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**Silence of the Schoolgirls: death and the Japanese schoolgirl in
contemporary US pop culture**

**APPROVED BY
SUPERVISING COMMITTEE:**

Supervisor:

Nancy Stalker

Kirsten Cather Fischer

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contemporary US pop culture**

by

Dana DeLassus, B.A.

Thesis

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Arts

The University of Texas at Austin

August, 2013

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my sister and revolutionary thinker, Leslie DeLassus, whose support and guidance helped me to remain faithful through to its completion. You will be an awesome professor.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincerest gratitude to those on thesis committee: my advisor and mentor, Dr. Nancy Stalker, for her support of my thesis study and research, her patience, motivation, extensive knowledge, and invaluable feedback during the final editing. I would also like to thank my second reader, Dr. Kirsten Cather, for her guidance and enthusiasm during the research stages of this thesis, her patience, and feedback during the editing. I am grateful to both for their support and help in the development of my ideas on this topic.

I would also like to thank Joseph Schaub for his guidance and contribution to my thinking on this topic during the research phase and allowing me the opportunity to share my ideas with him and his students in his fascinating and challenging class on Japanese pop culture.

I express my sincere gratitude to the generosity of the donors of the Mitsubishi Graduate Fellowship for Japanese Studies, whose gift supported me during my preliminary research. I would also like to thank the faculty and staff in the Department of Asian Studies at the University of Texas at Austin for their valuable patience and assistance.

A special thanks goes to my very good friend, Michaela Nielsen, who shared her useful experience as a graduate student with me, allowed me the use of her awesome work space in her home, and provided motivation and support of my ideas.

Abstract

Silence of the Schoolgirls: death and the Japanese schoolgirl in contemporary US pop culture

Dana DeLassus, M.A.

The University of Texas at Austin, 2013

Supervisor: Nancy Stalker

This thesis explores images of the Japanese schoolgirl in contemporary pop culture in the US. As with earlier examples of gendered Orientalism, the body of the female Other is used as an accessory to the Occidental Self. In four images by four different Western artists, the schoolgirl functions as an accessory. The production of the schoolgirl as accessory reflects an appreciation for Japan that is based primarily on their encounter with Japanese pop culture. This encounter with Japanese pop culture informs each artist's identification with and desire to introject into the Japanese Other. However, lacking the material body needed for full immersion or identification with the Other, they produce the female Other, in this case, the Japanese schoolgirl, as an accessory to the Self. The accessory provides false immersion or identification with the Japanese Other. In this way, the Japanese schoolgirl becomes the embodiment of Japanese pop culture and an object of Western fetishization.

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INTRODUCTION

The opening sequence for Sion Sono's 2001 film *Suicide Club* begins with a crowd of 54 schoolgirls descending a large stairway to the bottom platform of a Tokyo subway station. A cascade of bare knees and white leg warmers marches along followed by a bobbing wave of young, happy faces. On the platform, the girls gather and chat away noisily. Rapid shots of the schoolgirls talking and typing on their *keitai* (cell phones), businessmen waiting patiently for their train, a mother and her baby daughter, and an oncoming train, quickly builds tension. As the train approaches the station platform, the schoolgirls suddenly line up along the edge and join hands. They chant and swing their arms back and forth to a score of bouncy electronic music, then jump onto the track before the train can completely pull up to the platform. As the train quickly rolls along coming to a stop, it cuts and minces their bodies below on the tracks. A shower of blood sprays the rest of the passengers waiting on the platform and washes over the train cars. Everyone on the train platform panics screams out in alarm and runs. The last shot follows an expanding pool of blood as it oozes around a mysterious white handbag left behind on the platform. This final shot leaves the audience wandering: Who left this bag? What is inside?

Later in the film, the contents of the bag are finally revealed as two detectives investigating the group suicide open it on an examination table at a Tokyo police station. Carefully clad in a pair of white examination latex gloves, one of the detectives reached in and, grimacing in disgust, places the contents of the bag on the examination table. He has removed what appear to be rectangular strips of human skin sewn together at the ends and rolled neatly into a reel. Upon closer examination by a medical team, it is revealed

that there are 54 strips of skin when the reel is unrolled, and at least a few of those strips match up to rectangular incisions inflicted on the severed body parts of multiple victims recovered from the train track. The detectives conclude that each strip on the skin reel matches up with a rectangular wound on the body of each of the 54 schoolgirl victims. Following this shocking discovery, the detectives begin to question human behavior and the state of Japanese society.

The skin reel in the film *Suicide Club* functions as an allegory for the historical treatment of the body of the Japanese schoolgirl in Japanese culture. For example, during the Meiji-Taishō period in Japan, many considered the schoolgirl a deviant figure and her image circulated in media tabloids, scientific studies, literature, and art. Scholars propose that this general panic reflected the ongoing social progression of young women in Japan at this time, as all-girl schools were established throughout the country and led to their greater visibility in public. Their greater visibility generated a rise in public anxiety and discourse surrounding the figure of the schoolgirl. In this way, the schoolgirl's body became a site for the inscription and the propagation of dominant ideologies of gender. This appropriation of the body of the schoolgirl for the purposes of ideology is evoked in the skin reel, an image that reveals how such appropriation of an individual's body is violent in that it severs that individual from agency and bodily integrity.

As with the mass death of schoolgirls in *Suicide Club*, gendered Orientalist representations of the Japanese schoolgirl in the West, and particularly in American visual culture, present the Japanese schoolgirl as a gutted, lifeless accessory to the Occidental Self. The schoolgirl accessory appears in the work of Gwen Stefani's *Harajuku Girls*, Quentin Tarantino's *Kill Bill Volume 1*, in Katy Perry's experience living

with Japanese, female exchange students, and in Simone Legno's designer label *Tokidoki*. In interviews, each of these artists has revealed their admiration for and identification with Japanese culture. However, despite their appreciation for an entire culture, their identification is specifically informed through their encounter with and fetishization of Japanese pop culture. They choose the body of the female Other to embody this fetishization, as the female Other, the theoretical framework of gendered Orientalism argues, "construct[s] a racialized point of gendered origin" that is used to authenticate an exotic portrayal of the Orient (Lewis, 116). Additionally, the image of the Japanese schoolgirl circulates widely in Japanese pop culture available to US audiences. In this way, I argue how these artists objectify the schoolgirl as an accessory to the Self and further suggest that the schoolgirl must sacrifice for her body as an accessory for Occidental identity formation. The dead schoolgirl as the embodiment of the fetishization of Japanese pop culture and accessory in the US reflects how commodity culture mediates the cultural relations between the US and Japan.

As contemporary Orientalist artists' identification with Japan is largely based on their encounter with images of gendered identities in Japanese pop culture, this study will begin by considering these identities, specifically young, feminine figures such as the *shojo* and the schoolgirl. Japanese pop culture, especially certain films, *anime* (animation) and *manga* (comic books) titles, video games, magazines and fashion, is rife with images of young female figures such as the *shojo*, which includes young girls between the ages of 7-18 in Japan. A large percentage of these images are male-authored. Several scholars have proposed that these Japanese male authors demonstrate a "wishful identification" with the plight of young women and desire to introject into

young, female subjectivity. While male identification with young women seems to promise greater visibility for women in Japanese society, these authors argue that images of women in Japanese pop culture in fact deprive them of voice and agency.

METHODOLOGY

The following study analyzes images of the Japanese schoolgirl accessory as an example of gendered Orientalism in US pop culture. The primary theoretical frameworks of gendered Orientalism include: Edward Said's *Orientalism*, Judith Butler's notions of gender "performativity" and "materiality", Leon Hunt's concept of "introjection", and Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic theory of identity formation in the mirror stage. The term "gendered Orientalism" builds on Edward Said's important post-structuralist work on the discourse of Orientalism. His book, *Orientalism*, is a critique of the West's (Western Europe and the United States) production of a body of knowledge, or discourse, on the "Orient", or the non-European cultures of the world during the age of European and American Imperialism.¹

In Said's study, "Other" corresponds with "Oriental", those living in the "Orient," while "Self" and "Occident" corresponds with the "West". In this study, Other will refer to Japan and Japanese people, while Self or Occident will refer to the West and the US. Said points out that at the heart of early Orientalist production "an assumption had been made that the Orient and everything in it was, if not patently inferior to, then in need of

¹ The concept of discourse is introduced by Michel Foucault and he defines it as an *effect* "which transmits and produces power" (101). Here, power is not reducible to "an institution, and [it is] not a structure...it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society"(93). Power does not just unfold through law, but through strategy. Discourse is part of that strategy, as it involves the production of knowledge and truth, "the things said and those concealed, the enunciations required and those forbidden"; finally, "it is in discourse that power and knowledge are joined together" (100).

corrective study by the West” (41). Therefore, Western knowledge and literature on the Orient makes as many assumptions about the West’s position of superiority as it does the about the Orient’s inferiority. He further maintains that the production of knowledge on the Orient, in turn, “because generated out of strength, in a sense *creates* the Orient, the Oriental, and his world” (40). Similarly, this thesis critiques artists who contribute to a larger cultural tendency of fetishizing Japanese pop culture. This cultural fetishization mediates the production of Japan and Japanese schoolgirls in the West.

The production of the Japanese schoolgirl in American Orientalism is an example of gendered Orientalism. Gendered Orientalism is a kind of Orientalism that focuses on the gender of the Other. For example, Reina Lewis’s study on gendered Orientalism in European literature draws attention to how authors in the late 19th century wrote about and portrayed Oriental cultures through the voice of the female Other. This was done to attract more readers, as the voice of the female Other offered what many believed to be the most authentic and exotic portrayal of Other cultures. However, she points out that the voice of the female Other as a European literary device was actually the voice of the European Self. Her study sheds light on how in gendered Orientalism, the female Other is a performative identity and voice which is activated to further exoticize a representation or portrayal of the Orient.

Gendered Orientalism, then, is a kind of performed identity that also comes to rely on the material aspects of the body. Judith Butler’s concept of “performativity” holds that identity is a culturally constructed practice that relies on coded behavior. In her work, she argues gender is a performed identity and that individuals are not biologically endowed with gender, because it is a *practice* or *act*. Furthermore,

performativity is “not as the act by which a subject brings into being what she/he names, but, rather, as that reiterative power of discourse to produce the phenomena that it regulates and constrains” (xii). She proposes that gendered identity is unstable by nature of its performativity. Thus, gender also comes to rely on the materiality of the body. Butler points out that discourse on gender appropriates material bodies, confirms this materiality of bodies as fixed (penis=male; vagina=female) and then rigidly inscribes the confirmed notion of fixed materiality back onto the material surface of the body. This bodily inscription is the way in which dominant culture, through discourse, violently “regulates and constrains” the body. Similarly, gendered Orientalism relies on the performance and materiality of the Other’s body. As this study will show, the materiality of the schoolgirl’s body is central to the gendered, Orientalist production of her image as an accessory to the Occidental self in US visual culture.

US artists’ identification with Japan is largely based on their encounter with Japanese pop culture. However, because they claim to identify with the whole of Japanese culture, some express disappointment over the fact that they are not Japanese. The disappointment or longing for Japanese subjectivity demonstrates Leon Hunt’s point that “[t]his immersion in the other has its limits...an inability to *introject* into...Japanese subjectivities” (?). Here, the term “introjection” corresponds to Jacques Lacan’s Western notion of subjectivity formation.

