# Today Your Style, Tomorrow The World: punk, fashion and visual imaginary

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**ABSTRACT**

In this article we will analyze the punk movement as an innovator in fashion and contemporary visual imagery. The interpenetrations between these worlds will be approached through the trajectories of Vivienne Westwood, Malcolm McLaren and Jamie Reid. To explain these crosses, we will take a three-level approach: first, we analyze the emergence of punk in England in the mid-1970s, as well as the socio-economic context that allowed this emergence; then we will search the connection between fashion and punk, how it has been and influenced each other; finally, we will study the lasting impact of this fashion/punk link through the focus on graphic design. The perspective is to perceive the creation and perpetuation of punk visual imaginary up to the present considering its legacy and probably even its memory.

**Keywords:** (Post)Punk Subculture; Fashion; Visual Culture.

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**RESUMO**

Neste artigo procuraremos analisar o movimento punk enquanto potenciador de inovação na moda e no imaginário visual contemporâneo. As interpenetrações entre estes mundos vão ser abordadas através das trajetórias de Vivienne Westwood, Malcolm McLaren e Jamie Reid. Para explicar estes cruzamentos, levaremos a cabo uma abordagem em três níveis: primeiro, analisaremos o surgimento do punk em Inglaterra, em meados da década de 1970, bem como o contexto socioeconomico que permitiu este surgimento; em seguida, abordaremos a conexão entre a moda e o punk, como esta se processou e se influenciaram mutuamente; por fim, estudaremos qual foi o impacto duradouro desta ligação moda/punk através do foco no design gráfico. A perspetiva, é perceber a criação e perpetuação de um imaginário visual do punk até o presente considerando o seu legado e provavelmente, até a sua memória.

**Palavras-chave:** (Pós)Subcultura Punk; Moda; Cultura Visual.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

> It was then that a momentary melancholy squeezed my heart: I thought the words finish, perfection, contain the word end: perhaps I had only offered one more prey to the devouring time (YOURCENAR, 2010, p. 161).

The epitome words of Marguerite Yourcenar are emblematic of cultural and symbolic changes under the impact of punk. From it, in fact, the finitude of Western culture seemed more pressing - ineluctable. However, punk also allowed - from a cultural and symbolic point of view - several purposes and concomitant revivals. In this article, we will analyze the punk movement as a potentiator of fashion innovation and contemporary visual imagery in a spectrum of incessant resurrection and death (Guerra, 2017; Guerra & Straw, 2017). The interpenetrations between these worlds will be approached through the trajectories of Vivienne Westwood, Malcolm McLaren and Jamie Reid. In order to explain these crosses, we will take a three-level approach: first, we analyze the emergence of punk in England in the mid-1970s, as well as the socio-economic context that allowed this emergence; then we will approach the connection between fashion and punk, how it has been and influenced each other; finally, we will study the lasting impact of this fashion/punk link through the focus on graphic design. The perspective, is to perceive the creation and perpetuation of a visual imaginary of punk up to the present considering its legacy and of course, its memory and heritage.

Juvenile subcultures are complex and multidimensional realities and require analysis that takes into account the differences between and within them. Punk is no exception in this equation. A first dimension of subcultures is crossed by the notion of resistance (Guerra & Quintela, 2018). In this sense, the dimension of resistance, as a symbolic

resistance, turns out to be transversal to all the dimensions of the youth subcultures, expressing itself, in particular, in the appropriation that the subcultures make of the style and the meaning attributed to it. A very visible element is the use of clothing itself and look as a way of transmitting an ideology. Also, consumer rituals are an important component of subcultures insofar as they appropriate and invert cultural meanings through the consumption of fashion, music and other leisure goods, patenting that "through consumption rituals [...] the subculture reveals, in turn, their 'secret' of identity and communicates their forbidden meanings "(Williams, 2007, p 576).

According to Cohen (1972), the style is subdivided into four components: clothing, music, behavioral rituals and language, not being an inherent quality of subcultures, but rather a dimension that is being built throughout its existence. "The style is made by the activity of stylization - the active organization of objects with activities and perspectives, which produce an organized group of identity in a coherent and distinctive 'being-in-the-world' way." (Clarke et al., 1976: 54). One of the most discussed components of the style dimension has been clothing, since it is one of the most visible forms that members of subcultures use to prove themselves. The style of the subcultures is also expressed, with a recurring frequency in our days, in the modifications made in the body itself, as is the case of tattoos and piercings, and in the changes introduced in the urban environment, as with the graffiti connected to the hip-hop subculture. In Hebdige's words:

> The raw material of history could be seen refracted, held and 'handled' in the line of a mod's jacket, in the soles on a teddy boy's shoes. Anxieties concerning class and sexuality, the tensions between conformity and deviance, family and school, work and leisure, were all frozen there in a form which was at once visible and opaque (HEBDIGE, 1979, p.78).

Following the notion of specificity that Hebdige postulates, subcultures are identified by the possession and use of certain objects. Each subculture represents a particular response, a specific way of manipulating the base of social experience (GUERRA & QUINTELA, 2018). That is, a subculture originates practices and responses mediated and influenced "by the historical context in which it finds itself, standing before a specific ideological terrain that gives a particular life and specific meanings" and "a 'solution' to a set of circumstances, to problems and contradictions" (HEBDIGE, 1979: 81). Therefore, we can affirm that there are two inseparable concepts to analyze the subcultural style (and the subcultures themselves): conjuncture and specificity.

However, it is necessary to considerate that the act of wearing any garment is not, by itself, style synonymous. It is imperative that there is a process of stylization - a conscious organization of objects, a repositioning and recontextualization, which removes them from their original context and thus enables new readings and resistances (GUERRA, 2018). It is precisely through this process of stylization that subcultures communicate their messages and forbidden meanings, as well as their collective identity that we study in this article.

