 2009. [http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/17/fashion/18codes.html?pagewanted=print].

[4] David Colman and Leonard Koren (1984: 78) perceive the trad and preppy one and the same while Joe Pompeo (2009) in his article ventures into asking 'What is the difference between trad and preppy?' The difference between trad and preppy, according to David Wilder, sales associate of J Press in Manhattan, is 'Preppy is a little broader than trad…It's more eccentric, more colourful.' (Pompeo, 2009). Hozumi (2003 [1980]: 178) perceives "preppy" as a trendy 1980s restylisation of "Ivy".

[5] Hill, *op.cit.*, p. 305.

> What makes today's prepidemic so fascinating is how it is, surprisingly enough, so Japanese. The look has its roots in the United States, to be sure. But the spirit, rigor and execution of today's prep moment is as Japanese as Sony.[6]

Even the 'term trad itself is said to have been coined by the Japanese'.[7] Writer and artist W. David Marx goes even further by saying:

> Since the 1960s, Japan has been an important part of the story of the Ivy League Look, and during a few dark periods the island nation has played an important role in preventing the style from possible extinction.[8]

A picture book called *Take Ivy* is often accredited with the preservation of the "Ivy style" in the United States (figures 148 & 149).

Figure 148 Four different Styles of Ivy-Leaguers in *Take Ivy* (1965)

Figure 149 Image from *Take Ivy* (1965)

The images are striking for the way in which they capture the informality of collegiate life with a crisp representation of the clothing specifics. According to Steele:

> In1965, Kensuke Ishizu commissioned photographer Teruyoshi Hayashida to travel to America and document the sartorial scene at Ivy League colleges. The result was *Take Ivy*, a book that has now achieved cult status among connoisseurs of traditional American menswear.[9]

This "bible" of Ivy-league styles 'has always been extremely rare in the United States, a treasure of fashion insiders that can fetch more than $1,000 on eBay and in vintage book stores'.[10] Up until the recent reissue, the prevalence of the scanned images from *Take Ivy* online 'aroused renewed interest for its apparent prescience of preppy style'.[11] We might,

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[6] Colman, *op.cit.*

[7] J. Pompeo, 'Trad Men' *The New York Observer*, September 8, 2009. [http://www.observer.com/2009/fashion/trad-men].

[8] W. David Marx, 'The Man Who Brought Ivy To Japan' *Ivy Style*, August 31, 2010. [http://www.Ivy-style.com/the-man-who-brought-Ivy-to-japan.html].

[9] V. Steele, *Japan Fashion Now*. New York: Yale University Press. 2010, p. 13. (hereafter, Steele, *Japan*)

[10] Colman, *op.cit.*

[11] *Ibid.*

then, wonder how the Japanese fascination with the "Ivy style" began and continues to operate.

Ivy Sprouts in Japan

Up until the 1990s, the styles that evoke a degree of similarity to the "Ivy style" made almost continual appearances in the culture of Japanese clothing.[12] The history of Japanese "Ivy style" is often said to have begun with Kensuke Ishizu, who as we have seen, was the "architect" of *Take Ivy*, and 'a kind of Ralph Lauren avant la lettre'.[13]. He founded the Ivy League-inspired clothing brand company VAN Jacket in 1951. Not only was the owner of the company, Ishizu, in his heyday, also designed VAN items and frequently wrote for *Otokono fukushoku* in the 1960s.[14] In addition to its original clothes, VAN Jacket also imported such American fashion brands as Gant and Spalding in the 1970s.[15] '"Ivy Leaguers wear clothes with pride, not fashion" is the philosophy he ultimately distilled'.[16] Significantly, Ishizu articulated his belief that the "Ivy-league" style would be popular among Japanese on the basis that there were some similarities between the sartorial philosophy of Ivy-leaguers and the philosophy of male students in pre-World War II Japan. What Ishizu was referring to was the aesthetic of *bankara*, which involved 'intentionally dressing like a rustic, wearing a ragged and dirty kimono'.[17] For Ishizu, the dandyism of the "Ivy-league" style and the rusticity of *bankara* were two sides of the same coin. Thus, like the Japanese adoption of the three-piece suit in the late nineteenth century, this cross-cultural affinity of male fashion aesthetics reinforces the claim made by Nederveen Pieterse that cultural hybridisation is founded on cultural affinities rather than difference.[18]

VAN clothing, and hence the "Ivy style" became popular in the mid-1960s in Japan (figure 150). The first issue of men's lifestyle magazine *Heibon Punch*, for instance, featured the illustration of "Ivy style" boys on its cover in 1964 (figure 151, see next page). Although strictly speaking different from the "Ivy boys", the fashionable youth who

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[12] K. Fukasawa 'Men's ni manabu Trad kouza (The Lecture on Trad Style taught by Men's Fashion' *Numéro Tokyo*, Vol. 41, November 2010, pp. 64-5.