Keeping in mind Butler’s proposal that gender identity formation relies on performativity and the materiality of the body, the formation of the subject discussed in Lacan is also an unstable process and, thereby, not biologically fixed. For instance, Lacan’s theory of the mirror stage maintains that the formation of the ego or Self

(subjectivity formation) in an individual occurs at the moment an infant, between 8-16 months old, identifies his/her reflection in the mirror as his/herself. Before this, Lacan believed the infant perceived a primordial whole or mass rather than a differentiation between Self and Other. In the mirror stage, the subject sees him/herself as a separate and unique entity and thus splits from the primordial mass into a world of Self and Other. However, as Butler shows with identity formation, this process of subjectivity formation is not biological because a mirror mediates it. Therefore, the body of the self is misrecognized as the reflection in the mirror.

Returning to Hunt's notion of introjection, introjection involves a "wishful identification" or desire to recognize the Other as the mirror image of the Self. However, as Butler demonstrates, identity formation relies on the materiality of the body. Therefore, the Western Self (the individual artists explored in this thesis) lacks the body of the Other and experiences an inability to introject into the Japanese Other. The inability to introject leads the artist to adapt a "mode of articulation" Hunt identifies, citing Ding-tzann, as "yielding." Ding-tzann defines "mode of articulation" as "the manner in which the 'other' is connected to 'the imperial self.'" For instance, instead of "incorporating" the Other, which involves the "transformation of the 'other' by imperial self," the artist instead yields to the Japanese Other they cannot introject into. Yielding is "a synthesis of 'dominant' and 'peripheral' cultural forms that 'both 'transcends self and the Other'" (221). Through yielding, the Japanese schoolgirl becomes a mirror image, or a site of inscription for the projection of the desire to introject into the Japanese Other.

Because she is a mirror image, the artist fetishizes the body of the Japanese schoolgirl and wears her as an accessory to the Self. Adorning the Self with the body of

the Other creates false introjection where the Self experiences identification with, yet fails to be or introject into the Other. Here, the Japanese schoolgirl must literally and violently sacrifice her body as an accessory to the Occidental Self, a necessity that is suggested in gendered Orientalist images of the Japanese schoolgirl. Caroline Evans points out how the in the modern fashion industry, living, breathing humans are produced or “sacrificed” as inanimate objects upon which commodities are hung for display. Her analysis, based on Karl Marx’s idea of commodity fetishism, holds that commodities mediate human relations under the conditions of capitalist production and that the given value of a commodity is always greater than that of the human labor that produced it. Therefore, human agency is devalued and “sacrificed” in commodity culture. It is under these conditions that runway models appear inanimate and Japanese schoolgirls figure as accessories.

Chapter 1 of this thesis will discuss gendered stereotypes of Japanese women and girls in Japanese visual culture. Some of the examples considered include art, literature, and media from the Meiji-Taisho period and contemporary Japanese pop culture. These examples demonstrate how the bodies of Japanese women, shojos and schoolgirls were appropriated in mass culture and served as sites for the inscription of dominate discourses of gender. Chapter 2 examines the prevalence of icons of young, Japanese femininity in the West, with particular emphasis on US-produced representations in the contemporary period. The discussion will begin by briefly exploring early Western representations of Japanese women in *Japonisme*, a late 19th and early 20th century European and American art movement in which Japanese art and culture inspired the work of many artists. It will be argued that these artists, as well as European and American consumers of Japanese art,

consumed and fetishized images of Japanese women as “accessories” to their larger collections. This discussion will then transition to an examination of the image of the Japanese schoolgirl as accessory in the work of Gwen Stefani, Katy Perry, Quentin Tarantino, and Simone Legno. An analysis of each image will propose how the schoolgirl appears dead, as she must sacrifice her body for Occidental identity formation.

Chapter 1. Historical and Contemporary Female Icons in Japanese Culture

This chapter will explore the historical and contemporary production and prevalence of young, female icons, such as the shojo and schoolgirl, in Japan. Many scholars have pointed out how official, public and subcultural entities appropriate and treat the bodies of young women as sites for the projection of discourse on gender. This appropriation of young, female subjectivity indicates anxiety and/or identification with young girls in Japan. While icons such as the *moga* and schoolgirl produced during the Meiji and Taishō periods presented them as deviant, contemporary icons derive from pop culture and tend to encourage male fetishization of and identification with shojo and schoolgirls. This latter production of female icons in Japanese pop culture is an example of what Sharon Kinsella terms “cognitive transvestism” (i.e.-introjection into female subjectivity). Scholars argue that the appropriation of the schoolgirl or shojo’s body for the purposes of male identification robs her of agency and bodily integrity, a condition that leaves a female body without substance or life.

During the Meiji and Taishō periods in Japan, icons of young femininity that circulated in print media were viewed as deviant and often incited heightened public interest. Historical studies on the *moga* (Japanese for “modern girl”) and schoolgirls (*jogakusei* in Japanese) reveal the growing public anxiety and discourse around such figures. Journalists and scientific community members capitalized upon and contributed to this discourse on the deviant young woman as a way to demonstrate their expertise and also further their interests.

Miriam Silverberg, studying newspaper articles and journals from 1920's Taishō Japan, discusses the how the *moga*, or modern girl, entered the public spotlight due to the increasing public visibility of women, their entry into the modern workforce, their delayed betrothal, and their investment in Western fashions and lifestyles (2006). Young girls identified as *moga* according to markers such as Western clothing and bobbed hair often provoked public alarm (Figure 1). Many thought that the *moga* demonstrated an insubordination to traditional gender roles and national campaigns that promoted more conservative gender roles such as “Good Wife, Wise Mother” (*ryōsai kenbo*). Journalists and critics tapped into this public alarm, publishing articles and journals addressing the *moga*, thereby drawing the patronage of the masses who wished to keep abreast of this supposed crisis of gender and modernity.

Similarly, Gregory Pflugfelder's interviews with former Japanese schoolgirls and his study of highly circulated texts from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries concerning the schoolgirl, reveals how this female figure was also a source of a perceived crisis in Japan (2005; 133-190). The establishment of girls' education during the Meiji period (1868-1912) and the large number of all-girl schools at the start of the Taishō period (1912-1926) resulted in their growing visibility in the public, much like the *moga*. Additionally, schoolgirl attendance at girls' schools throughout Japan resulted in their greater visibility in numbers. Schoolgirls were



Figure 1. *Moga* in Kobayakawa Kiyoshi's *Topsy*. 1930. Color woodblock print. Collection of Phillip H. Rochs, Jr.

reportedly seen walking together and engaging in deviant behavior, such as holding hands. The increasing public presence of many young girls attending school together, forming close friendships on their own terms, and the absence of male peers, led many commentators to speculate whether they were engaging in romantic relationships together. Pflugfelder notes an increase in the circulation of terms such as “same-sex love” in the media and in the medical rhetoric of sexology. Sexologists, invested in the growth of their field at the time, jumped at the opportunity to provide expertise on the issue of “same-sex love.” This shows how “this discursive fray did not result in a consensus on the significances and dangers of female-female intimacy but, through its very clamorousness, helped keep the schoolgirl at the forefront of early twentieth-century debate on gender and sexuality” (2005; 176-7).

Both Silverberg and Pflugfelder reveal how icons of young, female figures in mass culture were portrayed as deviant and controversial during the Meiji and Taishō periods. This portrayal of deviant girls contributed to a growing social discourse on proper gender roles and behavior. These female icons and the discourse that surrounded them proved advantageous to various influential entities, such as the media and the scientific community. These entities furthered their own interests and the state’s interests in slogans that promoted particular gender roles, such as “Good Wife, Wise Mother.” However, this treatment of *mogas* and schoolgirls robbed young women of voice and political agency and constructed them as deviant Others against which the Japanese state and society defined social norms. This further reveals how the female body was historically used as an empty site for the inscription of discourses of gender and identity formation.

Several examples of male-authored literature from this time exhibit this discursive appropriation of the female body. For example, in the novels *Futon* (1907) by Tayama Katai and *Naomi (Chijin no Ai)* (1924) by Jun'ichirō Tanizaki, the schoolgirl and *moga* is utilized as an object of the male protagonist's fetish and is imbued with a degree of unruliness. This unruliness reflects the threatening social upheaval of Japan's difficult transition to modernity. The protagonist usually struggles to understand the young female's cutting-edge, materialistic, Western mannerisms and becomes jealous as it seemingly gains her admiration from others. Through the portrayal of *moga* and schoolgirls as cutting-edge, materialistic and Western, these novels address modern social issues dealing with gender, such women's growing visibility outside the home and access to education, Western notions of love and family, and the organization of society along Western notions of class. The schoolgirl or *moga* antagonist is an analogy for the encroachment of Western modernity, or Other, while the male protagonist who struggles with his own identity crisis, stands for Japan, or Self.

Images of the *moga* or schoolgirl in Meiji and Taishō Japan demonstrate how the bodies of young females were used as sites for the inscription of discourses on gender. In contemporary Japan, the figure of the *shojo* acts as a similar site. The *shojo* is another female figure that, like the *moga* and schoolgirl, incites public anxiety. *Shojo* is a Japanese term commonly used to describe young girls ranging in ages from 7-18 years old and is the subject of much contemporary scholarly work on gender in Japan (for example, see Orbaugh's brief discussion on *Shojo-ron*, 205). Young girls may not necessarily identify themselves as *shojo*, however, they might partake in or consume *shojo* culture. This might include buying cultural goods literally labeled as *shojo*, such as

Shojo Beat, a weekly publication of comic strips or *manga* targeted towards a young, female audience but which also draws a large, male audience. While schoolgirls fall into the category of *shojo* in Japan, I choose to focus on and refer to the American-produced female icons analyzed in this study as schoolgirls. Nonetheless, I use the work of scholars who have written on the *shojo* in Japan, since the schoolgirl is also considered a *shojo*. Like the *moga* and schoolgirl in Meiji and Taishō Japan, the *shojo* also becomes a site for the projection of male anxiety. Additionally, she is an image with which male audiences identify and desire introjection.

Scholars who write on the *shojo* in contemporary Japan point to how she becomes the object of a male gaze and is appropriated in male-authored narratives in Japanese pop culture. Sharon Kinsella identifies this body of male-authored art and literature on the *shojo* as the “cult of the girl”. It is in the work of these scholars that I find the idea of “introjection” comes into play with the image of the *shojo*. Not only does the *shojo* gain a male audience in Japan, she is appropriated in male fantasy narratives as a mirror image with which her male spectators experience identification. In other words, male spectators represent, or, to use Sharalyn Orbaugh’s words, “engineer” the *shojo*’s body in a way that they can occupy or “step into” her. Here, the materiality of the *shojo*’s body is required and manipulated for the purposes of introjection.

This desire to introject into the subjectivity of the *shojo* is demonstrated in Sharon Kinsella’s work on male critics and the “cult of the girl” in Japan. In her study on “[M]ale performers of Japan’s Lolita complex”, she addresses how men perform the *shojo* as a form of minstrelsy, thereby suggesting how the *shojo* becomes performed identity in Japan. She features a portrait in her essay of a male intellectual figure, who,

Kinsella proposes of such figures, exhibits “an unstable mixture of hostile resentment and a wishful identification with the imagined social power and largesse of ascendant girls” (83).

What makes the *shojo* a subjectivity with which male viewers feel “wishful identification” and desire introjection? Similar to Kinsella, John Whittier Treat discusses this “hostile resentment and wishful identification” with the *shojo*. In an article on Banana Yoshimoto, a self-identified *shojo* author who writes in the voice of the *shojo*, Treat analyzes male-authored, pseudo-intellectual social critique produced in 1980’s Japan. He points to a reoccurring tendency to critique Japanese society as “empty” and alienated due to the supposedly hyper-materialist and consumptive versus (re)productive behavior demonstrated by the Japanese population. These critics describe Japanese society as having receded in maturity and masculinity to the point that everyone can be considered a *shojo*. Since the *shojo* is not yet a woman with the responsibilities of reproducing the Japanese patrilineal family line, she is perceived to lack any purpose other than to consume. So, in this body of male-authored social critique, the term *shojo* was used as a referent for Japanese society that was perceived to be lacking in output and mired in excessive consumerism. In this way, the *shojo*, as Treat points out, became “a sign without substance” (12) that stood for Japanese society. Much like the *shojo*, Japanese society was perceived to be devoid of any characteristic or contributions to the better, social whole.

