Fashion Forward

Edited by

Alissa de Witt-Paul & Mira Crouch

Fashion Forward

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Introduction

Alissa de Wit-Paul

> 'I knew nothing when I went for my first interview and stepped
> into the infamous Elias-Clark elevators, those transporters of all
> thing *en vogue*.' *The Devil Wears Prada* (Apr. 13, 2004) by
> Lauren Weisberger (p. 11)[1]

Fashion begins often with critiques of bodies, spaces, objects and images. We embody and inhabit commodities which define, delegate and perform both a group and individual identity creation function. This cultural development has been predominantly researched in terms of the modern and post-modern conditions. Yet to look forward may also be to look back, sideways at and beyond the typical milieu of clothing and modern consumption theories.

The 1st Global Conference of Fashion, Exploring Critical Issues took place on Friday 25th September – Sunday 27th September 2009 a t Mansfield College, *Oxford* in association with Models 1: Europe's Leading Model Agency. This part of the Inter-disciplinary net's Ethos project where they focus on the dynamics of modern communities. The inter- and trans- disciplinary nature of the conference projected fashion beyond its traditional forms and into a forum for multiple locations, both physical and temporal, which are expressed by fashion.

The E-book is delineated not by the uses of fashion but by discursive locations of the authors.

Part 1: Forward Discourse

> The question of fashion is not a fashionable one among
> intellectuals. This observation needs to be emphasized: even as
> fashion goes on accelerating its ephemeral legislation, invading
> new realms and drawing all social spheres and age groups into its
> orbit, it is failing to reach the very people whose vocation is to
> shed light on the mainsprings and mechanism of modern
> societies.[2] - *Gilles Lipovetsky*

The participants in this first section strove to put fashion into a significant critical framework. From where does fashion create the individual in Kim Cunningham's question 'Can a fashioned body itself embody this critique in its representation?' To locations of non-intellectual reviews on meaning in contemporary fashion magazines confronted in questions by Johannes Reponen: Is there a d emand, or fashion, for fashion related texts and where should fashion criticism lie?, Or where is the crucial boundary between designers and garments as asked by Flavia Loscialpo: Is the work of designers using deconstructive theory causing a rethinking of the garment itself? And Aurélie Van de Peer: When, how

and in what way does the debate over the concept of 'newness' represent ways of writing, speaking and thinking on fashion? Finally the connection between fashion display from magazines and the body to the larger artistic venue of museums whose significance is debated by Alexis Romano's question: When contemporary designers display their work in museums, do they reflect the contradictory narratives between designer, curators, organizers and the architecture?

Part 2: Historical Fashion

> Fashion is exercised most ostentatiously, carried to extremes, in the sphere of personal appearance: for centuries, this sphere has represented the purest manifestation of organization of the ephemeral. - *Gilles Lipovetsky*

Time as a component of fashion generally is considered in the quickness of garment or object style overturn. In these following chapters time becomes both retrospective in historical time and as part of future possibilities. Attempting to discover both the specific and universal in historical uses of fashion, the following authors look through materiality, historical identity generation, social hierarchy depiction, and local style dissemination.

Ericka Basile looks at the influence of specific materials used through fashion to express contemporary female bodies. Jess Berry discusses the dandy as a symbol of male narcissism as it plays a continual role in men's engagement with fashion by reflecting the artificiality masculine construct. C.T. Rooijakkers looks at time through a new model, *reconfiguration* theory that describes a key mechanism behind changes in dress codes as a society regularly restructures. Dress then becomes a means of redefinition and assertion of new identities.

Rebecca Perry examines the influence of the British children's book author and illustrator Kate Greenaway (1846-1901) on the fashion for historicizing clothing styles for young girls in the late nineteenth century. Greenaway's work did not just demonstrate the aesthetic of an idealized childhood: her storybooks instigated a trend for children's historicized costume. While Kristen Stewart produces an examination of both the fad and reactionary criticism against it providing an illuminative perspective on evolving concepts of boyhood as reflective of the changing social structure of late nineteenth century American life.

Michael A. Langkjær asks the questions: Where did the popular craze for uniforms originate? What or who was being targeted? Did rock stars influence their fans or was it the other way around? And what was the role of fashion entrepreneurs: was it the shops of the times that led the bands or the rock bands that made a particular look a mainstream fashion? In contrast, the specificity of a singular designer is discussed by Evangelia N. Georgitsoyanni and Sofia Pantouvaki regarding the work of Greek designer Yannis Tseklenis (born 1937).

He is considered to be the artist and businessman who pioneered Greek fashion to the contemporary international fashion world introducing a global market for Greek identity.

Part 3: Fashion Forward

> **The Man of the World**
> Others may with regret complain
> That 'tis not fair Astrea's reign,
> That the famed golden age is o'er
> That Saturn, Rhea rule no more
> Or, to speak in another style,
> That Eden's groves no longer smile.
> For my part, I thank Nature sage,
> That she has placed me in this age.
> Voltaire[3]

The past is not the only time period in which fashion is illuminated. The presumed present/future of identity creation can also be seen through the use of fashion in fantasy and cyber space. Chana Etengoff considers the value of physical place becoming easily transmittable via digital means. In virtual space and place the avatar's capability to engage in an extreme exploration of identity at a cost below real world prices, provides important market research data to physical world fashion designers as they attempt to answer the emerging needs of the 'techno-sexual' masses.

Sarah Hand researches Tzvetan Todorov, who was the first scholar to apply structural analysis to the category of fantasy and thereby liberating it from historical, psychological or literary associations. The sense of incredulity that under-pins our experience of fantasy is the perspective in which it frequently took centre stage. The combination of photography with 'role-play' creates visual fantasy whose effect is also to crate digital fashion. In the world of reality, Erica de Greef's chapter describes a society using fashion to investigate the historical traces, as the past resurfaces in an attempt to deal with the trauma of recent South African histories.

Part 4: Consumption and Luxury

> Demand, that is, emerges as a function of a variety of social
> practices and classifications, rather than a mysterious emanation
> of human needs, a mechanical response to social manipulation
> (as in one model of the effects of advertising in our own society),
> or the narrowing down of a universal and voracious desire for

objects to whatever happens to be available. - Arjun Appadaurai [4]

Fashion revels in its dealings with commodities, both in terms of consumption and luxury. Constantin-Felix von Maltzahn discusses the different levels of gradation which exist for different fashion companies and types of consumers, depending on the respective level of identification. The connection between producer and consumer are generally related through the eyes and education of designers.

In education, however, Claire Evans considers the production of archives as key learning resources that provided an understanding of the use of physical garments to create and inspire the design process. This use of historical evidence then becomes a product for the designer in developing a new commodity, a new garment.

Desiree Smal in her project regarding Eco fashion, educates through a design-driven approach. She uses the concept of eco fashion as part of the decision-making process reflecting on important lifestyle issues of the twenty-first century. Karen Marie Heard also reveals possibilities for designers in the focus on reusing waste from clothing and accessories. The materiality of creating clothing from scraps is not limited to fabric, but could be developed from 'anything'. Nothing becomes something where leftover shapes and pieces that are left over, actually shape new designs. It follows a journey of materials, silhouette and intuition suggesting ideas and possibilities giving breath and life to things redundant and discarded.

Eco fashion is not just in the production of garments, but can also reveal a fundamental connection between the word, Sustainability, which has become the definer of quality building design, and fashion as an architectural drive, according to Alissa de Wit-Paul's argument.

Yet the built environment connects to the fashion industry in a more traditional sense, the city fashion centre. Nathaniel Dafydd Beard sees a ch ange in today's globalised world a new kind of fashion city, the style centre, emerged to challenge the impersonality of the fashion capital.

Part 5: Creation of Identities

But what does it mean to be dressed well? It means to be dressed correctly.
To be dressed correctly! I feel as if I have revealed in these words the secret that has surrounded the fashion of our clothes up until now.[5] - Adolf Loos

As Lucy Collins states, Fashion is often thought of as an important mode of self-expression that also provides a moment of self-concealment, even while the self is revealed. How is fashion both a veil and a performance? In this sense, the act of dressing may be similar to confession – as it becomes a public act of revealing what was once concealed. Individual expression is a creative act of identity, yet an identity not necessarily self absorbed or isolated. Similarly and yet more explicit are the findings of Giovanni Vassallo in his study which reveals that the cosmetic use of skin whitening substances by African women. The highly desirable products have been linked to real health risks, yet the women are connecting more to the social building of beauty as a concept then their health risks.

The strength of the pull for economic and social relevance through fashion is investigated by Luca Lo Sicco through looking at the textile industry in Italy in the first half of the 20th century and the consequent stimulus to create an independent fashion industry. In this study identity creation is not just individual but collective and national. Another collective potential location of fashion is in culinary practices. Cecilia Winterhalter discusses the concept of Luxury and its changes in the close metaphor between eating and consuming. The consumption of food is thus a way to construct identities and to assert ideas, which bring about the evolution of mentalities.

Part 6: Identities of Creation

> Men who form that Flock we call Society, placed in the same Circumstances, will all do the same Things, unless some more powerful Motives divert them from it.[6] - Jean-Jacques Rousseau

As both agents and designers of our reactions to fashion, we utilize the garment as a tool not just to create our identity, but to identify modes and locations of creation, perhaps even as a site of rebellion.

Wessie Ling discusses women in China's resistance to the Nationalist agenda through their bodies and appearance. Fashioning the qipao became a silent tool for Chinese women to struggle against state regulation of their bodies. Similarly Ekaterina Kalinina provides a close research into deeper and more dramatic insights into the use of retro fashion by cultures that have gone through drastic times of turbulence. Style then became a means to deal with the legacies of the past and reconstruct cultural identity of a nation.

Resistance is most often seen in the realm of the designer. Şölen Kipöz and Deniz Güner examine the designer Hussein Chalayan. His methods for resisting against image-oriented approach of fashion industry is created through his conceptual attitude by deconstructing meaning of the clothes in order to re-semantify them and change their ontology. Another location for resistance is in

challenging the fashion journal as central to defining expertise. Claire Allen finds that the fashion journal is being tested by assertive fashion bloggers. They threaten the process by which an expert is declared, and the way in which the discourse or message is received and the meaning conveyed.

Part 7: Depiction Media

> Indeed, indeed, there is charm in every period, and only fools and flutterpates do not seek reverently for what is charming in their own day. No martyrdom, however fine, nor satire, however splendidly bitter, has changed by a little tittle the known tendency of things. It is the times that can perfect us, not we the times, and so let all of us wisely acquiesce. Like the wired marionettes, let us acquiesce in the dance.[7] - Max Beerbohm

One aspect of identity creation is depicting our own selves through some lens of fashion. This may be through depicting who we are locally as in Shelley-Ann McFarlane's chapter recounting the fashion of Reggae/dancehall which was once dominated by the red, green and gold colours of Rastafari and the militant dress of the Rude Boys. She then describes a shift from the local to international through the designer Earl 'Biggy' Turner. He is depicted as the Jamaican designer who has paved the way for Reggae fashion.

Yet depiction also inhabits the realm of perception revealing undercurrents within a society. Alisa K. Braithwaite considers whether the media, within the 2008 election year in the United States, focuses on Michelle Obama's fashion as a way to avoid the very real concerns about how black women are perceived or as a vehicle for which traditional negative perceptions may be overcome? If we avoid subjects through our depiction of fashion, does fashion divulge what we are striving to ignore? Jacque Lynn Foltyn unearths that the modelling of 'death' to sell fashion by using simulated 'corpses' to sell fashion is something new. While feminist scholars observe that fashion models often appear emaciated, frail, and cadaver-like. If we probe the depths of corpse chic, a culture immersed in the problem of death emerges.

Part 8: Fashion Performance

> The ceremonies in Louis XIV's bedchamber are mentioned often enough. But it is not enough in this context to regard them as a curiosity, a dusty exhibit in an historical museum which surprises the onlooker only by its bizarreness. Our intention here is to bring them alive step by step so that we can understand through them ...[8] - Norbert Elias

The runway, advertising, and celebrity use exposes fashion directly as performative. Yet these are not the only locations of possible and actual performance. Nicole D. Shivers reports on how the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art (NMAfA) used an innovative approach of creating a f ashion experience through combining the interpretive vehicle of performing arts and the process of interactive education. The response to art through fashion as performance holds the potential to forge the way for a cu ltural and educational movement.

In the public sphere, Michelle Liu Carriger locates the performances by Gothic Lolitas' as a self-fashioning gamble on the fraught relation between recoded symbols and claims to authenticity. They reveal ways in which fashionable discourses travel and transmute, losing and gaining in translation.

> With written clothing, we confront an infinite communication whose units and functions remain unknown to us, for although its structure is oral, it does not coincide exactly with that of language. How is this communication to be structured?[9] - Roland Barthes

Throughout the conference dialogue on the structure of fashion as communication, creation, temporal, linked to commodity production and use, performance, and a location of identity challenged the traditional discourse of fashion. Going forward, we look back to this as a drive of new theory, and perhaps, practice.

Notes

[1] L. Weisberger, *The Devil Wears Prada*, Broadway, New York, 2004, p. 11.

[2] G. Lipovetsky, *The Empire of Fashion: Dressing Modern Democracy*, trans. C. Porter, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 1994, p. 3.

[3] Voltaire, 'The Man of this World', *The Rise of Fashion: A Reader*, D.L. Purdy (ed), University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2004, p. 32.

[4] A. Appadurai, 'Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value', *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1986, p. 29.

[5] A. Loos, 'Men's Fashion', *The Rise of Fashion: A Reader*, D.L. Purdy (ed), University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2004, p. 32.

[6] J.J. Rousseau, 'Discourse on the Arts and Sciences', *The Rise of Fashion: A Reader*, D.L. Purdy (ed), University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2004, p. 39.

[7] M. Beerbohm, 'The Pervasion of Rouge', *The Rise of Fashion: A Reader*, D.L. Purdy (ed), University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2004, p. 227.

[8] N. Elias, 'Etiquette and Ceremony', *The Rise of Fashion: A Reader*, D.L. Purdy (ed), University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2004, p. 53.
[9] R. Barthes, *The Fashion System*, trans. M. Ward and R. Howard, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1983, p. 17.

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Part I:

Forward Discourse

This Is Not a Hat: Towards a Haptic Methodology in Fashion Theory

Kim Cunningham

Abstract

Following Barthes, fashion theory often positions fashion as a system of signs.[1] However, cultural studies theorists have criticized sign-based approaches to the body as 'disembodying,' or leaving out the lived, embodied experience of fashion as an 'event.'[2] Can a fashioned body itself embody this critique in its representation? In other words, can a body, through fashion, take subversion one step past subverting normative codes of race, class, and gender, and subvert the enactment of code-reading vision itself? If so, how would it do so? Beginning with a critique of 'vision-as-reading' (optical)[3] used in the semiotic and social constructionist approaches to fashion, this piece invites fashion theorists to consider fashion as not only an abstract code of meanings and signs but as an embodied event, or 'vision-as-feeling.' Adapting concepts of vision from film studies, this chapter outlines a new visual methodology for studying fashion by using Deleuze's contrasting concepts of 'optical visuality' and 'haptic visuality'[4] in order to account for a lived experience of the sensuous and affective dimensions of fashion. To explore the haptic image's potential and enactment, the author undertook a five-year long autoethnographic study, which involved wearing the same hat every day in an academic community and watching this chapter of clothing gather affective intensity. Rather than simply being read as a 'fashion statement,' the hat became a lived example of a haptic fashion image, evoking intense affective responses as its affective intensity builds over time. Finally, and most importantly, the piece explores the political dimensions of using haptic visual methodology and instructs fashion scholars on how to use haptic criticism to explore fashion theory's neglected sensory and affective dimensions.

Key Words: Fashion theory, haptic visuality, optical visuality, sociology of the body, Foucault, Deleuze, confession, haptic rerouting, body image.

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1. Lived Embodied Experience: Limits of Representational Vision

> I can't possibly comment on your hat for a paper you're writing. Honestly, I have known you for four years and I do not know what your hat means at all. We're so close I don't even notice it.[5]

> I do remember my profound surprise when once you showed me
> the top of your head. I had the strong feeling of seeing
> something intensely private, when normally seeing the top of
> someone's head is not unusual. Somehow it became a s acred
> avert-your-eyes kind of space.

Fear. Anxiety. Shivers. Heartbeats. Sweats. Pleasure. Terror. Speechlessness. Since when does a hat on someone's head produce such intense responses? For the last five years, I have worn the same hat, a train conductor's hat everyday in the same academic community and never removed it from my head. Almost the entirely of this community of people – graduate students, professors, staff, and others, never saw me without it. Surprisingly, this simple act of repetition generated intense affective responses in those who came to know me and be exposed to this fashion performance over time. Though the hat was rarely spoken of by myself or others, ironically, it became infused with affective intensity, as though the silence surrounding it augmented its mystery. Consider, for example, my friend's 'speechless anxiety' upon spotting me one day without it in public. What about the synchronizing of turning heads, which turned away as it fell off of my head one day in a lecture? It should be noted that nothing in the hat itself, or in an analysis of its cultural meaning would render it by itself, an object that rendered discomfort or terror. Thus, the hat cannot be studied *by itself*, as an object or text, it seems, it must be studied within context, and that context is both social and embodied.

