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Introduction

From the Bronx to the Boutiques:
The Rise of Street Style in the Fashion Industry[1]

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Abstract

Street style was born as the distinctive brand of the first *crews* in the disadvantaged Bronx in the mid-Seventies. Today this stylistic trend has established itself as a global phenomenon, and not only strictly in relation to clothing. In the more recent years of its explosive rise in the contemporary fashion industry, this trend would seem to have sacrificed its initial *freshness* on the altar of worldwide business. What appears most interesting, however, is the fact that this change has allowed the 'style of the streets' to contaminate the fashion sector, even reaching into apparently untouchable sectors in the universe of the most celebrated brands. Virgil Abloh for Louis Vuitton, Alessandro Michele for Gucci, Dao-Yi Chow in Sergio Tacchini or Riccardo

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Tisci in Burberry (after his experience in Givenchy), Kim Jones in Dior and Raf Simons now in Calvin Klein are, in fact, only the most emblematic names in what amounts, *tout-court*, to a contamination which is modifying from the inside the classic canons of fashion creations. How did this change come about? In what measure did the concept of 'new accessible luxury' dictate the extremely fast pace of this escalation? What are the consequences today, and what will they be tomorrow, of this epochal change for the fashion industry? Starting from a necessary historical excursus on the origins of this style and on its evolution over the decades, this article intends to address these questions utilizing a semiotics-based methodology.

Keywords

Street style, New accessible luxury, Fashion semiotics, Fashion contaminations, Brand.

1. Introduction

An eclectic phenomenon in constant change, *street style* was born as the distinctive brand, or uniform, of the first *crews* in the disadvantaged Bronx in the mid-Seventies. Today this stylistic trend has established itself as a global phenomenon, and not strictly in relation to clothing. In the more recent years of its explosive rise in the contemporary fashion industry, this trend (initially markedly *underground* by definition and in status) would seem to have sacrificed its initial *freshness* on the altar of worldwide business, forgoing its jauntier, fresher, 'freer' face to present itself as a highly codified stylistic universe. This mutation, on the other hand, has permitted *street style* to conquer, with ever increasing vigour, the more illustrious sectors of the fashion industry.

That which appears most interesting for our purposes, however, is that this change has permitted the 'style of the streets' to contaminate the fashion sector with its characteristic features, even reaching into apparently untouchable sectors in the universe of the most celebrated brands. There are numerous examples. Virgil Abloh for Louis Vuitton, Alessandro Michele for Gucci, Dao-Yi Chow in Sergio Tacchini or Riccardo Tisci in Burberry (after his experience in Givenchy), Kim Jones in Dior and Raf Simons now in Calvin Klein are, in fact, only the most emblematic names in what amounts, *tout-court,* to a contamination which is modifying from the inside the classic canons of fashion creations, historically – in most cases, at least – regulated by an (archaic?) concept of the beautiful, the traditional, the well-proportioned.

Since the origin of the socio-cultural unit, choices of clothing have constituted vehicles for identity, creating (and then influencing) the representation of the self and presenting themselves as texts subject

to interpretation.[2] If one's garments, traditionally, are (also) the means utilized to demonstrate one's belonging to a particular tribe, when these 'tribes' assume potentially infinite dimensions, then it is clear that a reflection on the assumed (or assumable) meanings of certain typologies of clothing choices (especially if operated by drawing from the wardrobes of realities that are potentially very distant from that in which one finds oneself physically inserted) becomes indispensable.

From sub-culture to luxury, *street style* clothes are now part of mass culture and, far from the social contours of that Bronx which gave origin to them, do not nowadays desist even from an occasional reference to that *Camp* which – in the early days – exclusively connoted the world of *gangsta rap.* A stylistic universe which had developed on the West Coast of the United States, and which in the past – as is well known – was looked upon with ill-concealed suspicion by the East Coast purists.

