Fractious Bodies and Processes of Sedimentation

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‘What the hell is going on there?’ ‘I am in-between’, that is how Hiroki describes herself, as we met on a warm sunny day in 2009 in Berlin. We talked about gender, body and desire in Visual Kei. Hiroki is 18 years old and for 4 years she has been a ’Visu’ – which is one of the most common self-depictions of the protagonists in Visual Kei in Germany. But what is Visual Kei and why does Hiroki speak of being ’in between’?

Over the last years Visual Kei has been very prominent in the Media in Germany. Along with Manga and Anime, the possibilities of Social Media and fast running broadband internet, Visual Kei came from Japan to Germany around the year 2000. In the first years altogether unnoticed, Visual Kei got a lot of attention by the mainstream media in May 2005 when a concert of Dir en Grey in Berlin was sold out within one day and more than 3000 people came to see the Japanese band.

Visual Kei is a subculture with its roots in Japan. The term means literally 'visual system' and relates to the slogan of one of the most famous Visual Kei bands X-Japan: ’Psychedelic violation crime of visual shock’. Influenced by Glam Rock, New Romantic, Goth and artists like David Bowie, Kiss, Twisted Sister and the Japanese Kabuki Theater, the first Visual Kei bands came into existence in the early 1980s. The music touches a large variety of genres, like Goth, Metal, Glam Rock up to Pop; sometimes mixed in only one song. Accordingly Visual Kei is characterized by a crystallisation around a certain style of music - called J-Rock.

But – as one might guess from the term – Visual Kei is not only known for the music, it has something to do with specific clothing, make-up, hairstyle, tattoos, piercings, fashion; shortly with a significant aesthetical practice. This aesthetical practice is interconnected with a specific set of practices of body, gender, desire, sexuality and relationship.

The protagonists in Germany follow a specific aesthetic subcultural style in which heterosexual gender dichotomy is put into question. Judith Butler shows that gender is not a pre-discoursive, biological fact, it is a social construction, a performative act. Subjects are liable to the assumptions of normative heterosexuality – those powerful rules that force us to conform to specific gender roles in a heterosexual binary conception of sex and gender (Butler 1990). This is the symbolic system and its demands which the protagonists in Visual Kei face in their everyday life. But how do the protagonists act on that?

In reproduction of the – mostly male – musicians aesthetic, the protagonists in Visual Kei have wild dyed hair and plenty of dramatic make-up, clothes black or white, leather or lace, skirt or dress, bodies are slender, pale, hairless, with little muscles. Representations of gender and body get fluid, it is impossible to identify gender by sight, androgyny is all that counts and bodies seem to be endlessly shapeable and changeable.

This fluidity, the irritation of the heterosexual gaze, caught my interest and – according to Clifford Geerts – I wanted to know: ’What the hell is going on there?’ (Quoted by Aman and Hirschauer 1997:20) But as you can guess this simple question is just a first impulse to start research. In order to locate Visual Kei it suggests itself to draw on subcultural studies in the first instance. Although the concept of 'subculture' was presumed dead many times – it becomes clear in this volume that it
might be still a fruitful idea to work with (Muggleton 2003). But what means 'subculture' today, in a postmodern world? How can we do research on subcultures, especially without the heavily criticised focus on semiotics and class culture (Hall 2006: vii—xxxii)? How can I reframe the concept of subculture so that it is adequate for the epistemological interest of my work.

When I started to have a closer look on Visual Kei, I wanted to find out, which codes, which (body)routines – briefly which practices – the protagonists in Visual Kei do incorporate to become intelligible subjects, acknowledged by others and by themselves. I do ask how the individuals in Visual Kei become attributable subjects through their practice and whether or how their performativity of gender and body opens up possibilities outside normative conceptions of gender, body and desire. This lead me to ask how performative resistance or subversion can be actually realised in social practice? How becomes the objection against social terms efficacious in substance and in everyday practice? And how can subjects – which can not elude their social provenance – nevertheless accomplish (political) transformation? To answer these questions I draw to the work of Judith Butler and Pierre Bourdieu and try to pose the question of subculture on them as well.

It is implied in my questions, in my points of interest and it results from my personal activism in a queer subculture in Berlin that my approach has a queer-feminist angle. What does that mean for my research?