It seems clear that the meaning of the hat is not easily separable or independent from these bodily responses to it. Is it r eally something that is my own, that characterizes me? Instead, it seems more along the lines what Deleuze calls 'the event' – a singular moment in time which crosses the boundaries of various objects and bodies.[6] To remember that the hat is not only 'a hat' but is a social event stored various bodies, I will use the term 'hat-event' below.

Such unusual, specific, time-saturated lived fashion events studied over in everyday life are rarely studied in fashion theory. When fashion studies scholars do address situations of lived fashion and dress, they tend to emphasize fashion as a text, consistent with Barthes' semiotic approach. Historical and theoretical explorations of dress and codedness position fashion as a text to be read, analyzing the social and cultural productions and forces that contribute to the disciplining of the body through normative codes of race, class, and gender, or, conversely, how individuals resist such codes and discourses through 'subversive' skewing of these normative expectations for appearance. In the case of the hat, cultural meanings associated with such a hat – an association with working class culture, hipster culture, or gender-bending – may render it 'ironic' or 'vintage' or 'subcultural' but by no means can account for this intensity. We may understand that wearing a swastika might elicit terror … but a train conductor's hat? Semiotics seem to fail to

'see' its uniqueness because such an approach generalizes the object it seeks to understand, bracketing its singularity.

Some theorists also argue that these semiotic and discursive analyses exclude fashion's sensual and embodied aspects. Drawing from sociology of the body and Merleau-Ponty, fashion theorist Joane Enwitstle has argued that fashion's semiotic meanings have come at the expense of an understanding of fashion as both meaningful *and* embodied, as both semiotic and simultaneously sensual.[7] Some theorists argue that semiotic approaches actually disembody fashion as a sensual and affective modality, delineating a disembodying 'split' between epistemology and ontology. Or, as body theorist Alan Radley so eloquently writes 'The delineation of the body-subject leaves it, as flesh, marginalized.'[8] Fashion theorists have neglected fashion's sensual aspect in their obsession with studying fashion as a text. In the case of the hat, attempting to read it as a text, in other words, would sever its meanings from the fleshly and affective responses to it, and would not account for the sensual and affective transmission that clearly characterized this event. From my close friend's reported 'speechlessness' when he saw me without it, to the feelings of fear and anxiety that others expressed when I spoke about it…. A methodological question then arises: How can fashion theory account for its neglected affective and sensual elements?

To begin, it must be noted that this split does not simply occur in fashion study's modalities of visioning the body, but in everyday life. These theories within fashion arise from larger cultural forces. As a dominant mode of analysis in Western culture, separating meaning (or text) from the body or 'the thing itself' is everywhere applied to the body, including in everyday life. The fashioned body is continually subjected to this very same 'disembodying' split which reads it as a text.

In everyday life, this means reading the body as text, but in terms of what terms of what its fashion means about the individual who wears the fashion objects. Victoria Pitts-Taylor links Foucault's confession, the incitement to speak that plunges to the depth of the subject in order to establish the 'truth of the self' to how we vision the body.[9] We believe we can read the truth of the self on the body's surface. Pitts-Taylor is implying that the confession can operate as a specific way of visioning the body, as scanning it as a text. We read Joan Rivers' cosmetically-altered face, for example, as an indication of pathology, the truth of who she as evidenced by her physical appearance.

In the case of the hat, such a reading would not only sever its meaning from its materiality, but it would also serve to position the truth of myself as the hat. This would be limiting not only in that it may result in a reductionism to pathologization of my personality or psyche for undertaking such a bizarre action, but it would in this very process serve to split me as an individual from the social processes from which the hat is inextricable. Indeed, if the hat were 'just a hat,' it seems unlikely that it would elicit the intense, affective responses described above.

These two ways the body's fashion is often 'read': through the semiotic (in fashion studies) and the confessional (in everyday life) have in common an unquestioned mode of dominant visuality. It is this mode of vision that I want to question below. Interestingly, the hat itself, I argue, critiques this mode of vision, as will be shown below.

2. Haptic and Optical

Both the semiotic and confessional reading of the body rely on what film critical Laura Marks calls 'optical vision' a form of visuality that separates figure from ground in order navigate the space visually. In studying film, Marks draws a difference between the type of visuality we see most often in contemporary films, optical visuality, and haptic visuality, a mode of seeing which is encouraged by films which tend to blur the objects they are representing through various techniques, such as blurry images and freeze-framing. This haptic vision, a vision in which the 'eyes themselves function like organs of touch,'[10] a more fluid, tactile vision that 'depends on limited visibility and the and the viewer's lack of mastery over the image'[11] and 'renders inter-subjective borders blurry.'[12] Thus, to look at fashion through haptic vision can not only link vision and tactility, thereby undoing the abstract disembodiment of a semiotic approach, but also blurring not merely social categories, but also the subjective borders of self and other that the optical relies on.

In contrast, optical vision takes a distance from the object of it looks upon, and thus, this modality of looking, and thus, discerns depth. Furthermore, it allows the viewer, while watching the object, to project her or himself onto the object of vision.[13] Optical vision is the dominant modality of reading the fashioned body, viewing bodies as whole objects and subjects with clear boundaries. Optical vision addresses a viewer who is distant. It takes a distance which allows the viewer to project him or herself onto the figure in the image, allowing for a clear separation of subject and object, as when fashion objects are removed from the body and analyzed textually.

The confession, too, relies on optical vision in that it the confession individualizes the body-self by placing bodies into categories such as normal and pathological.[14] Its primary function is to individualize and delineate. In this regard, the confession is an optical technology, as it seeks out whole objects and searches for their borders. Moreover, it 'plunges to the depth' seeking visual truth. It separates the 'figure' of the body-self from the 'ground' of unintelligibility. The confession makes subject and object clear and acts to establish distances between objects in the visual bodily field of normative positions.

For Marks, the problem with optical vision itself is not problematic, which is necessary to everyday tasks such as driving or typing, but its culturally-mediated dominance over how we see, and the lack of flow between optical and haptic.[15] Establishing a greater flow between haptic and optical is important for challenging

the body as an indicator of the truth of the self, or in the case of the confession, for challenging the idea that the body's display, whether through surgery, its gender, its size, or the fashion that adorns it, should not be read as the truth of the self. Haptic vision makes clear the limitations of visual knowledge, because it reminds that vision is material, tactile. In fashion studies this serves to keep the fashion theorist from splitting fashion's meaning or text from its sensuality. Haptic images, such as the hat, have the ability to challenge our perceptions by not allowing us to simply 'scan,' and instead re-embodying our vision.

3. Haptic Rerouting: Remembering Touch

'That vision should have ceased to be understood as a form of contact and instead become disembodied and adequated with knowledge is itself a function of post-Enlightenment rationality.'[16]

Marks argues, as indicated in the quotation above, that we have forgotten that vision is simultaneously a form of touch in itself, a form of contact with something. Caught up in the representation of *what we see*, we forget that seeing is a form of contact. But unlike the semiotic conception of 'subversion,' haptic visuality is not about subverting expected codes of texts by creating another text, it actually interrupts the ability to separate text, for fashion to have a clear message at all, for it to disembody its meaning from its flesh.

Making the object of vision hard to separate, in Marks' typology, serves to break up the dominance of optical vision, and invite haptic vision. Though haptic and optical vision are taking place all the time, Marks argues that certain images are more given to evoking a haptic mode of looking, which she calls 'haptic images.'

Thus, haptic rerouting – the movement from optical to haptic visuality – is politically important in much the same way that subversion of normative codes is, except, that what is subverted is not an expected code of race, class, or gender, which the wearer then subverts by doing the unexpected. It is a visual rerouting (an action) from optical to haptic. It reroutes the drive to know someone through their fashion, to establish their truth, by disrupting the form of vision (optical) that the confession relies on. Put simply, if you don't know the boundaries or limit of the object or subject you are looking at, you can't clearly establish its truth. This establishes frustration, and creates a kind of felt intensity in the viewer, a tactility, which invites haptic vision. Thus, perhaps the best way to solve fashion theory's tendency to disembody and objectify is to refuse to (visually) delineate the body or fashion object in the first place.

4. Haptic Rerouting: The Hat-Event as an Example

Having established the political importance of the haptic-rerouting, I will illustrate how my wearing of the hat enacts this flow that Marks argues is so

important, from optical to haptic. This rerouting becomes clear as the optical is frustrated; figure and ground become hard to separate.

The blurring makes these images tactile because they draw attention to the materiality, the texture, both material and affective, of the representational screen. In the case of the film, the screen is the cinematic projector or video screen. In the case of the body, the screen of representation is the body's visual surface, but also any speech or other representations of it. The haptic rerouting of the hat-event that I describe below makes most people first approached my peculiar wearing optically, attempting to discern its boundaries and seek knowledge about it. Those who came to be exposed to the hat asked questions in attempts to discern its boundaries and to search for an explanation for its presence in my character ('*Why do you wear that hat all the time?*') Clearly, through such questions they attempted to find the borders of my wearing of the hat – where it started and where it ended. This disclarity and bracketing of knowledge also blurred the spatial and temporal borders of the hat-event (*Do you wear that hat to teach your courses? Do you take it off at home? Will you wear it for job talks?*). When I wore it and when I didn't, where I wore it and where I didn't, and how much longer I would go on wearing it were common questions.

But instead of responding to these questions with answers which could function to give the hat a clear meaning (confession), my answers were always indirect, rendering it 'blurry,' like Marks' haptic film images. Giving a clear answer such as 'it's just a project I'm doing' could serve as a confession. By refusing to confession, I refused to delineate the borders of where the hat started and ended, and also, the borders of where it's distance from me started and ended.

Marks discusses this as a technique for creating haptic images on film: bring the objects very close to the viewer too close to see clearly such that it becomes difficult to separate 'figure from ground.'[17] The inability to separate figure from ground, and thus, see the outline of where one ends and the other begins in order to expose them to visual knowledge, corresponds to the relationship between hat and forehead. The hat-event enacts such a blurring through its refusal to separate from the body, and thus to separate figure from ground, organic from inorganic, object from body-subject. Vision literally cannot separate out its surface from the object it is supposed to represent, blurring the bodily representational surface. Like the blurry image on the screen, this draws visuality away from what is being represented and to the materiality or texture of the representational surface itself. The image of it is blurry, its boundaries unclear. Optical vision has failed, and tactile vision, an exploration of the surface by how it feels, is the only means left by which to explore, to *know*.

The hat and my forehead become a tactile surface, a surface that draws intensity, and intense responses. It is clear that figure was hard to separate from ground in my friend's statement that she was 'too close' to really be able to delineate the meaning of my hat. Marks writes; 'The haptic image indicates figures

and then backs away from representing them fully-or, often, moves so close to them that for that reason they are no longer visible.'[18] Thus, the hat's borders had become invisible to my friend, though the hat-event's affectivity was strong and intense. This was the same friend, who expressed fear and hesitation about making comments on my hat. *(I am terrified to say the wrong thing about it!)* Optically veiled by the hat, the haptic is exposed.

5. Blurriness

Marks also argues that the haptic 'depends on limited visibility and the viewer's lack of mastery over the image.'[19] Indeed, viewers of my hat could not achieve mastery over the image of it, though its limited visiblity. The haptic image 'indicates figures and then backs away from representing them completely.'[20]

It also leaves part of the body out of view over time. Optical vision generally 'reads' a part normally exposed which is then hidden means something is lacking or hidden, offsetting visual mastery and control over the body's meaning by the observer. The hat-event refuses a r eading of a co mmonly-exposed surface, hair, thus throwing off the mastery of reading 'the whole body' and instead, positioning what is visible optically as only a nonwhole. Scanning vision cannot see the entirety of the object it seeks knowledge about, and thus, it cannot be sure of the accuracy of its 'reading.' Thus, the body's visual presence in the hat is always 'partial.'

This covering functions as a denial of mastery over the visual field, and the refusal to show its borders clearly. This partiality both frustrates the optical search for visual truth by bracketing a key area of the surface of representation normally exposed to the scan of visual knowledge and allows for a blurriness of the body's boundaries. One might argue that the wearing of the hat is simply a marker of identity. But while optically, the repetition of wearing the hat all the time would seem indeed to serve as an embodied representative marker of identity, this optical reading actually aids the rerouting as the surface is covered by the hat, a blurry, indeterminate image, sustained by the refusal to confess, and its rerouting to the affective. The optical fails through this partiality, and vision begins to come closer to the image, to feel through this partiality, as vision is rerouted.

6. Subjectivity of the Viewer

The hat may at first seem to be the ultimate marker of the truth of the self, but a haptic reading shows that it has the potential, through its blurriness, to actually critique the self as separate. While an optical reading of the hat would see its constancy as forming a private, personal space on the body, creating a clear 'mine' and 'yours,' subject and object as distinct, Marks argues that haptic visuality invites a more dynamic look between viewer and object.

> Haptic vision is...a visual erotics that offers its object to the
> viewer but only on the condition that its unknowability remain
> intact, and that the viewer, in coming closer, give up his or her
> own mastery.[21]

Haptic visuality 'pulls the viewer close, too closer to see properly'[22] and 'calls
on viewer to engage in its imaginative construction.'[23] The blurriness of the image
also blurs subject and object. To see clearly, a kind of distance is necessary. In the
academic world, for example, we are encouraged to step back from an object in
order to access knowledge about it.

In the absence of visual wholeness, Marks argues that haptic images 'call on
the viewer to engage in its imaginative construction' and that the viewer of a haptic
image exists in a dynamic subjectivity between looker and image. This space of
'imaginative construction' is an in-between of clear subject and object boundaries.
When it's hard to visually pick out the borders of an object, as in the case of the
hat, Marks argues, it can be hard to pick out the borders of subjects. The viewer's
sense of separateness from the image is eclipsed by a more dynamic subjectivity
and exchange. The viewer can no longer take the distance, affectively or visually,
to remain separate from the object of view.

7. Fashion Theory for the 21 Century: Haptic Methods

So why did this hat elicit such intense responses? The answer is unclear and
blurry. For the purposes of moving fashion theory forward, however, how is a
more important question. It did not do it on its own or through an abstract meaning
transmitted through larger cultural codes of gender, race, or class, nor through
subtle meanings coded within it a s a text. Instead, the hat-event illustrates the
inseparability of a body from its culturally-specific modalities of vision. The hat
moves the vision applied to it f rom optical to haptic, and this movement alone
seems to evoke intense responses. Clearly, something different is happening.

The hat-event is not the start or end point of haptic rerouting. As illustrated
here, the fashion theorist can enact this movement as well, by moving from the
optical to the haptic in our approaches to methodology. Instead of giving
instructions for this methodology, I offer this study as an exemplar, and haptic
visuality – that which refuses to separate figure from ground, blurs intersubjective
boundaries, and brackets the viewer's mastery over knowledge about the object –
and a methodological tool for seeing and studying other instances of haptic
rerouting.

Notes

1 R. Barthes, *The Fashion System*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1983, p. 31.
2 G. Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1990.
3 L. Marks, *Touch: Sensuous Theory and M ultisensory Media*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2002, p. xii.
4 G. Deleuze, *Francis Bacon*: *The Logic of Sensation*, University of Minnesota Press, 2005, pp. 88-96.
5 Throughout this chapter, I use quotations from those who have been exposed to 'the hat event' or the hat performance, and their informal responses. The quotes appear in italics, and do not include names to protect privacy, and also to contribute to the mysterious haptic effect I aspire to create in this piece.
6 Deleuze, loc. cit.
7 J. Finklestein, *The Fashioned Self*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 1991, pp. 6-39.
8 A. Radley, 'The Elusory Body and Social Constructionist Theory', *Body & Society*, Vol. 1, June 1995, p. 3.
9 V. Pitts-Taylor, *Surgery Junkies: Wellness and P athology in Cosmetic Culture*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey, 2007, p. 25.
10 Marks, op. cit., p. 2.
11 Ibid., p. 17.
12 Ibid., pp. 17-18.
13 Ibid.
14 Pitts-Taylor, op. cit., p. 112.
15 Marks, op. cit., p. xiii.
16 Ibid., p. xii.
17 Ibid., pp. 4-5.
18 Ibid., p. 16.
19 Ibid., p. 17.
20 Ibid., pp. 16-17.
21 Ibid.
22 Ibid., p. 13.
23 Ibid., p. 16.

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Kim Cunningham is a Ph.D. Candidate in Sociology at the City University of New York (CUNY) Graduate Center in New York City. Her research interests include media and technology studies, sociology of the body, social theory, affect, psychoanalysis, queer theory, experimental and auto ethnographic writing, and visual studies. She teaches sociology and fashion studies courses at the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT) in New York City.

Fashion and Philosophical Deconstruction: A Fashion In-Deconstruction

Flavia Loscialpo

Abstract

This chapter explores the concept of 'deconstruction' and its implications in contemporary fashion. Since its early popularization, in the 1960s, philosophical deconstruction has traversed different soils, from literature to cinema, from architecture to all areas of design. The possibility of a fertile dialogue between deconstruction and diverse domains of human creation is ensured by the asystematic and transversal character of deconstruction itself, which does not belong to a s ole specific discipline, and neither constitutes *per se* a body of specialistic knowledge. When, in the early 1980s, a new generation of independent thinking designers made its appearance on the fashion scenario, it seemed to incarnate a sort of 'distress' in comparison to the fashion of the times. Influenced by the minimalism of their own art and culture, designers Rei Kawakubo, Yohji Yamamoto, Issey Miyake and, later in the decade, the Belgian Martin Margiela pioneered what can legitimately be considered a f ashion revolution. By the practicing of deconstructions, such designers have disinterred the mechanics of the dress structure and, with them, the mechanisms of fascinations that haunt fashion. The disruptive force of their works resided not only in their undoing the structure of a specific garment, in renouncing to finish, in working through subtractions or displacements, but also, and above all, in rethinking the function and the meaning of the garment itself. With this, they inaugurated a fertile reflection questioning the relationship between the body and the garment, as well as the concept of 'body' itself. Just like Derrida's deconstruction, the creation of a piece via deconstruction implicitly raises questions about our assumptions regarding fashion, showing that there is no objective standpoint, outside history, from which ideas, old concepts, as well as their manifestations, can be dismantled, repeated or reinterpreted. This constant dialogue with the past is precisely what allows designers practicing deconstruction to point to new landscapes.