[13] Colman, *op.cit.*

[14] K. Ishizu, *Itsumo zero kara no shuppatsudatta (I always made my start from nothing)*. Tokyo: Nihon tosho centre. 2010, p. 66.

[15] *Ibid.*, pp. 77-78.

[16] L. Koren, *New Fashion Japan*. Tokyo: Kodansha Inetrnational. 1984, p. 78.

[17] K. Hirano, 'The Westernization of Clothes and the State in Meiji Japan' in K. Hirano (ed) *The State and Cultural Transformation: Perspectives from East Asia*. Tokyo: United Nations University Press. 1993, p. 128.

[18] Nederveen Pieterse, *op.cit.*, p. 72.

sauntered around Miyuki Street in Ginza, called *Miyuki-Zoku* (Miyuki Tribe), appeared, quite fleetingly, at the same time.[19]

Figure 150 Japanese rock group The Wild Ones appear with VAN Clothing (1967)

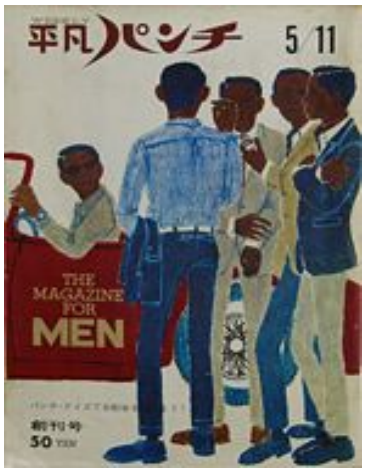

Figure 151 The Cover of *Heibon Punch*, first issue (1964)

Figure 152 Men of *Miyuki* Tribe (1965)

The tribe was divided primarily into two sartorial groups, with one half of the males wearing dressed-down "Ivy style" clothes with particular emphasis on VAN items (figure 152) while the other half wore the "European continental" style with more flamboyant colours and designs.[20]

In the aftermath of the Hippie movement, a revaluation of the "Ivy style" took place, and the style became associated with the readership of *POPEYE* in the late-1970s and early 1980s. Popeye boys, as they were called from this time, dressed in a style comprising a sporty European-branded polo shirt and a navy- blazer (figure 153).[21] The name is redolent of the American cartoon character who first appeared in 1929, although these men's styles are not relevant to Popeye's dress style.

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[19] Y. Akagi, *Heibon Punch 1964*. Tokyo: Heibon-sha. 2004, pp. 112-3.

[20] H. Narumi, 'Miyukizoku' in Across Editorial Office (ed) *Street Fashion 1945-1995*. Tokyo: Parco. 1995, p. 86-88.

[21] E. Miura, 'J J Girls/Popeye Boys' in Across Editorial Office (ed) *Street Fashion 1945-1995*. Tokyo: Parco. 1995, p.184.

It was also in the late 1970s when the "New Traditional" styles for women emerged in the Kobe district, and later in the Yokohama district. These styles were called "Yokohama Traditional" or "Hama-tra".[22] The "Hama-tra" style is said to be inspired by the Northern American schoolgirl look, with a three-quarter sleeved shirt, wrap-around skirt, a pair of flat shoes (both of which are preferably made by Fukuzo and Mihama, brands in Yokohama), and a Courreges' shoulder bag (figure 154).[23]

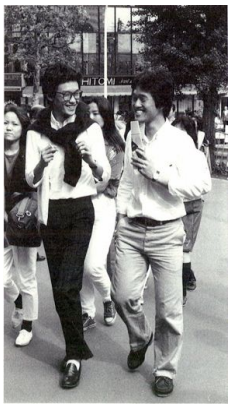

Figure 153 Popeye Boys with "Preppy" style (1982)

Figure 154 "Hama-tra" girls (1980, left) and Hozumi's Illustration (1980, right)

The style was believed to be either originated or popularised by the students of Ferris University, a "privileged" all-women college in Yokohama, and this "trad" style for young women was perceived as ideal in order to showcase "innocent" and "lady-like" femininity.