How did this change come about? In what measure did the concept of "new accessible luxury"[3] dictate the extremely fast pace of this escalation? What are the consequences today, and what will they be tomorrow, of this epochal change for the fashion industry?

Starting from a necessary historical *excursus* on the origins of this style and on its evolution over the decades, then concentrating on *fake branding* and on garment citationism, here understood as central elements for explaining the success of the entire phenomenon, this article intends to address these questions utilizing a semiotics-based

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2. "In order to understand the social functions of customs we have to learn to read them as signs in the same way in which we learn to read and understand languages" (Pětr G. Bogatyrëv, "The Function of Folk Costume in Moravian Slovakia", in *Approaches to Semiotics*, ed. Richard R. Crum [Den Haag: Mouton, 1971[5]], 83).
3. Michael J. Silverstein and Neil Fiske, "Luxury for the Masses", *Harvard Business Review*, vol. 4 (April 2003), 48-57: https://hbr.org/2003/04/luxury-for-the-masses.

methodology. The objective will thus be that of defining the contours of choices which have now acquired a global dimension.[4] Within these choices, the desire to represent (*intentio autoris*), and subsequently to represent oneself (*intentio lectoris*), drawing from the vestments of an 'other' culture, will therefore assume a central role in the daily discourse in relation to clothing.

2. Street style, the origins

The origins of *street style* are rooted in the genesis of the Hip Hop movement. The birth of this style can be collocated in the Bronx in the mid-Seventies. In this historical period, in fact, the neighbourhood, which is one of New York's five administrative boroughs, finds itself in a phase of significant urban decline,[5] leading to the exponen-

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4. A global dimension as demonstrated by two examples which are worth mentioning here, purely on the level of anecdotes and with no claim to going into the many possible interpretations or analyses of the phenomena in question. The first is Virgil Abloh's appointment to the creative direction of luxury French fashion house Louis Vuitton (rendered official in 2018), the second – very recent – is the announcement, shared on social media in July 2020, of Rapper Kanye West's desire to take part in the election campaign as a candidate to the presidency of the United States of America.
5. 1959 was the year of the construction of the "Cross-Bronx Expressway", a large road artery which crosses the heart of the district. Its realization entailed the demolition of dwellings, warehouses and factories. This meant the loss of jobs for many of the area's inhabitants, and drove the white middle class to move elsewhere, in search of greater economic security and of a more comfortable lifestyle: there followed a significant devaluation of real estate assets, which encouraged numerous Afro-Americans to move into the Bronx, attracted by the rents which were lower than in other districts, resulting in extremely high poverty and unemployment rates, and fostering criminal activities and the birth of the 'gangs'. This was one of the first events leading to the impoverishment of the Bronx.

tial growth of the unemployment rate and driving many young people to crime. Gangs are born that vie for control of the area in a context of widespread drug-trafficking and almost daily gunfights. Contemporaneously, the New York city council effects, for political reasons, a huge cut in public spending. This triggers a domino effect: the last remaining exponents of the middle class flee from the Bronx, the conflicts between gangs lead to hundreds of deaths, numerous exasperated families set fire to their own homes in the hopes of collecting fire insurance payoffs and thus being able to move elsewhere. The situation degenerates.

For a decade the Bronx is left abandoned to itself. The forces of law and order, disorganized and without funds, are unable to intervene in a district that is entirely devoid of laws and rules, the political class has no interest in it because the *middle class* (which represents the electorate) has by now transferred itself elsewhere. In these ten years, 40% of the area's buildings are destroyed.

Only in the second half of the Seventies does a new investment strategy slowly begin to emerge for the district's redevelopment. This new consciousness is fertile ground for the birth of Hip Hop.

The younger residents, who have grown up in a context of extreme poverty and have been scarred by the deaths of friends and relatives, decide in fact to establish a truce between the gangs, promoting peaceful coexistence rather than violence: this new climate fosters integration and cultural exchange between the various ethnic groups resident in the district (principally Afro-Americans and South Americans), laying the foundations for the birth of the 'block parties', real neighbourhood parties based on music and dancing.

