

Taste, snobbery and distinction on the periphery of European bourgeois hierarchies

Sharon Kinsella (followed by an interview with Stephen Wilson)

First impression

Thinking about Bourdieu's thesis on taste and social class in Japan presents a root conundrum: on the one hand we see a society that positively creaks under the weight of its rich cultural seams, in which the desire to be cultured and culturally distinct is dynamic and extremely diverse. On the other hand, we are also confronted with a society in which the existence of social class and class cultures has been historically suppressed and denied with powerful effect. This conundrum has haunted my research around Japanese culture for the last two decades. Is the focus on culture in fact a partial result of the suppression of discussion about social difference, in the manner of an 'ideology of the aesthetic'? Bourdieu's *La Distinction* was issued in Japanese in two volumes in 1989 and 1990, in translations by Ishii Yojiro. The terminology 'snobbery', 'distinction' and 'taste' have had some limited uptake in academic sociology, though how far this has been useful in unraveling the complex social cultural map of Japan is undetermined. How exactly can we understand Bourdieu's sociology of culture in a society in which social stratification is cloaked and denied?

Second impression

To dabble lightly with Bourdieu is not a wise undertaking. Bourdieu's theory is more than simply extensive and the volume of critical work applying and extrapolating from Bourdieu adds up to a sector of academia in its own right. Major writing extending Bourdieu's oeuvre includes Axel Honneth's critique that cultural capital cannot exist as a given but is contingent on social recognition; Tony Bennett's critique of Bourdieu's 'culture of necessity' and his overdetermination of the working-class habitus and tastes; Lois McNay's work around the reflexivity of gendered habitus; and Lisa Adkin's feminist analysis of the rise of reflexive cultures and tastes in the decades since *Distinction* was researched in the 1970s.

As I am not a Bourdieu specialist or close reader, I will be using ideas of taste and distinction linked to social class only in the most borrowed and bastardized

sense. It has been argued of course, and quite early on, that the problem with Bourdieu and his *Distinction* is that it is based on testing class-based habitus' and class-based cultural tastes within a particular and uniquely snobby French society, a society heavily dominated by bourgeois prerogatives and values in which there has been relatively sparse romantic or egalitarian interest in subordinate-class life and cultural styles. Anthropologists, such as Michael Herzfeld, have suggested that despite his Algerian sympathies Bourdieu's theories of taste and distinction are Eurocentric. His work offers French bourgeois culture as the world model or norm, against which standard foreign, working-class and colonized peasant cultures are theorized largely as if incomplete and lacking. The European particularity of Bourdieu's case studies has been made a point of ridicule, similar to the joke made of Freud's psychoanalysis based on case studies of highly privileged female patients in Vienna.

So, how far can we apply Bourdieu's notions of taste developed in France to Japan? And anyway is Japan in fact less a part of Asia than a part of modernist Europe? (A reasonable presumption, and one that classier sections of Japanese society would appear to subscribe to, at least at the level of cultural taste.) And if there is a leap to apply Bourdieu's class-stratified French society of the 1970s to Japan, is it any more than the anachronistic leap involved in applying it to Ireland, Norway or even the United States, which also exhibit quite different patterns to the class culture and structure of postwar France?

And following that line of thought into the present, how far can we stratify taste by class habitus in complex post-industrial cultures anywhere, anywhere in which culture has come to play somehow more central and reflexive roles in people's lives and selected identities? Classical or Marxian class structures have become increasingly flattened, sanitized, Americanized, overlapping and indistinct – and in this regard closer to the suppressed class culture of postwar Japan – so how do these dissolved class societies generate class-based cultural distinction? Working out the pertinent questions that need to be asked in order to understand how Bourdieu's idea of taste can be used in contemporary Japan is easier than working out the answers and easier still than carrying out the fieldwork to provide them.