Treat’s work demonstrates how the figure of the *shojo* in Japan becomes a vessel through which male authors criticize what they perceive to be social alienation and deterioration that is the condition of late capitalism. For these critics, Japan’s wayward

populace and its excess consumerism are the most immediate problems that need to be addressed. They appropriate the figure of the *shojo* to this end and apply the term, almost satirically, to the whole of Japanese society. In this way, they describe Japan as childish, feminine, and naïve. Furthermore, these critics attempt to maintain their own identity by dissociating with a society in whose mirror image they have inserted the *shojo*. This use of the *shojo* demonstrates how images of young females are instrumental to identity formation in Japan. Producing the *shojo* as a mirror image resembles what Sharalyn Orbaugh terms “cognitive transvestism” (2003; 206).

In her work, Sharalyn Orbaugh explores the figure of the “Battlin’ Babe”, a central and aggressive, female action character found in many examples of 1990’s Japanese *manga* (comic books) and *anime* (animation) and in European video games. She names films such as *Ghost in the Shell* and *Princess Mononoke*, and video games such as *Tomb Raider*, examples of narratives involving this female character. The Battlin’ Babe is usually the main protagonist in such male-authored or “engineered” media and are intended for a male audience. Orbaugh is interested in the male identification with this female character in Japan. Because “young men in Japan today avidly consume and presumably identify with the female characters in these 1990’s hybrid narratives,” Orbaugh suspects a level of “cognitive transvestism” at play in the spectatorship of the Battlin’ Babe. I find that her concept of cognitive transvestism closely resembles introjection, that is, “stepping into” or “becoming” the Other, similar to the male critics of the *shojo* whom Treat discusses.

Orbaugh provides a visual description of the “cognitive transvestism” male authors and viewers desire through their spectatorship and “engineering” of the Battlin’ Babe:

“Everyday millions of men and boys around the world suit up for battle. Each laces up heavy rubber-soled leather boots, then straps on his gun belt, a backpack with water and extra ammunition and a pair of enormous...breasts. Then he enters the Tomb Raider videogame world in the persona of Lara Croft, the “female Indiana Jones”” (201).

While there may exist some level of transvestism in the Tomb Raider video game, or in Japanese manga and anime narratives, Orbaugh notes how these male viewers suspend the female’s role in a heterosexual economy when they step into her character. In this way, the Battlin’ Babe lacks sexual agency where male identification begins, but, as Orbaugh stresses, the Babe is not really human, but cyborg, alien or robot, engineered by her male author. Her reading of the Battlin’ Babe as a form of cognitive transvestism points to a reoccurring tendency in pop culture in which the body of a young female is represented in a way that encourages male identification with the Other. This same tendency is at work the contemporary treatment of the Japanese schoolgirl in US pop culture, although the schoolgirl draws the identification of both men and women.

In another work, Kinsella explores images of deviant schoolgirls (*kogyaru* or *kogal*, derived from blending of *kokosei* for high school and *gyaru*, the Japanized form of English “girl”) produced by educated, male filmmakers and animators in the 1980’s and 90’s. She focuses on how these male artists, following the media coverage of schoolgirls suspected of engaging in *enjo kosai* (compensated dating) and other wayward activities which “sparked fascination with the potential for female violence against men” (20), embraced this female icon in their work. She cites films such as *Love and Pop* (1998) and *Suicide Club*, as well as animated films such as *Campus Adrift* (2000), as texts that

present schoolgirls as threatening “vanguards” to Japanese society (31-33). The male authors of such texts portray schoolgirls who sell their bodies as participating in a form of resistance to a patriarchal status quo. Thus, the schoolgirl icon is appropriated into “[f]antasies of female revolt against servitude and exploitation [which] constitute an experiential voyeurism that is shared by both fearful and sympathetic male sensibilities” (16).

Kinsella breaks down male identification with the deviant schoolgirl, finding that her image evokes their own experiences of the student resistance movements of 1960’s Japan. In this way, male authors and producers of these popular images of the schoolgirl in Japan identify with and construct her as a mirror image of the Self. Here, Kinsella’s analysis of this male narcissism and appropriation of the deviant schoolgirl is informed by Gayatri Spivak’s reading of the politically-motivated appropriation of a young girl’s suicide in her essay *Can the subaltern speak?*, which explores the limits of post-structuralist and post-colonial approaches to interpreting Other subjectivities. Spivak’s essay ends with an anecdote about how various groups, following the suicide of young, female revolutionary Bhuvaneswari Bhaduri, interpreted her death in ways that benefitted their own interests and perpetuated regulatory notions of female sexuality in Indian culture.² Here, Spivak’s argument informs Kinsella’s as she brings attention to how the lives of young females are appropriated and treated as empty sites for the inscription of many groups. By asking, “can the subaltern speak?”, Spivak points out that though the

² For example, there was much speculation that the girl committed suicide to avoid the social consequences of an unwanted pregnancy. Without revealing the girl’s reasons for committing suicide, Spivak argues that the speculation surrounding her suicide speaks louder than, or perhaps speaks for, the actual girl’s death. The fact of this speculation is what leads Spivak to ask, “Can the subaltern speak?” In the end, the author’s curiosity about a dead person’s agency works as an allegory for a subaltern subject’s lack of agency in post-structuralist discourse.

subaltern female's body might be materially present, she lacks voice and agency. This supports Judith Butler's notion that a dominant culture's discourses on gender and sex condition a body's material presence within that culture.

Through her reading of Spivak, Kinsella concludes that male cultural producers in Japan:

“[b]y assuming the identity of schoolgirls, effectively or literally, and speaking on their behalf...have not only been assisted by the incapacity of schoolgirls to articulate or respond at a proximate intellectual and cultural level, but ironically they have perhaps at the same time blocked the path of young female political imagination. The dense, competitive, and progressive colonization of every last facet of the voice, opinion, attitude, sexuality, and image of girls in the media and throughout academia bears out Spivak's melancholy complaint that the “possibility of the collectivity itself is persistently foreclosed through the manipulation of female agency”” (39).

The idea of the “colonized” schoolgirl, as well as Spivak's colonized subaltern, is important to this study on schoolgirls in US pop culture for it reveals how images of schoolgirls in Japanese pop culture are the product of authors who ostensibly identify with and appropriate her body into their work. Through appropriating the schoolgirl's body, male artists in Japan produce false introjection into the schoolgirl's subjectivity. Furthermore, as with Orbaugh's *Battlin' Babe*, the schoolgirl's agency and bodily integrity is erased, leaving a condition that I argue comes close to resembling death.

In the past decade, earlier forms of male cultural and social critique, including “hostile resentment and wishful identification” with schoolgirls, are now the self-proclaimed preoccupation of a rising, male-dominated *otaku* culture in Japan. *Otaku* is a Japanese word, originally meaning “your house”, now used to denote members of a nerd or fan subculture, as well as the subculture itself. Members of this subculture are considered to be the highly enthusiastic fans of Japanese pop cultural texts, such as anime, manga, video games, and science fiction films. Much of the subculture devotes

itself to fan fiction, the re-writing or contribution to preexisting titles and franchises, as well as the cultural production of new texts. While mainstream Japanese society originally used the term otaku as a pejorative in reference to this subculture, members of the subculture have adopted it to refer to themselves in a more positive manner. This was further facilitated following the advantageous rise in the international popularity of Japanese pop culture and the Japanese government's promotion of pop culture, or "Cool Japan", as foreign diplomacy during the 2000's. Following these developments, otaku subculture has been identified as a leading contributor to Japan's status as a cultural and economic global superpower.

Many self-identified otaku as well as postmodern cultural theorists identify otaku culture as a space or realm for the production of social commentary on Japan (Azuma, 2001). Like the critics explored in the work of Treat and Kinsella, many otaku cultural producers seek to comment on the state of postmodern Japanese society in their work. Gender and sexuality are popularly featured issues in these producers' works and reveal the workings of otaku identity formation, as discussed in Orbaugh's work. Images of sexualized and disproportionate female bodies abound in examples of lowbrow and high art in otaku culture. As Orbaugh points out, various anime titles produced for male audiences, such as *Cutie Honey*, showcase the female protagonists' exaggerated bodily proportions. Additionally, examples the female body in avant-garde otaku art, such as Murakami Takashi's sculpture *Hiropon*, defy gravity and human anatomy with oversized breasts and missing labia (Figure 2). Murakami's own reflection on this piece reveals his own Otaku identity formation: "The culture of Otaku is the most important in Japan since

World War 2...[with this piece] I wanted to express the hidden sexuality of Otakus.”³ Often, female figures such as the schoolgirl and shojo in otaku art are highly sexualized and disproportionate. This representation and projection of a young woman’s sexuality onto her body is exaggerated or violently excessive. It is such representations of Japanese schoolgirls in otaku culture that experience extensive local and global circulation.

However, while otaku culture and otaku-generated social critique is consumed locally and globally and influences Japan’s foreign cultural policies, a politics of gender and sexuality there within is often overlooked, as are many of Japan’s female producers of otaku culture. As Laura Miller points out, “[i]t is precisely the gendered nature of forms of consumption and cultural products...that are missing in celebrations of Cool Japan” (26). Male otaku artists have been presented as the forefront of an avant-garde



Figure 2. Murakami Takashi. *Hiropon*. 1997.
Oil and acrylic on fiberglass. Private
American collector.

pop cultural movement in Japan. While the Japanese government has capitalized on female youth culture in Japan, “[i]t sanitizes the economic and sexual violence experienced by women and girls. It does not tell us very much about what is going on in girl culture apart from a few fashions” (27). For example, in 2008, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs recruited three female “Ambassadors of Kawaii (or cute)”, to represent the “Cool Japan” brand abroad in cultural festivals and events. Each of the Ambassadors were selected and

³ Murakami Takashi, interview. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UWYEPbnQyXU>. Video. Accessed August 8th, 2013.

assigned to represent aspects of female youth culture in Japan that amounted to little more than fashion trends: schoolgirl uniforms, the Lolita look, and Harajuku female youth fashion.⁴ This attempt at representing controlled aspects of female youth culture for global audiences is no match, however, for the preponderance of images of female figures, such as the shojo and schoolgirl, in otaku culture.

Several contemporary Japanese artists who have risen to fame in the 1990's and 2000's display a fascination and fetishization for the body of a young woman, especially the schoolgirl in their work. For example, Aida Makoto, a self-proclaimed otaku and social critic, features the schoolgirl in several compositions. Like the male critics explored by Treat and Kinsella, Aida uses the body of the schoolgirl as a way to comment on the state of Japanese society. His treatment of the schoolgirl in his work vividly reveals how the



Figure 3. Schoolgirl suicide in Makoto Aida's *Harakiri School Girls*. 1999. Print poster. Mizuma Art Gallery, Tokyo.

appropriation of her body is inherently violent, as Kinsella points out in her study on the deviant schoolgirl. For example, in his poster titled *Harakiri School Girls* (1999), a group of schoolgirls is depicted disemboweling and beheading themselves (Figure 3). All but one of the girls falls to their knees in a pool of blood and entrails. The last girl, in her *ganguro*-style tanned skin and bleached hair, remains standing with a sword raised

⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, Press Conference, 12 March 2009. <http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/press/2009/3/0312.html>

above her head, perhaps preparing to decapitate one of her companions or slice her own belly open. Aida comments on this piece:

“*Harakiri School Girls* is an allegory for the distorted mentality of Japanese youth at the time and the atmosphere of Japanese society...After the Bubble Economy collapsed, I felt that an air of pessimism was spreading through Japan like a virus.” (Ashcraft, Ueda, 2010: 131)

Yet again, the schoolgirl is used as a referent or mirror for a Japanese society that must rebuild national identity following economic collapse. For the artist, the schoolgirl must violently sacrifice her body in order to mirror society’s wounded identity. The violent trope of the sacrificial schoolgirl is one that carries throughout his work, Japanese pop culture, and also in images of the Japanese schoolgirl in the US.