Key Words: Deconstruction, Derrida, *la mode Destroy*, body, mechanisms of fascination, consumer culture, history.

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1. The Germs of Deconstruction

Deconstruction, as a philosophical practice, has spread its influence far beyond the borders of philosophy and academic speculation. Since its early popularization, in the 1960s, it h as traversed different soils, from literature to cinema, from architecture to all areas of design.

The term 'deconstruction' possesses a particular philosophical pedigree, and its history of effects has been widely documented and meticulously investigated. This is not merely casual. Well known is in fact the resistance of Jacques Derrida, father of deconstruction, to provide a definition of it, and thus to surrender to the original Platonic question trying to fix the essence (*ti esti*) of the things that has long permeated Western metaphysics. Rather than being a methodology, an analysis, or even a critique, deconstruction is eminently an *activity*, that is, a reading of the text, which shows that the text is not a discrete whole, but has more than one interpretation, and very often many conflicting interpretations.

In any context in which it is at work, the a-systematic character of the deconstructive reading emerges in its putting into question and in re-thinking a series of opposing terms, such as subject-object, nature-culture, presence-absence, inside-outside, which are all elements of a conceptual metaphysical hierarchy.[1] The 'deconstruction' pursued by Derrida is indeed connected to another disrupting philosophical project, that is, the phenomenological 'destruction'. In the philosophical tradition, destruction (*Destruktion*), as Heidegger explains, is a peculiar disinterring and bringing to light the un-thought and un-said in a way that recalls an authentic experience of what is 'originary'.[2] The Heideggerian *destruction* and the *deconstruction* outlined by Derrida ultimately converge, fused by the same intention of mining the petrified layers of metaphysics that have for centuries dominated philosophy. Nevertheless, the deconstructive practice never finds an end, and is rather an open and complex way of proceeding.[3]

In an interview released to Christopher Norris in 1988, on the occasion of the International Symposium on Deconstruction (London), Derrida says:

> deconstruction goes through certain social and political structures, meeting with resistance and displacing institutions as it does so. I think that in these forms of art, and in any architecture, to deconstruct traditional sanctions – theoretical, philosophical, cultural – effectively, you have to displace…I would say 'solid' structures, not only in the sense of material structures, but 'solid' in the sense of cultural, pedagogical, political, economic structures.[4]

Spoken, written or visual language could in fact be the embodiment of forms of power and hierarchical systems of thought that have become so embedded in the language and in our consciousnesses that are now even hardly recognizable. The task of deconstruction is therefore to question the authoritarian foundations on which these structures are based, disclosing new possibilities of signification and representation. Among the fixed binary oppositions that deconstruction seeks to undermine are 'language-thought', 'practice-theory', 'literature-criticism', 'signifier-signified'. According to Derrida, the signifier and signified, in fact, do

not give birth to a co nsistent set of correspondences, for the meaning is never found in the signifier in its full being: it is within it, and yet is also absent.[5]

The ideas conveyed by deconstruction have profoundly influenced literature, related design areas of architecture, graphic design, new media, film theory and fashion design. Derrida's relationship with the domain of aesthetics runs indeed alongside his deconstructive work practiced on contemporary philosophy: at first with *The Truth in Painting* (1981), then with *Memoires of the Blind* (1990), and finally with *La connaissance des textes. Lecture d'un manuscrit illisible* (2001), written with Simon Hantai e Jean-Luc Nancy. However, it is only with *Spectres of Marx* (1993) that Derrida's idea of a *spectral aesthetics* achieves its full development.

Through the decades, the possibility of a fertile dialogue between deconstruction and many diverse areas of human creation has been encouraged and ensured by the a-systematic and transversal character of deconstruction itself, which does not belong to a sole specific discipline, and neither can be conceived as a body of specialistic knowledge. In the words of Derrida, in fact, deconstruction, is not a

> unitary concept, although it is often deployed in that way, a usage that I found very disconcerting … Sometimes I prefer to say deconstructions in the plural, just to be careful about the heterogeneity and the multiplicity, the necessary multiplicity of gestures, of fields, of styles. Since it is not a system, not a method, it cannot be homogenized. Since it takes the singularity of every context into account, Deconstruction is different from one context to another.[6]

2. A Fashion *In*-Deconstruction

In the early 1980s a new breed of independent thinking and largely Japanese designers made its appearance on the fashion scenario, transforming it deeply. Influenced by the minimalism of their own art and culture, designers Yohji Yamamoto, Rei Kawakubo (Commes des Garçons),[7] Issey Miyake and, later in the decade, the Belgian Martin Margiela, Ann Demeulemeester and Dries Van Noten largely pioneered the fashion revolution.

1981 is the year in which both Yamamoto e Kawakubo showed for the first time their collection in Paris. Their appearance forced 'the representatives of the world's press to examine their consciences'.[8] Rejecting clichéd notions of glamour or the fashionable silhouette's look, they disclosed a new approach to clothing in the post-industrial, late 20th century society.

Just as in the philosophical or in the architectural practice, the deconstruction pursued by fashion designers generated new construction and signification possibilities, and questioned the traditional understanding of the *invisible* and the

just *unseen*, thus subverting the parameters determining what is high and low in fashion. The designers seemed to make a powerful statement of resistance. At first, the austere, demure, often second hand look of their creations induced some journalists to describe it as 'post-punk', or 'grunge'. Nevertheless, the disruptive force of their works resided not only in their undoing the structure of a specific garment, in renouncing to finish, in working through subtractions or displacements, but also, and above all, in rethinking the function and the meaning of the garment itself. They inaugurated, thus, a fertile reflection that questioned the relationship between the body and the garment, as well as the concept of 'body' itself.

Almost a decade later, in July 1993, an article on 'deconstructionist' fashion appeared in *The New York Time*s, with the intention of clarifying the origin and the directionality of this new movement, of such a still mysterious avant-garde. A 'sartorial family tree' immediately emerged:

> Comme des Garçons' Rei Kawakubo is mom; Jean-Paul Gaultier
> is dad. Mr. Margiela is the favoured son. And Coco Chanel is
> that distant relative everyone dreads a visit from, but once she's
> in town, realizes they have of a lot in common after all.[9]

Even before the word 'deconstruction' began to circulate in the fashion landscape,[10] it became clear that some designers were already reacting and measuring themselves against the parameters that were dominating fashion. In 1978, for instance, Rei Kawakubo produced for Commes des Garçons a catwalk collection that included a range of black severe coats, tabards, and bandage hats.[11] Subsequently, in 1981, Yohji Yamamoto expressed a way of dressing that constituted an alternative to the mainstream fashion of the times: the clothes were sparse, monochrome, anti-status and timeless; knitwear resulted in sculptural pieces with holes, in mis-buttoning to pull and distort the fabric, in ragged and non conformist shapes, that were in complete contrast, in the form, with the glamorous, sexy, power clothes of the 1980s. Revolting against the excessive attitude and the little imagination that were anaesthetizing fashion, Margiela reworked old clothes and the most disparate materials, and for his first Parisian show (Summer 1989) choose a parking garage. Models had blackened eyes, wan faces. They walked through red paint and left gory footprints across white paper. For his 1989-1990 Winter collection, he used the same foot-printed paper to make jackets and waistcoats. Margiela says, 'we were working one year, and wanted a concept. It's a big word, but if you see what happened afterward, after five years, I think we can call it that'.[12]

Often labelled as 'anti-fashion', or the 'death of fashion', the works of the 'deconstructivist' designers incarnated a sort of 'distress' in respect to the mainstream fashion of the late 1980s. Nevertheless, just as Margiela's former teacher at the Academie Royale des Beaux Arts, Ms. Poumaillou, insists, 'instead

of killing fashion, which is what some thought he was doing, he was making an apology'.[13] Making a parody of the already excessive and orthodox fashion of the times would have been redundant. Margiela's work rather concentrated in disinterring the mechanics of the dress structure and, with them, the mechanisms of fascinations that haunt fashion.

The way of proceeding adopted by Kawakubo, Margiela, Yamamoto could bear associations with the sub-cultural fashion movements of the 1980s. For instance, the idea of cutting up clothes could refer back to the ripped t-shirts of the punks and the subsequent street style of slicing jeans with razor blades. Nevertheless, the work of the 'deconstructivist' designers goes much further. Far from resulting in a mere collage, or in recycled post-punk, or even in some post-nuclear survivalism, 'deconstruction fashion', or '*la mode Destroy*' is above all a *dialectical device*. As Elizabeth Wilson clarifies, it is definitely a 'more intellectual approach, which literally unpicked fashion, exposing its operations, its relations to the body and at the same time to the structures and discourses of fashion'.[14] Deconstruction fashion, which is always already *in*-deconstruction itself, involves in fact a thorough consideration of fashion's debt to its own history, to critical thought, to temporality and the modern condition.

3. The Deconstructed Body

The peculiar way in which 'deconstructivist' designers question fashion, through subtractions, replications and deconstructions, sounds like a whisper, in which what is not overtly said is both a consequence of and, at the same time, a condition for saying. Philosophically speaking, the force of deconstructive thinking can only be realized through the conditions of its dissemination. Similarly, for more than two decades, designers practicing deconstruction have unfailingly confronted themselves with the parameters that have determined and still determine fashion today. Their work represents in fact a reaction to and a critical reflection on traditional tailoring methods and paragons of body consciousness.

In fashion, a complexity of tensions and meanings, not only relative to the dimension of clothing, becomes manifest and accessible. At the centre of this complexity there is always the body, in all the modalities of its being-in-the-world, of its self-representing, of its disguising, of its measuring and conflicting with stereotypes and mythologies. The dressed body represents therefore the physical and cultural territory where the visible and sensible performance of our identity takes place. What deconstruction fashion tends to show is how absence, dislocation, and reproduction affect the relationship between the individual body and a frozen idealization of it.

Significantly, in the early 1980s the work of designers pursuing deconstruction was considered a direct attack on western ideas of the body shaping. Their designs, apparently shapeless, were radically unfamiliar. But such a new 'shapeless' shape was subtly threatening the parameters prescribing the exaggerated silhouette of the

mainstream fashion of the times. When it first came to prominence, Kawakubo's *oeuvre* never seemed to be inspired by a particular idea of body-type or sexuality: it was simply 'neutral', neither revealing nor accentuating the shape of a body. As Deyan Sudjic underlines, her creations 'neither draw attention to the form of the body, nor try to make the body conform to a preconceived shape; instead, the texture, layering and form of the clothes are regarded as objects of interest in themselves'.[15] Contemporaneously, Yohji Yamamoto, inspired by images of workers belonging to another age, was disclosing a new possibility in respect to the self-enclosed horizon constituted by prior representations of the body. As François Baudot remarks: 'in a society that glorifies and exalts the body and exposes it to view, Yohji has invented a new code of modesty'.[16]

By playing with an idealized body, deconstruction fashion challenged the traditional oppositions between a 'subject' and an 'object', an 'inside' and an 'outside'. It finally showed that the subjectivity is not a *datum*, but is rather continuously articulated, through time and space, according to different myths, needs, affirmations or negations.

Not by chance, a recurring motif in deconstruction fashion is the reversal of the relation between the body and the garment. Kawakubo's Comme des Garçons S/S 1997 collection, called 'Dress Becomes Body Becomes Dress', masterfully exemplifies such operation: the lumps and bumps emerging from beneath the fabrics seem to be forcing the boundaries between the body and the dress, and to shape a different 'possibility' of articulating the modern subjecthood.[17] No longer contained or morphed by its standardized and rigid representation, the body begins to react to the garment. It animates it and finally encompasses it. As theoretical indicators, these conceptual designs hold an immense critical importance, as they show that any departure from the perfection of some crystallized paradigm should not be understood as insufficiency or limit. And nevertheless the one represented, for instance, by Comme des Garçons S/S 1997 collection is just a possibility, one among the many that can be and are yet to be drawn.

The reflection upon the border, the containment, the inside/outside demarcation is crucial for designers pursuing deconstruction, whose contribution regularly manifests itself in overturning this supposedly pacific relation. Indeed, a staple of Margiela's aesthetics is the recreated tailor's dummy, worn as a waistcoat directly over the skin, which tends to reverse the relationship between the garment and the wearer. The body actually wears the dummy: the tailor's dummy, a norm for classical sizes and proportions, to which the living body has for long been made obedient. In further occasions, as in the enlarged collection derived from doll clothes, Margiela explicitly refers to the problematic of the standardized body, for it ironically unveils the inherent disproportions of garments belonging to a body metonymically calling into question an idealized body of the doll. Several collections (A/W 1994-1995, S/S 1999) contain in fact pieces that are reproduced from a doll's wardrobe and are subsequently enlarged to human proportions, so

that the disproportion of the details is evident in the enlargement. This procedure results in gigantic zippers, push buttons, oversized patterns and extreme thick wool. In such a way, Margiela's practice of fashion questions the relationship between the means and the representation of the means, between realism and 'real', between reality and representation. The clothes produced for the line a *Doll's Wardrobe* are in fact faithfully 'translated' from doll proportions to human size, with the effect of producing an exaggeration of the details. As Alistair O'Neill highlights, 'Margiela points to the slippage between seeing an outfit and wearing it by showing how something is lost and something poetic is found in the translation'.[18] By reversing the relation between body and clothes, and by playing with an idealized body, Margiela problematizes the traditional oppositions between 'subject' and 'object', 'body' and 'garment'. This peculiar manipulating, as Barbara Vinken points out, contributes to revealing how fashion 'brought the ideal to life, an ideal which, however, was such located out of time, untouched, like the dummy, by the decline to which the flesh is subject'.[19]

4. Ethics of Deconstruction Fashion

The disposition to seek, 'like the philosophical project of deconstruction, to rethink the formal logic of dress itself'[20] has become, through the decades, the motif that characteristically defines the practice of fashion pursued by 'deconstructivist' designers. Fashion, art, and a cr itical reflection on consumer culture are strictly intertwined in their *oeuvres*, which question our attitude towards time as well as the contemporary view of fashion, marked by a vivid tension between transitoriness and persistence.[21]

The particular ethic driving the work of such designers is clearly motivated by the refusal to be pervaded by the idea that fashion has to change and reinvent itself continuously. Yamamoto's, Kawakubo's, Margiela's designs seem in fact to neglect any temporary and yet constricting tendency or direction. In replicating clothes form the past, and in reassembling clothing and fabrics from past times, for instance, they perform these reproductions showing that there is no objective standpoint, outside history, from which ideas, old concepts, as well as their manifestations, can be dismantled, repeated, or reinterpreted.[22] The constant dialogue with the past is precisely what allows Yamamoto, Kawakubo, Margiela, among the others, to point to new landscapes.

A 'semiotic blur'[23] has for long characterized fashion, in which incessant mutations take place in such a way that can hardly be interpreted or fixed in the collective consciousness. The spiral of consumerism is encouraged and enhanced by these fast and endless substitutions of imagery. The work of designers practicing deconstruction is motivated by the awareness that what is present always refers back to what is not *hic et nunc*, and hence creation does not happen in an empty blank dimension. These designers might be mainly known for their radical interpretation of fashion, but a thorough knowledge of fashion history is what

precisely forms the base of their creativity. As Alison Gill remarks in particular about Margiela, the Maison's *oeuvre* is both 'a critique of fashion's impossibility, against its own rhetoric, to be 'innovative', while at the same time showing its dependence on the history of fashion'. These words best summarize a significant feature that is definitely common to all designers practicing deconstruction.[24]

In not being dictated by any particular trend, deconstruction fashion seems to address a provocation to consumer culture, in which the process of production is separated from consumption. The theorist Herbert Blau has even dared to suggest that, 'if there is a politics of fashion, leaning left or right, the practice of deconstruction, as it was in the early nineties, might have been considered the last anti-aesthetic gesture of the socialists style'.[25] When they first came to prominence, designers pursuing deconstruction were revolting against the glamour that permeated the previous decade of fashion, in favour of what Blau calls an 'anaplasia of dress'.[26] While a manifest political intention in their works might be a too strong claim, their critical impetus towards fashion and culture cannot be underestimated.

Far from being an evasion, or a product of pure fantasy, deconstruction fashion has always been characterized by a critical nuance, as it tends to revolt against fashion in its most oppressive and glamorous form. However, it does not simply aim at replacing the old fashion parameters it tries to dismantle with new ones. What it does, in fact, is working for disclosing and showing 'other' possibilities. Emblematic, in this respect, is the case of Margiela's reconstructions stemming from raw materials.