It is my notion of queer (politics) and my political engagement that lay the foundation for my interest in generating knowledge about subcultural practices of body, gender and desire out of a queer-feminist perspective. It comes with a desire for nascent, becoming or discarded existences. Queer Theory did decrypt heteronormativity as a powerful social element, which runs through gender order, biographies and perceptions of bodies, identities, families, nations or classes. In this, gender and sexuality are arranged on the line of normality and abnormality (Jagose 2001). Queer Theory is interested in non-normative forms of identity or forms in which gender, sex and desire do not line up in the socially prescribed way. Briefly Queer Theory has its focus on the subversion or transgression of gendered or sexual dichotomies. And this is the lens I am looking through in the process of my research. As I am doing my Ph.D. in Cultural Anthropology, I am constantly working at the interface of queer-feminist theory and Cultural Anthropology, trying to make this productive for my research (Heymann 2011).

I regard the outcome and the research practice of my study as 'situated knowledges', as Donna Haraway coined the term. For her 'objectivity' is not only an epistemological problem, but rather a political one: 'I would like a doctrine of embodied objectivity that accommodates paradoxical and critical feminist science projects: Feminist objectivity means quite simply situated knowledges' (Haraway 1988: 581). With Haraway I assume that only a partial perspective – that means a limited location, situated and embodied knowledge – results in a comprehensible, responsible research that opens up for critique and is able to be called into account. In my work, I try to mark the position from where I speak, I try to mark my split and contradictory self and mediate my various standpoints. This account touches not only political or epistemological questions, it is also about ethics, which becomes very clear in my research and constitutes an interface of queer-feminist theory and Cultural Anthropology.

My approach is an ethnographic one: For one and a half years I conducted fieldwork in this subculture in Germany. At the core of my data collection was a participant observation. This means that I took part in the daily life of
protagonists in Visual Kei – mostly with people living in Berlin, Cologne, Leipzig and Kiel. As Visual Kei came to Germany with the help of the internet, and as the protagonists use the internet a lot, I spent plenty of time on social networks like Animexx, Myspace and especially Facebook to communicate and follow. Most of the time I met the people in real life and afterwards we connected on an internet platform. Besides that, I accompanied the protagonists when they visited concerts of Japanese bands, conventions, meetings, when they went shopping, hung around at McDonald's or Starbucks. One central occasion to meet many protagonists – who designated themselves as Visus – was the Berlin Visual Kei Meeting (Bevit), which takes place three or four times a year. This is an event, which is organised and carried out by the young protagonists themselves, who are about fourteen to twenty-five years old.

But before I exemplarily point out some practices I encountered at the Bevit, I will give you an overview of the theoretical setting of the study. This information is necessary to understand how I read my material and under which focus I did my analysis. In the research process it became clear that there are four threads in my data about Visual Kei, that are very commanding and interconnected: gender, body, desire and the reference to Japan. As I am interested in the everyday life practices in Visual Kei and the question how the individuals in Visual Kei become attributable subjects through and in their practice, I choose subjects as a 'main hub' of a particular analytical strategy. This strategy points out that social and cultural systems, practices and discourses are to be considered with regard to the question which forms of the subject – of its body and its gender – these produce. Which subjects are possible in and through the practices of the protagonists and which are not?

**Studying Subcultures**

With its roots in Japan and its specific German imprint, Visual Kei can be marked as a translocal subculture. That means that while the construction of Visual Kei in Germany was inspired by the Japanese 'original' it encounters the locally constituted dispositions of the protagonists. That is why Visual Kei in Japan is not superimposable with Visual Kei in Germany. One of the main differences is that the protagonists in Germany are mostly girls and transgender identified people, dressed and behaving like their favourite J-Rock-Star in an androgynous way.

In my endeavour finding answers to the questions, stated above, I first allocated to subcultural theory. Given the rejection of the Birmingham's Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) particular notion of subcultural theory and the endless assortment of contexts in which the term subculture is applied, I follow Paul Hodkinson, who suggests a new definition of subculture: It centres on cultural substance and not on the former constriction on youth, working-classness, collective resistance and deviance. Furthermore, his conception of a 'translocal subculture' transcends the limitations of the local communities which have conventionally been in the focus of subcultural studies, consequently being better suited for the study of subcultures in the age of global networking and travelling.