In another work, *Jumble of 100 Flowers* (2013), Aida depicts the bodies of two naked *shojos*, one from whose face a swarm of strawberries explodes (Figure 4). These



Figure 4. Hunted shojos in Makoto Aida's *Jumble of 100 Flowers*. 2013. Canvass. Mori Art Museum, Tokyo.

girls are running towards the viewer and into two green reticles or gun crosshairs. These reticles, which symbolize the focus of the viewer, suggest how the spectatorship of young females in Japanese pop culture involves the violent sacrifice and appropriation of their body and subjectivity. This work also reflects Aida’s “wishful identification” with and fetishization of young girls. In an interview, He states: “ At the age of fourteen, I became obsessed with the magical quality young girls have...As I get older, the age difference gets wider,”

(Ashcraft, Ueda, 2010: 129). In a larger composition of *Jumble of 100 Flowers* completed in 2013, the girl’s dissolution into miniature strawberries, butterflies, and

candy suggests Aida's identification with young girls and his production of her as a mirror image: as his own identity becomes increasingly unstable, the girl also becomes unstable. Similar to the realism depicted in the bloody sacrifice of (and devouring of) Christ's body in early 13th and 14th Western iconography intended for religious identification, the *shojo*, or young girl, in Aida's work is sacrificed and fragmented for the purposes of identity formation (Figure 5).



Figure 5. Fragmented *shojo* in Makoto Aida's *Jumble of 100 Flowers*.

Chapter 2. Japanese Femininity and the Schoolgirl in the West

The following chapter will explore images of Japanese femininity in the West. These images demonstrate how gender has played a key role in the Western production of Orientalist art and literature. Icons of Japanese femininity are frequently featured in such art. For instance, in many examples of late 19th century and early 20th century European and American theater and art, the Japanese woman was often presented as a central character or subject of a work. Giacomo Puccini's opera *Madama Butterfly* (1904) is one of the most recognized Western works of art that portrays a Japanese woman. Such icons of Japanese femininity, and particularly the Japanese schoolgirl, continue to appear in contemporary Orientalist art. This chapter will explore and argue that contemporary Western images of the Japanese schoolgirl present her as an accessory to the Occidental self. It is further proposed that death is present in these contemporary images of the schoolgirl, as she must sacrifice her body as an accessory to the Occidental Self.

The earliest production of European and American Orientalist art inspired by Japan began shortly before the arrival of Commodore Perry's "black ships" (steam ships) in Yokohama Bay (1853) which ended Japan's long, feudal period of isolation (1635-1854) and led to the Meiji Restoration (1868). Before opening its doors, Japan's feudal government maintained tightly regulated trade with few European countries. This light trade introduced a small number of Japanese crafts and wares to Europe, which sparked artists and collectors' curiosity for Japanese art and aesthetics. Following the opening of Japan's doors to trade with the West, an influx of Japanese art flooded European and American markets. As a result, Western consumers and artists developed a hunger for collecting "all things Japanese," including furniture, screens, clothing, and art, among

other bric-a-brac. Many famous artists who also collected these imports began to replicate or create their own works of art inspired by Japan. This movement in Western art is referred to as *Japonisme* and is an example of what Said terms “second-order knowledge-lurking in such places as the “Oriental” tale, the mythology of the mysterious East, notions of Asian inscrutability-with a life of its own...“Europe’s collective day-dream of the Orient’” (52). Many notable artists and writers who contributed to this movement focused on Japanese women or particular aspects of Japanese femininity, such as dress and dance, in their work.



Figure 6. Vincent Van Gogh's *La Courtesanne*. 1887. Oil on canvass. Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.

Vincent Van Gogh, a famous French

Impressionist painter, became enamored with all things Japanese, especially art, and amassed a prized collection of Japanese ukiyo-e paintings, or woodblock prints.⁵ He mounted this large collection to the walls of his studio and painted in the style of many of the prints. One of his more famous pieces is that of a Japanese geisha titled *La Courtesanne* (1887), which was based on Kesai Eisen’s ukiyo-e print used on the cover of a French publication (Figure 6). This image portrays a Japanese geisha dressed in an elaborate kimono with a number of large

combs that fan out from her hair. She is presented with her back turned and looking over

⁵ Ukiyo-e is a technique within Japanese art developed during the Edo period (1603-1868) in which an image or text is carved onto a wooden block and then stamped onto a scroll or canvass. The development of this “stamp” art allowed Japanese artists and art manufacturers to reproduce a large number of prints for domestic and, once the country opened its doors to trade with the West, foreign art markets. By the beginning of the 19th century, numerous ukiyo-e manufacturing companies existed in Japan and ukiyo-e prints were in high circulation in Europe and America.

her shoulder, as if returning the viewer's gaze and inviting him/her into her world, the Orient. Paintings from the Japansime movement such as this one produce the female as a collectable image or accessory that further reveals a "wishful identification" with the Japanese Other.

Claude Monet, another famous French Impressionist painter, also collected a large



Figure 7. Monet, Claude, *La Japonaise*. 1876. Oil on canvas. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

number of ukiyo-e prints. In one of his paintings, *La Japonaise* (1876), he depicts his wife as dressed in a kimono and donning a folding fan (*ōgi*) while a cascade of non-folding fans (*uchiwa*) decorate the wall behind her (Figure 7). Like the geisha or courtesanne in Van Gogh's painting, Madame Monet is portrayed with her back turned, looking over her shoulder, again, returning the gaze and inviting the onlooker. American painter James Abbott McNeill

Whistler's painting titled *The Princess from the Land of Porcelain* (1865), also portrays a Western woman

dressed in kimono holding a fan. She stands before a Japanese screen and other Asian collectables in the room, such as a Chinese vase and a Turkish-style Oriental rug. These paintings not only reflect the ongoing trend for all things Japanese in art, but they also focus on the Orient through aspects of Japanese femininity, such as dress and flattering poses.

These portraits of Japanese women or Western women dressed in Japanese women's clothing, reflect both a "wishful identification" with the Japanese Other, as in

Van Gogh's *La Courtesanne*, and the Orientalist production of the Japanese woman as a performative identity, as in Monet's *La Japonaise*. Additionally, these works suggest how in the Japonisme movement, the Japanese woman becomes an accessory or collectable image. For example, *bijin-ga*, or Japanese woodblock prints that focus on beautiful women, were among the most sought after ukiyo-e prints in the West. Famous Japanese ukiyo-e artists such as Kitagawa Utamaro produced many of these *bijin-ga* prints (Figure 8).



Figure 8. Kitagawa, Utamaro, *Blowing a Glass Toy* from the Series “Ten Physiognomic Aspects of Women”, Woodblock print, 1791.

Examples of European and American literature and theater also contribute to gendered Orientalist images within Japonisme. Exotic and essentializing stories such as Julien Viaud's, better known as Pierre Loti's, *Madame Chrysantheme* (1887), presented Japanese women as collectable objects. *Madame Chrysantheme* is a story about a French naval officer's short-lived marriage to a Japanese woman during his temporary residence in Japan. As Susan Napier points out in her study on Western representations of Japanese women, Loti described Japanese people in a way that “evokes the animal” such as the “human hedgehog,” and de-humanized Japanese women as “little Nipponese dolls” (105). In a similar, exoticizing manner, Giacomo Puccini's opera *Madama Butterfly* (1904), a Japanese woman is betrothed to a Western sailor who, in the end, leaves with their son to return to Europe. Puccini's portrayal of the Japanese bride is tragic at best. These stories attest to and seemingly comment on the rising number of brief marriages between European sailors and Japanese women following Japan's opening to trade with the West,

as well as the tendency to objectify and “collect” Japanese women as trinkets or accessories while on temporary residence in Japan. They also attest to how in gendered Orientalism, the Japanese woman is produced as a performative identity.

The Japanese schoolgirl is another image of Japanese femininity that makes an appearance the early gendered Orientalism of the Japonisme. For example, in British composers W.S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan’s 1885 comic opera *The Mikado* (1885), three white actresses humorously perform as Japanese schoolgirls dressed in *yukata*, shuffling about in *geta* slippers, with fans, singing:

“Three little maids from school are we
Pert as a school-girl well can be
Filled to the brim with girlish glee
Three little maids from school.”⁶

As they dance and sing, they giggle and raise their fans to hide their smiles, evoking the mannerisms of Western women dressed as Japanese women in paintings such as *La Japonaise*. They not only reveal how the Japanese schoolgirl is a performed identity in gendered Orientalism, but they also suggest how accessories, in this case, fans, *geta* slippers, *yukata*, and pinned up black hair, are key to the performance of gendered identity. Thus, in some examples of gendered Orientalism, the body of the Japanese female also becomes an accessory to the Occidental Self, much like *bijin-ga* were accessories to Western consumer’s collection of Japanese art. The following examination of the Japanese schoolgirl in contemporary Western pop culture will further suggest how

⁶ Gilbert, W.S. and Sullivan, Arthur, *The Mikado*, 1885.

the Japanese female sacrifices her body as an accessory to Occidental “wishful identification” and false introjection into the subjectivity of the Other.

THE JAPANESE SCHOOLGIRL IN CONTEMPORARY US POP CULTURE

The following section will focus on the “cult of the schoolgirl” (borrowing Sharon Kinsella’s term “cult of the girl” mentioned in chapter1) in contemporary US pop culture and will further demonstrate how gender continues to play a key role in Western Orientalism. In contemporary US pop culture about Japan, the Japanese schoolgirl is frequently featured. Appreciation for this icon has grown since the early 2000’s, during the hey-day of Japan’s pop cultural influx in the US. The production of the Japanese schoolgirl in contemporary US culture is largely informed by her presence in Japanese pop culture. While the schoolgirl has been an icon in Japan since the early modern period as mentioned above, it has been her growing presence in Japanese pop culture of the 1970’s, 80’s and 90’s, that has found a global audience. In many examples of Japan-influenced cinema, music, literature and fashion, the schoolgirl and her contemporary incarnations often make an appearance, if, in fact, they are not the star of the show. Several stereotypical facets of this gendered icon are now recognizable to US audiences, such as the quintessential schoolgirl uniform or her ornate street wear, her shy, high-pitched giggle, and her penchant for commodities imbued with an essence of “cute”, such as Hello Kitty.

While gender always plays a role in any representation of another culture, the case of Japanese femininity, and presently, the Japanese schoolgirl, offers something unique. I intend to analyze the schoolgirl icon through examining a number of images produced in

the US. Namely, I will consider a television interview with Katy Perry; Gwen Stefani's "Harajuku Girls"; Simone Legno's *Tokidoki*; and the character of GoGo Yubari in Quentin Tarantino's film *Kill Bill Volume 1*. I argue that in each example, the artist expresses identification with Japan that is mediated by Japanese pop culture. Despite their "wishful identification" with Japan, as Western subjects, they fail to introject into Japanese subjectivity. Instead, they produce the image of the Japanese schoolgirl as the embodiment of their fetishization for Japanese pop culture. The schoolgirl's body becomes an object of fetishization in the US and is presented as accessory to the Occidental Self where the Self fails to introject into Japanese subjectivity. In this way, the Japanese schoolgirl must sacrifice her body for the production of false introjection into the subjectivity of the Other. This sacrifice is portrayed in each image through a variety of violent methods, such as skinning, disembodiment, murder, blood and torture.