In broad brushstrokes, what are the key problems that need to be considered in the case of Japan? Perhaps, like North America, Japan offers a rather peculiar challenge to seeking out an equivalence with Bourdieu's hierarchy of tastes. Who are the aristocratic or working classes in the modern (post-1868) and post-Second World War state? Do they have a presence or a discreet habitus and what are their tastes? Certainly they are thinly developed as cultural archetypes and the aristocratic and ruling classes would seem to be an invisible social strata in the postwar period. The formal abolition of the privileges of the samurai class in the late nineteenth century, followed by the largely suppressed, denied and henceforth patchy awareness of social class distinctions in postwar thought, have contributed to the ideology of Japan as a homogenous ethnic mono-cultural place. Popular and sponsored notions of Japan as a civilization...

social class, made talking about or researching around the horizontal cleavages of class identity difficult and unpopular for most of the postwar period. (Recent shifts towards reintroducing issues of class inequality in social discussion about rising unemployment and irregular contract employment linked to the period after the collapse of Lehman Brothers in 2008 have not permeated over to cultural theory.) Educational credentials are widely traded as a code in place of class – the *gakureki* or 'personal educational history' being a more accepted and permissible way to mention socio-economic background and its connected habitus. Talking about social class in research with correspondents tends to lead to rejection of the terms entirely, making ethnographic work that seeks to unravel class experiences lying behind cultural tastes hard to move forward, despite the signs of class styles and reactions lying all about. Little wonder that school uniforms indicating types of school, sortable by rank, laced with subtle hints and signs of the variable class background of the wearers, have become fetishes in film, advertising and subcultures.

From the 1980s, school uniforms became a cult and fashion matter with the competitive launch of designer school blazers and uniforms by high-ranked and expensive private schools and the perverse surveillance of classy schoolgirls in uniform by subcultural elements, the coalescing otaku underground. The significance of state-school uniforms reaches rather wider than a class-detecting exercise but class typing and a kind of longing (*akogare*) for contact with children in high-class school uniforms, and at other times a delight in playing (*asobi*) in roughed up and mixed up school uniforms, permeates the fascination with uniforms as fashion. In 1985 Mori Nobuyuki published the first of many editions of the *Tokyo High-School Girls' Uniform Handbook* (*Tokyo Joshiko Seifuku Rankai*) in which anthropological sketches of girls dressed in the various high-school uniforms of Tokyo, are portrayed in their habitat – the streets close to the mother school in question, along with maps and tips on school uniform watching. It is an otaku work par excellence (entirely deadpan) in which the girls are dealt with as a kind of nature watching and the uniforms and postures suggest their social class, personality, and school ranking. In the mid-1990s, the school as a register of a range of issues linked to transformations in the gendered class structure (the threat and onset of a decline in relative male wages and labour conditions) exploded into mass media and culture. The media narrative of the 1990s focused on the idea of a spontaneous self-degradation of either poor and needy, or materialistic and high-class, schoolgirls wanting to strike out alone and earn independent incomes as consorts. Meanwhile schoolchildren themselves engaged playfully with customized school uniforms, hinting that they were slumming it and classy evening wear hinting that they were high-class or hoping to pass for that. Through other vectors class-gender language and signs persist and even flourish in hackneyed guises.

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Composite classical tastes

Across the classes, but especially visibly amongst the upper middle and educated classes, there is in Japan a strong expression of a double or composite array of class-linked cultural tastes and identities. These are composed of identification with both European registers of taste – listening to classical music, patronizing classic art exhibitions – and perhaps subscribing to other variants of French or English culture and, and sometimes or, subscribing to a domestic version of refined culture and habitus – a large multi-generational traditional wooden house (*ie*), training or appreciation of the traditional crafts and arts (*gei*) – no, *kabuki*, *ikebana*, *koto* or *gagaku* music, *nihonga* painting and *shodo* calligraphy and so on. (Amusingly the rather specific preference for French modernist or impressionist art and fashion amongst well-heeled Japan might work like clockwork in one of Bourdieu's taste surveys.) A tendency towards composite class habitus that identifies as both European or classical and as ethnic and Japanese would, at first glance, seem digestible enough. But the politics of Orientalism and the quasi-colonial rejection of non-European countries from classical cultural rankings, which have been profoundly internalized within Japan, means that this tendency towards a composite set of tastes, both European and frankly bourgeois and French (to wit Louise Vuitton), is an unstable and contested cultural habitus within modern Japan. Thus Joji, the narrator of Tanizaki Junichi's 1920s' novel *Foot's Love*, speaks of moving the rebellious and licentious Naomi, his wayward and tasteless young wife, from their European style 'culture house' (*bunka jukaku*) back into a traditional or Japanese style house with tatami flooring, with the hope this might architecturally induce her to curb her humiliating and foolish attempts at being 'Western' and also encourage her simultaneously to be more Japanese, chaste and obedient.