In the late-1980s and early 1990s, there was another fashion trend called "Shibuya Casual" or "Shibu-caji" for short, allegedly made popular by college and high school students in the upper-class areas of Tokyo (*yamanote*, figure 155). The orthodoxy of the style, which was largely unisex, consisted of a navy blazer over a polo-shirt, straight-fit jeans and a pair of loafers.[24] Perhaps the most striking aspect of the "Shibu-caji" style was

[22] Kobe is the capital city of Hyōgo Prefecture on the southern side of the main island of Honshū, Island. Yokohama is the capital city of Kanagawa Prefecture, located about 30 km from the central Tokyo.
[23] K. Hozumi, *IVY Illustrated: Gals*. Tokyo: Aiiku-sha. 2003 [1980], p. 174. (hereafter, Hozumi, *Gal*)
[24] H. Narumi, 'Shibu-caji' in in Across Editorial Office (ed) *Street Fashion 1945-1995*. Tokyo: Parco. 1995, p.216.

its preference for American and European luxury brands. Despite the simple appearance, such items as a Ralph Lauren jacket and shirt, jeans made by Levi's, and a Louis Vuitton bag were "musts".[25] A cheaper, simpler version with the preference of black and white aesthetics called "French-casual" emerged in the early 1990s, this time led by a group of high school girls.

Figure 155 A "Shibu-caji" couple (1990)

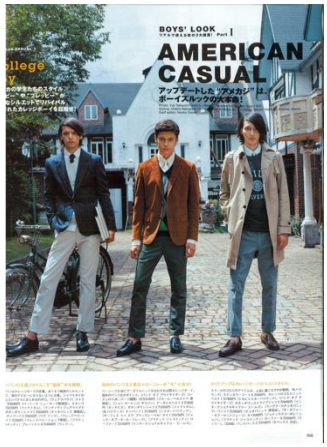

Figure 156 Burberry's "British Preppy" Style (left) and American "College Boy" Styles (right) in *POPEYE*, October 2007

Figure 157 Model Laurent Takigawa Dressed in Ralph Lauren Rugby, 2010

As I noted in Chapter 3, the "Ivy style", and similar styles such as "school", "preppy" and "trad", are popular in our contemporary moment, particularly for those who appreciate the neat and conservative look such as *kireime* and high-casual styles (figures 156 & 157). This modern day revival of the "Ivy style" was particularly evident in the years between 2007 and 2008, where the aesthetics of the "Ivy style" were syncretized with other styles and engendered a number of similar styles with a subtle nuance. Such styles include the "college boy" style, a boyish look for grown-ups (*POPEYE* November 2007), "new preppy" (*POPEYE* September 2007), casual yet elegant "British traditional" (*MEN'S NON-NO* December 2007), "French preppy" with Lacoste items (*POPEYE* April

[25] *Ibid.*, p. 216.

2007), and even the "Dress Preppy" style with Takeo Kikuchi's frilled or lace embroidered shirts (*POPEYE* April 2007).

What is striking about the Japanese embrace of the "Ivy style" is, I would argue, not only its rescue of the style from possible extinction, but also its demonstration of subtly nuanced changes and transformations. This process of Japanese adoption and appropriation of the "Ivy style" can be illustrated by the comparison between *Take Ivy* and another Japanese publication, Kazuo Hozumi's *IVY Illustrated* (figure 158 & 159).

Figure 158 Ivy-Leaguers in *Take Ivy* (1965)

Figure 159 Hozumi's Ivy Boys in *IVY Illustrated* (1980)

Transformations and Variations

As fashion critic Guy Trebay writes in his article, *Take Ivy* is '[p]art style manual for Japanese fans of American "trad" style and, somewhat inadvertently, an ethnographic study' of the Ivy-Leaguers in the mid-1960s.[26] Its aim was quite obviously to capture and introduce the "realistic" aspects of the subcultural lives of Ivy-Leaguers in the early to mid-1960s. Published fifteen years after *Take Ivy*, Hozumi's *IVY Illustrated*, by contrarst, revolves around idealised images of Ivy boys.