Katy Perry and her Versace Schoolgirl "skin suit"

In a 2012 interview with television show host Jimmy Kimmel, pop singer Katy Perry discusses her experience living with Japanese female exchange students as a teenager. She explains her fascination with the student's clothes and the chopsticks they formally presented to her as a gift. Wide-eyed, she describes this experience as the beginning of a lasting "obsession" with them and with Japanese culture. She states: "It was so incredible watching them as a culture, so now I've been obsessed ever since."⁷ When Kimmel humorously questions whether the exchange students comprehended her obsession with them, Perry mocks herself and exclaims, as if addressing them: "I'm so

⁷ Kimmel, Jimmy. Interview with Katy Perry, on Jimmy Kimmel Live! #10.192, 25 Jun. 2012.

obsessed with you, I want to skin you and wear you like Versace!” Even though intended as a joke, Perry’s schoolgirl “skin-suit” acknowledges, almost hysterically, her desire, yet failure to *introject* into the Japanese Other. She joins a number of famous American Japanophiles who, failing to introject into the Japanese Other, participate in a gendered, Orientalist tradition of fetishizing the body of the Japanese female Other as an accessory to the Self. Where introjection into the Other fails, the female Other, in this case, the Japanese schoolgirl, is represented as an accessory to the self which is then used to produce a false identification with the Other.

Perry’s fetish for the body and flesh of the schoolgirl is instrumental to her identification with the Other. As with Lacan’s mirror stage, the schoolgirl functions as the mirror image or ego ideal with which Perry seeks “wishful identification.” In other words, she wishes to construct herself based on the image of the Other, or the Japanese schoolgirl. However, as Judith Butler demonstrates, identity construction is largely performative. For example, an individual constructs their own gendered identity through performing the pre-established behavior and mannerisms of a particular gender. In gendered Orientalism, the construction of Japanese feminine identity with which one identifies is also performative. This performance of the gendered Other is based on pre-established, or stereotyped mannerisms and appearances of the Other.

Describing her experience living with the Japanese female exchange students, Perry mimics their behavior and mannerisms, demonstrating the construction and performance of Japanese feminine identity at work in gendered Orientalism. In one shot, she bows her head and moments later, she cups her hands together and stretches her arms out, as if offering a gift. She describes and performs the Japanese schoolgirl engaging in

the custom of gift giving. Perry's endearing, but exoticizing, performance of the Japanese schoolgirl is reminiscent of early examples of gendered Orientalism in the Western performance of the Japanese schoolgirl, such as in Gilbert & Sullivan's *The Mikado*. Like Katy Perry's gift-giving performance, the scene from *The Mikado* in which three Western women perform as the Japanese schoolgirl demonstrates how gendered Orientalism is a kind of identity performance that is based on stereotypes of the female Other. The actresses' fans, *yukata*, *geta* slippers, and pinned-up black hair imply how accessorizing is also key to the performance of this gendered identity.

However, as Butler points out, the very idea that identity is constructed and performative indicates that these identities are not fixed and are unstable. Perry suggests a "wishful identification" with the schoolgirl through her simulation of her behavior. Stoically watching her perform the Japanese schoolgirl giving a gift, Kimmel proceeds to ask Perry about the schoolgirl's reaction to her obsession with her, a question that inadvertently forces Perry to confront the limits of her identification with the schoolgirl. Perry then acknowledges the failure of her identification or introjection into the Other. Again, Butler's notion of performativity indicates that Perry's identification is largely performative, and therefore is not fixed and is unstable. This instability of Perry's identification is at the heart of her joke about wearing the schoolgirl Versace suit. Acknowledging her failure to identify with the Other, she produces a false introjection into the Other's subjectivity through the image of wearing the schoolgirl's skin. The image of "wearing" the schoolgirl brings us to Butler's notion of the materiality of the body in Perry's identity formation.

The materiality of the Other's body, which equates with racial and ethnic difference, or those very elements that render the Other as "exotic" and which the Western subject lacks for the purposes of full immersion or introjection into the Other, is, to use Butler's term, "compelled" in gendered Orientalist representations of the Other. In other words, the materiality of the Other's body as expressed through the Other's difference, is required for authentically representing the Other. Since Perry's identification with the Other fails as she lacks this material body, she suggests that she skin the Japanese schoolgirl and leave her flesh to the skills of Versace. In this way, she incorporates the schoolgirl's material, fleshy body into her fashionable identification with her. Wearing the schoolgirl's flesh allows her to produce a false introjection into the Japanese subjectivity. However, as indicated in the joke about skinning the schoolgirl, this appropriation of the schoolgirl's body is inherently violent. For Perry, the schoolgirl must sacrifice her body as an accessory for Occidental identity formation.

In order to yield the Versace schoolgirl skin-suit, the Japanese schoolgirl is sacrificed and murdered for her flesh. Perry's schoolgirl suit is made from a dead schoolgirl. This appropriation of the schoolgirl's flesh further reveals the violence inherent in the inscription of discourses of gender and sex (male/female) onto the material surface and contours of the body. In her study on materiality and identity formation, Judith Butler argues that discourses of gender and sex (male/female) appropriate the materiality of the body (genitals), confirm this materiality as fixed (penis=male; vagina=female) and then rigidly inscribe the notion of fixed materiality back onto the material surface of the body. This bodily inscription is the way in which dominant culture, through discourse, violently "regulates and constrains" the body.

Similarly, Occidental identification with the Other in gendered Orientalism relies on the fixed materiality of the Other's body, as in the Versace schoolgirl skin suit.

The schoolgirl skin-suit, an ironic, yet salient and violent image, is significant to Katy Perry's identification with and representation of the Japanese schoolgirl. Using the flesh of the sacrificial Other as fashion piece or accessory to identity formation is an unsettling icon in other moments of US pop culture. Buffalo Bill's woman suit in the 1991 film *Silence of the Lambs* is example. In this murder-mystery film, Buffalo Bill is the criminal antagonist who murders young women for pieces of their flesh, which he then uses to sew a full-body woman suit. The woman suit is central to Buffalo Bill's identification with the female subject. Like Perry's "wishful identification" with the female Other, Buffalo Bill wishes to become a woman. A scene from the film pictures him applying make-up to his face and dancing before a mirror. Buffalo Bill performs as a woman, thereby demonstrating the performativity of his desired gendered identity. However, his desire for full immersion and transformation calls for a woman's material body. This further suggests that identity formation is also tied to and expressed through the materiality of the body. To provide material proof of his identity, Bill murders the woman for her flesh, which he then uses to accessorize or cover his own body. Similar to Bill, Perry's joke about her production of false introjection through the flesh of the sacrificial Other indicates a disconnect between human subjects where the commodity form mediates identity formation.

As an accessory to the Occidental self, the Japanese schoolgirl is violently sacrificed for her skin and worn as a designer garment. Not only does the schoolgirl skin-suit reveal how accessorization and fashion is key to the performance of gendered

identity, it reveals how, in modern commodity fetishism, the bodies of Others are treated as inanimate objects. In the case of the Japanese schoolgirl, she is treated as an object, which the Occidental Self wears in order to produce false identification with the Other. This treatment of the schoolgirl bears a resemblance to how, in the fashion industry, individuals working as runway models are treated as inanimate and of secondary importance to the garment or commodity in the age of modern capitalist production. Caroline Evans proposes that capitalist commodity fetishism produces the conditions whereby the runway model is treated as interchangeable with inanimate dolls or mannequins upon which garments are hung for display. The model is “sacrificed” for her body, which must appear mute and lifeless so that the garment can stand out. This treatment of the living, breathing runway model as inanimate, and, in many instances deathly, as Evans points out, is similar to Perry’s treatment of the schoolgirl and demonstrates the alienation of the human subject from the body in modern capitalism. For Katy Perry, the schoolgirl is sacrificed for her flesh, which then becomes a skin-suit that allows her to introject into the Other’s subjectivity.

However, as a skin-suit, the Japanese schoolgirl also becomes a garment or commodity that stands out on the body of the Occidental Self. Indeed, the schoolgirl’s dead body is commodified and takes on a primary significance over the body of the model that wears her flesh. It can be further proposed that Perry becomes a deathly and inanimate model donning the schoolgirl skin-suit, a comment on how the body of the pop star is also commodified. The commodity as a dead human subject is a critical analogy for how the relations between human subjects in modern capitalism are mediated by the

commodity. The commodity, itself, is not a living thing, however, it is imbued with a significance that is greater than a living human subject.

Katy Perry's production of the schoolgirl as a commodity that allows false introjection into the Other brings attention to how, in the Western Orientalism, Japan is produced as a commodity. Furthermore, the Japan that gets produced as a commodity is yet another image, like the schoolgirl, that is equated with and informed by an encounter with Japanese pop culture. Perry's encounter with the Japanese schoolgirl's fashion and the gift of chopsticks mark the beginning of her "wishful identification" with the Japanese Other. The following section will explore another pop cultural example of this "wishful identification" with the Japanese Other in which the schoolgirl, yet again, is presented as a dead accessory to the Occidental Self.

Gwen Stefani and her Harajuku Dolls

In a 2004 interview with British television host Jonathan Ross, American pop singer Gwen Stefani enters the studio, leaving backstage her entourage of four stylishly poised, yet silent, Japanese girls. Curiously, host Ross inquires about these four women. Stefani explains their presence: "They're kind of here, they're kind of not. They're kind of in my head; they're kind of my inspiration... I thought about them and they appeared one day."⁸ Stefani relegates actual living girls, whom she refers to as the *Harajuku Girls*, as mere figments of her imagination. However, they are visible as they accompany Stefani in public appearances, in live performances, and in music videos. They make up

⁸ Ross, Jonathan, Interview with Gwen Stefani, *Friday Night with Jonathan Ross*. #7.10, BBC One. 5 Nov. 2004.

one of the main motifs of her first solo album, *Love.Angel.Music.Baby*, and are sold as dolls and decorations on Stefani's designer label, *Harajuku Lovers*. These Harajuku Girls are another example of how the body of a Japanese schoolgirl appears as an accessory to the Occidental self. Stefani fetishizes the body of the female Other as it allows her to produce false identification where she cannot introject into the Other. Because the schoolgirl accessory is a silent figment of Stefani's imagination, lacking agency and bodily integrity, the Harajuku Girls are inanimate and evidence of how the Other must sacrifice her body for this mode of Occidental identification.

Shortly after her appearance on Ross's show, Stefani appeared for another interview in 2005 with Jimmy Kimmel, where she discussed her first visit to Japan. She marvels over the Japanese youth fashion culture of which she encountered. She states: "The first time I went to Japan with *No Doubt* I freaked out. I was like, 'Why am I not Japanese?'"⁹ Here, Stefani's dual feelings of awe and disappointment indicate her desire, yet failure to introject into the Japanese Other. As a way of subverting this inability, Stefani adapts the "mode of articulation" that Lii Ding-tzann describes as *yielding*.¹⁰ Unable to introject into the Japanese Other, Stefani yields to the Other through her creation of the Harajuku Girls as accessories, which she then uses to produce a false identification with the Other. In this way, the Japanese schoolgirl becomes Stefani's mirror image.

Stefani models her Harajuku Girls after the young, female fashionistas and primary consumers, most of whom are schoolgirl age, of Harajuku culture and who

⁹ Kimmel, Jimmy, Interview with Gwen Stefani, *Jimmy Kimmel Live!* Episode 3.394., ABC. 25 May 2005. *No Doubt* is the previous musical act of which Stefani is a member and lead singer.