In his study about the UK Gothic subculture, Hodkinson elaborates four criteria of cultural substance, which circumscribe his notion of subculture: identity, commitment, consistent distinctiveness and autonomy are cumulatively sharpening the use of the concept of subculture (Hodkinson 2002:29). This way, subcultures can be described as 'distinguishable from more fluid elective collectivities by their level of substance, something indicated by the relative satisfaction by a given grouping of the criteria outlined' (Hodkinson 2002:33).
It is especially Hodkinsons notion of identity-related processes in subcultures, which I found useful for my study. It stresses a shift away from the mystical stories of resistance, towards a closer regard on motivations, meanings and experiences of actual protagonists. Nevertheless it is not enough to answer my questions. Subcultural theory only strives the answers to how the individuals in Visual Kei become attributable subjects through their practice and whether or how their performativity of gender and body opens up possibilities outside normative conceptions of gender, body and desire. In the CCCS’s notion of resistance it is often a specific aesthetic style in which the subversion appears. But are style and resistance enough to explain how social change is possible, how gender and desire are constructed and how the protagonists become intelligible subjects? And, isn’t Angela McRobbie’s critique of the male bias in subcultural studies – that the subjects of subcultural studies have an ‘unambiguously masculine prerogative’ (McRobbie 1991:117)– still relevant? The subcultural practice of girls, women or people which are gender-non-conform need still to be explored further. I would argue that most of the research on subcultures reflect the subsidence of masculinity as normality in subcultures. But how can we get hold of this, how can we set the becoming subject, the protagonists in their everyday life, in focus?

In a meandering pattern between theory, data, and field – in my search for continuative answers – I address the works of Judith Butler (1990) and Pierre Bourdieu (1982), who are concerned with the possibilities of political intervention, subjectivation and agency. Despite all differences, there are parallels allowing to relate these two theoretical accounts: besides other components it is the role of practice in both, which is striking. Based on this, I would like to argue that Butler and Bourdieu relate to practice in order to explain, how subjectivity is generated. The concepts of habitus and performativity allow to trace the subcultural circles of acknowledgement and help explain, how the gendered bodies in Visual Kei are constituted and affirmed performatively. In the light of their theories I try to examine whether the practices in Visual Kei have a subversive potential and how subjects are (re)produced and located in and through practice. But what are the practices in Visual Kei? To shed light on this, and as I said before, I would like to focus on a special event in the protagonists everyday life: the Bevit (Bevit is an abbreviation for Berlin Visual Kei Meeting). Here, we will look at some practices as an example of the subcultural everyday life.

**In-between at the Bevit? – A participant observation**

It was a nice and warm day in Berlin 2009, and I was on my way to my first Bevit. In the course of my research I did my first steps to get access to Visual Kei and the protagonists in it at this time. At the Bevit I wanted to meet two people: to begin with there is Tama, one of the organisers of the Bevit and at this time 22 years old. The other person is Miku – I heard a lot about him, and I was sure that he might be and become an import person of my research as he is well-established in the subculture in Germany and was into it from the start. We arranged our meeting at the Bevit via email and SMS and Miku announced himself like this:

> Yes, we will be there :) We will be there around three or four. Address me in any case. Oh, and I am blond now. And I think I am going to wear a leather jacket with leo [leopard skin]. Love Miku (Miku, SMS 15.08.2009, Translation N.H.).

Many protagonists change the colour of their hair quite frequently – and on the last pictures of Miku that I saw, he had black hair.
Re-naming
As you might have noticed, it is common for Visus to discard their given names. Instead, they use Japanese names like Taiji, Miku, Waru, Sano-chan or Tara, which usually refer to J-Rock artists or other Japanese figures. Doing so, it becomes impossible to categorize the person's gender by knowing the name – typically in German you can guess the gender by knowing the name of a person. If language, as Butler writes, is a key instrument of normalization, then names also have ascribing and normative function. Within an everyday world knowledge names are, therefore, a significant gender attribute. Following the compulsory jurisdiction of gender, they are associated with gender role expectations and support as 'institutional genderism' (Goffmann) the disambiguation of a gender affiliation. An important signum of participation in the subculture is the selection of a different name. Why do the protagonists give themselves other than their birth given names? Which significance has this change for them? Which impact has this practice on their daily lives and what effects does it evoke?