[26] G. Trebay, 'Prep, Forward and Back' *The New York Times*, July 23, 2010. [http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/25/fashion/25Prep.html].

Figure 160 Possible Influence of *IVY Illustrated* on *MEN'S NON-NO*, April 2008

There are a number of differences outlined via a comparison between the two Japanese publications. *Take Ivy* tells the reader that Ivy boys do not 'bother looking neat for classes. They feel that they can get away with dressing casually as long as they don't look too shabby'.[27] This contrasts with the statement made in *IVY Illustrated*, which says 'Ivy Boys take a great care of their appearance. A pleasant appearance is the first step of every fashion'.[28] There are subtle changes regarding the styles, too. *Take Ivy*, for instance, documents that during the week, Ivy Leaguers seldom wear ties and jackets, for it is trendy to dress casually on campus.[29] Even on Sunday, they would not wear a blazer. Instead, these young men would wear a tie with a cotton jacket, tweed jacket with a pair of jeans, and so forth (figure 161).[30]

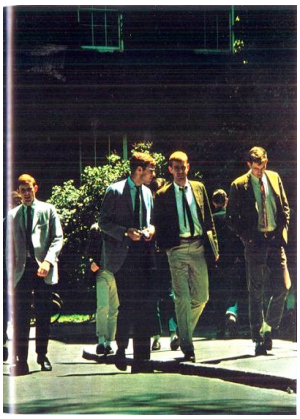

Figure 161 Ivy-Leaguers Dressed-up for Sunday, *Take Ivy* (1965)

Hozumi's *IVY Illustrated* says the opposite, for Ivy boys would wear a blazer even in the summer to dress-up.[31] The Ivy Leaguers captured in *Take Ivy* are "uncouth" dressers who, in their everyday lives, tend to dress for practicability than aesthetics. In contrast, Hozumi's version of Ivy boys are neatly dressed conservatives who respect tradition, and

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[27] T. Hayashida, S. Ishizu, T. Kurosu, and H. Hasegawa, *Take Ivy*. NY: powerHouse Books. 2010 [1965], p. 66. (hereafter, *Take Ivy*)

[28] K. Hozumi, *IVY Illustrated*. Tokyo: Aiiku-sha. 2003 [1980], p.134. (hereafter, Hozumi, *Boy*)

[29] *Take Ivy*, p. 58.

[30] Hozumi, *Boy*, p. 126.

[31] *Ibid.*, p. 49.

the foundations of their styles are appropriated forms of British Edwardian dandies (figure 162). [32]

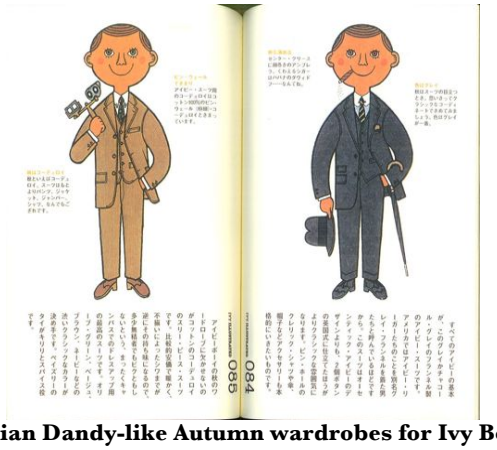

Figure 162 Rather Edwardian Dandy-like Autumn wardrobes for Ivy Boys, *IVY Illustrated* (1980)

Figure 163 Similarities between Hozumi's Ivy Boy-Look and Burberry's "Neo-Edwardian Dandy" Look in *POPEYE* (2006)

As a matter of fact, one of the styles offered by Hozumi, a winter style for Ivy boys with a navy blazer, grey flannel trousers, a white shirt and a regimental tie is, quite astonishingly, similar to the "Neo-Edwardian" dandy look in *POPEYE* that we have seen in Chapter 3. Only the navy blazer is replaced by a black trench coat (figure 163). It needs to be noted, however, that Ishizu too thinks the origin of the "Ivy" style is British men's fashion. For instance, when he entered university in 1929, Ishizu was dressed in a British style, hand-woven tweed three-piece suit, an oxford shirt, a club tie, and a Burberry coat. He recalled this British fashion as perhaps signalling his first encounter with the "Ivy-league" style.[33]