¹⁰ Leon Hunt introduces Lii Ding-tzann's discussion of modes of articulation in his study from which I draw the notion of introjection.

appear in the pages of Tokyo fashion magazines made available in the US in translated book form. Harajuku is a station off Tokyo's main perimeter rail line and is also a shopping district famous for its boutiques that specialize in subcultural street fashion. This district is known inside and outside of Japan for attracting many Japanese youths, and particularly the Japanese schoolgirl, who is often associated with this location. These youths pace the district streets elaborately dressed in a variety of styles that incorporate a



Figure 9. *Fruits Magazine*, Tokyo: Street Magazine, LENS inc. 2013. [<http://www.fruits-mg.com/>]. Website.

blend of high and mid-range fashion garments. Photographs of these youths are also featured in several Japanese street fashion magazines available in the US, such as *Fruits* and *Egg* (Figure 9).

Stefani's initial encounter with this culture occurred in 1997, while on tour with her band *No Doubt*. Since then, she has cited this culture as influential on her own style and expresses a “wishful,” yet, failed identification with these Japanese youth (“Why am I not Japanese?”). As a

way to introject into the Other, she has created the Harajuku Girls, a doll-like entourage that accessorizes her body at public appearances, as well as *Harajuku Lovers*, her line of clothing and accessories, which are decorated with the illustrated bodies of the Harajuku Girls. The Girls often appear dressed in the same school uniforms or in Stefani's interpretation of Harajuku fashion. In some images, they are presented with rosy cheeks and blank stares, surrounding Stefani like replicated dolls (Figure 10). The singer alludes

to how she purchases and “dresses up” the Harajuku Girls like dolls. For example, in the song “Rich Girl” she sings:

“...if I was a wealthy girl
I'd get me four Harajuku girls to
Inspire me and they'd come to my rescue
I'd dress them wicked, I'd give them names
Love, Angel, Music, Baby
Hurry up and come and save me.”¹¹

In this quote, Stefani expresses her identification with, yet failure, to introject into the Harajuku Girl’s subjectivity, thereby calling on the Harajuku Girls to come save her. However, her intentions to dress and name them like dolls indicate how the Girls are constructed and performative identities through her intentions to dress and name them.



Figure 10. Gwen Stefani and her Harajuku girl dolls, 2004.

Like Katy Perry, Stefani wishes to construct her own identity based on the image of the ideal female Other. For Stefani, the Other becomes a “sign” in “whose mirror or

¹¹ Stefani, Gwen. “Rich Girl”. *Love.Angel.Music.Baby*. Interscope Records, 2004. CD.

image...[Stefani's] identity and creativity finds its definition."¹² In other words, Stefani takes the image of the Other as the reflection she wishes to see in the mirror and that will allow her to identify herself as the Other. Her construction of this identification, like Lacan's mirror stage, is mediated by an image and becomes, as Butler points out, a performance of that image. As this identity is always unstable by nature of its very performativity, the failure to fully immerse or introject into the Other compels a fetish for the material body of the Other. Stefani fetishizes the material body of the schoolgirl, as it fills in where performance fails to produce the Self as Other. In order to become the ideal Other, Stefani must produce a false introjection through the material body of the Other. She creates her entourage of Harajuku Girls towards this end.

This appropriation of the actual bodies of Japanese women deprives them of agency and bodily integrity, as is demonstrated in the idea that the Harajuku Girls are figments of Stefani's imagination whose silence is compulsory in her presence. In this way, the Harajuku Girls often appear as lifeless and silent versions of the female Other. The doll-like silence and lifelessness reveal how Stefani treats the schoolgirl as an inanimate object. Stefani's fetishization of the schoolgirl's body is the fetishization of an inanimate schoolgirl-doll. This relegation of the schoolgirl as an imaginary, inanimate object suggests how the Japanese schoolgirl must sacrifice her body for the production of Occidental identification with the ideal Other.

Several examples of Stefani's work, including her interviews with Ross and Kimmel, propose how the Japanese schoolgirl is sacrificed for her body. For example, on

¹² Bronfen, Elizabeth, *Over Her Dead Body: Death, femininity, and the aesthetic*, New York: Routledge, 1992. p. 209. Bronfen's quote originally reads: "Woman functions as a sign ...in whose mirror or image masculine identity and creativity finds its definition." For this analysis, woman corresponds with "Other" whereas masculine identity is equated, though not interchangeably, with Gwen Stefani/ "Self".

the cover of her album, *Love.Angel.Music.Baby*, Stefani is pictured sitting on a distorted, plasmic throne to which two of the Harajuku Girls appear to be affixed (Figure 11). The girls are abstract and ooze like mercury out of this misshapen mass to gain an ethnically marked corporeality in pinned-up hair and facial features. Here, the moment of their materialization is an analogy for Stefani's fetishization and production of their material bodies for her own false introjection. Hence, her own corporeality or image is unstable, abstract and in the process of formation. The Harajuku Girls are extensions of the mercurial mass that, as a whole, represents Stefani's identification in limbo as she attempts to produce herself as the ideal Other.



Figure 11. Stefani, Gwen. *Love.Angel.Music.Baby*. Interscope Records, 2004. CD cover booklet.

Both girls are fluid or effaced in the image; the body of one girl dissolves back into the throne and an incandescent bulb appears to blot out the other girl's face. The fluidity and intangibility of their bodies signifies the suspension of their corporeality and sentience at the moment in which Stefani produces a false introjection into the ideal Other. It is the suspension of this corporeality and sentience that provides the conditions

which allow the schoolgirl's body to become objectified and inanimate, much like Perry's schoolgirl skin-suit or the deathly runway model in Evans' study on the fashion industry in modern capitalism. As an inanimate object, the schoolgirl becomes a doll-like object of adornment for Stefani's body. The erasure of these figures and their fluctuation in and out of a material body attest to how they must sacrifice their bodies for Stefani's accessorization.

Stefani's appropriation and objectification of the schoolgirl for the production of a false identification with the ideal Other is played out in yet another example of her work. In the video for her hit single, *What You Waiting For?*, the Harajuku Girls appear to Stefani in a daydream following her purchase of a service that will cure her writer's block. The narrative follows her through reality, where she struggles to produce a song for her studio album, and her Alice in Wonderland-themed imagination, which exhibits a fluid consistency much like the throne on the album's cover. It is in her imaginary world where she encounters her muses, the Harajuku Girls. The "writers block" service provides her a transition between both reality and her imagination, where she can connect with her muses. While in her imaginary world, Stefani plays the role of Alice, encountering her muses and various characters, including versions of herself as the Mad Hatter and the Queen of Hearts.

At the beginning of the music video, Stefani sings the song's lyrics with her double dressed as the Mad Hatter. The lyrics are self-reflective questions and answers communicated between herself and her double. Halfway through the song, she encounters her identity as the Queen of Hearts, who then pushes her into a black void, where "Alice" Stefani floats and dreams of chasing a White Rabbit, who is one of the

Harajuku Girls. While dreaming in her imaginary world, she sings lyrics that reflect her identification with the Harajuku Girls and her longing to travel back to Japan. When she wakes back up in the studio, the Harajuku Girls are present, sitting silently still while listening to her. As she sings, she continues to question herself “What you waiting for?” However, she directs her gaze at the Harajuku Girls, as they have replaced her double or mirror image. Once the song ends, the Harajuku Girls, in stereotypical fashion, shyly giggle, and Stefani then receives a bill from the writer’s block service. Here, her false introjection is possible through the imagined presence of the Harajuku Girls. However, she has paid for this false introjection, indicating that the Japanese schoolgirl is not only reduced to a figment of Stefani’s imagination, but she is also commodified. In this way, the Harajuku Girls are twice emptied of their agency and bodily integrity.

This is not to say that the Harajuku Girls are entirely devoid of agency. The Japanese schoolgirl reverses this dynamic in several instances. For example, in the video for *Rich Girl*, Stefani herself appears as the tiny Captain of a toy ship in the possession of four young, giant Japanese schoolgirls. The schoolgirls rock the ship, sending her falling back and forth as she tries to dance and sing inside. They then stage a shipwreck at the video’s end. Here, Stefani is at the mercy of the Japanese schoolgirl and is, herself, portrayed as a doll (Oddly enough, her life is snuffed out in the shipwreck and she is reborn as a mermaid. Stefani is also a figment of the schoolgirl’s imagination.)

Similarly, returning to the album cover, one of the Harajuku Girls maintains her corporeal body, whereas the other is absorbed back into the viscous throne (an analogy for Stefani’s imagination.) In defiance, she turns her back to Stefani. All of these moments of resistance chip away at Stefani’s imagined possession and control over the

bodies of her Harajuku Girls. However, the defiant Harajuku Girl's face is, in the end, blotted out with a iridescent sphere and Stefani, although melting away, retains the integrity of her identity with her name boldly printed across the bottom of the cover image.

For both Stefani and Perry, the Japanese schoolgirl is a desired body with which they accessorize themselves. Accessorizing with the Japanese schoolgirl results in the schoolgirl's mutilated and disembodied condition. In order to wear her body or step into her skin, she must be emptied of agency and substance. Her skin must easily peel from her body, or her body must remain pliable. However, while the Japanese schoolgirl is an object of appropriation and subjugation, the bodies of Perry and Stefani, too, are themselves objectified as female pop stars and fashion icons. In their accessorization with the deathly or dying schoolgirl, they reveal the objectification of the feminine in capitalist commodity culture.

Quentin Tarantino and his Schoolgirl action figure

Quentin Tarantino's 2002 film *Kill Bill Vol. 1* follows the white, female protagonist, Beatrix Kiddo (Uma Thurman), as she seeks vengeance on a number of villains responsible for the murder of her friends and family, including her husband and unborn baby, present at her wedding one year ago. Waking from a coma she has been in since the incident, she resolves to hunt these villains down one by one until she finally confronts the ringleader, Bill. One of the villains is O-Ren Ishi (Lucy Liu), a Chinese-born female assassin who is now the head of the Japanese underground, or *Yakuza*.

Kiddo must travel to Japan to fight this enemy and along the way master Japanese swordsmanship. Before she can fight O-Ren to the death, she must get through her vicious Japanese schoolgirl bodyguard, Gogo Yubari (Chiyaki Kuriyama). Gogo is called forth, donning a typical sailor-style school uniform and white socks (Figure 12). She swings a flying guillotine above her head (an homage to a character from an early Hong Kong martial arts film that enjoys Tarantino’s endorsement in US markets).

Although a minor character, Gogo is one of the most well recognized US-produced images of the Japanese schoolgirl. She is an ethnic cast member or “action figure” that accessorizes the set of Tarantino’s film. The film, a postmodern, intertextual pastiche of various film genres such as



Figure 12. Gogo Yubari. Tarantino, Quentin, *Kill Bill Volume 1*, Miramax. 2003.

the spaghetti western, martial arts, and blacksploitation, and its’ more “obscure” Asian cast members are accessories to Tarantino’s performance of a false introjection into the subjectivity of the ideal Other, or the Hong Kong filmmaker. During battle, Kiddo overcomes Gogo and her flying guillotine, hits her in the head with the exposed nails of a wooden table leg and kills her. A camera shot lingers on Gogo, as tears of blood drip from her eyes that then roll back into the sockets of her punctured skull (Figure 13). She

drops dead to the floor. This image in US pop culture is another example of how the Japanese schoolgirl sacrifices her body for Occidental identity formation.



Figure 13. Gogo, the dead schoolgirl. Tarantino, Quentin, *Kill Bill Volume 1*, Miramax. 2003.