The deconstruction and reconstruction of clothing has been a leitmotif of Maison Martin Margiela's repertoire for years. This finds its most significant expression in the 'Artisanal Collection', for which existing clothes or humble materials, such as plastic or paper, are re-worked in order to create new garments and accessories. The collection could be interpreted as the Maison's answer to the haute couture of the classic fashion system. The unique items of the Artisanal Line are fabricated in the same labour-intensive way as in haute couture. The term 'luxury', however, undergoes here a semantic shift: it does not mean precious materials, but rather indicates the hours worked in the production of each piece. In this way Margiela unmasks human labour as the real source of the value of a garment. Recycling, nevertheless, is not the ultimate scope of Margiela's fashion, which has even been compared, not appropriately, to Italian *arte povera,* or considered as a forerunner of eco-fashion.[27] Borrowing, altering, recollecting and manipulating become for Margiela a cultural and critical practice that deconstructs couture techniques and gives life to new formations by reassembling old clothing and raw materials. Caroline Evans draws a parallel between Margiela's practice of fashion and the activity of *bricoleurs* in the early nineteenth century:

> Margiela's transformations of abject materials in the world of
> high fashion mark him out as a kind of golden dustman or
> ragpicker, recalling Baudelaire's analogy between the Parisian
> ragpicker and the poet in his poem 'Le Vin de Chiffoniers' (The
> Ragpickers' Wine). Like Baudelaire's nineteenth-century poet-
> ragpicker who, although 'marginal to the industrial
> process…recovered cultural refuse for exchange value', Margiela
> scavenged and revitalised moribund material and turned rubbish
> back into the commodity form.[28]

Margiela's practice of recollecting and reconstructing, rather than being an explicit critique to the consumer culture and the fashion system, is an index of the awareness that any critical fashion is always anchored in a specific moment of capitalistic production, consumption and technological change. It *performs* a critical reflection on fashion, unmasking its crystallized myths and commercial roots.[29] The uncanny re-creations that finally emerge are characterized by a respectful attitude, and by the belief that individuality and contingency cannot be replicated, or better, that any replication would bear a significant difference.

By declaring the precise amount of hours required for the production of each piece, Margiela overcomes the alienation that for Karl Marx defines the relationship between the consumer and the product.[30] Through the declaration of the labour intensive production Maison Martin Margiela seems to temporarily reconcile the consumer with the process of production. It doing so, it remarks its debt towards the tradition and history of fashion, while at the same time it deconstructs the mechanisms of fascination and re-discusses our assumptions regarding fashion.

Deconstruction fashion is not a simple and strategic reversal of categories. At the origin of such a practice there is always the consciousness that it can never constitute an independently and self-enclosed system of operative concepts. Just as there is no language, or no critical discourse, so vigilant or self-aware that it can effectively escape the condition placed upon its own prehistory and ruling metaphysics, there is no creation, or re-creation, allegedly pure or innocent. Any creation, as well as any critique, is always a situated practice. Hence, deconstruction fashion itself is always already *in*-deconstruction.

As Jacques Derrida has incessantly warned, deconstruction is not an operation that supervenes afterwards, from the outside. In an interview with directors Kirby Dick and Amy Ziering, he says: 'you find it already in the thing itself. It is not a tool to be applied. It is always already at work in the thing 'we' deconstruct'.[31] Through the deconstructing practice, and the exposure of the means that lead to the formation of certain idealized parameters, some designers have masterfully managed to problematize and re-think a series of opposing pairs (i.e. original-derived, subject-object, nature-culture, absence-presence, inside-outside), whose

stronghold has for long been un-attacked. Through their questioning designs, they suggest, time and again, that everything can be re-interpreted and re-constructed differently. This uninterrupted movement from the finitude of the materiality to the infinite interpretation is what allows designers practicing deconstruction to listen to the voice of historical tradition, in a dialogue that extends to the present and discloses other possibilities of understanding. Deconstruction fashion seems then to dwell in a place that is neither inside nor outside the fashion scenario, but stands always already on the edge or, in Derridean words, '*au bord*'.

Notes

[1] Before Derrida, Nietzsche has denounced the rigid and deathly regularity of the metaphysical heritage, which he compares to a 'Roman columbarium', *On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense*, W. Kaufmann (ed), Viking Penguin Inc, New York, 1976. On the connections between Derrida's work and Nietzsche, as well as Freud and Heidegger, see Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's preface to J. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. G.C. Spivak, John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, MD and London, 1976.

[2] M. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson, Harper & Row, New York, 1962.

[3] *Deconstruction, II*, A. Papadakis (ed), Architecture Design, London, 1999, p. 11.

[4] Ibid., p. 7. In the essay 'Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences', Derrida warns: 'repetitions, substitutions, transformations, and permutations are always taken from a history of meaning [*sens*] – that is, in a word, a history – whose origin may always be reawakened or whose end may always be anticipated in the form of presence', in *Writing and Difference*, Chicago University Press, Chicago, 1978, p. 279.

[5] N. Sarup, *Post-Structuralism and Post-Modernism*, Harvester and Wheatsheaf, Hertfordshire, 1988, p. 36.

[6] *Deconstruction, II*, op. cit., p. 8.

[7] Deyan Sudjic reckons that a significant role in the impression that Kawakubo made in the western scenario of the early 1980s was the 'perceived exoticism' of Japanese designers. D. Sudjic, *Rei Kawakubo and Comme des Garçons*, Fourth Estate and Wordsearch, A Blueprint Monograph, London, 1990, p. 84.

[8] F. Baudot, *Yohji Yamamoto*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1997, p. 10.

[9] A.M. Spindler, 'Coming Apart', *The New York Times*, July 25th, 1993.

[10] According to Mary McLeod, the term 'deconstructionist' 'entered the vocabulary of fashion shortly after the Museum of Modern Art's Deconstructivist Architecture show in 1988', M. McLeod, 'Undressing Architecture: Fashion, Gender and Modernity', *Architecture: In Fashion*, D. Fausch, P. Singley, R. El-Khoury, and Z. Efrat (eds), Princeton Architectural Press, New York, 1994, p. 92.

[11] Herbert Blau recalls that 'the rip, the tear, the wound that we associate with modernist wound was a factor in the sartorial mutilations of Commes des Garçons some years before, when the notion of rending fabrics was still (or again) a radical gesture – in the case of Rei Kawabuko's designs, not only radical, but stylishly perverse.' *Nothing in Itself*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1999, p. 177.

[12] Spindler, loc. cit.

[13] Ibid.

[14] E. Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams*, I. B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, London, 1985, p. 250.

[15] Sudjic, op. cit., p. 54.

[16] Baudot, op. cit., p. 8.

[17] Concerning the collaboration between Rei Kawakubo and artist Cindy Sherman, see H. Loreck, 'De/Constructing Fashion/Fashions of Deconstruction: Cindy Sherman's Fashion Photographs', *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body & Culture*, Vol. 6, Iss. 3, pp. 255-276.

[18] A. O'Neill, 'Imagining Fashion, Helmut Lang & Maison Martin Margiela', *Radical Fashion*, C. Wilcox (ed), V&A Publications, London, 2001, p. 45.

[19] B. Vinken, *Fashion Zeitgeist*, Berg, Oxford-New York, 2005, p. 150. In grasping the peculiarity of Margiela's *oeuvre*, the author remarks: 'that the body is not a natural given but rather a construct is what Maison Martin Margiela's fashion offers to our gaze through ever-new variations', B. Vinken, 'The New Nude', *Maison Martin Margiela '20': The Exhibition*, Mode Museum Provincie Antwerpen, Antwerp, 2008, p. 112.

[20] C. Evans, *Fashion at the Edge*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2003, p. 250.

[21] Moreover, in contrast with the cult status of fashion designers of the 1980s and the 1990s, Kawakubo, Margiela and Yamamoto use to draw attention on their work and to present the label as a result of a collective work, rather than an extension of the designer's individuality.

[22] Barbara Vinken acutely remarks: 'the old is not excluded and denied but is made into the material of the clothes. It is not the matter of historicism, a revival of a past epoch, but an inscribing of traces of mortality… The traces of use, the time of their making, the history of clothing are inscribed into the creations: they absorb time, decline, age into themselves', B. Vinken, 'Fashion: Art of Dying, Art of Living', *Fashion and Immagination: About Clothes and Art*, J. Brand, J. Teunissen and C. de Muijnck (eds), ArtEZ Press, Arnhem, 2009, p. 87.

[23] Concerning this aspect of fashion he argues: 'today we have reached such a level of cultural commodification that the duplicity of the sign, that is, that the product might actually 'mean' something, can be done away with', I. Chambers, 'Maps for the Metropolis: A Possible Guide to the Present', *Cultural Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1, January 1987, p. 2.

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[24] In W. Wenders' documentary film 'Notebook on Cities and Clothes' (1989), Y. Yamamoto says: 'I know myself in the present that is dragging the past. This is all I understand'.

[25] For a critique of Margiela's work, as an exclusively aesthetic experience, see A. Ross (ed), *No Sweat: Fashion, Free Trade and the Rights of Garment Workers*, Verso, New York and London, 1997.

[26] 'Anaplasia' is a medical term that means a reversion of differentiations in cells and is characteristic of malign neoplasm (tumours). H. Blau, *Nothing in Itself*, p. 175.

[27] See S. O'Shea, 'Recycling: An all-New Fabrication of Style', *Elle*, 7, 1991.

[28] C. Evans, *Fashion at the Edge: Spectacle, Modernity, and Deathliness*, pp. 249-250.

[29] In discussing the position of such designers within the fashion system, Caroline Evans observes that 'there is a paradox in this type of design: however oppositional or experimental it might be, it remains locked… into the very capitalistic system whose cycles of production and consumption it might be seen to be criticising'. Nevertheless what cannot be underestimated is that 'this type of fashion design makes theatre of out of material that spoke to us, reaching parts that most polemicists cannot reach, but only in the realm of symbolic', Ibid., p. 262.

[30] K. Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, trans. B. Fowkes, Penguin Books, London, 1979, pp. 163-177.

[31] 'Derrida – The Movie', documentary by K. Dick and A. Ziering (2002).

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Flavia Loscialpo Phil. PhD. (Sapienza University of Rome). She works and lives in London, where she is a visiting post-doctoral fellow at King's College. Her areas of research are philosophy of language, Wittgenstein, deconstruction, curation and visual culture.

Fashion Criticism Today?

Johannes Reponen

Abstract
With the rise of fashion blogs and an ever-increasing number of newly published fashion magazines, there is no lack of commentators wanting to have their say about fashion. Large portions of writings that are published through these mainstream channels are less critical in their accounts and often result in 'free' advertising. The late curator and fashion historian, Richard Martin (1947-1999), in his seminal essay 'Addressing the Dress' rightly asks, 'does a journalistic account qualify as criticism?' Fashion is often seen as superficial and frivolous, though in some way or another it affects all of our lives. Martin observes that 'few fashion writers know anything about criticism or fashion history'. More recently, the fashion designer Giles Deacon remarked in an interview with Colin McDowell and published in The Sunday Times (2009), that 'despite often ridiculously grand titles, most of the front row are ignorant: they can't tell a print from a jacquard. What can anyone learn from what they have to say?' If the quality of writing, or more importantly criticism, is in a state of 'dumbing down', how might we expect the audience to have informed views about fashion? In contrast, writing about fashion in academic journals reaches a smaller and defined specialist audience of primarily fashion design researchers. While such publications promote a critical discourse for fashion writing, there are limitations in scale of distribution but also in the often inaccessible use of academic jargon. This chapter will begin by presenting an overview of the current state of fashion design writing and criticism moving on to consider, how might we assure that fashion doesn't fall into the dark ages by insuring a healthy culture for criticism, whilst allowing fashion to grow and innovate. I intend to outline some of the foundations that are affecting the written form of fashion criticism today.

Key Words: Criticism, fashion writing, fashion journalism.

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1. Introduction

The title of this chapter proposes a paradox. On one hand it promises a review of the current state of written form of fashion criticism while, on the other hand, it questions the very notion of it. Is there such a thing as fashion criticism?

Over the years as fashion has become a popular subject of interest the demand for fashion related texts and images has grown significantly. This is demonstrated by the wealth of publications that concern fashion in one way or another, whether as purely trade related news or trend supplements in a gossip magazine. It is now common for all the major newspapers to have their own fashion editorial

departments while the free newspapers such as Metro and London Lite dedicate a considerable amount of column space to fashion. As well as traditional print media, the rise of cheap and easy access to the Internet and various software has enabled users to create websites and blogs cheaply, if not free, without any prior website development knowledge. This has resulted in a wide variety of fashion websites and webzines such as style.com and Ponystep.com, as well as blogs published by individual fashion enthusiasts such as Susanne Lau from StyleBubble or Diane Pernet from A Shaded View on Fashion, which cover niche fashion subject areas from a subjective point of view.

While fashion is a widely covered subject, the content in most cases remains superficial. As the whole fashion industry is driven by appearance and image, it could be easy to believe that fashion is nothing more than a visual phenomenon[1] and despite fashions undeniable success as a social and commercial. phenomenon, it remains the very exemplum of superficiality, frivolity and vanity.[2]

There is plenty of research on the subject of fashion writing, most notably Roland Bathes' *The Fashion System* (1967), but very little research has been done on the written form of fashion criticism. This chapter is an attempt to further some of the discussion started by Richard Martin in his essay 'Addressing the Dress' published in *Crisis of Critisicm* (1997), Angela McRobbie in her chapter 'Fashion and the Image Industry' from British Fashion Design: *Rag Trade or Image Industry* (1998) and Colin McDowell's chapter 'Supplement Living' as from his book *The Designer Scam* (1994).

Before we begin to analyse the role of criticism within fashion writing, it is important to consider the motives behind writing in general. 'All writers are vain, selfish and lazy, and at the very bottom of their motives there lies a mystery' according to George Orwell in his seminal piece Why I Write.[3] Orwell defined four motives for writing:

> 1. 'Sheer Egoism. Desire to seem clever, to be talked about, to be remembered after death, to get your own back on grown-ups who snubbed you in childhood, etc.'

> 2. 'Aesthetic Enthusiasm… Desire to share an experience, which one feels is valuable and ought not to be missed.' Though he does note: 'The aesthetic motive is very feeble in a l ot of writing…'

> 3. 'Historical Impulse. Desire to see things as they are, to find out true facts and store them up for the use of posterity.'

> 4. 'Political Purpose – using the word 'political' in the widest possible sense.'[4]

Ideally academic writing falls into the category of Historical Impulse (desire to see things as they are, to find out true facts and store them up for the use of posterity) in Orwell's taxonomy. While I recognize the importance of fashion theory and academic writing where critical discourse is thoroughly examined and no doubt critical analysis takes place, however, this chapter concentrates on examining fashion writing in the new and old mainstream medias: newspapers, magazines and online publications – blogs or webzines. The reason for this is because the writing that appears in these forms is targeted to a general audience as opposed to fashion academics and professionals.

2. Defining the Fashion Critic

It is important to start by defining the term criticism to begin to understand the role of a fashion critic. The word is often associated with the process of fault-finding; to criticize something usually means to give a negative review. This is also the first definition given by the Oxford English Dictionary to the word critic: 'a person who expresses an unfavourable opinion on something'. Perhaps one of the most famous fashion commentators considered a cr itic was the late Richard Blackwell (1922–2008), notably known for his 'Worst Dressed List'. Mr Blackwell's list, based on subjective evaluation of fashions worn by celebrities, was designed to ridicule the subject and entertain the audience. Though Mr Blackwell's List does confirm the definition provided by Oxford English Dictionary, it falls outside the definition of criticism this chapter is proposing to be used to define the term. It would be perhaps more appropriate to define Mr Blackwell's writing as satire rather than criticism. In contrast Professor Noël Carroll's description, which appeared in his book On Criticism, defines a critic, as person who 'engages in the reasoned evaluation of artworks'.[5] In practice this means to assess the merits and faults of the object of criticism in a manner to describe, classify, interpret, analyse, contextualize, elucidate and disseminate it with the support of valid reason.[6] The concept of time plays a part in criticism also, and this is where we might start to draw distinctions between journalistic and critical account, when considering the nature of the written piece. Colin McDowell notes that 'a critic must have a perspective of time if what he says is to be of any value'.[7] By this McDowell means knowledge and understanding of history in order to contextualize work though we can also read this as having the time to disseminate and elucidate the ideas thus allowing critical discourse to emerge.

There is no shortage of column space in both print and online media with fashion writers and commentators giving their views on the latest fashions or selecting, or rather editing, fashion items for the reader to choose from. '12 top swimsuits – Jo Jones, Observer fashion editor, picks one-pieces', 'Great Gladiators – Paula Reed, Grazia style director selects sandals'.[8] Professor Carroll defines this as consumer reporting, the reviewer who records his or her likes and dislikes so that the reader can use them to predict which fashions they will like or dislike.[9]

Although this is the most common form of fashion writing, it falls outside of the subject of criticism.

To begin to understand the culture of criticism, or the lack of it, in fashion writing it is important to note that there are only a few writers who are actually called critics (apart from Mr. Blackwell). In fact most writers are referred to as Fashion Editors. This is the case for one of the most influential and widely read fashion commentators, Suzy Menkes, who is the International Herald Tribune's Fashion Editor. Similarly the Financial Times writer Vanessa Friedman is their Fashion Editor; Colin McDowell, is Senior Fashion Writer for the Sunday Times; Hilary Alexander, is Fashion Director for the Telegraph. All these writers have more or less the same job description. Though all of these widely respected journalists perform some aspects of the task of a critic, in general the use of title 'editor' proposes a problem. If most of these fashion writers, who in general are all regarded as authoritative voices in fashion, are employed to edit fashion for the readers, can we expect any critical evaluation to take place? As fashion is regarded as a somewhat disposable consumer-based industry, to have a fashion editor as the prime voice in newspaper writing only reinforces the disposability of the industry and thus undermines the need for serious discourse to take place to allow a healthy evolution of the industry to occur. Suzy Menkes' counterpart Alice Rawsthorn who writes for the design section of the International Herald Tribune is Design Critic (not Design Editor).