These subtle differences indicate that *IVY Illustrated* is concerned more about an idealised and possibly "appropriated" image of Ivy boys, which are integrated into the Japanese conception of the "Ivy style" today. In other words, Hozumi's Ivy boys are more like an outcome of the fifteen years of fusion between American and Japanese cultures than a direct historical representation. Evidently, Hozumi's *IVY Illustrated* states that the

[32] *Ibid.*, p. 10.
[33] Ishizu, *op.cit.*, p. 21.

spirit of "Ivy" is to respect and appreciate traditions. Thus, it would be desirable for Japanese Ivy boys and girls to wear the kimono at certain occasions such as at the summer festival, graduation ceremony, and wedding (figure 164).

Figure 164 *Yukata* (Summer, Cotton Kimono) coordinates for the Ivy Boy and Gal, *IVY Illustrated* (1980)

What this point outlines is the processes of "localisation" and reverse flow of culture. Appadurai has argued that:

> The new global cultural economy has to be seen as a complex, overlapping, disjunctive order, which cannot any longer be understood in terms of existing center-periphery models (even those which might account for multiple centers and peripheries).[34]

Similarly, sociologist Zygmunt Bauman argues that although the celebration of cultural globalisation is still limited to the "privileged", the concept represents 'the determinate, unruly and self-propelled character of world affairs: the absence of a centre, of a controlling desk, of a board of directors, a managerial office'.[35] The absence of a centre in the concept of cultural globalisation, along with disjuncture and fluidity in the flow of culture, suggests the potential of what Nederveen Pieterse has called the countercurrents, or "reverse" flows of culture: the notion that cultural forms circulate in multiple ways. When a "Western" culture is accepted and understood in a non-Western cultural context, the process of countercurrents stands for 'the impact non-western cultures have been making on the West', and 'the role of local reception of western culture'.[36] As media and cultural studies scholar Chris Barker notes, this idea of multiple

[34] A. Appadurai, 'Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy' in B. Robbins (ed), *The Phantom Public Sphere*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 1993, p. 275.

[35] Z. Bauman, 'On Globalization: Or Globalization for Some, Localization for Some Others,' *Thesis Eleven*, no. 54, 1998, p. 38.

[36] J. Nederveen Pieterse, *Globalization and Culture: Global Mélange*. Maryland: Roman & Littlefield Publishers. 2004, p. 69.

cultural flows questions and possibly problematises the idea that 'globalization is constituted as a monolithic one-way flow from the west-to-the rest'.[37]

This flow of countercurrents is evident, for instance, in Colman's perception of the "Ivy style". He calls the combination of a blue blazer, button-down collar, bermudas, and loafers as the "full-on Japanese prep" against the low-key version of the style with plain boat shoes, a faded Lacoste shirt with jeans or an off-white suit with a madras tie, the latter of which some men still prefer. The "full-on Japanese prep", according to Colman, requires 'the attitude to carry it off' in order to look good outside the Japanese context.[38] Like the Japanese *Lolita* style that we have seen in Chapter 5, the non-Japanese-oriented styles of "Ivy" have been adopted and localised in Japan, and in turn, this mélange style has been reimported to the United States. Equally significant in relation to this localising process of the "Ivy style" in Japan is the "establishment" of the "Ivy style" for women (figure 165).

Figure 165 Ivy Boy and Girl wearing the signature Navy Blazer in *IVY Illustrated: Gals* (1980)

Ivy Girl

Although there is no written rule stating that "Ivy style" is boys-only, and there are versions of the style marketed at and taken up by women, men still occupy the centre-stage of the "Ivy style" outside Japan.[39] Perhaps reflecting this tendency, *Take Ivy* offers a very fleeting reference to the fashion of female students. It is thus significant that six months after Hozumi's illustrated work of Ivy boys, Hozumi published its "gal" version. According to the author, the publication of the girls' version was to meet the demands of (female) readers, who wished to have style guides for girls.[40] Hozumi's illustrated book

[37] C. Barker, *Television, Globalization and Cultural Identities*. Buckingham and Philadelphia: Open University Press. 1999, p. 42.