2.1. Hip Hop's zero day
Hip Hop's 'zero day' is traditionally considered to be 11 August 1973. A young girl decides to throw a party in her home, at 1520 Sedgwick Avenue, and offers her elder brother the opportunity to display his tal-

ents as a DJ for the first time. The youngster's performance is amazing: he makes use not of one but of two record-players, combining them with a mixer to implement an incredibly revolutionary new technique which permits him to play the most rhythmical sections of the records in a *loop*.[6] His name is Clive Campbell, aka DJ Kool Herc, recognized all over the world as the pioneer of Hip Hop. The event is also attended by two other key individuals in the history of this culture: Afrika Bambaataa, who contributes to laying the bases for the movement's ethical principles, and Grandmaster Flash, creator of various fundamental techniques for the musical development of the genre.

The party is a success, but it will prove necessary to wait until the following year to see this new phenomenon take shape. It is in 1974, in fact, that it achieves a strong identity and consolidates itself into an actual cultural movement based on strong ethical principles acquiring the name 'Hip Hop', attributed to the founder of the 'Universal Zulu Nation',[7] Afrika Bambaataa.

2.2. The four souls of Hip Hop

Hip Hop is divided into four disciplines, deriving from the most common and immediate forms of artistic expression and from the union of all the various cultural practices of the different ethnic groups that populated the Bronx. The first is B-boying (or Breakdance), connected to dancing; the second is Writing, connected to painting and calligraphic art; the third is DJ-ing, which comes from Dub.[8] The fourth

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6. That is, uninterrupted repetition.
7. An association whose aim is to provide ethical indications to the youths who approach this movement.
8. Dub is a sub-genre of Reggae that was born in the Sixties. In this music type the producers, having realized the public's passion for the rhythmical sections of the records and especially for those rich in bass and percussion, created ex-

and last discipline is MC-ing,[9] whose origins are rooted in expressive techniques for the most part deriving from the Afro-American people: the improvisation of rhyming verses on instrumental bases can be traced to the West African 'Griot',[10] and to *toasting*.[11]

2.3. The ethical importance of Hip Hop

It is interesting to observe the fundamental social function occupied by the Hip Hop movement in the second half of the Seventies in the Bronx. The movement, in fact, arises from a truce between gangs and therefore carries within itself a strong message of peace and integration. With the birth of the *block parties* and of this culture, for the first time the district's young people are offered the possibility of confronting one another in a constructive way and learning to appreciate the differences in their cultures. This gives the inhabitants of the Bronx the opportunity to seek and create a new cultural identity after years marked by crime and poverty. The gangs are transformed into 'crews', and start to channel and release social tension and the need for self-affirmation through Hip Hop: the gunfights give way to dance competitions between B-boys and freestyle battles, where the MCs

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tremely long instrumental versions of the Reggae pieces that were popular at the time in order to meet the demands of the dance halls. This very need encouraged DJ Kool Herc, who in fact had Jamaican origins, and subsequently many other Bronx DJs to develop techniques that permitted them to isolate and repeat these rhythmical sections which were considered particularly interesting.

9. MC, literally 'Master of Ceremonies'. It is believed that the MCs drew inspiration also from the *spirituals* and from elements of the *talking blues*, a digression in rhyme on an ironic theme that had spread in the Blues of the early periods. There is no doubt, furthermore, that Latin oratorial art may also have been a source of inspiration with its linguistic 'battles'.

10. Poets and singers who handed down the traditional culture orally.

11. An entertainment technique developed in the Caribbean area consisting in the narration of long stories in rhyme.

challenge one another by improvising rhymed verses. Increasingly taking on the appearance of an actual movement, Hip Hop develops its principal function as a means of communication, leading its creators to give this culture an ethical imprint with the declared objective of bringing about a general improvement both in society and in the Bronx itself.[12] The Zulu Nation organization, in particular, has always taken great care of this aspect, presenting the 'Hip Hop Declaration of Peace'[13] to the UNO on 16 May 2001.