## 2. ANARCHY IN THE U.K.: A CATHARSIS WITH A CONTEXT

> I'm antichrist, I'm anarchist/ Don't know what I want/ But I know how to get it/ I wanna destroy the passerby
> 'Cause I want to be anarchy/ No dog's body
> Anarchy for the U.K./ It's coming sometime and maybe/ I give a wrong time, stop a traffic line/ Your future dream is a shopping scheme
> 'Cause I wanna be anarchy/ In the city
> How many ways/ To get what you want/ I use the best, I use the rest/ I use the enemy, I use anarchy/
> 'Cause I want to be anarchy/ It's the only way to be
> Is this the M.P.L.A. or/ Is this the U.D.A. or/ Is this the I.R.A.?/ I thought it was the U.K./ Or just another country/ Another council tenacy
> I wanna be anarchy/ And I wanna be anarchy/ Oh, what a name/ And I wanna be an anarchist/ I get pissed, destroy
> Sex Pistols, *Anarchy In The U.K.*, 1976.

In terms of ideology, punk assumes itself as a contestation movement in the artistic, economic and social dimensions. It is contextualized in a period of deep economic crisis and demands a (contested) belonging to the working class and the individuals marginalized by the current society (GUERRA, 2017). The punk movement was also a response to the hippie movement, since this second failed in its promises in terms of revolution of traditions that crushed everyday life. Musical dilettantism, contestation and agitation will therefore be the statutes of the punk movement (Département Musique, 2006). In its musical aspect, the punk ideology will reject the music prevailing in the 1970s, the music industry and its dynamics, traditional modes of dissemination, progressive sonorities and reigning aesthetics. It was a movement near the garage rock of the 60s, predisposing itself to a youth movement through the prolific band constitution (GUERRA & BENNETT, 2015) and claiming for itself a DIY strategy[1].

The dialectic relationship that animates cultural life, that is, the relation between the inexhaustible essence of life and the modes of expression (or exteriorization) of culture, leads it to a situation of contradiction, rupture and even opposition. Therefore, the exhaustion of traditional forms of culture leads to the unwinding of a creative energy of life (Simmel, 2001: 204). Close to this Simmelian approach, punk in Western societies represented a rupture and repositioning against the existing social structure accompanied by a soundtrack and a visual imaginary. Punk has always been more than a simple t-shirt or a song: it was an insubmiss attitude that broke the status quo and gave visibility to a dissatisfied and unbelieving youth (Colegrave & Sullivan, 2002). Punk contains itself the impetus of return,

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[1] Do It Yourself (DIY): It's now seen as the punk's motto and as also a banner for breaking the status quo, especially in music and aesthetics. Inspired by the attitude and aesthetics of London youth in the late 1970s, Vivianne Westwood and Malcolm McLaren expressed a pop scene that included clothing and props, vocabulary building, scenario creation, and the definition of a sound (Guerra, 2013, 2017 and 2018).

of resurrection and renewal, but also of change, of inversion, and of subversion (REYNOLDS, 2007).

In the words of its protagonists, we can say and according to Joe Strummer[2]: "Everything seemed like a desert, with nothing. We had energy. We wanted to go somewhere. We wanted to do something. There was nothing to do. Nowhere to go. A kind of hopelessness. But we had hope in a sea of hopelessness" (COLEGRAVE & SULLIVAN, 2002, p. 201). Johnny Rotten[3] reiterates this sentiment: "It was a very miserable period. High unemployment. Absolutely hopeless. A furious class war. Literally, no future. I wrote my own future. I had to. It was the only way out " (COLEGRAVE & SULLIVAN, 2002, p. 202). This culminates in what we might call "formal agnosticism." This represent the situation in which, in the absence of qualified solutions from the angle of existing forms of life manifestation, cultural dynamics is pushed to exercise its own absence of forms, the denial of the forms as Simmel would have it, "as a way of to convert in the world" (SIMMEL, 2001, P. 204). The exhaustion of forms demands that we engage in the discovery of new forms, that *tertium datum*, which allows us to resolve the present cynicism of the current forms.

In 1976, the date of its emergence and nomination, punk as word and concept was associated with negative meanings and therefore marked by a strong social negation. This lack of positive evaluation and social recognition is itself an indicator of its inferiority and its difficulty of affirmation as a

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[2] The Clash's lead singer. The Clash (1976-1986) consisted of Joe Strummer (lead vocals, rhythm guitar), Mick Jones (lead guitar, vocals), Paul Simonon (bass, backing vocals) and Nicky "Topper" Headon (drums, percussion). One of the most acclaimed English punk rock band, they have always sought to experience with other musical genres, such as reggae, ska, dub, funk, rap and rockabilly. Their politicized lyrics, and rebellious attitude had a profound influence on rock, especially on alternative rock. They are widely referred to as "the only band that matters", a commercial nickname originally introduced by CBS, the group's label (EGAN, 2014).
[3] Sex Pistols' lead singer. The Sex Pistols (1975 - 1978, 1996-2003, 2007-) were the brainchild of Malcolm McLarem, designer and owner of a clothing and accessories store called Sex. To create the band, McLarem brought together a ragtag of regular clients, Glenn Matlock (bass), Steve Jones (guitarist) and Paul Cook (drummer). None of them were professional musicians. For the role of lead singer was chosen John Lydon (who would be better known as Johnny Rotten), which aroused the McLarem's attention by walking with a t-shirt saying "I Hate Pink Floyd" and getting ready to take the test vocalization accompanied by a jukebox and Alice Cooper (SAVAGE, 1992).