Leon Hunt discusses Quentin Tarantino’s identification with the East Asian filmmaker, whom he constructs as an ideal Other and positions as a mirror image of himself. Like Katy Perry and Gwen Stefani, Tarantino expresses a “wishful identification” with the Other. Hunt quotes an interview in which Tarantino implies a desire, yet failure, to introject into the subjectivity of the East Asian martial arts filmmaker: “I wanted to immerse myself so much in that style of [martial arts] filmmaking so that the things they did would be second nature to me... I was like someone who lived in Hong Kong in the Seventies” (221).¹³

Tarantino’s knowledge of East Asian cinema and his desire to introject into the Other filmmaker is largely informed by his encounter with the presentation of East Asian martial arts films in US “grindhouse cinema” of the 1970’s and 80’s. *Grindhouse* refers to the modulation of foreign films for Western audiences, which were typically shown at

¹³ Though Tarantino directly cites Hong Kong filmmakers as his ideal Other in this quote, they are one among many, as indicated in the influence of Japanese director Toshiya Fujita’s film *Lady Snowblood* on *Kill Bill*’s creative direction.

“downmarket cinemas” that screened exploitation films. While the films were edited with English dubbing, much of the East Asian cultural elements remained. This early encounter with East Asian cinema and images of East Asian cultures influenced Tarantino’s “choppy” pastiche filmmaking style, which blends different genres and film aesthetics, as well as his identification with Hong Kong martial arts filmmakers. By identifying with Asian martial arts filmmakers based on his spectatorship of these “localized” martial arts films, Tarantino equates the Other with the budgeted variant of the original film for which he has developed an ironic appreciation. In fact, Orientalist reproductions of Asian pop culture often stand in for the Other where the Occidental self identifies with the Other. The Asian filmmaker of which Tarantino constructs as his ideal Other, or ego ideal, and into which he desires introjection is in fact an Other constructed and mediated by an images in pop culture.

An example of Tarantino’s desired introjection or immersion in the Other is represented through his identity a “gatekeeper” or “auteur.” According to Hunt, “‘gatekeeper’ figures” are “producers attuned to cults surrounding Hong Kong, Japanese and South Korean cinema, auteurs displaying their connoisseurship of Asian films and directors” (220). Tarantino fits this description through his endorsement of East Asian martial arts film releases in the US and through his production of such films as *Kill Bill Volume 1*. For example, many East Asian martial arts films distributed in the US have Tarantino’s name and a quote of his pertaining to the film printed across the movie box. While this endorsement reflects his connoisseurship and knowledge of such films, it also reveals the limits of his introjection into the subjectivity of the Asian filmmaker. He is a

passive “gatekeeper” from the Occidental sidelines as opposed to the Other filmmaker involved in the production of these films.

In 2001, Tarantino began production of his film, *Kill Bill Volume 1*. The film is Tarantino’s direct attempt to introject into the ideal Other with whom he identifies. Because Tarantino’s identification and attempt to introject into the Other calls for the material proof of his identity, his “immersion” is incomplete. As Butler argues, identity moves beyond the level of the performative and requires or “compels” the materiality of the body. Here, the lack of the Others’ body, which would allow full immersion in the Other, gives rise to Tarantino’s fetishization for the body of the Other. This fetishization for the body of the Other is visible in Tarantino’s casting of multiple Asian stars that “carry more subcultural capital than the more widely know Asian stars adopted by mainstream Hollywood [such as Lucy Liu]”, which include Shin’ichi Chiba, Chiaki Kuriyama, the cast comprising a biker gang the *Crazy 88’s*, and a Japanese band, *The 5, 6, 7, 8’s* (not to mention Chia Hui (Gordon) Liu who appears in *Kill Bill Vol. 2*). In this way, *Kill Bill Vol. 1* becomes an exhibition of his “collection” of Asian movie stars and a demonstration of Tarantino’s fetishization of the material body of the Other.

Gogo, the Japanese schoolgirl, is an ethnic body of which Tarantino fetishizes and with which he accessorizes his film in an attempt produce a false introjection into the ideal Other. She is introduced early in the film while sitting obediently and loyally by O-Ren’s side. She is both O-Ren’s security and vicious, female accessory. Not only does Gogo accessorize O-Ren, but she also accessorizes Tarantino’s film in several ways. Gogo, native to Japan, is essential to the film’s authenticity and the reproduced theme of female vengeance as seen in several East Asian martial arts films of the 1970’s. This

theme is one that appears in several Japanese action and martial arts films and is appreciated and endorsed by Tarantino as an “auteur” of the genre. Among other elements of various film genres such as a Spanish horn section from spaghetti Westerns, paused close-ups of characters and funk music featured in blacksploitation, he incorporates the theme of 70’s Japanese female vengeance into his pastiche-style film.

For example, the Japanese director Toshiya Fujita’s film *Lady Snowblood* (1973) is argued as having been influential on Tarantino’s style of filmmaking in *Kill Bill*. As Hunt proposes:

“ Kill Bill’s most substantial Asian influence is *Lady Snowblood*, in which Kaji Meiko plays a swordswoman literally born for vengeance. The film exerts a formal, as well as narrative, influence, with its chapter headings, self-conscious use of panel... and a snowbound climax that is invoked in the confrontation between The Bride and O-Ren” (225).

Gogo, a deviant schoolgirl similar to those of which Kinsella discusses in Chapter 1, taps into this theme of female vengeance through what Kinsella describes is a “cultural premonition of a young female rebellion against incarceration, economic dependence, forced sexual servitude, and unearned contempt” (16). However, rather than seeking vengeance against familiar individuals as *Lady Snowblood* did, Gogo targets random men. Her resentment most likely stems from the oppression of a lingering patriarchal social order, against which she must fight and protect herself and the Japanese underground’s first female boss. This patriarchy is represented through Tarantino’s depiction of several members of the Yakuza who feel hesitant towards the idea of a Chinese, female boss O-Ren, and the advances of a man with whom Gogo drinks at a bar.

Early in the film, Kiddo introduces Gogo and states: “What she lacks in age, she makes up for in madness.” A brief flashback scene that takes place in a bar where she

drinks with an awkward, older man follows this segment. As she drinks from a bottle of wine, the man asks her if she likes Ferraris (*Furari kaa ga suki desu ka?*), indicating what some suspect is code on Tokyo streets for oral sex or an actual reference to the man's own Ferrari. Gogo slams her bottle down on the bar and turns to him, asking: "Do you want to screw me?" The man embarrassingly laughs and confirms. She then suddenly drives a dagger into his stomach, asking: "Do you still wish to penetrate me, or is it I, who is penetrating you?"¹⁴ She removes the sword, his entrails falling to the floor. This scene, intended to build tension leading up to Kiddo's encounter with Gogo, provides audience shock not only at the advances of the older man towards a schoolgirl, but also with Gogo. At first, Gogo appears young, naïve, and vulnerable, however, in seconds, she turns sinister, gruesomely murdering local barflies. Here, her deviant schoolgirl identity is key to her violent and vengeful nature. As Kinsella points out, citing Gogo as an example of the deviant schoolgirl gone international, "Gogo capture(s) something of the oafish personality attributed to schoolgirls in revolt in Japan at the turn of the millennium" (15). By murdering the old man, she collects her vengeance against patriarchy.

Although *Kill Bill*'s white protagonist reverses the roles and positions Gogo as a villain, much like O-Ren, Gogo still contributes to the theme of female vengeance along which *Kill Bill*'s narrative follows and enhances the film's authenticity as an example of the martial arts genre. Gogo, like O-Ren, who seeks vengeance on the man who long ago murdered her family as depicted in an animated sequence in the film, is nevertheless a vengeful and deviant young girl. Furthermore, Kuriyama's ethnicity and knowledge of

¹⁴ *Kill Bill Volume 1*. Dir. Quentin Tarantino. Perf. Kuriyama Chiyaki. Miramax, 2003. Film.

the Japanese language further serves the film's authenticity. In this way, the material body of a female Other exoticizes and authenticates the film and allows Tarantino false introjection. Kuriyama's character is authentic insofar as she performs a gendered, Japanese identity that also draws on a lingering social anxiety about deviant schoolgirls in Japan. She resembles the images of deviant schoolgirls of which Kinsella discusses and is stripped agency. Additionally, like Stefani's Harajuku Girls, she is relegated as an accessory to both O-Ren and Tarantino. She is a violent, Japanese female, "action figure" which gives Tarantino's film sequence enough of a feminine and ethnic edge to "pass" as an example of a martial arts film. However, this schoolgirl accessory, like the others explored in this thesis, succumbs to death when the films' protagonist murders her.

Gogo's schoolgirl identity and her bloody death is necessary to Tarantino's appeal not just to American audiences, but also to the Japanese movie audiences whom he idealizes as having a compulsive thirst for realistic depictions of violence and gore. As Hunt points out, "Tarantino made considerable capital out of preparing a bloodier version of *Kill Bill* Volume 1 for the Japanese market, claiming that Japan 'can handle this stuff better. They just think it's funny'" (225). Tarantino can further produce a false introjection through his appeal to his idealized Japanese audience. This generalization is perhaps based on his encounter with and endorsement of Japanese martial arts films such as *Lady Snowblood* of which he follows and replicates carefully in *Kill Bill*'s pastiche of film genres. It is through his encounter with Japanese pop culture that Tarantino makes generalizations about Japanese movie audience's tastes.

Gogo's presence as well as the realistic depiction of her death in the Japanese version lend the film authenticity as an archetype of the martial arts genre and appeal to

Tarantino's idealized and *imagined* Japanese audience. Accessorizing *Kill Bill Volume 1* with the bodies of Others ostensibly qualifies the film as an example of martial arts cinema and Tarantino as an Asian martial arts filmmaker. It is through the sacrifice of Gogo, as well as the death of many other Asian cast members, such as Lucy Liu, Gordon Liu, etc., that he appeals to this imagined audience, and thereby deceptively introjects into the subjectivity of the Other filmmaker.

The presence of the white protagonists' introjection into Other subjectivities- i.e.- her mastering of Japanese swordsmanship, her fluency in Japanese- is the articulation of Tarantino's desired, yet failed, introjection into the Other. This fictitious mini-introjection occurs within Tarantino's actual attempt at introjection. In this way, Occidental audiences can identify and introject through the protagonist's rapid immersion in the Other. However, this Occidental spectatorship of the Self involves the violent appropriation and sacrifice of the Other's body. Furthermore, it represents the mass production of narratives of introjection into the Other, where the Other is actually the congealment of the Orientalist fetishization of pop culture.

The Japanese Schoolgirl's Death by Cute in Tokidoki

Tokidoki (Japanese for "sometimes") is a label featuring patterns designed by artist Simone Legno, an Italian national living and working in Los Angeles. In 2005, US cosmetics designers discovered his label when it was initially launched in Italy, and at their invitation, Legno moved to L.A., where he continues to produce a Tokidoki line of apparel, accessories and toys for retail outlets across the globe. The Tokidoki pattern,

which is amenable to various themes, is a reproduction of Japanese “cute” or “kawaii” aesthetics and cartoon characters drawn in a similar style to those on the label of the Japanese company Sanrio, such as “Hello Kitty.” Tokidoki’s kawaii pastiche blends symbols of Japanese, Italian and American urban subcultures and organized crime. For example, Legno incorporates cartoon versions of the Italian mafia into his patterns. While Legno’s work reveals his appreciation for Japanese aesthetics and culture, he also reveals a penchant for symbols of femininity, death and violence. His seemingly multi-cultural, yet violent patterns are vividly arranged around the body of a gigantic, sexualized cartoon Japanese girl. In Tokidoki, Legno holds the Japanese girl hostage as an accessory within an economy of violence and death. Tokidoki is another testament to how a young, Japanese girl, such as the schoolgirl, must sacrifice her body for Occidental identity formation.