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12. In the course of the years the musical genre born from this movement, Rap, has not always respected the fundamental ethical cornerstones of this culture, attracting diverse and reiterated criticisms. It is important to specify, however, that this genre, born in a district where deaths from drugs and gunfights were the order of the day, is still nowadays the genre chosen by artists who continue to live in deprived circumstances and exploit their music to try and narrate the context in which they find themselves. So-called 'Gangsta Rap' and the 'bling bling' movement (in fact connected to criminal activity and to the display of weapons and money), born in California, represent only a small aspect of Hip Hop which, nevertheless, on account of media and commercial interests, received greater visibility. This is in direct contrast with the ethical bases of this culture and for this reason has always been criticized in the 'underground' environment. In Gangsta Rap, indeed, the propensity towards helping the community is replaced by materialism, misogyny and the use of violence as a means to assert oneself socially within the group to which one belongs (something that then led to the historical feuds between Rap movements, the most famous of which was the conflict between East Coat and West Coast). The introduction of Hip Hop on the discographic market and the attention of the media in its regard turned out to be a double-edged sword. This entry (and the subsequent planetary success) proved, in fact, essential to the genre's conservation and diffusion but at the same time became (perhaps involuntary) accomplices in the loss of the ethical values at the basis of Hip Hop.
13. It will be sufficient here to remember the first two points: (1) "Hip Hop culture respects the laws and the agreements of its society, does not participate deliberately or voluntarily in any form of hatred, dishonesty, prejudice or theft"; (2) "Hip Hop is to be considered an informed international culture which provides every race, tribe, religion and people with a basis for the communication of their best ideas and of their best values" (my translation).

Having a significant entertainment function, and being excellent dance music, this genre spread extensively in America and subsequently in the world, in its turn exerting considerable influence on the society and on the mental outlook of the young. In particular, Rap influenced the ways of dressing and speaking of young people, contributing to the birth of their very own 'slang'. And of an authentic clothing culture connected to it.

3. Street style as fashion

From conflict and revolt, as we said, a new cultural movement is born. This movement, from its origins, is characterized by the contraposition of rival bands (the *crews*) which owe also to their choices of clothing the possibility of proposing an immediate demarcation line between 'us' and 'them'. Fashion, then again, is by its very definition a set of practices which are in the first place social, and which lead to the challenging of changes and appropriations that are quintessentially identitary. The clothing system as a whole is certainly capable of constituting an effective instrument of representation, save for then being able, as a second step, to deviate from this in order to become a more wide-ranging vehicle for sharing and for uniting.

The 'identitary obsession'[14] always finds new means for expressing and transcending, also in fashion, which is a central element in what may be defined as "the complex whole that includes the knowl-

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14. The expression cites the title of anthropologist Francesco Remotti's book devoted to the study of identity and of its processes of definition: see Francesco Remotti, *L'ossessione identitaria* (Roma and Bari: Laterza, 2010).

edge, beliefs, art, morals, laws, customs and any other capacities acquired by man as a member of a society".[15]

In the context referred to here, characterized by the desire to consolidate cultural practices defined as 'identitary', fashion appears capable of proposing itself as an indispensable instrument for demonstrating one's belonging within everyday life.

3.1. The genesis of street fashion

Where people used physical violence as a release for their anger, they now fight with music, *street art* and dance. The variegated population of the Bronx (Latinos, Europeans and Afro-Americans) daily enacts a rich mix of culture which characterizes it in its eclecticism, making the young proud of their ethnicity, provenance and group identity.