social movement (COLEGRAVE & SULLIVAN, 2002). Simon Reynolds (2006) argues that punk can be understood through four main modes. Firstly, punk can be measured as a kind of "hyperword", since it has generated endless discussions, and it should be noted that the unity of the movement is confined to the music press, since there is no unanimity about its motives and objectives. The debate in this respect is intense and if there is any consensus, this is signaled by its character of opposition to something and an opportunity of aggressiveness (GUERRA, 2018). The characteristic that allows a conceptual unity about punk is perhaps the nature of opposition to the dominant society (MCNEIL & GILLIAN, 2006; REYNOLDS, 2006; KOGAN, 2006; GUERRA, 2017). The punk movement was not assumed as a counterculture once had a fatalistic posture about social change, but it always had a pamphleteer matrix that augured to; at least, rethink the functioning of the current social structure. In this way, post-punk from the 1978-1984 can be understood as the consequence of all the questions that emerges and of all the provisional answers and conclusions that some presented. In a second line of problematization, punk is a word full of energy and emotions, and its distinctive trait is ensured by the intensity and simultaneity of feelings:

> It was during the year 1975 that life was inflated by punk as a visible entity. In the beginning, punk was a way of being that was expressed essentially through fashion and music. It was anarchic, nihilistic and deliberately aggressive. It called into question the existing establishment, defying established order, in general, by asking the question "why?" (COLEGRAVE, SULLIVAN, 2002, p.18).

Image 1: Vivienne Westwood and Malcolm McLaren, central figures in the development of punk style and fashion, 1974.

Source: chic.uol.com.br (2018).

Another look at punk allows to visualize it within a metaphorical structure of astrophysics as an explosion of fragments before a crystallized structure of rock'n'roll, amorphous and accommodated to the system and the more oppressive mechanisms of the cultural industries. Punk would be the emergence of a new universe - the post-punk cosmos, whose different variations can be compared to the galaxies and solar systems that make up the universe. Punk can also be analyzed as if it were a Reformation: after the first schism (old wave versus new wave, as equivalent to the opposition Catholicism-Protestantism) the way for further disintegrations was opened. The main controversy that stressed the punk culture in the period 78-84 refers to uncertainty about what to do with the spoils of punk, all the strength and chimera accumulated in 76/77 (GUERRA, 2013).

Punk more than a movement was a collective of individuals who expressed themselves, which makes it very difficult to define (COLEGRAVE & SULLIVAN, 2002). Individualism is a mark shared by all English and American agents in this context (ALBIEZ, 2006). If in the U.S., the demonstrations were more musical, the spectrum of manifestations in the UK is broader, gaining ground in fashion, design, and aesthetics. These multiple revelations that make it difficult to define (Savage, 2001). In terms of

social structure, the development of punk has the background of a masculinized context, marked by an excess of sexism and alcohol; in historical terms, lies in the aftermath of the postwar period and in its consequent absence of future expectations. It's also associated with youth in general, but in particular with the working class, deprived of social, economic and cultural capital (Savage, 2001). Finally, and following closely the structure of the social fields as postulated by Bourdieu (1996), punk has to be seen as an achievement of prerogatives against a closed social system, which also led him to be assimilated as an article of consumption and empty it as an opposition movement (KENT, 2006), which brings us closer to the theses of Frankfurt's critical theory (BENJAMIN, 1992).

The emergence of punk is often interpreted by the context of economic crisis experienced and reflected in the increase of oil prices after the Arab-Israeli conflict of 1973, which violently affects the western nations. At that time, Britain observed the last bastions of its economy sink: the car industry and the textile industry were experiencing enormous difficulties, as were the coal and metallurgical industries. The prices got very huge, the salaries stagnated and the unemployment increased:

> For young people, there is nothing: unemployment allowance, a grant to enter an "art school", small jobs, none of this is sufficient to equilibrate the morale of teenagers mined every night on television by unemployment statistics and by the lists of factories that closed (PARAIRE, 1992, p. 166).

In music, rock had assumed an immense degree of institutionalization, dominated by big bands, a stagnated industry and distant of youth daily despair:

> It is in the concrete cities, in this urbanism built in a hurry after the war, in the midst of that unoccupied, uneducated, violent and desperate youth that the contest will be born and write: once the rock died controlled by a handful of world vedettes that made it a

private enclosure, will have to destroy those establishment of rock (PARAIRE, 1992, p. 166).

Simmel (2001) argues that the Marxist scheme that relates productive forces to the definition of a certain mode of production (and the contradictions that are internal to it) has a validity that transcends the economic sphere. In the history of culture, this opposition manifests itself between the inexhaustible energy of life and the "forms of its historical exteriorization which remain fixed in rigid equality." That is, the necessity to convert "internal mobility" into "external creation" produces problems when the second one do not seem to provide the "appropriate expression" for the first one. Hebdige (1979) interprets the punk style as a visual response to England's socioeconomic crisis during the late 1970s. According to Hebdige, punk "appropriated the rhetoric of the crisis that had filled the radio and television broadcasts, and editorials throughout this period and translated it in tangible (and visible) terms "(1979, p. 87). A similar reading of punk is proposed by Chambers, who suggests that this musical genre signaled a period during which "a particular music, a highly visible subcultural style and a growing public crisis were momentarily combined together" (1985, p. 175).

Hebdige presented punk as essentially juvenile music, this interpretation also extends to the studies of punk in other national contexts. Bennett argues that, this markedly juvenile inclination is relevant insofar as those who are actively involved in the subculture after the age of thirty are people who are in some way involved on a more organizational or creative level: musicians, promoters, fanzines writers, artists, because "most of the people in the punk subculture end up leaving behind their punk identities" (1997, p. 319). It is necessary to observe here if punk has challenged the previous musical structures of distribution and production, and has been able to enforce independent

music organizations. At that time, a first generation of British independent rock-based companies emerges, which mainly included go-it-alone businesses, influenced by some of the cultural values developed, but relatively disinterested in any deep democratization of social relations of production (Hesmondhalgh, 1997). As the actors involved themselves point out, Johnny Rotten in the first place: "This frees people. Punk really has this effect "(COLEGRAVE & SULLIVAN, 2002, p. 119) and then, Paul Cook tells us "Et voilá. A simple four-letter word initiated everything" (COLEGRAVE & SULLIVAN, 2002, p. 168).