Like Quentin Tarantino, Legno’s identification with the Japanese Other is primarily informed through his initial encounter with Japanese pop culture. Growing up in Italy in the 1970’s and 80’s, Legno was exposed to an influx of Japanese animation, or *anime*, that debuted on Italian television. While importing anime into Italy required a large degree of “localization”, which includes such processes as Italian dubbing and particular scene omissions, some representations of Japanese culture remained. This includes examples as obvious as a cartoon character wearing traditional *yukata* or *kimono*, or something less obvious as a character eating sushi with chopsticks (now a global trend). Despite the localization of anime in Italy, Legno has developed a connection to and identification with Japan through his spectatorship of anime. Legno

equates his encounter with Japanese pop culture with the Japanese Other and Japanese culture. As Legno points out in a 2008 interview:

" ...It was not just about the characters and the stories, but through animation I could experience the lifestyle of Japanese people - the way they ate, their houses, neighborhoods, trains, cherry blossoms, student uniforms, rice balls... everything that is iconic of Japan. As a little kid I got struck by all of this; I have sketches from when I was in kindergarten designing Japanese people and Japanese elements."¹⁵

As a demonstration of his appreciation for Japan, a foreign culture imagined and constructed through his consumption of Japanese pop culture in Italy, Legno incorporates his interpretation of Japanese “kawaii” aesthetics in his Orientalist “pop” art. The term “kawaii” is derived from Japanese female youth culture where it is used to refer to things that are adorable, cute, and cool, such as Hello Kitty accessories, or even something considered charming and helpless, such as baby animals and the elderly. Over time, the term has moved beyond the confines of this local culture to now refer to, what Christine Yano describes as an “aesthetic and sensibility that seems to dwell in the playful, the girlish, the infantilized, and the inevitably sexualized, for old and young alike” (682). Kawaii aesthetics are now noticed in many facets of Japanese culture, from animation to high art, from cell phone accessories to public notices. Legno even sites the influence of globally recognized Japanese artists whose work exhibits this kawaii aesthetic, such as Murakami Takashi.

Legno describes himself and his Orientalist pop cultural art as an example of Japonisme. Dean Evans states of Legno in a 2008 interview:

“ Ask Italian artist and illustrator Simone Legno to describe his artwork and he'll sum it up with one word - 'Japanisme'... his soul is firmly rooted in the "happy face of Shibuya" and the "magic silence of Kyoto". A fascination for all things Japanese defines Legno's work.”

¹⁵ Evans, Dean. Interview with Simone Legno. *Computer Arts*. Computer Arts, 2008. Web. 11 Nov. 2008.

Legno identifies with European and American artists of the Japonisme movement. Indeed, elements of Japonisme, especially images of Japanese women, pervade his work, such as tattoos of Van Gogh-esque geishas on the backs of his cartoon girls. However, identification with the Japanese Other, especially the gendered Other, describes a literary and artistic impulse in the Japonisme canon. This identification with the Other is a tendency in many works of art and literature. In other works, this identification is also the subject of witty commentary, such as Monet's *La Japonaise*, and possibly, as Akane Kawakami proposes, in Loti's *Madame Chrysantheme*.¹⁶

However, as Legno sites Japanese culture as an influence on his work, he identifies with, rather than comments on, Japonisme artists whose work demonstrates an identification with Japanese subjectivities, for example, with Japanese women and ukiyo-e artists. Legno's identification is not only mediated and informed by Japanese pop culture, but also by the works of artists and writers who identified with Japanese culture. This further suggests that not only Japanese pop culture, but also Orientalist culture, such as art and literature, mediates Occidental identification with the Other. In other words, Legno's identification is based on earlier examples of Occidental identification with the Orient (I also do what Japonisme artists did), thereby demonstrating how Occidental identity formation is a mediated and repetitive performance.

¹⁶ See Kawakami, Akane, "Stereotype Formation and Sleeping Women: The Misreading of Madame Chrysantheme." Kawakami argues that Pierre Loti's novel, despite being read as an Orientalist and racist text, is in fact the author's own "self-sacrifice" to the demands of French *japoniste* readers. In other words, she holds, "Loti is only too aware that the story of his relationship with a Japanese woman, to a Parisian readership in 1887, is bound to be read in the context of *japonisme*, that is, fated to be *misread*" (Kawakami, 2002: 288). Therefore, she considers Loti's text a commentary on European culture.

The lack of the Other's body causes the instability of Legno's identity performance and his failed introjection into the subjectivity of the Other. As a result, Legno develops a fetishization for the material body of the Other. This fetishization compels the material presence of the Other, and in this case, the schoolgirl, as an accessory in his work and through which he produces a false introjection. However, this

need for the material body of the Other as accessory to the Self calls for a dead, unoccupied body, drained of agency and life, as indicated through the images in Tokidoki. For example, in one of Legno's early works, the Japanese schoolgirl returns the viewer's gaze through the empty, Orientalized slits of her eyes as she is held hostage and surrounded with anthropomorphized, kawaii symbols of violence and death (Figure 14). While a grimacing razor



Figure 14. Legno, Simone. *Poster for Yoyamart*. 2007. New York City: Yoyamart.

blade threatens to cut through her chest, a miniature, rosy-cheeked child in a full-body cow skin suit stands guard with a tommy gun (a satire of the Italian mafia or *moofia*). An extra supply of bullets smile as they warm patiently on a fire that burns next to a carton of milk playing soccer with a detonated bomb. The grim reaper's skull-face appears ten times and is "super flat" and

mouth-less, much akin to the art of Murakami Takashi and icons such as Hello Kitty. Trapped within this violent, deathly chaos, the schoolgirl's body becomes insubstantial and her torso fades into the colorful background of clouds and rainbows. Similar to Japanese women returning the gaze of the viewer over their shoulder in Japoniste paintings, the schoolgirl's empty gaze invites viewer identification and introjection. However, rather than immerse into the girl's captive world, the viewer is invited into an earlier moment of identification with the Japanese Other through viewing the tattoo of a geisha on her back, thereby denying the violent sacrifice of the schoolgirl for the Occidental Self's false introjection.

In another Tokidoki image that is grafted onto a men's cap for sale at the Tokidoki website, the Japanese girl is pictured with a snake coiled around her naked, tattooed body (Figure 15). The snake

represents a point of male identification and promises introjection into its fantasy of rape as the hostage Japanese girl straddles his phallic body. As it holds the girl captive, the snake's head hovers above her shoulder with its fangs drawn, threatening to strike her should she try to get away. Again, the schoolgirl is held hostage in Legno's work by



Figure 15. Legno, Simone. Title unknown, date unknown. Accessed August 2013.

an image that symbolizes methods of bodily harm such as strangulation, dismemberment, stabbing, poisoning, and rape. Additionally, her tattoos reflect how Legno further abuses this female figure through the inscription of his fetishization of Japanese pop culture and

Japonisme onto her flesh. This image reveals how the appropriation of the Japanese schoolgirl's body for Occidental identity formation is inherently violent.

As these images demonstrate, Legno fetishizes the body of the Japanese schoolgirl as she is the embodiment of Japanese pop culture and Japonisme. He accessorizes his designer label with her body, producing false immersion into Japanese subjectivity. However, the schoolgirl must sacrifice her body as an accessory to Legno and is portrayed as a hostage within an economy of violence and death. Even though there are obvious elements of violence present in Tokidoki, some argue that Legno's work must be understood as an example of multiculturalism. For example, Emiko Okayama and Francesco Ricatti explore Legno's work as an articulation of "the reciprocal and complex cultural and economic influences that link Japan, Italy and the USA" (2). They argue that a gendered Orientalist critique is ill equipped as a framework through which to analyze Legno's work. Because Legno's work captures the influences of multiple cultures and is produced in the "global and decentered nature of contemporary capitalism", they maintain, "it is increasingly important to consider the in-between of different cultures" (2).

While Legno is an example of a transnational artist from Italy who lives and works in the US, and while Tokidoki does incorporate a pastiche of kawaii symbols of various cultures, his work continues to produce "second-order" knowledge on the Orient through "notions of Asian inscrutability" and "Europe's collective daydream of the Orient." This is apparent in how he acknowledges that his encounter with Japanese pop culture and earlier moments of Orientalism in the West, such as Japonisme, inform his appreciation for and identification with Japan. The argument that Legno's work must be

read through a framework of globalization and multiculturalism rather than gendered Orientalism overlooks how the exoticization and fetishization of the female Other is an ongoing form of Orientalist production in the West. This argument further overlooks how commodity culture mediates the cultural relations between Japan and the West, thereby creating false encounters and experiences with the Other.

Conclusion

The Japanese schoolgirl explored in the work of Katy Perry, Gwen Stefani, Quentin Tarantino and Simone Legno is an example of contemporary gendered Orientalism in the West. These artists, like many Western Japanophiles, express an appreciation for Japan that is based on their initial encounter with images of gender identities in Japanese pop culture. They profess a longing for and identification with Japanese subjectivity based on this encounter. In this way, the Japanese Other is the literal embodiment of the Western fetishization of Japanese pop culture. Although the artist desires introjection into Japanese subjectivity, each must confront the limits of their ability to introject into the Other. This failure to introject is recognized as the Self's lack of the materiality of the Other's body, which then results in a fetishization for the body of the Other, and specifically, the body of the Japanese schoolgirl. Thus, they appropriate the body of the schoolgirl for the purposes of false introjection into the Other. In this way, the schoolgirl must literally sacrifice and empty her body of life and agency so that these artists can "cloak" themselves in or introject into Japanese subjectivity through the materiality, or skin, of the body.

The vulnerability and death of the Japanese schoolgirl coupled with the instability of the Self's identity construction points to how "death is at work in the cultural construction of femininity" (Bronfen, 208). In her work on the aesthetics of death and femininity, Elizabeth Bronfen refers to the construction of the feminine and masculine through Lacan's theory of the mirror stage and the Symbolic order. She brings attention to how femininity functions as a mirror image from which masculinity "splits" and finds

its definition and identity. Within the Symbolic order, she argues, femininity comes to embody death and disembodiment, opposite of which masculinity stands alive and whole.

Recalling Lacan's mirror stage, Bronfen states:

“Lacan's insistence that femininity can be understood only in terms of its construction must be seen in relation to his general theory that the human subject emerges from a radical split, both in relation to the void introduced at birth with the loss of the primordial mother and with the creation of the unconscious, as the child is grafted on to a system of laws and symbols” (210).

Plugging the feminine/masculine into the logic of the Symbolic order where self/Other resides, Bronfen proposes that masculinity splits from and is defined against femininity; femininity “stands in for male lack” (212). In this way, woman's “function is to support the fantasy of self-actualization and wholeness to be gained in relation to an Other” (213). In order to maintain the wholeness of the self (masculine), death often becomes the female form (Other) in representation. Furthermore, inherent in the female form is the “lack of a fixed place, an uncanny shifting of position, a fading, an absence within representation as well as a superfluity” (212). The order of the symbolic can be applied to the Japanese schoolgirl; where Occidental's identity is questioned (“Why am I not Japanese?”), the schoolgirl must come to stand in for the lack of the Other, sacrificing her own bodily integrity and agency. This assures the Occidental Self of the fantasy of identification and introjection into the Other.

The construction of the Japanese schoolgirl as the embodiment of Japanese pop culture that is key to Occidental identity formation reveals how commodity culture reproduces the means of capitalist production at the level of the body. As illustrated in the image of the Japanese schoolgirl in Western Orientalist pop culture, the Self feels a “wishful identification” with the Other and thus produces the Other as disembodied and

inanimate, like accessories or cyborgs, into which the Self falsely introjects. However, because the Other is the embodiment of Japanese pop culture, the Self actually identifies with the commodified form of the Other, thereby producing false introjection into a commodity. In this way, the commodity itself introjects, albeit falsely, into the psychology of human identity formation, not just as pieces of a whole identity, such as an accessory or garment, but as a mirror image. This dangerous identification with the commodity form promises the perpetuation of capitalist reproduction and the sacrifice and alienation of human agency.

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