From its very beginning, this movement pays marked attention to clothing. In its initial phase, it therefore endorses a certain well-defined style which is that of the *B-boys*,[16] and which emerges with the principal aim of breaking the rules and norms of fashion, according to a process of change which echoes, in its explosiveness, the artistic modifications proposed in music. All that matters, at first, is to be 'Fresh', which essentially means "having a stylish, fresh look".[17] This early candour or, indeed, 'freshness' implies a certain capacity to stand out on account of one's style despite the economic conditions of poverty in which one finds oneself. Being 'fresh' thus becomes a way to elevate oneself above social injustice by displaying one's in-

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15. Barbara Miller, *Antropologia culturale* (Milano: Pearson, 2014), 10.
16. The *B-boys* were *dancers*, and their style was heavily codified in the initial phase of the movement and characterized by the use of Lee jeans, tank tops, turtlenecks and Kangol hats, Puma or Adidas sneakers.
17. *Fresh Dressed*. Directed by Sacha Jenkins, Atlanta, GA: CNN Films. 2015. Documentary.

dividual ethical integrity through 'clean' fashion. Since the beginning of the Eighties, this integrity has manifested itself in the extensive utilization of brands tied to sportswear such as Adidas, Nike and Reebok.

3.2. Dapper Dan, icon of yesterday and of today

The early *street style*, however, does not live of sports brands alone, and it would certainly be, at the very least, reductive nowadays to define this style simply as 'sporty'. The *street c*lothing culture, in fact, has always drawn profusely from the imaginary connected to luxury brands, re-elaborating in *street* key certain brand-values that underlie the construction (as well as the subsequent reception and consumption) of some of the most renowned designer labels in the fashion sector. This process of appropriation and re-elaboration of the constitutive features of a particular universe tied to clothing fashions in the 'luxury' segment will be the topic of the second part of the analysis presented in this article, but it may be useful here to mention briefly an iconic character from the origins of the phenomenon who played a key role in the creation of this imaginary of values which, as will be seen, is still today central to the creation of the fashion discourse on streetwear.

This personage, in some way the progenitor of the modern clothing conception of *street* fashion, is the Harlem *bootlegger* Daniel Day, otherwise known as 'Dapper Dan'.[18] This self-taught tailor, active in the New York district from the mid-Seventies, and subsequently from 1982 officially with a shop on 125th Street, began his career by re-

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18. In English, the common name 'dapper-dan' (whose plural is 'dapper dans') means: "A man who dresses and is groomed in a fancy, elegant or fastidious manner" (https://www.yourdictionary.com/dapper-dan; last accessed on July 14, 2020).

branding his sartorial creations with the logos of certain high fashion labels. It was not a question of mere falsification. Dan, in fact, impressed on his own materials the logos of Gucci, Fendi, Louis Vuitton and other great Italian and French fashion brands, offering his customers both reproductions of garments seen in the official designer collections and original garments, designed directly and autonomously by himself, with a famous brand name impressed on them. His first customers, prevalently belonging to Harlem's Afro-American community, showed that they appreciated his offer, also because in Dapper Dan's store they could find designer garments in large sizes, too, but even and above all highly original made-to-measure apparel bearing false logos. And it is precisely to some of his most famous habituès (Run DMC, Salt-N-Pepa, LL Cool J, Olympic athlete Diane Dixon and boxer Mike Tyson, among others) that his success was owed, as was – by consequence – an important change of paradigm in the clothing culture related to the world of Hip Hop. One of his most famous clients, however, was also in some way responsible for his unexpected failure. In 1988, in fact, Mike Tyson and his historic rival Mitch Green engaged in a fight right outside the Harlem shop and the video of the brawl was relayed by some of the major television stations in the world, with the result that certain designers accused Dapper Dan of counterfeiting. After its proprietor had been sued by various brands, the store was closed down in 1992. The story of this visionary tailor, nevertheless, could not yet be considered concluded.