[38] Colman, *op.cit.*

[39] Both in and outside Japan, American traditional styles for women tend to be called "preppy" rather than "Ivy".

[40] The Ivy style for "gals", according to Hozumi, is the one embraced by students of the Seven Sisters, seven liberal arts colleges in the Northeastern United States. They are Barnard College, Bryn Mawr College,

can be construed as symbolic of the strong presence of women within the "Ivy style" in Japan. The basic style for "Ivy girls" as described in both *Take Ivy* and *IVY Illustrated* are similar.

Figure 166 A rare image of a young woman in *Take Ivy* (1965)

Figure 167 Ivy girl styles in Hozumi's *IVY Illustrated: Gals* (1980)

Take Ivy defines the female style as a cotton dress, a plain blouse, and a banal, mass-produced, pleated skirt,[41] and *IVY Illustrated* introduces a plain and simple, puff-sleeved cotton dress as the all time favourite for Ivy gals.[42] In both publications, neatness, simplicity and youthfulness are the key for Ivy girls' styles.

In modern times, the "Ivy/preppy girl" style is commingled with the schoolgirl-like *kawaii* (cute) aesthetics in Japan. As I demonstrated in Chapter 4, certain kinds of *kawaii* aesthetics allow women to embrace the "infantile" cute and almost saccharine fashion philosophy without hinting at obvious sexual allure. With the *kawaii* aesthetic, Japanese girl culture has reinvented such sartorial items as a béret, blazer and a pair of argyle-patterned socks as cute and girlish fashion items (figures 168 and 169).

Figure 168 "Lady's Ivy Style" in *Olive*, October 1982

Figure 169 Tomoko Konno (second from right), a member of all-girls rock band Princess Princess, showcases the "Ivy girl" look (1990)

Mount Holyoke College, Radcliffe College, Smith College, Vassar College, and Wellesley College. Historically these are women's colleges.

[41] *Take Ivy*, p. 126.

[42] Hozumi, *Gal*, p. 39.

As recently as in October 2010, *CUTiE*, magazine for young women who prefer mainstream-street fashion, offered the preppy style as a cute, schoolgirl style that would attract boys (figure 170). Perhaps exploring the style more creatively, the November 2010 issue of another fashion magazine for young women, *Zipper*, offers a modified preppy style (figure 171). The imaginaries of these Japanese publications, particularly the latter, allude to further processes of change and to the continual remakings of the style. Now a preppy cardigan can be worn with a tiger-patterned mini-skirt or a navy "Ivy" blazer with a pair of Dr Martens.

Figure 170 Preppy Styles in *CUTiE*, October 2010

Figure 171 Preppy Styles in *Zipper*, November 2010

As I have argued of male fashionability and possible motivations in Chapter 3, the same aesthetic concept of "Ivy (preppy)" can be interpreted as both appealing to men (*CUTiE*) and a showcase of more creative and possibly, flamboyant fashion senses (*Zipper*). In this sense, the "Ivy style" has now become a "format" which is ready to produce a "product" that reflects another cultural hybridisation, interaction and appropriation.

The styles for Ivy boys and Ivy girls are different in form. The "Ivy style" for boys still tends to be relatively conservative compared to the "Ivy" girl style, and it does not include

such items as a mini skirt or a béret although the latter has been part of other styles for men (figure 172). This indicates that like other fashion cultures, Japanese fashion is not moving towards the extinction of gender distinctions. After all, as Steele has rightly said, men and women appear differently, and what they wear may reinforce or reflect gender roles.[43] This leads back to the contention of Wilson that clothing defines and redefines the concepts of gender.[44]

Figure 172 "Ivy style" worn by three models of *CHOKI CHOKI*, November 1010 (left and centre) and May 2011 (left)

What the Japanese embrace of the "Ivy style" illuminates is, however, the presence of a certain degree of similarity between men's and women's styles, particularly their embrace of similar fashion aesthetics. Although it might be a utopian view, I suggest that the Japanese version of "Ivy style" seems to accept differences between men and women, and yet offers them equal opportunities to appreciate the same (or at least very similar) sartorial aesthetics. It is plausible that this is another testament of the notion that fashion is important for both men and women, and that gender distinctions might be, even if only in very subtle degrees, differently understood in contemporary Japanese culture.