European or American cultural tastes within Japan simultaneously work in two different ideological frames – they can express a class habitus and identity, but also simultaneously function – or be interpreted as – signifiers of attitudes towards Japanese cultural autonomy. The result of this being, for example, that wealthy Japanese people with a taste for European wine might be admired as sophisticated in a class context but then in quick succession also be resented for their cultural choice to value wine culture over the illustrious traditions and makers of sake. We can find traces of these anti-colonial tastes for an autonomous and de-Europeanized Japanese culture and art in bodies of culture as diverse as manga and, especially the sort Azuma Hiroki might describe as being crowded with the symbols of 'pseudo-Japan', Hijikata's *bunsho* dance and its return to source and erasure of structure, and Murakami Takeshi's *superflat* art, all of which propose to have Japanese sensibilities and aesthetics. We can see small signs of the search inwardly, and backwards for independent Japanese cultural references across class-cultural contexts – a man wearing a *yukata* and zori sandals to an urban festival perhaps. The urge to return to a Japanese place (*ba*) in the ground (*chi*) or nothingness (*mu*) or the past, tends to be a broadly

middle-class and educated, sometimes bohemian, preoccupation and turmoil. For other classes further down, or simply below, the managerial chain, composite tastes and cultural fusion, as an aspect of everyday internationalism and wit, appear to offer less of an ideological concern or conflict. Taste and distinction in Japan is complicated and destabilized through the lateral cross-cutting of culture by the politics of Orientalism.

Flattened deconstructed classes

This taste of cultural dualism, indirectly leads us from our first problem – what are the canons and hierarchies of class culture outside of Europe? – to our second problem, that is, how does *taste* and *distinction* operate in both *other* (i.e. non-European) and *later* (i.e. most post-industrial, post-modern) places? In Japan and in other mainly post-industrial societies, class habitus may now be more obscure than it appeared to be to Pierre Bourdieu in the 1970s. Habitus may be partially eroded through deindustrialization and overlapping due to the gradual later postwar flattening of distinctive class cultures and identities. The causes of class flattening have been both political and structural, the latter being principally the deeper ploughing-over of stable class cultures and associated long-term cultural habitus' during the current recession. This is an economic recession now lasting over a quarter of a century in Japan. The rise of cheaper, irregular and service-oriented employment within the context of short-term economic temporality, and the resulting collapse of twentieth-century (unionized) male employee privilege and the stable and plan-able family budget, have undermined the conditions for the acquisition of specific class habitus' and tastes. Stable class-based and acquirable habitus' and tastes, as they flourished in the first half of the postwar period (until the 1980s), now appear to be left behind in the new tempo. The question this leads to is how the social inheritance and transmission of cultural capital is being (or has been) impacted by the decline in stable long-term employment and the associated decline in family formation and child-rearing, in toto. Will reflexive adults dealing with a fluid labour market and less normative life-course produce hyper-reflexive post-habitus children? Does reflexivity itself continue to be possible in the absence of static or stable cultural reproduction?

There is a small side point to mention here, if we retrace our steps a little. Research suggests that working-class consciousness and self-recognition was relatively weak in twentieth-century Japan because the blue collar had a briefer residency during the very rapid industrialization of Japan and because there has been a higher turnover of class position than those more slowly developing Northern European societies. A relatively high proportion of social mobility from agricultural labour and village self-employment into the urban cities transferred directly to clerical and white-collar jobs, while industrial blue-collar families have experienced high levels of social mobility into other classes, meaning that a specific blue-collar class culture had fewer generations and continuity

over which to coalesce as an independent habitus. This is the thesis put forward by Ishida Hiroshi based on his quantitative work on social mobility.