Almost thirty years later, in 2017, Gucci's creative director Alessandro Michele in fact presented in his Cruise Collection in Florence a jacket that was practically identical to the one created by Dapper Dan in 1989 for Olympic athlete Diane Dixon. This instantly sparked off a controversy and, under the leadership of Dixon herself, the Italian brand was asked to attribute the creative paternity of the jacket to the Harlem tailor. After an agitated exchange of words, the brand entered into cooperation with Dapper Dan, making him be-

come in the same year the protagonist of a brand advertising campaign and asking him to design a collection to be sold in the Gucci stores in the spring of 2018. Nor did it end there. The brand itself, in fact, chose to help Dan reopen his historic shop, supplying him with the materials and the templates of the original logos for impressing on his garments, permitting him to restore life to his activity.[19]

Ultimately, this emblematic example allows us to conclude the first part of our discourse by sustaining that, like all general standards common to cultural *patterns*, street fashion too lends itself to being reinterpreted and re-elaborated in subjective, personal ways. In the light of this, it does not therefore appear to be a homogeneous system, but rather a complex communicative mechanism that is eclectic, multi-faceted and, above all, in constant evolution.

4. "Started from the bottom (now we are here)"[20]

Clothing is a social model, a more-or-less standardized image of forseeable collective behaviours, and it is precisely on this level that, according to Roland Barthes, it becomes significant. For this reason, it is fundamental in any clothing analysis to consider the social function exercised by apparel, contextualizing it in the phenomenon which

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19. The partnership between Gucci and Dapper Dan is active on various fronts up to the present day. After the outburst of controversy *à propos* the balaclava sweater, presented in the maison's AI 2018/2019 collection, the Harlem tailor has in fact also become a consultant for the label for a programme of multicultural integration and development which has various activities worldwide.
20. The quotation is from a piece by Rapper Drake, extracted as a single from his third studio album (*Nothing Was the Same*) and published in 2013 with the Young Money, Cash Money, Republic record company.

is considered and in its history. The presentation of the value of clothing, in fact, "depends on the system of which it is part".[21] Evidently the evolution of the garment subculture connected to the Hip Hop movement is no exception.

If, as we have seen, the beginnings of this underground trend were closely bound up with an extreme personalization of style, principally focusing on the already mentioned 'desire for freshness', it is only with the growth – geographical, too – of this movement that the system of reference values specializes and becomes defined in its details. This passage permits a trend which was initially centred on the individual dimension to actually rise to the status of a social model, proposing a standardized version of collective behaviours which gradually become more common. At the same time, it is this very change that ties this phenomenon to the 'classic' realities of the fashion sector, inaugurating the (fortunate) strand of collaborations which will subsequently be focal to the entire evolution of street style up to the present day.

4.1. RUN DMC and 'My Adidas'
This line of cooperation between music and fashion was ushered in by the New York trio RUN DMC which, besides establishing itself on the international artistic scene, was responsible for Adidas' becoming part of the B-Boys' uniform. The events which led to this are common knowledge. The trio, in fact, utilized mainly garments and accessories from the "brand with the three stripes" for their public appearances and in 1986 dedicated a song to the brand, actually entitled "My Adidas". This song and its scenographic presentation to

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21.   Roland Barthes, *Il senso della moda* (Torino: Einaudi, 2006), 23.

the general public on the occasion of the famous concert in Madison Square Garden were to prove responsible for a veritable revolution.

On 19 July 1986 the trio, greeted by about twenty thousand people, starts its New York concert. Among the audience, invited by 'Run' Simmons' elder brother, there is also the head of Adidas' marketing division, Angelo Anastasio. On the notes of "My Adidas" Run decides to get his fans involved and, slipping off a shoe, waves it above his head, inviting his audience to do the same. About twenty thousand shoes "with the three stripes" are brandished aloft in Madison Square Garden, and Angelo Anastasio immediately realizes the essential reach of this phenomenon and the capacity of such artists to attract masses of consumers[22]. Shortly after that, Run MDC sign a one and a half million dollar contract with the brand, becoming the first non-athletes to play a role as testimonials for an international sports label. Hip Hop opens itself up to mainstream culture, and the *collabs* with the golden world of fashion officially begin.