Let us emphasize the positioning and development of the Sex Pistols. The attitude of the Sex Pistols is marked by three denials: rejection of feelings, rejection of fun and rejection of the future (no feelings, no fun, no future). This feeling of revolt and the desire to provoke is transversal to youth in a general way, but especially related in the late 70's, a time marked by changes from the social and political point of view, when the hippie dream begins to crumble, and the excessive drug consumption arise (SAVAGE, 2001, p. xii). The sentences that the Sex Pistols promoted in their songs (Get Pissed Destroy or No Future) derived from the situationist catechisms (GUERRA, 2013, Silva & Guerra, 2015). The libertarian ideology of the late 1960s transformed the lives of many, including Malcolm McLaren, Vivienne Westwood and Jamie Reid. Leaving themselves influenced by the International Situationist, they found a language of their own to express their revolts and ideals, using new forms of communication such as manifests, flyers, among others, which still aroused the feeling that things can be modified. We cannot forget that Malcolm McLaren had attended an art school and this situationist ideology was familiar to him[4]. In England, a group of situationists had

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[4] Moreover, a considerable number of British pop musicians from the 1960s to the present were educated and started their performances in art schools, which is a not insignificant circumstance for what we can call a

joined under the name of King Mob. Among these situationists, we pointed Jamie Reid and Malcolm McLaren. Jamie Reid's graphic work for the Sex Pistols is highly consistent with the band's goals or Malcolm McLaren's constant pursuit of shock and scandal.

The International Situationist was created in July 1957, in *Cosio d'Arroscia*, Italy, from the fusion of three groups of artists in disagreement with the art instituted (HENRIQUES 1997, p. 11). They argued that art should not be closed in its stylistic and formal purposes, they made the apology of art as a constant creation and continuous reconstruction. From a situationist point of view, art is either revolutionary or nothing. The overcoming of art would only come through the continuous transformation of the city, which impelled urbanism and architecture to be the tools of a revolution. For the Situationists, "the imagination should take over the existential void of the city, subverting a daily blinded by habit, restoring meaning to spaces, awakening a mythical past" (VVAA, 1997, p.153). It was in this framework of ideas that McLaren created the group:

> The group had no certainties, but McLaren did: 'I had an eye,' said McLaren, 'and I saw Rotten's ability to create images around himself. It was a good feeling. I knew he had something, just like Jones'. McLaren persuaded Cook, Jones and Matlock to record with Lydon for a week over a pub called Crunchie Frog in Rotherhithe: no one appeared on the first day except Lydon (SAVAGE, 2001, p. 121).

The Sex Pistols began their journey under a context of antagonism, misunderstanding and mutual suspicion, an instability that did not fail to cause real damage. McLaren's expectations were very high. He intended to create a band that presented itself as antithesis to the picture of the existing rock status quo as he had observed in the New York Dolls in the U.S.,

human capital for music that is highly correlated with avant-garde aesthetic and artistic currents (Frith & Horne, 1987).

> McLaren's ambitions were vast: [...] he wanted a contagious, anarchic, noisy rock scene, something that had been forgotten since the mid-1960s. [...] The Sex Pistols existed so that English rock could finally take of assault the 70's. In order to do this, it was necessary to recover the theory of pop [...] (SAVAGE, 2001, p. 194).

This posture of challenge, revolt and nihilism vis-à-vis the current society was taken to all spheres of actuation of the band, even as regards their relationship with the media[5]:

> Guided by McLaren, the group was easily able to ironize this speech when it was intended to confront the media. The way they pondered the media - in their songs, in their interviews and in their clothes -, the media reflected the Sex Pistols, in an intense symbiosis that quickly led to distortion, but which would define a style of a decade that was to come (SAVAGE, 2001, p. 198).

The relationship between punk and the media was somewhat ambiguous. If, on the one hand, it was based on a certain contempt for them, on the other, it did implicate an involvement. In fact, the media were already inserted in the center of the punk movement, in their songs, in their clothes, in their attitudes, and they ended up dictating how the first could develop.

## 3. SEX(ADDICTION): THE SUBVERSION OF PUNK IN FASHION

The Dada movement, the French artistic movement in the 1920s, accepted anarchy, subversion and provocation, while using the tumult as a means of self-promotion. The Dada, headed by Duchamp, argued that "those who look are the ones who make the pictures", being a staunch defender

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[5] In this respect it became famous Sex Pistols' interview on The Bill Groundy Show, broadcasted on the BBC, December 1, 1976: Interviewer: Now I want to know one thing... Matlock: What? Interviewer: Are you serious or are you just making me, trying to make me laugh? Matlock: No, it's all gone. Gone. Rotten: [Under his breath] that's just their tough shit. Interviewer: It's what? Rotten: Nothing. A rude word. Next question. Interviewer: No, no, what was the rude word? Rotten: Shit. Interviewer: Was it really? Good heavens, you frighten me to death. Rotten: Oh alright, Siegfried... Jones: You dirty sod. You dirty old man! Interviewer: Well keep going, chief, keep going. Go on, you've got another five seconds. Say something outrageous. Jones: You dirty bastard! Interviewer: Go on, again. Jones: You dirty fucker! [Laughter from the group] Interviewer: What a clever boy! Jones: What a fucking rotter. Interviewer: Well, that's it for tonight. (COLEGRAVE & SULLIVAN, 2002).

of the desacralization of the aura of artistic geniality. His ready-mades are the supreme example of this quest: it introduces mundane objects and everyday goods, elevating them to the status of works of art (BASTOS, 2008; COLEGRAVE & SULLIVAN, 2002). The Dadaist John Heartfield has a particular connection with punk, as he pioneered the collage technique, which was based on putting together different images to obtain a new composite representation, this graphic style also associated with punk (COLEGRAVE & SULLIVAN, 2002, p.18). But the influences do not stop here. They extend to the beat movement that emerged in the United States in the early 1950s involving Allen Ginsberg, Gregory Corso, Jack Kerouac, Charles Bukowski and William Burroughs, whose artistic and literary approaches thematized urban life and experiences, being closely linked to the new yorker underground and associated with hedonistic and ecstatic experiences that new art (BARRETO, 1982), new consumption and psychotropic substances.