One of the only fashion writers who is known as Critic is Cathy Horyn, who writes for The New York Times (owned by The New York Times Company which also owns The International Herald Tribune). Ms Horyn, who was trained as an architect, has earned an authoritative reputation in the fashion industry by voicing critical views on her *On the Runway* blog, dedicated for the biannual catwalk season, which is published on The New York Times website.

In fact most often when we think about fashion criticism, we have come to think about the reviews that appear in newspapers and online during the show seasons in the same way we associate gallery reviews with art criticism. As the fashion show season has become the pinnacle of the fashion world, a considerable amount of column space is taken up by the show reviews. During the women and men's couture show season Suzy Menkes's articles appear in the International Herald Tribune daily (sometimes as often as three times a day online) as opposed to off-season when they appear on average once a week. Because of the nature of fashion weeks, where up to 12 shows take place during the day, fashion editors and writers are expected to write reviews and give evaluations about the shows with a very quick turnaround – sometimes as soon as 20 minutes after the show.[10] Suzy Menkes is known for typing her copy during the late shows in order for her to be able to get a review published in the next day's newspaper. Does 20 minutes allow enough time to fully analyse, contextualize or even elucidate a show review? The late curator and fashion historian, Richard Martin (1947–1999), in his seminal

essay 'Addressing the Dress' rightly asks, 'does a journalistic account qualify as criticism?'[11] In the same way in which we have come to expect art critics such as Waldermar Januszczak for his reviews of the latest exhibitions or film critics such as Mark Kermode to review the latest films, we have come to expect on fashion writers such as Suzy Menkes and Cathy Horyn to give their views about fashion shows. However, unlike Waldermar Januszczak who is free to wander into an exhibition or Mark Kermode, who by simply purchasing a ticket, can experience the most recent film, fashion journalists can only attend fashion shows if they have been personally invited by the designers. As fashion media is closely linked with, even dependent on the fashion industry how can we expect writers to write properly critical reviews about fashion? Tunstall argues that because specialist fields in journalism associated with consumer-based activities are advertising revenue led, they inevitably have a closer relationship with the industry, which manufactures and promotes the product, since it is both the source of 'news' and revenue.[12] As almost all the magazines and some newspapers are financially dependent on fashion advertising, it may not be easy to voice criticism for fear of losing a £100,000 a year advertising account with a major fashion house. 'An issue of Vogue coinciding with collections is crammed with advertising whose sole purpose is to differentiate one fashion brand from another in the fraction of a second that it takes to turn the page. There is no time for words or, often, even to show clothes,' notes Deyan Sudjic design critic and the director of the Design Museum.[13] As an example the September 2007 issue of US Vogue had a staggering 727 pages of advertising out of a total of 840 pages, demonstrating the extent to which the magazine is dependent on the advertising revenue.[14] This no doubt leads to fashion news being presented in a favourable light by magazines and newspapers. With recent reports showing that the number of advertising pages placed in magazines has dropped as a result of the economic downturn, there is more pressure for magazines to 'promote' brands in order to keep the advertising revenue coming in, thereby reducing the content of magazines to mere advertorial.[15] 'Writing is also a Business. A lot of the discussion about blogs vs. magazines these days forgets that most writing is done as part of a commercial venture and it is very important to understand the commercial rules of writing' comments Vicky Richardson, the editor-in-chief of Blueprint magazine in the 'Why I Write' event organized by the MA Design Writing Criticism students held at the Design Council on the 3rd of June, 2009.

When writers do voice strong, if not unfavourable, opinions about shows, it is not uncommon for them to be banned from the shows by the designers. Earlier last year Ms. Horyn was declined an entry to the Giorgio Armani autumn/winter 2008 ready-to-wear show after the designer felt Ms Horyn's review of his haute couture show which took place the month before was 'belittling of his family and friends'.[16] Though the practice in general is closer to dictatorial suppression of the freedom of the press, a Napoleon complex from the designers' part perhaps, it

sometimes maybe justifiable if the criticism is unfounded or belittling. Hadley Freeman, the Guardian Fashion Features Writer was banned from the Paul Smith menswear show in 2008, having described the show as 'strange and furry', 'quite ugly' and describing the designer as 'Desperate Dan', while her predecessor, Charlie Porter, was briefly banned from the Balenciaga show in 2003 having described the clothes as 'so small they might just fit an anorexic Cabbage Patch Kid'.[17] Is this really a reasoned evaluation of a collection? The late curator and fashion historian, Richard Martin, in his seminal essay 'Addressing the Dress' states that 'few fashion writers know anything about criticism or fashion history'.[18] More worryingly, the fashion designer Giles Deacon remarked in an interview with Colin McDowell and published in The Sunday Times (2009), that 'despite often ridiculously grand titles, most of the front row are ignorant: they can't tell a print from a jacquard. What can anyone learn from what they have to say?' Horyn, who has also been previously banned from shows by Helmut Lang, Dolce & Gabbana, Carolina Herrera, Nicole Miller and Vera Wang,[19] noted that she 'did not buy any of it … not the old-fashioned practice of restricting journalist (in a digital age) from shows'.[20]

3. Challenges for Criticism

Indeed, the digital media has created new ways for fashion writers to communicate through the use of online blogging and publishing. The speed in which images from the latest catwalk shows appear online might be as soon as two hours after the shows, allowing instant commentary on the latest collections. Though there are no obvious benefits for the speed unless one counts the fact that it feeds the desire for news of many fashion enthusiasts around the globe, the media itself allows individuals to brace this democratic fashion media, which has already had a huge impact on the way we view fashion. On top of this the so called old print media is taking advantage of online publishing with magazines such as i-D cutting down its annual number of issues from 12 to 6 in order to increase its online presence and cut down printing costs.[21] But what makes online writing different? And more importantly, what is the quality of criticism that appears in digital media?

Of course one might be tempted to say that with the speed in which catwalk pictures appear online, one does not need to attend the shows in order to obtain an informed view about the collections. However, with the increasing importance of fabrics and the restrictions that this 2-dimensional media allows, limits the way in which one can experience fashion; it is after all a 3-dimensional design discipline in which motion is very important. And while the speed has given a new dimension to the publishing world it also has an effect on the way in which fashion is being presented. 'It's got to be more about experiencing the fashion; a stylistic point of view. It's less and less about information', states Jefferson Hack, founder and the co-publisher of Dazed Group.[22] Dazed Digital, the webzine by Dazed and

Confused magazine, has begun live blogging, posting real-time reports from shows, which clearly illustrates this shift. Fashion is reduced to a momentary experience, a mere sound bite, where information is less important, with no time allowed for reflection, analysis, contextualization or even elucidation. Although fashion's written record has often seemed as immediate as fashion itself[23] and while the blogosphere has created a democratic media by allowing anybody and everybody to publish views about fashion, it does not mean that everybody is capable of judging a show or fashion in general beyond consumer reporting. And as the front row of fashion shows 'is allocated through a process of negotiation in as much deadly earnest as anything seen at UN Security Council' according to Deyjan Sudijic[24] demonstrating the emphasis and pressure that is put on journalist to write favourable reviews to secure a seat, are increasingly being taken over by bloggers, further demonstrating the importance that publicity-hungry fashion houses are putting on the instant blogging media.[25] Doesn't this undermine the importance of journalistic practice and qualification, even in the absence of criticism?

4. The Problem of PR

As public relation managers, communication and marketing directors now act as gatekeepers to all fashion houses and brands making their main mission to get positive stories into magazines and newspapers, the need for criticism could easily be undermined. And as some fashion journalists are increasingly relying on pre-written press releases about products, shows and exhibitions the role of a fashion writer in some cases has been reduced to rewriting already existing news stories because of the speed in which news needs to be published. Similar problems exist in the blogosphere where news stories are increasingly recycled and passed on from one blogger to another. On one given day one might see the same story appearing in numerous different channels with identical content which in some cases is even cross-referenced with other sources, creating a one-dimensional experience.[26] It is not just the pre-written press releases that act as a form of domination from PR departments. Most fashion companies have huge budgets that are solely dedicated to lavish store openings, lunches and parties all designed to entertain fashion writers with the expectation of favourable press. On top of this gifts sent by design houses and brands to journalist during the fashion show season are common practice in the fashion industry[27] and accepting them makes it difficult for writers to offer any critical evaluation about the collection or a brand.

And it is perhaps because of this that pieces that offer the most critical evaluation of fashion are written by writers working outside the field of fashion writing. It that seems subjects such as child labour in clothing factories, size zero models or fashion business related subjects are often regarded as fringe matters by the majority of the fashion writers, leaving the reporting to news reporters and other critics.[28] In fact most often these pieces appear in sections of newspapers that

are not dedicated to fashion but rather to business, culture or news in general. Could this be because the writers do not have the direct relationship with the industry that allows them the freedom to express more critical evaluation? Judith Mackrell the Guardian dance critic recently reviewed the Dying Swan ballet by the English National ballet with costumes designed by Karl Lagerfeld. Ms. Mackrell offered her evaluation of the costumes, noting that 'tutu was conceived with cavalier disregard for the ballerina's working body – the line of the neck broken by an egregious, fluffy ruff, the waistline broken by a too-high skirt'.[29] Harsh as it may sound in the fashion terms, Mackrell's expertise as a dance critic and author of many books about the subject is undoubted. The assessment considers proportion, cut and how the garment works on the body, which is relatively rare in fashion. Have you ever heard anybody questioning the design credentials of Henry Holland or even the wearability of Gareth Pugh's clothes, after all it is fashion, right?

5. Conclusion

'Writers subject matter will be determined by the age he lives in' George Orwell.[30] When most fashion writing these days is driven by advertising revenue, personal gain and status, or to use Orwell's definitions, Sheer Egoism and Political Purpose what does it s ay about the age in which we live? It seems that it is generally expected that criticism does not exist in fashion writing. Angela McRobbie notes that fashion writing is informative or celebratory, it i s never critical, only mildly ironical and of all the forms of consumerism, fashion seems least open to self-scrutiny and political debate.[31] Doesn't the fashion industry, UK's second largest industry, if we include retail and textiles, deserve more a mere consumer reporting or comic satire?[32] Like a healthy democracy where the role of the opposition is to challenge the leading party, fashion needs to allow channels to be developed and flourish where critical discourse can more freely take place.

Notes

[1] A. Köning, 'Glossy Words: An Analysis of Fashion Writing in British Vogue', *Fashion Theory*, Vol. 10, Iss. 1, Berg, 2006, p. 207.
[2] B. Vinken, *Fashion Zeitgeist*, Berg, Oxford, 2005, p. 3.
[3] G. Orwell, *Why I Write*, Penguin, London, 2004, p. 10.
[4] Ibid., pp. 4-5.
[5] N. Carroll, *On Criticism*, Routledge, New York, 2009, p. 7.
[6] Ibid., p. 13.
[7] C. McDowell, *The Designer Scam*, Hutchinson, London, 1994, p. 1388; P. Reed and J. Jones, 'Observer', *Women*, No. 42, June 2009, pp. 46-47.
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[12] A. McRobbie, *British Fashion Design: Rag Trade or Image Industry*, Routledge, London, 1998, p. 152.

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[14] J. Koblin, 'Condé Nast September Monthlies Lose 1,680 Ad Pages', *The Observer Online*, 21.07.2009.

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Johannes Reponen, University for the Creative Arts, Rochester, UK London College of Communication – University of Arts, London UK.

Fashion and the New in Vogue and Vanity Fair

Aurélie Van de Peer

Abstract
This chapter examines the role early 20th century (1914-1930) fashion magazines played in the construction of the discourse of fashion. Special attention is given to the relation of the discourse of fashion to newness. A detailed Bourdieuan reading of two fashion magazines – Vogue and Vanity Fair – reveals that the new or the novel were the most important signifieds in the magazines, though this does not entail a straightforward relationship between fashion and newness. The magazines hold a paradoxical stand towards the new: both celebrating as well as discrediting it. The category of the new is not only perceived as highly ambiguous, it is also linked to other categories, like pleasure, taste and distinction. The article examines the possibility of a link between the rise of modernism and the paradoxical urge for newness in fashion by arguing for a 'marketplace modernism'. The early 20th century extensive discussions on the new in fashion stand in sharp contrast to the silence of contemporary fashion writings on the ambiguity of newness. It seems that the paradoxical attitude towards the new made way for a p re-reflexive accepting of the new as a constitutive element of fashion, or a 'growing self-evident' of the new as the 20th century progressed. In order to critically reflect on the contemporary unquestioned ways of writing, speaking and thinking on fashion and newness, I propose an unravelling of the ambiguous roots of this value of the fashion field.

Key Words: Fashion magazines, the new, discourse, marketplace modernism, Pierre Bourdieu.

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1. The Value of the New in Contemporary Fashion

While reading fashion magazines, fashion blogs and newspapers that report on fashion throughout the years, I gradually noticed a cer tain discourse on fashion, which puts enormous emphasis on fashion having to be new. Initially I was not all too concerned with this often unspoken demand of newness. Reflecting upon the definition of fashion, it affirmed what I had been reading all along in popular writings of fashion: newness was essential to speak of fashion in a general and of 'good' fashion in a more specific way.

Taking up the work of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu led to me to revise this initial uncritical conception of fashion. For when all players of the fashion field – journalists, designers or scholars – consider the new as substantive to fashion, Bourdieu's work enables us to consider the reason the contemporary social space values the new in relation to fashion to this extent and, consequently, where this emphasis on newness in fashion originates.[1]

Bourdieu argues for an experience of the social world that is based on the immediate acceptance of the facts of that social world or particular field of it. Hence players within a field agree to the facts of that field as unquestionable truths.[2] Bourdieu labels this universal field characteristic 'doxa', or 'the totality of pre-reflexive categories and tacit understanding which is never questioned or made explicit because it never becomes the subject of discourse.'[3]

Why does a field like the fashion field have values that are pre-reflexively endorsed by all players of the field? According to Bourdieu, one of the general properties of fields is the constant struggle for capital in which new players challenge the older ones to achieve part of their field specific resources.[4] In this constant battle, the new players cannot subject the field as a whole to interrogation. For all players, whether they are new or consecrated (the latter meaning bestowed with different forms of field specific capital), want the field to further exist; the faith in the field itself has to be saved at all time.[5] To ensure the existence of the field there have to be certain constitutive field features that cannot be endangered. This is where the concept of 'doxa' comes into play, meaning that some field characteristics do not become subject of discourse since they are pre-reflexively agreed to by all players. Hence, these field characteristics are lifted up to the level of field values which, generally, are not threatened by change.

Now, is newness a constitutive field value of the contemporary fashion field? Elizabeth Wilson's definition '[f]ashion is dress in which the key feature is rapid and continual changing of styles. Fashion, in a sense *is* change […]', already broadcasts the importance ascribed to variations and alternations in dress.[6] Many scholars add to this that fashion's interest in newness originated in modernity, the rise of mercantile and industrial capitalism, urbanization and a growing bourgeoisie.[7] Roland Barthes affirms this: 'the erotics of the New began in the eighteenth century'.[8] He follows by suggesting that the New is not a fashion of one specific cultural field; the New 'is a value, the basis of all criticism: our evaluation of the world [...] depends on the opposition between [...] Old and New'.[9] Thus, scholars who take an interest in fashion clearly argue for the importance of the category of the new to fashion. But what about the other players of the fashion field?

Although fashion scholars tend to agree upon the essential character of the new to fashion, no research has been conducted so far on the judgements of other players of the fashion field. A limited study on the evaluation of deconstruction fashion by two prominent newspapers between 1992-2006 showed the excitement of the press when deconstruction fashion was introduced beginning 1990's. As time progressed this arousal quickly vanished, however, for many 'deconstruction designers' refused to come up with something new.[10] I quote fashion journalist Suzy Menkes,

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But here's the problem. At the heart of the Dior collection was the shock of the not-so-new. Dresses composed of jackets that were spilling out their linings […] are part of a deconstruction theme that has been around for years […]. If Galliano wants to make Dior an abstract exercise […] he needs to think up a really novel idea.[11]

The above cited comment indicates just how important the new is to contemporary fashion as 'good' fashion. Yet one does not often come across a written discourse of the new in the present-day fashion press, for as a pre-reflexive category of the field the new does not become subject of discourse. However, when something is not 'new' or not seen as 'new', the outcries are intense, as illustrated above. According to Bourdieu, for all categories of cultural distinction, matters of taste are determined by negation.[12] Translated to the fashion field, one can read this as: when fashion does not ascribe to the all-powerful new, reactions are fierce. At that very moment the value of the new steps into the light, heavily debated for being breached.

I suggest that in contemporary fashion the new is not a fashion. That is, the new is not a fickle characteristic of the fashion field that is open to change at any time; it is a value of the fashion field, pre-reflexively accepted when entering. This of course carries several questions with it. Firstly, when did the new become a value of the fashion field? For self-evident facts – like newness to fashion – are not given to a field, 'fashion as striving for the new' had to grow self-evident to the field of fashion. Secondly, how did this 'becoming dominant' of the new, right up to the level of not being debatable, develop? And lastly, was this evolution affected by situations outside the fashion field? If so, which ones?