4.2. Streetwear from subculture to culture
This moment, emblematic and fundamental for the whole ensuing (extremely rich) history of the trendy connections between fashion and Hip Hop, is particularly interesting for our purposes because it pinpoints the first step in the journey that will result in this comprehensive artistic genre abandoning its *underground* dimension of reference to attain the status of an actual culture, finally flowing into the mainstream which characterizes it in the present day.

Nowadays the influences of the Hip Hop current on both *haute couture* and *pret-à-porter* fashion are undeniably frequent and many

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22. In "Louder than a bomb" (2012), u.net says that Anastasio's was, more than a decision, a sensation similar to a "religious conversion".

brands have decided to entrust themselves precisely to exponents of this clothing subculture. The examples, already partially remembered in this paper (cf. *infra*, §1), are numerous and demonstrate growing interest as regards, in the first place, the market.

The causes leading a stylistic genre that was born on the wrong side of the tracks to this (fortunate) epilogue are many, as are the emblematic cases in the history of Hip Hop that contributed to creating its fortune. As concerns the latter it is not possible here to explore the topic in an exhaustive manner, while it may be interesting to mention, briefly, the narrative journey which saw the genre under consideration emerge from underground in order to enter mainstream fashion in its own right.

On reconstructing the narration of this subculture it is in fact possible, in the first instance, to trace a generative scheme. Starting from the initial disjunction of the object of value (which, in the specific case, is assimilable to the desire for social emancipation and recognition), Hip Hop constituted itself thanks to a semantic investment that, different from that of the dominant culture, allowed it to obtain its own autonomy and its own recognizability. By choosing to adopt a creative 'alternative' as compared to the mainstream, it was possible for this style to create a new culture characterized by a new knowledge and by a necessary 'know-how'. In this articulated procedure of construction of meaning, texts and contexts, borders, languages and narrative methods were defined. Central to this constitutive process was the creation of a competence which, shared by its members, permitted them to move forward from being subjects virtualized according to a duty and a desire, conquering fundamental knowledge and power in order to obtain the desired reunion with the object of value (social recognition) and, consequently, realization as subjects (both on an individual and on a collective level). This journey, structured through means offered by the utilization of textual (and, broadly speaking, cultural) *bricolage,* thus permitted its subjects to build a

new universe of reference, producing a new culture. This culture, originally – as is absolutely par for the course with all subcultures – was critical towards the hegemonic one. Gradually, however, this universe of meaning ceased to place itself in direct contrast to the dominant culture, increasingly gaining space. This space, slowly extracted from that occupied by the main culture (including that of clothing), produced a new culture, a structural reserve of meaning, giving origin to an innovative system of veridition. In this sense, the street style movement connected to the Hip Hop culture introduced into mainstream clothing fashion a new clothing culture which slowly but inexorably surpassed it in a partial way.

In the history of clothing culture it is, moreover, possible to recognize a series of social discourses within which fashion inserts itself as an aide to defining the meaning of the debate, subsequently proposing itself as a means for the construction and deconstruction of the subjects negotiating this meaning. In this sense, the fashion phenomenon may be considered an 'anthropo-poietic' process,[23] able in the final analysis to 'create humanity' thanks to the role occupied by clothing (either by the combination of garments or, again, by the structured juxtaposition of clothes and accessories) as human capital useful in the definition of the genre. In this regard, Simona Segre Reinach claims: "Like a game of mirrors, a series of cross-references overturn the old differences between 'us' and 'them' and take new forms and

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23. As Francesco Remotti maintains: "Anthropo-poiesis is a concept that expresses modelling. The theory of anthropo-poiesis therefore distinguishes types, levels, modalities of production of the human being: above all, it insists on underlining that – since the human being is very plastic – there is on the one hand an incessant and often unconscious anthro-poietic activity, in which are also counterposed moments of more conscious and programmed activity" (Francesco Remotti, *Fare umanità. I drammi dell'antropo-poiesi* [Roma and Bari: Laterza, 2013], 18: my translation).