Vivienne Westwood[6] and Malcolm McLaren rented the back of Paradise Garage at 430 Kings Road. Initially, they sold rock'n'roll records, then Vivienne started designing teddy boy-style clothes and began ten years of intense subversive creativity. In the background,

> If we go back to New York from the 60s and Andy Warhol's Factory and the Velvet Underground we are entering the pillars of punk. With this mix of artists and homo, hetero, transvestites and drag queens performers, the Factory was an inspiration that will directly influence Malcolm McLaren and Vivienne Westwood for the making of London punk (COLEGRAVE & SULLIVAN, 2002, p.18).

In this shop, they sold items and clothing that resembled Elvis Presley and rock'n'roll. In 1972, the store was renamed Too Fast to Live, Too Young to Die. The audacity of the

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[6] Stylist and Malcolm McLaren's first wife.

clothing began to stand out in leather pieces, t-shirts with erotic illustrations, African motifs, among others. The controversy was installed and in response the duo changed the name of the store to Sex. It was the Sex that defined the punk style because,

> "The reason of being the store Sex, was to drop the taboos and, when we think, this was very successful. Such provocative clothes had never been seen - clothes that effectively changed the way things were seen" (MARCO PIRRONI[7] IN COLEGRAVE & SULLIVAN, 2002, p. 126).

A panel with the word SEX padded in pink plastic over the store announces the arrival of a really creative period. Clothes with sadomasochistic and porn messages, situationist slogans... the t-shirts have gained even more daring with more explicit messages, in addition to selling sadomasochistic objects. The store itself was surrounded by an entourage which included young people such as Siouxsie who later came to have a musical project.

Image 2: SEX, Vivienne Westwood and Malcolm McLaren's store, 1974.

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[7] Siouxsie and the Banshees' and Adam and The Ants' guitarist (REYNOLDS, 2006).
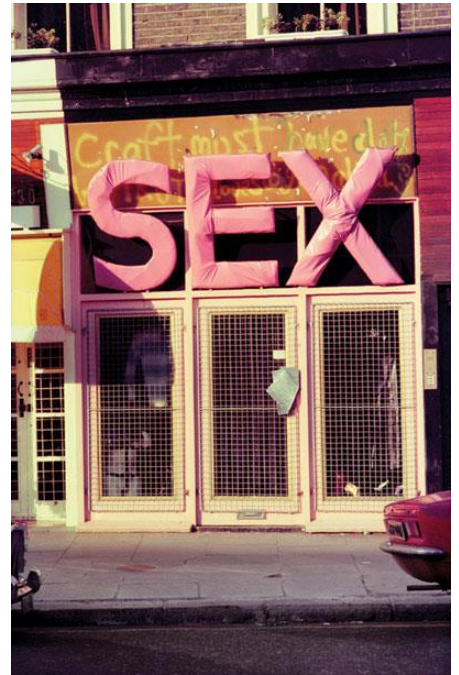
Source: http://butterflyeffects.tumblr.com/post/156119900/malcolm-mclaren-and-vivienne-westwoods-shop segundo licença CC-BY-NC-ND 4.0, 2018

During this period, latex became the main raw material for Vivienne Westwood's creations. Also featured leather clothing, torn t-shirts (called catalyst-shirts) and accessories made of chains and padlocks. Before they became Sex Pistols, the band members were regular shop keepers. And they were at the right place at the right time, cause "Malcolm was selling clothes, basically. He sold fashion. He sold rock'n'roll fashion. The best way to sell this fashion would be to have a band ". (BOB GRUEN[8] IN COLEGRAVE & SULLIVAN, 2002, p.126). One of the fundamental authors for understanding the movement, John Savage, defines the situation in this way:

> As Warhol, McLaren and Westwood made up a scene[9] where boiling youth - strong and vulnerable at the

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[8] North-American journalist and photographer. He is known, above all, for his photographs of rock bands (GRUEN, 2011).

[9] According to Malcolm McLaren: "The Dolls came to my store several times when they were in London, and they were so fascinated by it at that time, because there was nothing like it in New York. No one in New York sold rock'n'roll clothing and music in just one place. And the store, Sex,

same time - could free themselves, behave as they wished, as children freed by the weight of their adult commitments and tasks. As for Warhol, it would be the total lack of a conventional morality ... which was both a source of liberation and a source of its power. This means that the emerging movement could not be easily defined; on the one hand by its infantile character, being particularly vulnerable, and once defined, by its perversion (SAVAGE, 2001, p. 230).

Regardless of the various incarnations of the Vivienne and Malcolm store - Paradise Garage; Let it Rock; Too Fast To Live Too Young To Die - the common catalyst of their creations will be the revolutionary and anarchic attitude and the search for a new aesthetic. Undergoing any measure of comfort and social ease, what Westwood operates is a visual poetics of deconstruction and chaos, materializing in the vestments a certain esprit d'époque that waved to the loss of stabilizing social and cultural coordinates. "I made clothes that looked like ruins. I created something new by destroying the old one. This was not fashion as commodity, it was fashion as an idea "(WESTWOOD & KELLY, 2016, p. 160).