Further Research

The styles I have studied in this research are only a small portion of clothing styles available in Japan. There are a number of different styles present for both men and women, and some of them are regarded as more revolving around heterosexual attraction while others might have creative twists, with the desire to attract admirers lower in priority. The significance of the culture of Japanese clothing precisely lies in this diversity.

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[43] V. Steele, *Fashion and Eroticism: Ideals of Feminine Beauty from the Victorian Era to the Jazz Age*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1985, p. 246. (hereafter Steele, *Victorian*)

[44] E. Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams*. London: Virago. 1985, p. 117.

Chapter 2 showed that there are at least six unofficial categories into which young men's fashion styles can be divided. Perhaps not surprisingly, there are several fashion sub-cultures in which women partake in contemporary Japan, too. For example, a feature story in the May 2007 edition of *FINEBOYS* titled 'Real Life Watching' instructs the reader in how to capture the attention of female university students.[45] As one strategy, it offers the preferences and activities of four major types of girls –the outgoing and showy gal type (*gyaru-kei*); the demure and elegant young lady type (*ojousan-kei*); the chic and conservative *mote* type (*mote-kei*); and the creative yet candid street casual type.[46] We can also add the *mode*-type who prefers luxurious European high fashion, and *Lolita*, both of which might well be outside of the romantic interests of the general *FINEBOYS* male readership. These types are very likely based on the (unofficial) categories of young women's fashion subcultures and the magazines associated with them.

As expected, there exist several groups of fashion magazines targeting girls and young women who partake in different subcultures –*Egg* and *Popteen* for gals, *Non-no* for *ojousan* type, *CanCam* for *mote* type, *Zipper* and *CUTiE* for street casuals, *Figaro Japon* and *Vogue* for the *mode* type, *KERA* for *Lolita* and punk, and so forth. Moreover, even subtler differentiations within these subgroups are present. Further research on the diversity of Japanese clothing culture will contribute to the circulation of more detailed and rich understandings than I have been able to offer here.

Since this research has focused only on a portion of contemporary Japanese popular culture and sartorial style, how individuals associate with these styles in their real lives must be pursued in another context. Further research on this issue will open a door to more critical, and hence trustworthy conceptions of clothing as a cultural metaphor that is complete when animated by a body.

Conclusion

In the preceding chapters, I have identified some alternatives to the anachronistic yet persistent preconceptions about how men and women are assumed to engage with fashion. Such preconceptions adhere to the ideas that men dress for utility rather than for aesthetics while women's motivations for fashion are predominantly geared to attract and please men. These "distorted" conceptions have been firmly challenged by a series of European and American theories in both dress scholarship and sociology that attest that

[45] *FINEBOYS*, May 2007, p. 86-7.

[46] The word *mote* literally means to be attractive to the opposite sex. In fashion, it is a style specifically aimed to attract the opposite sex, and for young women's fashion, the style is characterized by its emphasis on youthful femininity without hinting sexual appeal.

motivations for dress, regardless of gender, can be more complex than that. Yet, fragments of these preconceptions are still somewhat culturally ingrained, and continue persistently in mainstream popular culture. My analyses of some select manifestations of mainstream Japanese popular culture, in relation to fashion, have, I hope, furthered those already established arguments. I have shown that not only women but men also dress for both the eyes of public and for themselves. I have demonstrated that a certain kind of "infantile" cute aesthetics can be empowering. Finally, I have argued that an opulently decorated, girlish fashion does not necessarily need to be read as symbolic of female oppression and objectification. These points reinforce the contention made by Entwistle that we dress for different motivations depending on circumstances.[47] Our motivation for dress involves a myriad of factors rather than merely reflecting (often imposed) gender roles. Steele has convincingly articulated this point as follows:

> For both men and women, whenever sex is an issue, so also is looking and being seen. Every woman who has ever been accosted on the street knows the temporary desire to be invisible, just as every person of either sex has posed in public, hoping to be regarded as attractive by his or her peers.[48]

Thus, as Miyazawa said in her television commercial two decades ago, taking care of one's appearance can be for attracting and pleasing admirers as well as for one's own pleasure, reinforcing what I discussed in Chapter 3.