While some of the protagonists use their chosen name only in subcultural context, for others it is important to use the name in everyday life – like that of school, work, university, etc. This process and the associated difficulties and effects reminded me of the practice of name change within the queer subculture and thus within my circle of friends: Here mainly transnegender identifying people choose to abandon their gender charged and coded first name obtained at birth. They also choose a name that does not allow firm conclusions to gender, such as 'Mo', 'Tia' or 'Malu'. On the one hand, this name change leads to a greater comfort with someone's own gendered position. On the other hand, such a change is connected with a lot of difficulties: Authorities continue to speak and write to the person with his or her given name, family members refuse the alteration, and also in the wider circle of acquaintances there is the possibility of these painful moments, when 'Mo' is suddenly 'Harry' again.

But which significance does a name change have for the protagonists in Visual Kei? Firstly, it is an expression of their enthusiasm for Japan and J-Rock musicians. The naming is linked to an understanding of aesthetics: the name should look beautiful, sound beautiful and have a reference to the object or to Japanese Visual Kei musicians. The chosen names are not constant, but can be changed or altered according to personal feelings. Whilst Butler writes that 'a name tends to fix, to freeze, to delimit, to render substantial, indeed it appears to recall a metaphysics of substance, of discrete and singular kinds of beings' (Butler 1997:35), I would argue that the practice of re-naming of the protagonists in Visual Kei is suitable to destabilize this 'metaphysics of substance'.

Since many Japanese names appear, in a European understanding, not sexually or gendered coded, it is impossible to know the person's gender by knowing the name. This
opens a range of gendered possibilities of interpretation and helps to dislocate the protagonists' gender. That is why rejecting and changing the given name can be interpreted as a queer practice that leads to gender ambiguousness. This practice underlines the renunciation of a distinct designation of gender and derivable sexual orientation. I would argue that this practice of re-naming – combined with appearance – leads to ambiguousness in gender identity. It is interesting what these practices express: (gender) identity is not fixed forever, it is fluid and changeable. But let me return to the charge: I was on my way to the Bevit, where I was about to meet some of the protagonists.

**Animexx and Media Use**

Back then, when I arrived at the Bevit I was excited and scared, what reminded me of the 'researcher's fear of the field' that Rolf Lindner describes: I was afraid that I might do something wrong and that access to the field might fail (Lindner 1981). I was afraid of what the protagonists might think of me. These fears vanished as I met Tama – who co-organises the Bevit – at the entrance and as she invites to join their meetings and as she asks me to connect on Animexx, which is a social media platform especially for Visual Kei, Manga, Anime and J-Rock fans.

As I mentioned above, it was technical development that made possible and fastened the transfer of Visual Kei from Japan to Germany. Thus, it is self-evident that the internet in general plays a decisive role in the everyday life of the protagonists. With the availability of smartphones this was even pushed in the last years because it became possible to access the internet from everywhere at any time.

Dealing with media – here understood as a collective term for audio-visual means and methods for dissemination of information, images, statements or messages – determines the daily lot of the protagonists, and is an important part of subcultural practice. Thus, the protagonists take many photos, which they post on social media platforms – like Animexx or Facebook – afterwards, on their way to school they have their favourite J-Rock on the ears, they post status updates like 'Today I'm gonna finally dye my hair blue again!' when they are out, and on Facebook, they write stories together or they fill whole sketchbooks with their drawings.

Therefore, the media use of the protagonists has for the most part a subcultural reference. Radio, television or newspapers – the classic mass media – are hardly noticed. Through digital photography and web-enabled cell phones, media is constantly available and in this daily confrontation, dealing with and access a technological world, the protagonists produce a specific knowledge: multimedia knowledge. Social media thus allows the exchange and networking on a peer-to-peer basis, there is no gap between producer and recipient. In this the protagonists are not only consumers, but also producers: Knowledge, information and media contents are created, edited and shared together which leads to a democratisation of knowledge. So, this is not only about communication, but also about negotiating, editing and sharing of content.