2. Discourse

Here I shall step back in time to pursue a detailed analysis of the discourse of fashion in a limited time caption and 'space'. The aims of this case-study are twofold: to give an account of the process of the 'growing powerful' of the new to fashion, and to consider the possibility of this evolution being influenced by broader social space.[13]

A. Empirical Material

Two fashion magazines, Vanity Fair (1914-1918) and American Vogue (1919-1930), make up the material for the analysis of the relation between the discourse of fashion and the new. Print media not only disseminate new styles of fashion, as cultural intermediaries they also contribute to a certain discourse of fashion and therefore, possibly, to the 'taking power' of the new in fashion. Hence, fashion magazines are distributors as well as creators of discourses on fashion.[14] I have chosen to limit the period in time to 1914-1930, as I expect the emphasis on the new in fashion to be highly influenced by the rise of modernism.[15] For the analysis of Vogue and Vanity Fair the issues with reports and comments on the latest

fashions were selected: mostly the March and September issues, though other months sometimes held comments on the new fashions as well.[16]

B. A Theory of Discourse

Following Bourdieu, I argue for the meaning or power of discourse to be found in the symbolic power of the one (person, institution etc.) that utters the discourse. Symbolic power 'can be exercised only if it is recognized, that is, misrecognized as arbitrary', while 'constituting the given through utterances, of making people see and believe, of confirming or transforming the vision of the world, and, thereby, action on the world and thus the world itself'.[17] Whatever is said has to be believed and in order for that to happen the person or institution that utters something has to be given the recognition by the group – to be read as misrecognition or a 'taken for granted' – that he/she is entitled or authorized to utter something and to be believed. Discourses, thus, derive their efficacy from the hidden correspondence between the field in which these discourses are produced and the structure of the field of social classes within which the recipients are situated and in relation to which they decode the messages.[18] So, in short, the efficacy of a discourse lies in the institutional characteristics of those who utter. Bourdieu's discourse theory will allow me to tackle several questions on 'the becoming powerful' of discourses, as I can relate the discourse of the magazines to their institutional characteristics, which will bestow of authority on the words they send out into the world. Hence, in my analysis of the fashion discourse of Vogue and Vanity Fair I will not follow the usual distinction made in discourse studies between the study of language and the study of the social uses of language, between 'langue' and 'parole'.

3. The Discourse of Fashion in Vogue and Vanity Fair

Bourdieu argues for the structure of fields being characterized by the constant struggle between the players of the field for field specific capital accumulated during previous 'fights'. Those who own the capital try to defend their property against the attacks of the newcomers. They do this by employing conservative or orthodox strategies; trying to keep the structure of the field in the state it is. The newcomers employ subversive strategies that question the power of the dominant players, although never up to the level of endangering the field itself. This constant battle between orthodoxy and heterodoxy forms the background to which I will analyse the relation of the discourse of fashion to the new. Bourdieu asserts that fields have a history which is essential to understand the contemporary structure of the field.[19] Therefore I will give an account of the history of the fashion field's concern with the new by analyzing the possible influence from modernism in the field of art, bearing in mind the fashion field's intermediary position between the field of art and the field of economy.[20]

A. Modernism

In Vogue and Vanity Fair, the new or the novel reveal themselves as the most important signifieds, as the magazines discuss the latest fashions. Interestingly, the magazines hold different meanings for the terms of 'new' and 'novel'. This distinction refers to the difference between the silhouette (the lines, cut, shape) and details (trimmings, buttons, colours, etc.) of dress; 'new' is used to describe the former, 'novel' the latter.[21] While the silhouette of fashion changes slowly over the years, never entirely rejecting last year's fashions, the details, change constantly and are always a negation of previous fashions. 'The actual mode, […], is usually the logical development of the fashions of the former season, continuing some of their best features, and introducing sensational novelties but sparingly.'[22] The details provide the constant novelty fashion asks for: '[t]his frock is in many ways typical of the season; it […] relies for success and novelty on the clever combination of material, as has been said, and upon carefully worked out details.[23] In short, the constant novelty of the details of fashion rejects all things past, the silhouette however works with the past in order to create something new.

Then, the magazines start defining 'newness'. They come to the conclusion that the new does not have to be the ultimate rejection of fashion's past. Vogue writes that 'a new mode does not necessarily mean a flat contradiction of the preceding one; a modification of it, an interpretation of an existing form in a new manner, also justifies the title of novelty.'[24] It has to be noted, though, that the further the past is from the present, the 'newer' the current fashions are perceived. For example: '[t]his is a very pleasing innovation; for innovation it is, since we must go back to the modes of 1894 to find a line similar to it'[25] and '[n]othing new under the sun? Perhaps not. But the continuously changing order of things is the means of influencing creators, especially of fashion, to present the old in an entirely new way'.[26] A reinterpretation of the old can become new again.

Vogue and Vanity Fair illustrate Bourdieu's his arguments for change in a field only to be possible when evaluated against the backdrop of the history of the field. The new put forward by the heterodoxy in order to challenge the orthodoxy does not claim to be utterly new. The history of a field is thus needed in order for something to be able to be defined as 'new'. This entails examining how the history of the new in the field might be influenced by other fields or broader social space, since the fashion field is essentially intermediate. I will consider the possibility of early 20th century modernism in the field of art as an influence on the new in fashion discourse.

Modernism developed in the 1890's as an intellectual or aesthetic project to understand modernity.[27] In the 1960's a lively art historical debate arouse on the 'nature' of modernism: which element made modernism to what it was?[28] Two possible answers were given, the first being self-reflexiveness or modernism's emphasis on the material it works with, the second being 'the voyage in search of the new'.[29] The latter has to be understood as a 'culture of negation'.[30] The new as

the overthrow of the old was thus considered as one of the constitutive elements of modernism.[31] Robert Scholes argues for a more nuanced view on modernism and newness.[32] A view that takes into account the alignment of the new with other categories, e.g. 'healthy' or 'abstract', as well as different forms of newness in terms of questions like,'[s]hould the past be utterly rejected? [–] Was the New to be a continuation of the Old – and, if so, which parts of the Old could serve as points of departure?'[33] Interestingly, a similar discussion on the definition of newness in fashion unfolded on the pages of Vogue and Vanity Fair. Thus revealing their nuanced stand concerning the new.

The magazines, then, are self-reflexive of what they – as players of the fashion field – expect fashion to be. They ask themselves how newness can be attained if everything has already been done and why they always want fashion to be novel, thus drawing attention to their main signifier: the new. Thus: '[…] we turn to cretan records of six thousand years ago […] and we cry again that there is nothing new under the sun',[34] and

> It is really a wonder that the designer of our era does not follow suit when he considers how long the world has worn clothes, and how few are the changes that can be rung on a garment […] On this limited foundation all the myriad variation that we call the mode are built, not each year, but continuously throughout each year, and yet the cry is still for novelty![35]

I argue that Vogue and Vanity Fair can be perceived as creators of a modernist discourse on fashion, thoroughly emphasizing newness and critically reflecting upon the main material or concept they work with: the new – although newness in fashion is not perceived of by the magazines as the ultimate rejection of all things old in search of the utter new.

B. Novelty in Fashion

However, the category of the new can be regarded as ambiguous in Vogue and Vanity Fair, and the way the magazines evaluate fashion's newness or novelty is just as paradoxical; celebrating as well as discrediting it. Interestingly, the previously made conceptual difference between 'new' and 'novel' receives a value based distinction. Whereas 'new', mostly used to describe changes in silhouette, is always welcomed by the magazines, the constant novelty of the details of fashion receives varying opinions; glorifications as well as condemnations.

Vogue and Vanity Fair have a negative attitude towards the abundance of novelty of details. Or: '[a]ny such ill-considered demand for novelty merely for novelty's sake means of course, the throwing away of both fashion and good sense […] the result of an exorbitant and entirely undiscriminating appetite for the

new'.[36] Too much novelty is tasteless, but taste is not defined as the opposite of excessive novelties.

The origins of the 'novelty versus taste' – debate are discussed by French historian Daniel Roche who argues that the 'clothing revolution' of the 18th century turned fashion into a r evealer of the true self rather than the mask of truth.[37] Combined with the upcoming wealth of the aspiring bourgeoisie, this led to fashion becoming the ultimate tool for opening societal doors. Presenting an appearance with an abundance of fashionable novelties, however, was biased towards the newly rich, since they were believed to miss the 'sixth sense' of knowing when fashion turned tasteless. This 'fashion as novelty versus taste'– debate was reflected in the discourse of Vogue and Vanity Fair. Though taste more and more was thought of as something that could be required, the clothing revolution made sure that the appearance one presented was seen as an expression of one's personality, one's true self. Hence, taste was linked to identity construction. The woman of taste knew how to balance novelty. Other women could rely on the advice of Vogue and Vanity Fair who argued for a toning down of the novel in order to remain tasteful and not to broadcast one's bad innate fashion sense.

Remaining tasteful was difficult, however. Followers of fashion easily adopt to the ever changing novelties: 'human nature has a way of treating fashion as Pope said it treated vice: it easily becomes familiar with it to the point of embracing it'.[38] Fashion is seen as all-powerful, like a goddess one cannot escape. 'For fashion is ruthless; it goes one and we cannot reject what it gives us because the old fashions are no more to be got'.[39]

Yet Vogue and Vanity Fair also celebrate the new in fashion because '[b]oth dressmaker and smart client are looking for something new, something of more intricate distinction, [...]'.[40] Hence, the new offers women the chance to distinguish themselves. The new in fashion is considered to be such a temptation by the magazines because it provides large amounts of pleasure to consumers. Vogue writes: '[t]o have been so alert, so much in time we find ourselves in the possession of some chic novelty while it is still novel, [...] is sure to give lasting satisfaction',[41] and

> [a]re you a person avid for the new? Do you like first nights, first editions, fresh foibles? [---] Does the first solitary rose of the first morning of summer thrill you more than all the thousands that come after? In short, does the zest for life for you consist of being right in the thick of things, or, if it is n't possible, in knowing all there is to be known about them at the earliest possible moment?[42]

To conclude: the discourse of fashion in Vogue and Vanity Fair is highly paradoxical. The new or novel in fashion discourse is allied to other paradoxical

categories as well; newness as the opposite of taste, newness as distinction, newness as pleasure etc. Vogue and Vanity Fair may not like the excessive novelties, constantly changing, but they on the other hand fall prey not only to the power of fashion but also to their own wish for novelty since it grants distinction and pleasure.

C. A Marketplace Modernist Discourse

Up till now an argument has been provided to argue for the fashion discourse of Vogue and Vanity Fair to be a modernist discourse, concerned with the new and self-reflexivity. Taking into account the multiple movements of modernism, the question what type of modernism the magazines' discourse ascribes to still has to be answered, however.[43]

The contemporary fashion field is a cultural fields where striving for financial gain is legitimate, since the field holds an intermediate position between the field of art and the field of economy.[44] Fashion as we know it today, however, was not always perceived as such, noticeable in the repulsive reactions most Parisian fashion designers in the 1910's had towards the vulgarity of business.[45] Hereby they clearly reflected the general tendency in the modernism of the time that stood in an adversarial relation towards mass culture,[46] to negate the field of economy in order to protect fashion's purity and originality.[47] Interestingly, the discourse of fashion in 1920's Vogue is not as hostile towards the world of business for '[t] here is perhaps no field of endeavour in which both the artistic and the commercial play such important parts as in the field of women's dress.'[48] Though Vogue ascribes the origins of excessive novelty in fashion to the field of commerce luring consumers into spending, they do not look upon it with disdain.

At the end of the 1920's this becomes even clearer when arguments for a new aesthetic of dress can be found on the pages of Vogue. Now all 'good' fashion has to be repeated, turned into copies. The discourse of fashion in Vogue relates to Caroline Evans' arguments for a modernist aesthetic of repetition and standardization in the 1920's fashion show of Parisian designer Jean Patou,[49] since '[t]o-day we have decided that a lovely frock is like a beautiful piece of music – it will bear repetition, and if it be good enough that repetition may be so widespread that the model can be truly described as broadcast'.[50] Thus, what we see happening in the 1920's fashion discourse is an embrace of the field of commerce that asks for a rethinking of the category of the new. Therefore, I suggest looking upon the discourse of fashion in the magazines, and especially in Vogue, as a marketplace modernist discourse, a t erm coined by Lisa Tiersten which emphasizes modernism's embrace of commerce.[51] Fashion as an intermediate field takes elements of the field of art – modernist self-reflexivity, the new etc. – and combines it with the consumer society it is embedded in being part of the field of economy, to speak in Bourdieuan terms.

4. The Power of the Discourse of Fashion in Vogue and Vanity Fair

Discourses become persuasive as the field in which they are produced and the social class of the recipients correspond. A 1927 survey showed that Vogue was popular amongst the higher and middle classes.[52] This was the aim of the founder of both Vogue and Vanity Fair, Condé Nast: '[t]he publisher, the editor, […] must conspire not only to get all their readers from the one particular class to which the magazine is dedicated, but rigorously to exclude all others.'[53]

Bourdieu suggests that the form of is there to underline the authority of the speaker, to hand him the (mis)recognition to be believed, to be followed into action. Important to this case study is Bourdieu's argument that the attention one has to give to the discourse itself grows, as the authority of the speaker is less clearly institutionalized.[54] This emphasizing of the form of the discourse is clearly to be seen in the fashion discourse of Vogue and Vanity Fair as they use French words to describe the new fashions, make reference to artists and history, all drenched in a snobbish tone that suggested good breeding. Thus the magazines allied with a certain social class of possible readers while excluding others. The authority of the magazines to produce the dominant fashion discourse was not institutionalized to the full.

Both magazines try very hard to reach the 'right' audience by stressing the form of their discourse, for they are not fully institutionalized as creators of fashion discourses. Hence Vogue and Vanity Fair will be able to change the way their readership perceives the new in fashion, just not up to the level of their discourse on the new being taken for granted in terms of not becoming subject of discourse. To reach this misrecognition of their discourse the early 20th century Vogue and Vanity Fair will have to work harder on their symbolic fashion capital.

5. Conclusion

In this chapter I have provided a detailed case-study on the discourse of fashion of two early 20th century fashion magazines, Vogue and Vanity Fair. The theory of discourse of Pierre Bourdieu made it possible to link the paradoxical stand of the magazines towards the new to wider social space. The fashion field, notoriously intertwined between the field of art and the field of commerce, is thus influenced by both.

This we see reflected in the discourse of Vogue and Vanity Fair - for the linguistic field is itself part of the fashion field, creating something that can be called a 'fashion discourse'. The discourse of fashion in Vogue and Vanity Fair mixes elements of modernist art with the field of economy and creates a highly paradoxical discourse on fashion's relation to the new, celebrating newness for its granting of pleasure and distinction while discrediting it for the possible threat to taste; hence my argument to perceive the discourse of the magazines as a marketplace modernist discourse.

The ambiguous position of the new in the fashion discourse of the magazines is interesting when compared to the contemporary doxic evaluation of newness in fashion. The extensive debates found in Vogue and Vanity Fair seem dissolved when reaching the end of the 20th century. Somewhere along this path, newness has gone from becoming the primary subject of fashion discourse to being taken for granted. Future research has to provide accounts of how this process developed, for at the beginning of the 20th century the new was a powerful though paradoxical category in the fashion field, not an all-mighty value of the field as nowadays.

Notes

[1] Pierre Bourdieu has written several works that discuss the possibility of a fashion field and its way of operating: P. Bourdieu and Y. Delsaut, 'Le couturier et sa griffe: Contribution à une théorie de la magie', *Actes de la recherche en sciences socials*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1975, pp. 7-36; P. Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1984; P. Bourdieu, 'Haute Culture and Haute Couture', *Sociology in Question*, P. Bourdieu (ed), Sage, London, 1995, pp. 132-138.

[2] P. Bourdieu, and L.J.D. Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1992, pp. 94-114.

[3] J. Codd, 'Making Distinctions: The Eye of the Beholder', *An Introduction to the Work of Pierre Bourdieu: The Theory of Practice*, R. Harker, C. Mahar and C. Wilkes (eds), MacMillan, London, 1990, p. 145.

[4] Bourdieu, 'Haute Culture and Haute Couture', p. 133.

[5] Bourdieu, 'Some Properties of Fields', *Sociology in Question*, P. Bourdieu (ed), Sage, London, 1995, p. 74.

[6] E. Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity*, I.B. Tauris, London, 2005, p. 3.

[7] For example: F. Braudel, *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th -18th Century: Volume 1: The Structures of Everyday Life, The Limits of the Possible*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1981, p. 316; Y. Kawamura, *Fashion-ology: An Introduction to Fashion Studies*, Berg, Oxford, 2005, p. 25; U. Lehmann, *Tigersprung: Fashion in Modernity*, MIT Press, Cambridge, London, 2000, p. xii; L. Svendsen, *Fashion: A Philosophy*, Reaktion Books, London, 2006, pp. 21-23; Wilson, op. cit., p. 16.

[8] R. Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, Hill and Wang, New York, 1975, p. 40.

[9] R. Barthes, op. cit., p. 40.

[10] A. Van de Peer, 'Discourses on Deconstruction Fashion in The New York Times and The International Herald Tribune', Unpublished Research Paper, Centre for Fashion Studies, Stockholm University, 2008.