Gendered habitus

The third problem raised by our Japanese case is something that takes a pronounced historical form in Japan: gender division. The gender-divided structure of society upon which efficient industrialization has been so heavily organized, not to say resourced, has germinated separate spheres of culture, subculture and tastes for men and for women, the separate spheres and trajectories of which encourage the organization not merely of class-based habitus' but of 'gendered



Figure 14.1 Talking with Girl Teacher, *Gyaru-sensei* transmits her worldly wisdom to an '18-year-old dry-cleaning shop assistant'.

Source: printed with kind permission of Tokyo *Graffiti* magazine. Tokyo *Graffiti* (March 2010): 100.

habitus', such as those identified by Lisa Adkins. Taste wars are likely to be carried out in the language of gender conflict, as male and female class fractions battle it out for supremacy. Contemporary television, animation and film is saturated with gendered class identities – from the posh suburban working woman and tasteless working-class lad in *Trainman*, to the girls dressed as maids for cultural tourists in Tokyo.

In the Japanese case, gendered cultures and tastes often bring into play signs of gendered class. There is at times a virtual snobbery against women, which sometimes appears tantamount to an indignant masculine claim to distinction from a generalized 'female class' or even female underclass: the embarrassing and *declassé gyaru tachi* ('wayward girls'; which, incidentally, I discuss in detail in my book on *Schoolgirls, Money and Rebellion in Japan*, 2014).

Complex tastes and un-decoded messages

Taste is not where I start with work on Japan, or Bourdieu, but delight in reading the tastes and meanings of the people I meet in my fieldwork, has been a silent and enormous pleasure, corollary to research. Mark Waters is a man I met in Summer 2013 for the first time. How do we read this man's taste, his politics, his location ... in terms of class, or gendered class?

Mark has used a 'cotton net' shopping bag for a scarf to prevent him from being recognized, wears a hard helmet bearing the slogan 'Middle-school year 2'



Figure 14.2 The Chairman of the Revolutionary League of Unwanted Men, Mark Waters, in his new take on 'geba style', or the helmet-protected student demo wear of the 1960s, 2013.

Source: photograph courtesy of David Panos.

– which is an abbreviation of the popular phrase 'Middle-school Year 2 syndrome' referring to men with the purported mental age of 12-year-olds. In this case the slogan (*chuu ni*) is also a pun on the abbreviated name of the 'Revolutionary Middle Core Faction' (*chuu kaku*) of the 1960s – members of which would have originally worn the hard-helmets for street battles – and self-mockingly points out that his orientation is arrested development while theirs was revolution. Mark's tabard bears the slogan 'No matter how many times you have sex it makes no difference!' and expresses some of the politics of the *otaku* underground regarding a cynical disaffection from commercial encouragements to desire sex and marriage and consume.

The *Revolutionary League of Unwanted Men* raises new politics and a complaint about the proletarian position of men trapped in irregular contracts, who are unable to have dates or get married. It operates as a permanent and deadpan parody of a revolutionary organization of the late 1960s. Susan Sontag's suggestion that 'Camp is a solvent of morality. It neutralizes moral indignation, sponsors playfulness' (Sontag, 1964: 64) gives us half of a route into understanding this complicated stylistic gesture. Camp is play, making the unacceptable more humorous, more tolerable. The *Revolutionary League of Unwanted Men* carry out demos with banners in bomber jackets on the streets of Tokyo in a retro mode that recalls both the anti-Thatcher demos of the 1980s, and the campaigning of the late 1960s. "Smash Valentine Day! Down with Christmas Eve!" shout the banners. We see a taste for the class and political outfits and expressions of the past, we see resentment of the apparent forward advance of women no longer prepared to date or marry and become the dependent of a man on a modest wage. This is a protest by a section of society that feels itself squeezed and rejected from privilege over women and from the family and possibility of having children.