Hence, after Tama told me to register on Animexx, I entered this important space of subcultural practice on the same evening. Unfortunately, Tama was very busy at the entrance of the Bevit so I went strolling through the other rooms of the venue. There were booths where you could buy Japanese food, magazines, (secondhand) clothes, accessories and books. And, there was a decorated corner, where you could take pictures of your friends and a table with material to draw and write fanart. It became clear that the protagonists in Visual Kei are not simply consumers of products – I saw them framing and constructing their very own version of Visual Kei. They are
negotiating about what Visual Kei should be, they are writing, drawing, creating clothes, styles and are in this sense producers in their own microcosm. In the main hall of the venue was a Cosplay competition going on. Cosplay is made up of 'Costume' and 'Play' and the protagonist try to dress like their favourite J-Rock star. Many people say Cosplay is about 'Women imitating men who are dressed like women'. But I think it is not that easy. Cosplay possess rather the question, who is the 'original' and who the 'copy'? It reminds me about Butler's reflections on *drag*: She propounds the practice of drag as a possibility to destabilize the binary of exteriority and interiority and shows that there is no 'original' gender, it is in fact scripted, rehearsed, and performed. Thus, Cosplay is a proposal for a theatrical remaking of the body and it becomes clear that the Japanese J-Rock stars, who the protagonists imitate, cannot be read as the antecedent original.

As I have shown, the protagonist's every day life is pervaded by an enduring reference to Japan and J-Rock. This pervasion reclines like a sediment in the practices of the protagonists and emerges in habitus and repetitive, ritual iteration. Despite local distinctiveness, there can be recognised a lot of similarities – especially in respect of clothing, make up and accessories – in taste and values. Thus, Visual Kei in Germany is anchored in a local arena, but through a constant reference to and exchange with Japan, it has a translocal imprint.

**Self-representation**

Near the stage, in the Bevit's main hall, I spotted the leo leather jacket and Miku – a bunch of people gathered around him. When the competition was over I introduced myself to them and Miku told me he has not got any time – he needs to do a photo-shooting – but I might join them if I like. So, we went outside into the surrounding park and as I sat under a tree with Miku's friends, he was posing in front of the camera like a real super star model. A slender body without curves, a stern and coolish gaze, no smile, filling the whole scenery, radiating activity and control. Once he finished, he came to me and the first topic he addressed was not Visual Kei: it was his body and his gender. He told me that he has been born as a girl, but 'always felt like a guy', he was always androgyn and dressed this way. Miku wants to be addressed as 'he' and I used the opportunity to ask the other three people around us about their gender positioning: One of them also wanted to be addressed as 'he' and the other one was not sure about it and said: 'I am something in-between.'

Miku told me that he has always loved women and could not imagine to be in a sexual relationship with a man. Many protagonists in Visual Kei identify themselves as bisexual, some as homosexual and only a few as heterosexual. Desire, albeit of heterosexuality, functions as an unspoken norm in this subculture and thus disrupts the 'symbolic violence' of heterosexual order. But what happens here? How is it possible to disrupt heteronormative conceptions of bodies, gender and desire? Judith Butler writes that,

*a sedimentation of gender norms produces the particular phenomenon of a 'natural sex' or a 'real woman' or any number of prevalent and compelling social fictions, and that this is a sedimentation that over time has produced a set of corporeal styles which, in reified form, appear as the natural configuration of bodies into sexes existing in a binary relation to one another* (Butler 1990:178).

I wonder, if the dispositions of the protagonist's habitus can have an outstanding effect. Do the sedimentation in and through the practices in Visual Kei 'produce a set of corporeal styles' which is suitable to disrupt heteronormative conceptions of sexuality and gender?
Processes of Sedimentation: The failure of repetition and norm

Bourdieu’s conception of habitus, as well as Butler’s notion of performativity mark ‘practice’ as a result of sociation. And according to Butler the symbolic order ‘is the sedimentation of social practices’ (Butler 2004:44). Bourdieu conceptualizes the habitus as bodily practices that sediment into habitual actions and movements sinking below consciousness (Bourdieu 1982). Taking up this idea, I understand practice as a (bodily) sediment of collective and individual experiences in specific cultural fields. I perceive sediments as accumulations of various materials, sometimes very solid, sometimes flexible and loose. In respect of embodiment in Visual Kei, I would argue that the body becomes its gender through a series of acts which are renewed, revised and consolidated over time. The subject and its embodied habitus – as the ‘embodied social’ – is thus a legacy of sedimented acts in the course of subcultural practice.

As it became clear in my analysis, I would argue that a praxeological approach to subculture can help understand, how the subcultural subject is constituted and how the sediments of experiences in sociation unfold their effects. Combined with ethnographic research it gives a deep inside in identity-related processes in subcultures and discloses the motivations, mindsets and experiences of the protagonists. It allows me to follow these ‘circles of acknowledgement’ – which Sarah Thornton describes with her concept of ‘subcultural capital’ – very closely (Thornton 1996).