Image 3: T-shirt with chicken bones, 1971-72.

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had a very specific ideology, it was not about selling anything but about creating an attitude "(MCNEIL & MCCAIN, 2006, 274).

Source: metmuseum.org, 2018.

Working on incisions, rips and violations, Vivienne inaugurates an unprecedented empiricism that deconstructs the market organization of a ready-to-wear, appropriating black shirts bought in mass markets and remastering them, customizing them. In these t-shirts, Westwood performs what would become the look of punk: on the chest of one of them was written SCUM (an allusion to Valerie Solanas's Society for Cutting Up Men); others had their sleeves replaced by short arcs of bicycle tires, with small zippers over their nipples; others still carried the word Venus in the chest, adorned with stones, feathers, and chains. The most iconic of them, however, was the T-shirt that would become the ultimate emblem of punk chic, a traditional black t-shirt decorated with bleached chicken bones, sewn together to form the word ROCK.

Even more extravagant and aggressive would be the Sex Pistols' T-shirts, with the band's name in pink condoms and displaying a nude teenager smoking a cigarette. Mixing the obvious iconography of the rock 'n' roll years (the 1950s pin-

ups featured in their first T-shirts) with contemporary cultural stigmata - heavy pornography and the rising sadomasochism bars in London in the late 1960s - Westwood aesthetics brings a moment of structural change in British fashion, in which establishment and hostility became essential motes. Realizing in her creation a bunch of performativity, Vivienne, through T-shirts, was perhaps the first fashion designer to really perceive the potential of imaginary of fashion by approaching it to lyricism and the outlandish experimentation of art (CHOI, 2005).

> The shape of a shirt is simple and beautiful. You are aware of the fabric, of the body, but also of an image: it is a canvas. And like a canvas, the T-shirt was open to experimentation of all kinds. Pop Art. Letrism. Found objects and DIY; the shirt was a place where fashion, sex, politics, and art met each other (WESTWOOD & KELLY, 2016, 173).

At this moment we can see the iconic "dubious masculinity" t-shirt, featuring two cowboys naked from the waist down, in obvious sexual tension, flaccid penises at the touch. More than a pictorial reproduction of gay porn of these days, this shirt is itself a political statement, imploding both the intimate life of two men and the power of the phallic in fashion. And it's so much more than punk. It is a political statement that has always been present in the creations of the designer.

Image 4: Gay Cowboys T- shirt, 197?.

Fonte: metmuseum.org, 2018.

Converging clients like Siouxsie Sioux, lead singer of The Banshees; the actress and presenter Margi Clarke, also the singer Toyah Willcox and the infamous nightclub promoter, Gerlinde Costiff; Westwood's creations for SEX channeled rage, outrage, boredom and sexual affront, forming the imagery base of what would be understood as punk. Transparent condom latex dresses, vintage panties, leather and rubberized underwear; what Westwood created was a cultural "undress", something new, fetishistic and inseparable from the urgencies of the time. As Malcolm argues, it might be inevitable that a designer with such radical proposals in those days acted "as a catalyst for the musical tastes of the time as well" (Vivienne & Kelly, 2016, 178). They would be, in short, designers looking for a band; designers who by merging the young revolt; the aesthetics of teddy boys, rock and sexuality, ignited the chaotically world will follow.

Image 5: The clients Danielle, Alan Jones, Chrissie Hynde, the iconic saleswoman Jordan and Vivienne in SEX store, 1970 decade.



Source: theguardian.com/artanddesign/2017/nov/10/jordan-vivienne-westwood-sex-shop-photo, 2018

## 4. SOLD OUT SELL-OUTS? WHERE'S THE PUNK? DOES HISTORY HAVE A PLACE FOR YOUR AESTHETICS AND VISUAL BREAKDOWN?

As opposed to the cultural norm, punk contains a constant debate between the authentic and the impure. Initiated by the Sex Pistols, with the signing of the contract with the music industry, this debate manifests itself through the contact between the subculture and the dominant instances of the cultural industry (DUNN, 2012; OSGERBY, 2008). In this regard, John Lydon (1996) tells us at the press conference that launched the tour after the band's 1996 meeting: "Listen, we invented punk, we wrote the rules, you guys follow it." Years later, regarding the second meeting, Lydon (2002) adds:

> Let us clarify one thing. The Sex Pistols is Punk. The rest is just punk rock, it's as simple as that. [...] There was no movement. And if we're honest, most punk albums were terrible and just wanted to fool people. But then there were the Sex Pistols who were serious.

Image 6: Jamie Reid's Posters. God Save the Queen, 1997.

Source: http://www.artnet.fr/artistes/jamie-reid/segundo licença CC-BY-
NC-ND 4.0, 2018).

In the relationship between punk, art and pop, Robert Garnett (1999) looks at the centrality of the Sex Pistols, their imagery and the contribution of Reid, McLaren and Westwood to it. It restores the contribution of the Pistols phenomenon as a cultural interstice of resistance, close to a critical postmodernism and Adorno's critique of the culture industry: "It was probably closer to pop than anything else, but it was at the same time unprecedented. This was what singular punk did, bands like Pistols have created that could not be done within art or pop, or any other space "(Garnett 1999: 17). Let's take a look now at the work of Jamie Reid, deeply in line with Westwood's.