In some work on the terminality of family and cultural and social reproduction I carried out in 2012 to 2013, I was interested to explore what might be the habitus of the increasingly large minority, the 40 per cent and growing portion, of the under-50-and-over-25s who do not form cohabiting or romantic unions, marry or have children. My loose thesis was that they could not pass on their own class-based habitus, tastes and stores of cultural capital. So how could culture be reproduced and habituated? The answer to this question is beyond the remit of this chapter, but along the way we discover that angry single men (*himote*) find time to express their disaffection from the historical processes around them in parodies of class and student cultural styles.

The delight in taste cultures in the absence of an acknowledged taste culture

Subcultures in postwar Japan are not only heavily based in sentiments about gender – they also often appear to express an alert posture to the social world that is laced with class awareness and tastes. Animation, screen and street

fashion delight in class parody, nostalgia or recreation (as with Mark Waters). These gendered expressions of habitus and sets of male (*otokotpoi*) or feminine (*shojotpoi*) tastes or anti-tastes protrude from a society not as overwhelmingly rooted in the private family interacting together and forming a confidential unit, but as gendered individuals moving in public space – in cafes, in workplaces, in school clubs, on trains and on shopping streets, and in online social life.

How, for example, are we to receive the cultural messages coming from aristocratic Loligoth fashion? We see in Loligoth a display of affectation for Rococo and pre-modern courtly life, which are – as the sub-styles labeled by Mana (a pioneer of this style) suggest – 'Elegant Gothic' and 'Elegant Gothic Aristocratic' in their orientation. This can be seen in the film *Kamikaze Girls* (2004), which lays out the class/taste issue at hand for the main protagonist Momoko, who comes from a tasteless and low-class background and aspires to gentility and decadence of a sort that might be imagined in a Rococo court.

The aristocratic affectations of Loligoth and its joy in the theatrical, playful, excessive and anti-social remind us of Susan Sontag's prediction that 'camp' and aristocratic tastes will become free-floating: 'the aristocratic posture with



Figure 14.3 Loligoth shoes in an ostentatious and perhaps pseudo-Rococo style, 2010.

Source: photograph by Sharon Kinsella. Courtesy of the author.

relation to culture cannot die, though it may persist only in increasingly arbitrary and ingenious ways' (Sontag, 1964: 64).

What drives the camp taste for courtly luxury and style? Is it an elected mode of distinction that expresses something else? Perhaps an unidentified but distinct fraction within the unidentified mass middle-class culture that has not found another form in style, but which seeks to be distinct? Is it an expression of a desire to return to a lost slow time of stable, fixed even, social place and cultural style? Takemoto Nobara, in his original novel and the film script, both suggests that aristocratic pretensions are an expression of ambition in lower-class girls, in the case of lead character Momoko, to escape from a grimy underclass of bar hostesses and bottom-rung mafia.

'Gyaru' and lumpen

However, in the other half of girls' fashion and subcultures of the 1990s we saw repeated references to lower-class, prostitute-like, lumpen, dirty, disheveled and worldly.

Girls adapted the rough and coarse language of working-class men and the bodily gestures of drop-out schoolboy gangs, the *yankii*, while dressing in sexualized school uniforms hinting that they might be looking for business. While Roy



Figure 14.4 Unladylike squatting by kogaryu girls on the street in Kichijoji, Tokyo, summer 1998.

Source: photograph by Maggie Lambert.

Boyme suggests that: 'Class cultures are for example now marked by reflexive attitudes: "rueful, ironic, envious, reflectively proud"' (Boyme, 2002: 119). It was not clear in Japan that any straightforward or direct correlation existed between the class background of girls and the class signs in their styles that travelled through several dimensions of female and male culture.

Conclusion

In Japan, class is nowhere to be discussed or acknowledged and yet taste cultures and the desire for distinction are everywhere. Tokyo extrudes raffined tastes, parody and nostalgic niches. From whence do the drives to gain distinction flow?