Furthermore a praxeological approach highlights the significance of the body – which is mostly a gendered body, and thus leads away from a mere study of style, semiotics and symbols. With regard to Visual Kei and the protagonists practices – like cosplay, media use, travelling to Japan, positioning themselves outside of normality – I am able to expound how these practices are incorporated, to become intelligible subjects, acknowledged by others and by themselves. As an invitation to explore the nexus of personal, social and historical factors that conjoin subcultural possibilities with the contexts and conditions of lived practices, the concepts of sedimented habitus and performativity reveals substantial explanatory potential.

But which effects can these sediments of subcultural experience have in the way of becoming an attributable subject? To answer this question it is necessary to reflect on how performative resistance or subversion can actually be realised in social practice. How does the objection against social terms become efficacious in substance? Though in his Theory of practice Bourdieu points out that the habitus is creative, inventive and spontaneous, he has not given many hints, on how the dispositions of the habitus can be changed or modified. But following his notion of subjectivity it must be an irritation of embodiment that leads to a ‘failure’. Butler on the other hand is constantly concerned with the possibilities of intervention and the mechanism of subversion. In her conception of performativity the possibility of failure is laid out from the outset. It is especially the role of repetition in performativity that Butler emphasizes:

*Performativity cannot be understood outside of a process of iterability, a regularized and constrained repetition of norms. And this repetition is not performed by a subject; this repetition is what enables a subject and constitutes the temporal condition for the subject. This iterability implies that ‘performance’ is not a singular ‘act’ or event, but a ritualized production, a ritual reiterated under and through constraint, under and through the force of prohibition and taboo, with the threat of ostracism and even death controlling and compelling the shape of the production, but not, I will insist, determining it fully in advance* (Butler 1993:95).
Butler assumes that gender is a performance that is never stable or absolute, but tenuous, reified and made powerful by its constant repetition. She argues for 'subversive repetition' of gender performance, or disrupting constructions of gender through parody, and 'proliferating gender configurations', or many genders (Butler 1990:187). It is applied in both, Butler's and Bourdieu's conceptions of subject constitution, that the performative repetition and the 'social magic' of the habitus might fail. At this point I would argue that they fail because of the sedimentations, the inscriptions of a translocal subculture – namely Visual Kei.

To Conclude: Fractious Bodies
During my research it became obvious that Visual Kei is a subculture that is dominated by girls and transgender identified people. In their practices of gender and bodies they put the dominant binary gender order in question. As the preceding description of the Bevit is just a little insight into my research of Visual Kei, I will briefly summarize some of the main results:

I suggest that the practices of the protagonists show a specific sensitivity towards matters of bodies, gender, desire and sexuality – the heterosexual matrix is not apprehended as self-evident. In their practices the synchronicity between sex and desire is put into question and thus concepts of gender, bodies and desire are opened up for reinterpretation. Thereby Visual Kei discloses a space of feasibility and experience for adolescents. It can be described as a 'safe place' for young people to contest gender, body images and forms of relationships. As Visual Kei has no explicit political agenda, it is possible to be hedonistic without being political – as this would be something like a 'precondition' in many queer subcultures. But: Although I argue that you can read incoherences, fragilities and thus possibilities for shifting bodies and genders, in the practices of the protagonists, this is nothing that the protagonist intentionally conduct. Of course, they have a notion that they are 'not normal', they are 'extreme' and some of them started to visit the Berlin Gay Pride and liked it there.

However, up to now all this did not manifest in a political positioning. Subsequently the pivotal question is whether the Visus in their practices can be understood as 'emancipative' or 'political' without having a particular notion of that or to reflect on that. Is critique to social conditions or the resistance against, dependent on an external view as a judgemental criterion or source for reflexivity? I would argue that the critique in Visual Kei is a critique deeply inscribed in the practices – a practical critique. It is less a practice of resistance – I would rather describe it as a fractious practice against heteronormative images of bodies and gender. This fractious practices are notably apparent in bodily practices: socially formed biological and gendered bodies are – as defined by Bourdieu 'necessarily politicized bodies, an embodied politics' (Bourdieu 1997:186, Translation N.H.). Positions and dispositions of bodies in Visual Kei are not coherent with a naturalised normalised gender dichotomy and hence are able to irritate and unsettle – they are fractious politicized bodies.

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