[11] S. Menkes, 'Galliano's Hobo Couture Takes on the Old Masters DECONSTRUCTING DIOR', *The International Herald Tribune*, Tuesday January 18, 2000.

[12] Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, p. 56.

[13] The research was based on the analysis of written discourse rather than on the new as represented in visual material. This choice is appropriate as the magazines consisted mostly of text accompanied by very little imagery.

[14] Kawamura, op. cit., pp. 79-80; A. Rocamora, 'Le Monde's discours de mode: Creating the créateurs', *French Cultural Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 37, 2002, pp. 83-98.

[15] This hypothesis is based on M.E. Davis, *Classic Chic: Music, Fashion, and Modernism*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2006; N.J. Troy, *Couture Culture: A Study in Modern Art and Fashion*, The MIT Press, Cambridge MA, 2003.

[16] From 1919 onwards reports on women's fashion were banned from Vanity Fair by the new editor, F. Crowninshield. Few articles with reports and advice on men's fashion were still published monthly however.

[17] P. Bourdieu, 'On Symbolic Power', *Language and Symbolic Power*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1991, p. 170.

[18] P. Bourdieu, 'The Production and Reproduction of Legitimate Language', *Language and Symbolic Power*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1991, p. 41.

[19] Bourdieu and Wacquant, Argumenten voor een reflexieve maatschappijwetenschap, Amsterdam, Sua, 1992, p. 62.

[20] Bourdieu and Delsaut, op. cit., p. 22.

[21] For example: '[t]he wash skirt, shown at the right page 66, is developed in a lovely, *crêpestriped ratine – a novelty this season*' (*Vanity Fair*, February 1914, p. 65, my emphasis), '[a] return of *bordered chiffons* may be noted, but these are of *novel design characteristic* of the spring of 1915' (*Vanity Fair*, March 1915, p. 71, my emphasis), 'Almost all the mannequins carried small Empire fans of lace […] indicating that the vogue for the *immense feather fan* is on the wane, having ceased to be a *novelty*'. (*Vogue*, Early October 1920, p. 80, my emphasis)

[22] *Vogue*, February 1920, p. 44.

[23] *Vanity Fair*, March 1915, p. 69.

[24] *Vogue*, February 1919, p. 45.

[25] *Vogue*, October 1920, p. 36.

[26] *Vogue*, October 1924, p. 73.

[27] R. Boyne and A. Rattansi, *Postmodernism and Society*, Macmillan, London, 1990.

[28] M. Berman, *All that is Solid Melts into Air: Experiences of Modernity*, Verso, London, 1983, p. 29.

[29] H. Rosenberg, *The Tradition of the New*, Horizon Press, New York, 1959, p. 11.

[30] R. Poggioli, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. G. Fitzgerald, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA, 1965, p. 107.

[31] Many contemporary scholars consider the new as the most important feature of modernism. Jane Goldman for example argues that there is no homogenizing label for modernism, 'except perhaps 'new', or 'the new'. J. Goldman, *Modernism, 1910-1945: Image to Apocalypse*, Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2004, pp. 2-3; see also P. Childs, *Modernism: The New Critical Idiom*, Routledge: London, 2004, p. 2; and R. Schleifer, *Modernism & Time: The Logic of Abundance in Literature, Science and Culture, 1880-1930*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2000, p. 1.

[32] Scholes conducted his research on a modernist periodical, The New Age. R. Scholes, 'Old and New in Modernist Art', *Paradoxy of Modernism*, Yale University Press, New Haven CT, 2006, pp. 33-89.

[33] Scholes, op. cit., p. 35.

[34] *Vogue*, September 1920, p. 69.

[35] *Vogue*, September 1920, p. 69.

[36] *Vogue*, September 1928, p. 39.

[37] D. Roche, *The Culture of Clothing: Dress and Fashion in the 'Ancient Régime'*, trans. J. Birrell, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994, pp. 470-471.

[38] *Vanity Fair*, March 1914, p. 59.

[39] *Vogue*, March 1929, p. 35.

[40] *Vogue*, September 1927, p. 29.

[41] *Vogue*, October 1929, p. 92.

[42] *Vogue*, March 1922, p. 25.

[43] The argument for multiple modernisms can be found in: P. Lewis, *The Cambridge Introduction to Modernism*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2002, p. xviii.

[44] Bourdieu and Delsaut, op. cit., p. 22.

[45] M.L. Stewart, 'Copying and Copyrighting Haute Couture: Democratizing Fashion,1900-1930s', *French Historical Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 1, 2005, pp. 103-130.

[46] A. Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture and Postmodernism*, Macmillan, London , 1988, p. 62.

[47] Troy, op. cit., pp. 2-17.

[48] *Vogue*, February 1919, p. 45.

[49] C. Evans, 'Jean Patou's American Mannequins: Early Fashion Shows and Modernism', *Modernism/Modernity*, Vol. 15, No. 2, 2008, pp. 243-263.

[50] *Vogue*, March 1928, p. 67.

[51] L. Tiersten, *Marianne in the Market: Envisioning Consumer Society in fin-de-siècle France*. University of California Press, Berkeley, 2001, p. 145.

[52] This survey of the London Research and Information Bureau is quoted in C. White, *Women's Magazines 1693-1968*, Michael Joseph, London, 1970, pp. 117-118.

[53] C. Nast, quoted in Davis, op. cit., p. 130.

[54] Bourdieu, 'Price Formation and the Anticipation of Profits', p. 76.

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Aurélie Van de Peer is a Ph.D. Candidate at Ghent University, department of Philosophy and Moral Science. Her dissertation examines fashion's relation towards the new, both historically as contemporary. Drawing from many different academic disciplines and combining multiple research methods, her work tries to unravel that which is normally not mentioned in contemporary fashion: the implicit claim to fashion's newness.

What's in a Narrative? Interpreting Yohji Yamamoto in the Museum

Alexis Romano

Abstract

Curators have used the work of fashion designer Yohji Yamamoto in over twenty-five museum-based exhibitions in Europe, North America, Australia, New Zealand, and Japan. This chapter questions what about Yamamoto's work lends itself to different museum narratives, including those studying the histories of design, haute couture, radical fashion, and Japanese art. In part one, I explore the different ways Yamamoto's work has been approached in seven exhibitions in Europe and North America in the past eight years, following the precepts set by a 1983 exhibition at the Phoenix Art Museum positioning Yamamoto in a Japanese avant-garde group along with Rei Kawakubo and Issey Miyake. These approaches reflect the different spaces and backgrounds of the organisers, including curators of Asian art, architecture, and design and fashion specialists – costume curators or the designers themselves. In part two, I consider how curators used these contradictory narratives in the shaping of the only retrospective of Yamamoto's work in 2005.

Key Words: Yohji Yamamoto, Rei Kawakubo, Issey Miyake, Junya Watanabe, museum, fashion curation, exhibition narrative, Japanese designer, neo-japonism, avant-garde.

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1. Yohji Yamamoto: Widely Exhibited

In the early 1980s, the Japanese 'invaded' the fashion world. The term 'Japanese invasion,' a harsh reference to several waves of designers from Japan who appeared on the international fashion scene has not only puzzled and fascinated many in the fashion industry it h as also attracted the attention of the wider art and museum community.[1] I argue that a 1983 exhibition of Yohji Yamamoto, along with Issey Miyake and Rei Kawakubo under the label Comme des Garçons, curated by Jean C. Hildreth at the Phoenix Art Museum set the tone for interpreting these designers in a display context. Since this show, entitled *A New Wave in Fashion: Three Japanese Designers*, other museum-based exhibitions held in the past decade in Western Europe, North America, Australia, New Zealand, and Japan showing Yamamoto's work have maintained the now-established tropes of the Japanese avant-garde fashion exhibition phenomenon, notably the designers' classification as a group, as 'avant-garde,' and as separate from 'Western' fashion. Yamamoto's place in the historical narrative, however, is far from standardized. While maintaining the above guidelines, curators contextualize his work as high art, bizarre, exotically Japanese, or as haute couture.

Most of the exhibitions, however, categorize Yamamoto under more than one of these labels, presenting the viewer with different layers of contradictory meaning. The diversity of approaches and spaces implicated follows the various training of the organizers. Curators of Asian art, Architecture, and Design and fashion specialists – costume curators or the designers themselves – all participated in the dialogue. Today, I will explore the construction of these categories and key examples from this exhibition history, ending with the only retrospective of his work.

Yohji Yamamoto was born in Tokyo in 1943. Although his initial formation steered him away from the clothing industry (he attained a law degree from Keio University in 1966), in 1969 he graduated from Tokyo's Bunka Fashion College (Bunka Fukuso Gakuin). Yamamoto worked in his mother's dressmaking shop before opening Y's Inc. in 1972 and presented his first Tokyo collection five years later. He went to Paris in April 1981 and by that fall joined the Fédération Française de la Couture et du Prêt-à-Porter. Yamamoto's first museum exhibition in 1983 came just two years after he debuted his prêt-à-porter collection in Paris, which incited visceral reactions of both wonder and contempt. A critic from *Le Figaro* described the clothes as 'World War III survivors' look.'[2] While others appreciated his work as a visionary and important contribution to fashion, the perception of his clothes as different from the fashion norm, as taking part in a larger artistic phenomenon almost overcoming fashion, caused museums to take notice.

A reviewer from the French periodical, *Jardin des Modes*, describing the 1982 collections of Yamamoto and Kawakubo, declared, 'These two collections are in absolute rupture with our Western vision.'[3] This statement – in view of the anti-Japanese sentiment of the 1980s – conjures a new meaning. Museums remained quiet during this decade when Japanese control of international industrial sectors was at its height. It was only in the late nineties that Yamamoto became a suitable exhibition subject. At this time, many shows built on the 1983 Phoenix Art Museum display, situating Yamamoto as a Japanese designer in a narrative of revolutionary, atypical dress in the broader history of fashion.[4]

This exhibition accompanied a display of contemporary Japanese ceramics in the Decorative Arts Gallery and contemporary Japanese textiles including designs by Keisuke Serizawa, one of Japan's 'Living National Treasures.' This juxtaposition effectively placed the designers in two narratives: that of Japanese art and fashion, where the Japanese designers are portrayed as foreigners working on Western soil. Yamamoto's generation is preceded by Hanae Mori, who went to Paris in 1961, followed by Kenzo Takeda's ready-to-wear successes in the 1970s.[5] These exhibitions contend that the Japanese designers partake in what the Powerhouse Museum labelled 'Neo-Japonism.'[6] That is, they draw inspiration from traditional Japanese clothing and dressmaking methods, whereby oversized and layered conquers form-fitting and tailored cuts.[7] Textile innovation and 'fine

craftsmanship' are other commonly attributed features.[8] *Contemporary Japanese Fashion: The Mary Baskett Collection*, an expanded version of the Cincinnati Art Museum's 2007 *Where Would You Wear That*, opens next month at the Textile Museum in Washington, D.C. This exhibition, fifteen years after *A New Wave in Fashion*, does not stray from the accepted guidelines in its exploration of the work of Miyake, Kawakubo, and Yamamoto, treating them as Eastern avant-garde designers, whose clothes, the museum claims, are 'characterized by asymmetry, raw edges, unconventional construction, oversized proportions and monochromatic palettes.'[9]

In 2003, the Musée des Arts Asiatiques, a small museum in Nice devoted to the art of China, Japan, India, and Indochina, presented *XXIème Ciel: Mode in Japan*, displaying the garments of Yamamoto, Miyake, Kawakubo, and Junya Watanabe. The director, Marie-Pierre Foissy Aufrère, saw in the garments of these makers an intrinsic link to ancient Asian cultures, and that mysterious quality or '*côté magique*' found in Japanese art.[10] She was met with initial refusal, however, when proposing the idea to the designers who rejected having their work presented as outdated Orientalism.[11]

Instead of providing the usual discourse on radical Japanese fashion design, curators aspired to evoke 'the beautiful qualities of Japanese design from a decidedly Western point of view.'[12] French conceptual artist Gotscho (whose work often focuses on fashion) designed the exhibition space, placing the garments in a theatrical display of fashion clichés including the coat rack and top model. These strange juxtapositions and lack of contextualizing information perhaps allowed the garments to speak for themselves as such, highlighting the differences between the designers, entreating the viewers to question and find their own definitions. Gotscho's *Robe X Lustre*, Yamamoto's dress from Spring-Summer 1999 interwoven with a chandelier, lying decadently on the ground over a red carpet, contrasted familiar yet disparate objects. On a second level, the garments interacted with the museum's permanent collection. While at times strikingly beautiful, the displays did not offer clear answers for the viewer, presenting him or her with a vague mix of contemporary fashions, Asian fine arts, and contemporary French art. Patricia Mears, a collaborator on this project, contends that organizers' messages were easiest to grasp in the case of Yamamoto, whose romantic clothing draws both from the past and the 'degradation' of the contemporary world.[13]

Mears argues that the press almost always labels these 'avant-gardists' as inseparable from their Asian heritage and questions what classifies their clothes as 'Japanese' if their separate bodies of work or creative processes neither resemble each other nor the standard in Japan.[14] 'I happen to have been born in Japan. But I've never labelled myself in that way,' Yamamoto claims.[15] While the designer has often denied being exploiting his Japanese roots, he has also embraced them at times.[16] Tagging his work as 'Japanese' in exhibitions, however, relies on a simplification of Japanese dress whether traditional kimono or contemporary

Japanese clothing, viewed often in a blend of Asian stereotypes.[17] Do the avant-garde designers, taking part in something that cannot be confined to a Japanese rubric, belong in these japonist narratives? As long as commentators in the art and fashion world continue to prioritize their origins, Yamamoto's garments have a place in this contemporary neo-japonism.

Critiquing Wim Wenders' 1989 documentary, *Notebooks on C ities and Clothes*, Barbara Vinken noted the prevalent portrayal of Yamamoto as heroic artist, where 'the aesthetics of genius […] has passed into *haute couture* [in] an apotheosis of old European authority […] in the ongoing history of Romanticism.'[18] Accordingly, curators often present Yamamoto' clothes as 'high art,' overlooking their 'garment' function. In 2004, *Form Follows Function* at the Museum at FIT highlighted the formal qualities of Yamamoto's garments treating them as abstract sculpted works of architecture. Three years later, the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco exhibited *Stylized Sculpture: Contemporary Japanese Fashion from the Kyoto Costume Institute*, which studied the garments of Miyake, Kawakubo, Yamamoto, Watanabe, and Tao Kurihara as works of sculpture. Here they were also displayed through the photographic lens of Hiroshi Sugimoto, who captured the garments' shadows and form, further stressing their sculptural qualities. These exhibitions, held in two fundamentally different institutions, both treated Yamamoto as working in a non-fashion design mode.

Curators have equally emphasized the conceptual qualities of his clothing. In 2006, Yamamoto's work was again placed on a parallel with architecture at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles in *Skin + Bones: Parallel Practices in Fashion and Architecture*, which paired the work of architects, such as Zaha Hadid and Frank Gehry, and fashion designers. In this case, however, curator Brooke Hodge explored the shared ideologies of the two disciplines, from their direct relationship with space and the human body to ideas of shelter, identity, creative process and style. Specifically, she considered Yamamoto and Kawakubo's work in the history of deconstruction in fashion, highlighting the cage corset in his black silk crepe ensemble for the Autumn-Winter collection of that year. The corset, composed of evenly-placed horizontal strips of fabric, demonstrates Yamamoto's interest in constructing form, as opposed to arriving at an unfinished look through deconstruction. This corset also shows the adaptability of Yamamoto's repertoire to several narratives: used by Valerie Steele this past year in *Gothic: Dark Glamour* to evoke the human ribcage, it might also illustrate Yamamoto's revisions of historical clothing or his penchant for radical, oversized and men's clothing on women.

According to Yamamoto, 'I want to achieve anti-fashion through fashion. That's why I'm always heading in my own direction, in parallel to fashion. Because if you're not waking what is asleep, you might as well stay on the beaten path.'[19] Yamamoto uprooted and broke clothing conventions and codes, against the norm of 1980s couture opulence, rethinking established ideas of beauty, age,

gender and the body. This quest has taken various manifestations throughout his career including a preference for asymmetrical shapes, oversized clothes, models of all ages and looks, gender ambiguous clothing, and deconstructions of historical Western dress, prompting Patricia Mears to label his work as 'romantic avant-gardism.'[20]

A 2001 e xhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum, *Radical Fashion*, focused on the 'revolutionary' in his work but situated his clothes in an international context that also included the work of Alexander McQueen, Hussein Chalayan, Issey Miyake, Martin Margiela, Comme des Garçons, Junya Watanabe, Azzedine Alaïa, Jean-Paul Gaultier, Vivienne Westwood, and Helmut Lang. In the exhibition catalogue, Curator Claire Wilcox noted the interest of 'change and renewal' in Yamamoto's garments, illustrated by the display of his wedding dress in mother of pearl silk with a hoop skirt from Spring-Summer 1999.[21] The model wearing this wedding dress on the runway famously unzipped her hidden pockets to remove slippers, coat, hat, gloves, and bouquet, transforming her appearance. In 2006, *Breaking the Mode: Contemporary Fashion from the Permanent Collection* at the Los Angeles County Museum again displayed Yamamoto's work with most of the same names. The curators Sharon S. Takeda and Kaye D. Spilker showed a women's two-piece suit in wool gabardine from Autumn-Winter 1993-1994 in an 'in-progress' state – with what resemble faux basting or chalk marks. Also on display was another revision of a tailored suit composed of trousers and a silk-satin coat with a voluminous lace train from Spring-Summer 1999. This collection, highlighted in both exhibitions, was a critical success and notable break from his earlier designs to those referencing haute couture.[22] In these exhibitions, then, it was specifically the ways Yamamoto rethought traditional Western dress that fit curators' definition of radical.