Aspects of recent styles contain powerful references to class habitus and tastes that appear nostalgic, European, and often camped-up and theatrical. How are we to understand the appeal of classic, classy and class lifestyles decanted into style? In the most immediate sense they appear to be divorced and dislodged from a directly or indirectly corresponding class habitus. One hypothesis might be that they constitute a reflexive and nostalgic play experimenting with postures of social distinction in an otherwise featureless culture in which class signs have been suppressed, and are indistinct, potentially even lost entirely. Perhaps in reaction to the lost ground of the reliable suburban homes of the status-conscious and aspirational white-collar masses, the twenty-first-century multitudes seek to distinguish and calibrate who they feel they are through play-acting fashions and theatrical cosplay? And with what new emerging class/gender position within the transforming field of labour and privilege might each play with distinction be somehow connected?

Sharon Kinsella and Stephen Wilson in conversation

STEPHEN: If we think about otaku in Japan, what makes this globally distinct?

SHARON: What do you mean by otaku? I ask this as otaku and cure culture and anime in Japan has obviously been promoted and exported and through this otakuism has become a global term and concept ... but the meaning of this to those receiving it outside of Japan tends to be rather less nuanced and lacking the full social context and politics that it bears in its point of social origination in urban and mini-comi (fan culture fanzines) and online Japan.

STEPHEN: Yes, I was interested in a collective mass that finds a fixation, a common obsession for a subject, one that might somehow over time become something else. While I understand this as a critical point of documented Japanese research, I am curious to understand why such an activity is more advanced in the general habitus of Japan and not mobilized outside with the same commitment?

SHARON: There is indeed a growing body of research on otakuism, within Japan this tends to be stemming from within the otaku intellectual subculture

itself – so Honda Tohru's work on, criticism of, 'love capitalism', but also analysis by Azuma Hiroki (Animalization of the Postmodern), and Miyadai Shinji and Ohtsuka Eiji which have some connection to the male undergrowth of otakuism. Outside of Japan there is work by Thomas Lamarre, Jan Condy, myself and Patrick Galbraith. Otakuism has captured the imagination of theory and the discussion on it has been wide-ranging and eventually encapsulating or making otaku the examples, par excellence, of postindustrial social evolutions. In allegiance with relatively silent or simply ignored feminist critics and writers in Japan, my own understanding of otakuism is that it is profoundly linked to gender relations within Japan. In general otakuism is not a floating and contextless propensity towards 'obsession' or database consumption (Azuma) or de-hierarchalized visual composition (Murakami Takeshi) in a generalized postmodern habitus. Despite continual attempts to massage and disguise this subject in intellectual analysis and promotional reading on otakuism, especially the things written for non-Japanese secondary consumers, otakuism in Japan is a largely male terrain and is deeply bound up with the de-privileging of male labour in the period from around 1970 forwards. While early otakuism was more fixed on working through changing and deflating emotions towards a bright science-driven future through the medium of science fiction spoofs and otaku space adventures, from the 1990s the bulk of otaku obsession is with women. Women re-drawn in caricature form as nubile girls made available to give themselves and their loving care, to men. The particular transformations of the gender field in Japan over the past three decades; the shocking shift to a social world in which young women as secondary citizens and young wives working effectively as household servants have simply vanished, is the truer context and local habitus.

This explains the particularity of otakuism to Japan. Much of otaku culture is a lament for the loss of easy access to obedient women. This is my broad response, otakuism is also an immense subcultural space and contains within it much that is only marginally linked to gender, but perhaps laterally sits within the broader culture, by a link, perhaps, to traditionally male pastimes and skills – mechanics, cameras, collecting. Otakuism does also display interesting new fan and online fan communications which can and have been theorized independently to the gender issue.

STEPHEN: Do otaku seek distinction?