paths. From the point of view of fashion's consumer culture, the up-heavals are equally significant".[24] In all this, a fundamental role is played by the speed and globality of the contemporary market: "Contemporary fashion-making is typified by transcultural co-creation wherein aesthetics and practices are shared, negotiated and adapted".[25]

4.3. 'Cultural appreciation' and intercultural references
The mechanism of negotiation, adaptation, sharing and co-creation of contemporary fashion phenomena is also typical of the current stylistic paradigm of the clothing trend connected to street style. Citations, periphrasis and references are, moreover, a distinctive feature common to the entire Hip Hop universe.

As has already been said, this clothing culture has become structured in time and in space, consolidating cultural practices defined as 'identitary' created also by means of the acquisition of symbols originating from other contexts. In this respect, worthy of mention here is a particular phenomenon of 'cultural appreciation' that binds *street* clothing culture to religious iconography. There have been many stylists who over the years have drawn from the encyclopaedia connected to religious representation in their creative phase, making and proposing outfits and accessories inspired by the traditions of the principal religions.[26] Emblematic, too, in this sense, is the case of Met

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24. Simona Segre Reinach, "Visions of the Orient and Visions from the Orient", *QUERFORMAT* , vol. 3 (2013): 87- 91.
25. Wessie Ling and Simona Segre Reinach, "Fashion-Making and Co-Creation in the Transglobal Landscape: Sino-Italian Fashion as Method", *Modern Italy*, vol. 24 (November 2019): 402.
26. In this regard, we can think of the many Dolce&Gabbana label collections (in particular, but not only, the female *pret-à-porter* line A/I 2019-2020 which proposed a reinterpretation of the sacred heart of Jesus), but also the collection presented on the same occasion by Jeremy Scott, centred on the utilization of psychedelic prints from religious iconography.

Gala 2018, whose purpose was precisely that of proposing a discussion on the link between fashion and sacredness.

The interest of *street* fashion in the universe of meaning and the symbols connected to this sphere is absolutely topical and represents an excellent example of intercultural translation, as well as of interpretative shifting between contexts which turn out to be only apparently remote from one another.

5. Conclusions

In a context that is so rich in potential, therefore, what is modified is, on the one hand, the very desire to represent (*intentio autoris)* on the part of brands and designers and, on the other hand, the desire to represent oneself (*intentio lectoris*) on the part of the consumers. The multiplicity of choices that are offered to the recipients of the fashion discourse permit them to structure their own narrative clothing programme by drawing not only from the range of clothing innate to their culture of reference,[27] but also from that which is made possible by the dictates and stylistic interpretations which come from an 'other' culture. This choice, evidently, assumes a central role in the daily discourse on clothing and contributes, every day, to the definition of its language.

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27. A culture of reference which, from many points of view, is still influenced by historical models which go back to the period of the invention of *haute couture* in nineteenth-century Paris and which established the development of the prototypes of the modern woman (*la parisienne*) and the Channel man (the English gentleman). These two sartorial icons reinforced the Eurocentric ideology, the patriarchal model and a narrative of fashion which had two capitals, London and Paris, as capitals of civilization, and – at least potentially – they still survive today.

The changes in language should, consequently, lead us to re-evaluate the very definition of fashion, too often connoted as being purely identitary, certainly capable of constituting an efficient instrument of representation, but from which at the same time it diverges in order to become a more ample vehicle for sharing and uniting. A sharing which permits the individual speakers of the language of clothing to acquire languages (and sometimes 'dialects') coming from other vocabularies and contexts. A cultural sharing which, in the ultimate analysis, has permitted the stylistic phenomenon of Hip Hop to force the boundaries of its sub-culture, transforming itself into an actual culture in its own right and moving its collocation, literally, from the Bronx to the boutique.

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