Reid's work was much more than a mere visual equivalence to music. Thus, the visual created by Reid amplified the experience of listening to music, to the point of becoming part of it, of incorporating itself in it. Reid appropriated the populism of cultural tabloids and advertising campaigns and added a vital dimension to it in the form of appropriation in an alternative language, that is,

agit-prop political press. Garnett gives the example of the 1972/3 Sticker Campaign during which Reid drew a series of stickers stamped with images, quotations and slogans such as "Turn Something on the Miners" or "Keep Warm This Winter-Make Trouble." Therefore, Reid's perception of agit-prop rhetoric made him a part of the radical / political designers and illustrators of the day. In addition, Reid realized that the Sex Pistols were the perfect vehicle for communicating his leftist ideas formulated in the 1960s and 1970s. Nevertheless, McLaren initially only saw the Sex Pistols as a kind of "a metamorphosed Bay City Rollers boys band that could be exploited with a view to promoting his store, the Sex" (Garnett, 1999, p.24). Through criticism, Reid and the Sex Pistols were able to achieve something that no other punk band got. For a brief period of time, his attack on rock led to his demystification (Lawley, 1999). In this process, they created an interstice, a loophole in which the population - and young people in particular, acquired some critical culture, and therefore gained power.

Image 5: Valentino Men's Fall/Winter 2017-18 Collection | Jamie Reid, 2017:

Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TXfrblpQY4k
segundo licença CC-BY-NC-ND 4.0, 2018.

Returning to the idea of interstitial space created by the Sex Pistols, Robert Garnett argues that this space has not disappeared, but it does not exist, it has to be created and recreated incessantly - as Jamie Reid and Vivienne Westwood have done. This is a space where one can negotiate the contradictions of investment and identification with the pleasures and practices of daily life, criticizing them at the same time. It is even important to emphasize the importance of Reid and Westwood's work for the Young British Artists[10] (YBA). Because with the Sex Pistols, these two creators have opened a space between scholarly academic art and the domain of popular culture. They discussed punk in the light of Adorno's (2003) culture industry analysis, emphasizing punk negativity;

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[10] The term is used to identify a group of London artists active between the years 1980 and 1990. The word derives from a series of six exhibitions: Young British Artists I - VI. These exhibitions were carried out between March 1992 and November 1996 at the Saatchi Gallery. The oldest members of the group graduated in the late 1980s at Goldsmiths College. The group gained prominence through a combination of premature talent and self-promotion, encouraged by the sponsorship of new collectors, particularly Charles Saatchi. Certain artists stand out, such as Damien Hirst, Angela Bulloch, Hume Gary, Sarah Lucas, Richard Patterson and Rae Fiona. The recurring themes were wide-ranging, displaying Marcel Duchamp's influences, the emphasis given to conceptual art, unconventional objects, humorous interpretations of everyday life and the place of artists in society.

distinguishing it from pop situationism, in which any element of appropriation, artistic plagiarism or parody can be read as a deviation from cultural practice reduced to the spectacle.

## 5. NO FUTURE FOR YOU. BUT FUTURE FOR PUNK

> God save the queen/ Her fascist regime/ It made you a moron/ A potential H bomb
> God save the queen/ She ain't no human being/ There is no future/ In England's dreaming
> Don't be told what you want/ Don't be told what you need/ There's no future/ No future no future for you
> God save the queen/ We mean it man/ We love our queen/ God saves
> God save the queen/ 'cos tourists are Money/ And our figurehead/ Is not what she seems/ Oh God save history/ God save your mad parade/ Oh lord God have mercy/ All crimes are paid
> When there's no future/ How can there be sin/ We're the flowers/ In the dustbin/ We're the poison/ In your human machine/ We're the future/ Your future
> God save the queen/ We mean it man/ We love our queen/ God saves/ There is no future in England's dreaming
> God save the queen/ We mean it man/ There is no future/ In England's dreaming/ No future for you/ No future for me
> No future no future for you
> Sex Pistols, God Save The Queen, 1977b.

Since the advent of rock'n'roll in the 1950s there have been a series of live musical performances, which were not only memorable in themselves but which became extraordinarily influential because they conformed the immediate path and progress of popular music. They introduced new styles, confronted practices, restructured definitions and dictated new models for others to follow (INGLIS, 2006). Thus, the performances of the Sex Pistols became collective moments of epiphany and of the expansion and sedimentation of punk. His presentation in Manchester is to this paradigmatic title[11]:

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[11] Lesser Free Trade Hall, June 4, 1976.

> Announced by A4 photocopies folded in two, the Manchester concert was a good occasion to launch the Sex Pistols out of London as Manchester, England's third largest city, is also the gateway for north and northwest. The concert was not a big success, but once again with the 70 people in there, there would be future artists and relevant personalities - such as Peter Hook and Bernard Summer from Joy Division / New Order, Morrisey, Tony Wilson from Factory - who were crucial for the future musical prominence of Manchester (SAVAGE, 2001, p. 208).

Since 1976, other groups have formed and played an important role in the nascent movement. The Clash appeared and will play a key role in the punk movement. In Manchester the Buzzcoks appeared. The Clash turned in the main influence and experienced a more politicized side of punk. And they brought the stylistic and sonorous mix to punk. As Greil Marcus says:

> The Clash's promise had been that the notion of horror, far from being something we should free ourselves from, is a means of influencing the reality that must be sought, constantly tested and renewed: the Sex Pistols 'no' has always been the 'yes' from the Clash. Horror provides limits. He shapes the fear, gives weight to laughter, undresses the mystification and reveals the paradox; music after music, London Calling does the same thing. The story - the history of pop, political history - closed around the Clash; they seem to have found a place in it (MARCUS, 2006, p.30).