SHARON: As fans submerged in specialist knowledge of new cultural areas ... for instance, female idols and the minutia of their lives and accessories, or some new TV or anime series, otaku, and also female fans of BL and girls' comics (also sometimes called 'otaku' though this is a little misleading), might behave like fan cultures elsewhere, as a 'shadow cultural economy' with its own associated rewards of distinction and informal accreditation. The English cultural studies theorist Simon Fiske used Bourdieu's *Distinction* as a starting point to develop this idea that fan subcultures can operate as

alternative and new territories for cultural pioneers, who may be cut out of or unable to compete (maybe for class reasons!) in the hegemonic cultural spheres. While they cannot go to (let's say) Keio or Oxford University and receive official accreditation as a Doctor of Philosophy of, say literature, and then reap the social and cultural and economic rewards for this distinction, they might become the master of AKB48 trivia and receive popular respect, minor fame and even potentially future employability for this mastery. As a fan subculture the generation of alternative modes of distinction would be a component of otaku culture. But it seems that collecting and knowledge acquisition are less important since the gradual transformation of otaku culture in the 1990s into a more mass and commercial sphere coalescing around girls and gender-experiments. The third of subsequent generations of otaku from the 2000s forwards are less involved socially with other otaku and less involved in pioneering new cultural territory and achieving mastery, claimed Okada Toshio in his last book on otakuism published in 2006, *Otakuism is Already Dead* (Oraku wa sude ni shinde iru).

STEPHEN: You say that 'reflexive adults dealing with a fluid labour market and less normative life-course' may 'produce hyper-reflexive post-habitus children'. Can we discuss this further?

SHARON: Many would argue that subcultures in Japan, otakuism, are in some senses at the forefront of hyper-reflexive generations for whom culture is a series of deliberate and personal choices. I am not so sure these subcultural 'bricolages' – as they are often described – are about post-modern reflexivity ... so much as the impact of a complicated relation to Europe and muted connection to the rest of the world meaning that dressing-up as them over there, as any one of them from any era ... is fair game. And in another sense the 'Japan thing', the particularity and historical difficulty of 'being Japanese' (maybe somewhat similar to the insularity of France in the Anglo-speaking world) means that it has tended to orient inwardly and as a result has retained for longer a range of stable cultural habituses (albeit somewhat massified) than more easily globalized societies such as Britain, in which reflexivity fuelled by knowledge and choice found online and through travel, spreads its fingers across the educated classes. Subcultures tend to be making selections and reflexive assembled identities based on cultural options and styles, but not re-assembling bits of suburban middle-mass Japan. The bricolage is also often about childhood and the infinite fascination with cherry picking moments of childhood – pokemon, school satchels, hair grips, frilly socks.

STEPHEN: And what about the post-habitus children?

SHARON: The broader idea I was raising, and which I cannot bring down from the abstract to a particular place – Japan, England – is that reflexivity, or the increasingly self-aware and liberated individual take on culture which undermines the trajectory of Bourdieu's class-based cultural choices or communal habitus' (that one assumes have as a precondition to their continuity a lack of knowledge of themselves) perhaps cannot continue to exist indefinitely over

generations. A cluster of social generations – like my own – in their forties – which are tending to be quite reflexive and individualized about how they construct a cultural space in the home, which tends to be less coherently marked as class habituses, presumably cannot pass on their non-habitus to their own children, and their own children will not have a normative culture against which to re-work and reflex. At first they may become the hyper-reflexive youth so often described in the media as subsisting in FB space and worshipping Duran Duran and other cultural nomenclature of the rooted past ironically with increasingly convoluted personal connection to the band. And then what? For how long will ironic re-riffs and re-selections of the Mums' and Dads' own self-made choices, HBO dramas, VW camper-vans, post-working-classladdishness, hold out before the lack of origin and normative culture erases all pleasure or meaning in its re-consumption? Maybe the new habituses are global and rhizomatic and new adults from all over the globe will find communality and joke about their parents' incomprehensible and artificial cultural affectations, their battle to get their kids off *Clash of Clans* (where they originally encountered each other) and into school tests, and the sense of temporal freefall. Perhaps we will see class habituses, signs and systems emerging in a connected global space – by this I do not mean to suggest that a habitus could be comprised of the mere common practice of going to Ikea and Tesco, so much as that the lived practice and conflicts in context of these families lives may repeat and coalesce sufficiently to become a specific global class habitus.

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