My thesis makes the final point that whether it was an Edwardian dandy, Victorian upper-class girl, the Rococo princess or the Ivy Leaguers in the 1960s, aesthetic essences of the romantic past are adopted, restyled and given new meanings in contemporary Japanese culture. This attests to the social-cultural approaches that recognise the complexity of cultural globalisation, where "global" and "local" cultures interact instead of one infiltrating the weaker others. Needless to say, the process of cultural globalisation might not always operate in "amicable" ways. There still exist issues of power and inequality, for example.[49] But as Roland Robertson has argued in relation to "glocalisation", the local is defined by the global, and 'when one considers them closely, they each have a local, diversifying aspect'.[50] Building on Nederveen Pieterse's theory of

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[47] J. Entwistle, *The Fashioned Body: Fashion, Dress and Modern Social Theory*. Cambridge: Polity Press. 2000, p. 186.

[48] V. Steele, *Victorian* p. 247.

[49] Barker, *op.cit.*, p. 43.

[50] R. Robertson, 'Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity' in M. Featherstone, S. Lash and R. (eds), *Global Maternities*. London: Sage Publications. 1994, p. 34.

syncretism, I contend that cultural syncretism is a fusion of cultural forms in which two forms have changed and a "third" cultural form has developed.[51]

This is what I hope my analyses of the selected clothing styles have elucidated. The Japanese incorporation of "Neo-Edwardian" dandy styles into the field of mainstream men's fashion has two significant meanings. Namely, such styles not only render these pleasantly suave and stylish aesthetics available at wider, everyday levels, but they also operate, (consciously or otherwise) as an effective way to reinvent a mode of masculinity that works in contrast to the worn-out, dowdy "salaryman". I have shown how the imagery of Lewis Carroll's "Alice" and the dress of Victorian young misses are deployed by a group of Japanese young female performers in order to articulate "infantile" cuteness, in a manner largely detached from the heterosexual economy. I have explained a synchronicity between the Victorian "little girls' dresses" and a particular kind of Japanese *kawaii* aesthetic and shown how it results in the detachment of eroticism from the representation of "sweet" and "girlish" sartorial styles. In addition, I have asserted that it also serves as an alternative to the established multiple binaries of sexualisation, assertion and subservience in which women tend to be represented.

In similar fashion, Japanese *Lolita* style, which is quite ostensibly a style drawing strongly on the conceptualisation of European historic dress aesthetics, can be read as a quintessential cultural mélange. The film *Kamikaze Girls* and its portrayal of the style attest to this. The teenage heroine who is dressed almost thoroughly in the extravagantly opulent fashion, engages in both conventionally "masculine" and "feminine" activities quite fluently. This interpretation of the elaborate girlish fashion not only reinforces the established theories that argue against the preconception that accuses decorative femininity and its alleged impracticability of limiting women, but also reinforces the social-psychological definition of "androgyny". Such a definition of "androgyny" tells us that, contrary to the apparent fixity in our biological gender, most of us have both conventionally "masculine" and "feminine" attributes. Expressions of these "gender" attributes, then, do not necessarily have to be connected to the traditional sartorial modes. This arguably inscribes new, and by and large more innovative meanings, to historical, opulently decorated women's dresses.

The Japanese embrace of the "Ivy style", finally within this theme, illustrates that both men and women may engage with fashion in very similar, if not identical, ways. This is a testament to what the cultural and social-psychological analysis of gender has argued. While the presence of biological distinctions between men and women is incontestable, as

[51] Nederveen Pieterse, *op.cit.,* pp. 72-3.

human beings, these theoretical perspectives believe that such differences might be less significant than differences created by individuality. This research has demonstrated that principally men and women in contemporary Japanese society dress and look differently. But their motivations for dress, whether to impress and attract admirers, to serve their own pleasures, or to manifest their "revolt" against cultural preconceptions could be shared by individuals regardless of gender. To a certain degree, this brings men and women closer. Hollander expressed in 1994: that 'any true account of clothing must consider both sexes together', because '[f]ashion has affected both sexes equally, and nobody with eyes escapes it'.[52] My analyses of clothing and Japanese cultural texts attest that many of Hollander's wide-ranging perspectives on fashion and gender are still credible today, and equally so in Japanese fashion culture.

[52] A. Hollander, *Sex and Suits*. NY: Knopf. 1994, p. 6 and p. 11.

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