After 1978, many reiterate the death of punk (Reynolds, 2007). But it is a death that is more symbolic than real, because the movement has changed and has been restructured by its relative incorporation into the current cultural industry system (Masters, 2007). Marco Pirroni goes so far as to consider that "from anything exciting, individual, different and subversive, punk began to transform itself into a form of presentation, of drinking beer and having cretinic attitudes" (In Colegrave & Sullivan, 2002, p. 352). But we know that pop history repeats itself with regularity, reinventing new underground scenes as responses to hegemony (Azerrad, 2002). In 1979, the rise to power of Margaret Thatcher marked a reversal and restructuring of

the punk movement, giving it new developments and contours:

> This means that a significant percentage of the punk consumer population voted conservatively; otherwise, punk and his intentions had extended to the whole world, but with the indigents left behind. Kings Road continued to attract the punks of the second zone, but the style as a whole metamorphosed into an absurd caricature of itself. Thus punk increasingly meant more grotesque wigs to the fifteen-centimeter-tall mohawk, facial tattoos, bondages, trousers boots, doc marteens [...] (COLEGRAVE & SULLIVAN, 2002: 342).

Image 8: Jamie Reid's Poster God Save Us All, 2017.



Source: https://www.itsnicethat.com/news/jamie-reid-god-save-us-all-trump-artworks-toby-mott-cultural-traffic-fair-120417 segundo licença CC-BY-NC-ND 4.0, 2018:

But a bunch of musical opportunities and concomitant ways of life was opened with punk as we will see below. Although the relationship between social movements and music has rarely been conceptualized, in practice there is always an interconnection. Music is a resource used to support the building of society consciousness (EYERMAN, 2007). It is a central resource for building collective entities, for the construction and subsistence of groups of conscience and solidarity. And it was, undoubtedly, an emergency context of a new visual, aesthetic and graphic culture. In this context, Bourdieu

(2007) also considers music as a central part of social action, since music and art are resources, forms of an attribution of position in the social field and also as forms of social distinction. Through Hebdige (1979), we see how subcultures have used music as a central resource of contradictory resistance (CARTLEDGE, 1999).

And the works of Jamie Reid and Vivienne Westwood have proven it for more than 40 years. Let's see, to conclude, a paradigmatic case. One of the earliest British publications associated with punk is the novel The Punk by Gideon Sams (1977). Its cover featured an image of Johnny Rotten with a baby pin stuck to his lip, literally through the magazine's own cover. For Rivett, this type of punk image was heavily overexposed; it was incidentally in these images that the British heritage of punk was founded. But at the time, this was a disconcerting image, capable of generating multiple readings (while book cover, punk icon or design object) (RIVETT, 1999). This book is very representative of this contradiction: this time it was distributed by a commercial distributor and was thus widely publicized and sold; and in antinomy, its publication in an underground publishing house gave the work a greater ideological, social and aesthetic value. The most important aspect of this work is that "it is not just a novel about punk, this work is the punk" (RIVETT, 1999, p.35). And it's just like this: "Today, so many years later, the shock of punk is that every good punk record still sounds like the best thing ever heard." (Marcus 2000: 51) Greil Marcus himself does not leave to unveil the best epilogue for this article:

> What remains irreducible in this song is the desire to change the world. It is an obvious and simple desire, but it has an inscribed history that is infinitely more complex - as complex as the game of reciprocities that constitute everyday gestures and organize the way the world has worked. This desire arises with the demand to live life not as an object but as a subject of history- to live as if, in fact, something depended on the actions

of each one - and this demand could only lead to a path of freedom (MARCUS, 2000, P. 10).

## 6. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Considering the style as a "codified response to the changes that affect the whole community" (HEBDIGE, 1979, p. 80) and adding the Gramscian concept of hegemony, we can understand the punk as a symbolic form of resistance (Guerra & Quintela, 2018). As Hebdige famously conceived, subcultures can be seen as an annoying, dissonant and divergent noise in the face of the dominant culture (Hebdige 1979). They would exhibit a possibility, in different levels, of resistance. However, this resistance was always under attack - or, more precisely, under a double attack: on the one hand, of the reappropriation and subsequent sale of the subculture by the market; and, on the other hand, the redefinition and ideological media interpretation of subcultures.

After all, could these subcultures eventually be incorporated into the dominant culture they originally opposed? As is well known, every time a new spectacular subculture arises there is a sequence of amplification and a reaction that usually varies between two extremes: terror and fascination. This amplification invariably ends with the deactivation and propagation of the subculture style in question. It is a process with two characteristics: a mercantile form, in which there is the conversion of the various symbols of the subculture into mass products; an ideological form, which is about "labeling" and "redefinition", on the part of the dominant groups and their apparatuses, such as the media, the police, the judicial system (HEBDIGE, 1979, p. 92-99).

Nevertheless, it is possible today to identify all the cultural and symbolic matricity of the creations of Vivienne Westwood, Malcolm McLaren and Jamie Reid. For example,

from a small shop on Kings Road to Paris, Vivienne Westwood has potentialized her influence in the fashion world and gradually entering a circuit. Often accused of selling herself to the system her previously criticized, Vivienne Westwood Label became a global and millionaire enterprise between the 1980s and 1990s; despite its virtual belonging to the capitalist logic of production, Vivienne's aggressive and ironic aesthetic still carries that old (in) contestation noise, transmuting the sacrosanct space of the catwalk into a platform of debate and protest.

Westwood's participation in the fashion world - despite controversy - restructured a didactic of visuality, bringing two perceptible symptoms in the coming decades: firstly the popularization and consolidation of the punk aesthetic and its symbolic association to the youthful and musical revolt lived in 1970's in the British context; later, but not least, the formation of a series of fashion designers associated with a post-punk research, echoing in their own creations the perception of a fashion as a flag and manifesto of social transformation.

Alexander McQueen, John Galliano, Rei Kawakubo for Comme des Garçons, Imitation of Christ, Miguel Androver and lately the new group of American designers working in Europe are some of the many names involved in the popularization and celebration of a visual post-punk culturalism, and once absorbed by the creative cultural industry, ratify their own catwalk as platforms for the massification of an ideology - less - but still problematizing the ills of the world. That is why Theresa May - the current English prime minister - wore a "classic" Westwood tartan at her inauguration in July 2016.

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