2. Yamamoto 2005 Exhibition Triptych

Yamamoto's concept that fashion should be 'alive' and for the 'moment' contradicts the clothing exhibitions he has taken part in, as well as his donation of garments to the permanent collection of the Kyoto Costume Institute. He has said: 'I'm not interested in my own past. Fashion is not that. Fashion is for people of today, this moment.'[23] With this thinking in mind, Yamamoto consistently denied proposals for retrospectives of his work, notably at the Centre Georges Pompidou in the late 1980s and the Brooklyn Museum of Art in 2001.[24] Finally, in 2005, a Yamamoto retrospective travelled to Florence, Paris, and Antwerp examining the designer and his work from multiple perspectives, revealing the difference of each space and museum philosophy. Olivier Saillard, programming director at the Musée de la Mode et du Textile in Paris, curated the project and Masao Nihei, Yamamoto's habitual fashion show assistant, designed the exhibition. This fusion of the museum and design worlds elicited conflicting motivations, one concerned

with creating a successful blockbuster show and the other with representing the artist and his company.

The first venue was *Correspondences* at the Galleria d'Arte Moderna of the Palazzo Pitti, the only exhibition of the three that was not held in a costume museum, entreating the viewer to treat the objects on display not as garments but as works of art. Approximately 100 Yamamoto pieces were interspersed in the Gallery's thirty rooms displaying nineteenth and twentieth-century sculpture and painting. The 'correspondences' were different art forms engaged in a dialogue with each other, the interiors, and the viewer. The garments were suggestively placed, unprotected by glass cases, in relation to the other works. Although inherently different, the objects were linked as high art, and, according to the organizers, shared a common ideal of beauty. A dissatisfied Yamamoto remarked the heaviness of the clothes next to the art.[25]

In Paris, the Musée de la Mode et du Textile consecrated its two floors to the exhibition that became *Juste des vêtements*. Here, the organizers were more concerned with Yamamoto's creative process – the first floor simulated his Tokyo studio including a montage of his sketches and fabrics strewn across the floor, garments in progress, and even the office of the *première d'atelier*. Elsewhere, antiques, books, and historic clothing from the museum's archives illustrated Yamamoto's inspiration. The second floor situated Yamamoto's garments in a French history of costume narrative. Here, the curators displayed a selection of designs they considered best represented the designer's development from the early 1980s to the present, eighty-five percent of which were the same garments from *Correspondences*, terminating in a final confrontation that paid tribute to Dior, Vionnet, Grès, and Chanel. Again, certain garments were not hidden behind display cases allowing for visitors to touch them, a first for the museum.

The final stop of the triptych was *Dream Shop* at the ModeMuseum, the museum's first exhibition dedicated to one designer. Here, visitors revelled in the materiality of Yamamoto's clothes: out of eighty silhouettes from the late 1980s to the time of exhibition, they could try on about twenty in a white, dream-like space with neon-lit changing cubicles. This interactive experience challenged basic museum and conservation etiquette. Yamamoto spokesperson Nathalie Ours explained that this was the first exhibition that evoked the designer's vision of the viewer's direct and 'living' relationship to the garment.[26] In most cases, the transformation of 'living' garments into 'dead' objects on display distanced them from their original context and from the audience. In *Dream Shop*, however, viewers perceived the clothes as consumable items, transforming the museum experience into a commercial one. Highlighting publicity and commercial motives, this exhibition more frankly engaged the viewer as a consumer than at the two previous venues.

Yohji Yamamoto works in a medium where there is no unique original creation or expression of an idea in a single form. Clothes take on a new form on the model

on the runway and become something else when sold in stores and when worn. The striking differences in conception and display in the exhibition triptych attempted to address several stages in the lives of Yamamoto's garments, either presenting them on a par with fine arts or costume history, allowing the viewer a glimpse of the production context and creative process, or to indulge in a tactile experience as the wearer.

Other than brief references in the wall text, curators withheld essential social context, however. None of them examined what was so powerful about this radical body of work, what made it stand apart from Western clothes in the early 1980s, how that has changed over the course of Yamamoto's long career, and what it meant at the time of display. On the other hand, curators strengthened the established canon of Yamamoto's most noted works, such as his androgynous suits, selections from his Spring-Summer 1999 collection, and his wedding dress with crinoline in bamboo from Autumn-Winter 1998-1999. The exhibition triptych, seen in the larger context of the Yamamoto exhibition phenomenon, permitted a more in-depth analysis of the designer, unfettered by narratives of japonism, avant-garde dress, and design history. His work, however, lends itself to more than one narrative and has served as material evidence to several themes. Isn't the desire to have things neatly explained precisely the problem? This question shall unfold as Yamamoto's repertoire – and his place in historical narratives – continues to evolve.

Notes

[1] For a summary of the press reviews documenting Yohji Yamamoto and Rei Kawakubo's Paris debut, see P. Golbin, 'Constat d'état ou flashback sur le paysage de la mode parisienne', *XXIèmeCiel: Mode in Japan*, M.P. Foissy Aufrère (ed), Musée des Arts Asiatiques, Nice, 2003, pp. 29-35.

[2] J. Samet, *Le Figaro*, October 21, 1982, my translation, Cited in A. Fukai, 'Le Japon et la mode', *XXIèmeCiel: Mode in Japan*, p. 22.

[3] G. Sainderichin, 'Éditorial: Le bonze et la kamikaze', *Jardin des modes*, December 1982, p. 5, my translation, Cited in P. Golbin, 'Constat d'état', p. 29.

[4] J.C. Hildreth, *A New Wave in Fashion: Three Japanese Designers*, Arizona Costume Institute, Phoenix, 1983, p. 40. The author contextualizes them in the history of fashion 'revolutions,' along with Paul Poiret's hobble skirt and Christian Dior's 'New Look.'

[5] Certain scholars place Issey Miyake with Kenzo Takeda in the first 'wave' in the late 1960s and early 1970s; P. Mears, 'Être japonais: une question d'identité', *XXIèmeCiel: Mode in Japan*, p. 40, or as the 'founding father' of the second wave – Y. Kawamura, 'La révolution japonaise dans la mode parisienne', *XXIèmeCiel: Mode in Japan*, p. 47.

[6] Powerhouse Museum, 'The Cutting Edge: Fashion from Japan', *Teachers' Exhibition Notes*, 2005, Retrieved November 2007, p. 2, http://www.power housemuseum.com/pdf/education/teachersnotes/cutting_edge.pdf.

[7] For analyses of Japanese clothing design from a Western point of view, see R. Martin, 'Our Kimono Mind: Reflections on Japanese Design: A Survey since 1950', *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 8, 1995, p. 219.

[8] Hildreth, op. cit., p. 44. The author notes: 'Known for his innovative fabrics, Yohji has them treated and prepared using traditional methods such as 'stone washing,' and also rinsing bolts of cotton in the Nagoro River […].'

[9] The Textile Museum, 'Contemporary Japanese Fashion: The Mary Baskett Collection', *Upcoming Exhibitions*, retrieved July 2009, http://www.textile museum.org/exhibitions/upcoming/Contemporary_Japanese_Fashion.htm.

[10] M.P. Foissy Aufrère, 'Histoires du XXIèmeCiel', *XXIèmeCiel: Mode in Japan*, p. 11.

[11] Ibid.

[12] P. Mears, 'The Global Impact of Japanese Fashion in Museums and Galleries Exhibiting Asia', *Fashion Theory*, Vol. 12, 2008, pp. 112-113.

[13] Ibid., p. 113.

[14] Mears, 'Être japonais', p. 37.

[15] Yamamoto, Cited in F. Baudot, *Yohji Yamamoto*, trans. J. Brenton, Thames and Hudson, London, 1997, p. 13.

[16] 'For a long time I didn't want to touch it – I am Japanese and I didn't want to do souvenirs […] Then one day, I thought it is time to touch it and to break all my taboos – kimonos, body fit, high heels.' Yamamoto, cited in S. Menkes, 'Yohji Yamamoto: 'Just Clothes' from the Inside Out', *New York Times*, 19 April 2005, Retrieved, October 2007, http://www.nytimes.com/2005/04/18/style/18iht-Fyohji. html.

[17] For a summary of Japanese dress from the mid-nineteenth century, see A. Fukai, 'Le Japon et la mode', p. 21.

[18] B. Vinken, *Fashion Zeitgeist: Trends and Cycles in the Fashion System*, trans. M. Hewson, Berg, Oxford, 2005, p. 72.

[19] Y. Yamamoto, 'May I Help You', *Talking to Myself*, Vol. 1, Carla Sozzani, Milan, 2002.

[20] P. Mears, 'Révolutionnaires: Rei Kawakubo et Yohji Yamamoto', *XXIèmeCiel: Mode in Japan*, p. 68.

[21] C. Wilcox, 'Introduction: I Try Not to Fear Radical Things', *Radical Fashion*, C. Wilcox (ed), V&A, London, 2001, p. 2.

[22] Y. Kawamura, *The Japanese Revolution in Paris Fashion*, Berg, Oxford, 2004, p. 143.

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[23] Yamamoto cited in A. Spindler, 'Wenders' Notebook has Yohji Talking', *Designer File*, 1 April 1990, p. 8. See also Mears, 'The Global Impact of Japanese Fashion', p.102.

[24] Yamamoto would have had a large role in the conception of this exhibition, for which he studied the museum's Charles James archive. For this information I thank Deirdre Lawrence, chief librarian of the Brooklyn Museum of Art.

[25] G. Trebay, 'A New Gear for Modern Aristocrats', *New York Times*, 16 January 2005, Retrieved November 2007, http://www.nytimes.com/2005/01/16/fashion/16fash.html?_r=1.

[26] Bibliothèque Municipale de Lyon, 'Exposition Yohji Yamamoto: 'Toucher, essayer…SVP', *Le Point sur l'actualité*, 8 July 2006, Retrieved October 2007, http://www.pointsdactu.org/article.php3?id_article=465.

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Alexis Romano is completing her M.A. at the Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts, Design, and Culture in New York. She is writing her thesis on Emmanuelle Khanh and the shaping of *stylisme* and prêt-à-porter in 1960s Paris under the direction of Michele Majer. A grant from the Pasold Research Fund enabled her to present this chapter at the First Global Conference on Fashion: Exploring Critical Issues.

Part 2:

Historical Fashion

Reconfiguration Theory: An Archaeological Perspective on Changes in Dress

C. T. Rooijakkers

Abstract

This chapter deals with a period long before the roller coaster of modern fashion was set in motion. It examines the changes within one particular type of garment, the tunic, in Egypt from its origins in the Late Pharaonic period to the Byzantine era. Through careful examination of surviving textiles, written and iconographic sources, I have tracked the mechanisms behind changes in the tunic, but also behind periods of relative stasis. In each instance very different reasons can be pointed out. Nevertheless, there is a common thread to be noticed. Every major change in dress codes can be related to a major change in the structure of society. This might not seem very surprising, but this phenomenon is not satisfactorily explained by some of the more common theories (e.g. trickle-down, Zeitgeist or collective selection). Based on these findings I have devised a new model that describes a key mechanism behind changes in dress codes. This *reconfiguration* theory is based on the fact that over time a society (and the groups and/or classes of which it is composed) is regularly restructured; new social groups are added and existing groups merge or split. When this happens, new group identities are formed and old ones are redefined. Dress is a means in this process of redefinition and assertion of new identities. Small changes in dress do occur in periods of stasis, but for dress codes to be broken there needs to be a break in the system that supports them. Although this model was devised to apply to an ancient situation and operates on a macro-level, it might also be useful to understand contemporary case studies.

Key Words: Archaeology, dress, Egypt, fashion theory, identity, reconfiguration, tunic.

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1. Introduction

> Fashion is understood as a historically and geographically specific system for the production and organization of dress, emerging over the course of the fourteenth century in the European courts, particularly the French court of Louis XIV, and developing with the rise of mercantile capitalism.[1]

This chapter is not about fashion. At least not if we follow the above definition of fashion by Entwistle. This does not imply that change in dress in earlier

societies does not occur; according to Entwistle, 'modifications to dress do occur, but not at the speed and with the regularity of fashion in modern societies'.[2] This is true, in that sense that in former eras, change in clothing was slower; social mobility was more restricted, although not impossible, and a regular person would have had a limited wardrobe. Also the mode of production, usually consisting of household and workshop manufacture, was different. The production of a garment took longer and was more labour intensive, making items of clothing a more expensive possession than what we have become used to today.

This chapter is therefore not about fashion but about changes in dress and dress codes. The research project, on which it is based, focussed on the development of the tunic in Egypt from the Pharaonic era to the Byzantine period, or to be more precise, from ca. 1550 B C to 642 A D.[3] I started out wanting to study the mechanisms, motivations and causes behind new dress codes. By carefully picking apart the economical, technical, political and social facets of each change visible in one type of garment (making the project manageable) I hoped to be able to gain an understanding of the 'why' and 'how' of change in dress in the past in general. In the end it resulted in a model that I think might prove useful for others studying contemporary dress and fashion as well. The first part of this chapter summarises the case study of the tunic in Egypt, while the second part explains the theoretical model it inspired.

2. The Tunic in Egypt through the Ages

'Tunic' is a modern term. In ancient times it has been called an *mss*, *tunica*, *chiton*, *dalmatica*, etc. In ancient dress studies, we tend to use it to refer to a body garment that covers at least the torso and part of the upper legs, has very little tailoring and is not gender-specific. The latter seems to be confirmed by the fact that the above-mentioned indigenous terms were used to refer to both the male and female version. The tunic was a very basic garment, worn in Egypt throughout the centuries by men, women and children.

My research relies on information retrieved from pictographic and textual sources and the examination of extant textiles. These sources are relatively scarce, their availability is dependent on the circumstances of the period, and sometimes their context is not very clear. Moreover, texts and depictions usually concentrate on the upper (literate) level of society. Also, complete textiles mainly derive from burial grounds, but usually only the middle and upper classes could afford a burial that was able to withstand the ages. It is difficult to create a diachronic perspective based on these snapshots. Nonetheless, as we accumulate more snapshots from different sources, our conclusions become more reliable.

Although it is impossible to go into all economical, technological and social aspects of the tunic within the extent of this chapter, the most significant changes and a number of interesting details are discussed below.

A. The Pharaonic Period

The first evidence of tunics in Egypt is found in the beginning of the New Kingdom period (ca. 1550-1069 BC). We know that prior to this period mainly wraps and composite V-necked dresses were worn, but the origins of the tunic are still shrouded in the mystery of the preceding Second Intermediate Period. This period is marked by the domination of a Semitic group, the Hyksos, but very little is known about their exact origins (or dress traditions). Interestingly, the introduction of the tunic coincides with the first use of the so-called vertical loom, which might have made it easier to weave the broader linen textiles used for the tunic.

The tunic worn in this period is also called a bag-tunic and consisted of a rectangular piece of plain linen cloth that was folded in half and sewn along the sides.[4] The neck slit was formed by cutting out and hemming a hole and slit. It was worn with several types of wraps by both men and women and largely left undecorated, although sometimes red and blue stripes were incorporated into the cloth. This lack of colour is probably due to the fact that flax is notoriously hard to dye, as remarked by Vogelsang-Eastwood.[5]

Throughout the following five centuries, relatively little changes in the appearance and use of the tunic. In general, a slow increase in the amount of cloth in outfits worn by the elite can be noted, but this is expressed mainly in the wraps used over and under the tunic. This relative stasis can be explained by the lack of independent craftsmen or workshops and the comparatively rigid hierarchical system of Pharaonic Egypt. As noted by Baines and Yoffee, the elite were dependent for their wealth on the pharaoh, who theoretically owned all land, and therefore also on this system.[6] A sense of continuity with the past was used to legitimise authority structures at the time, centred on the pharaoh, which was both achieved and expressed materially (in for example monuments, but also in dress).

B. The Graeco-Roman Period

Another period of little information follows, marked by internal unrest, the influx of foreigners, the rise of local centres of power, and several bouts with the Persian Empire. In 332 BC Alexander the Great captured Egypt, after whose death Egypt became a part of the Ptolemaic Empire. A major change in the period was the large scale immigration of Greeks and other Hellenised groups into Egypt, forming a new elite. Although the administration was in Macedonian and Greek hands, this did not mean that the native elite was without power, as Bowman remarks, but to rise within society, an ambitious individual would have to Hellenise and learn Greek.[7] Although the population did intermingle, Ptolemaic Egypt was marked by an uneasy coexistence; native Egyptian resentment led to internal unrest and even the occasional revolt.[8]

The *chiton*, a Greek version of the tunic, started to dominate the texts from this period onwards, but no actual textiles have been excavated to stave this

information. It is therefore not exactly clear what is meant by the term *chiton*. As the new official language was Greek, this term could have referred to anything tunic-like. Depictions and statues are often based on one of the two visual traditions, archaic Greek or archaic Egyptian. As described by for example Abraham, in Greece the *chiton* consisted of a rectangular piece of cloth that was folded along the side and pinned or sewn on the shoulders.[9]

One of the few sources that attempts to show daily life in a relatively realistic way is the tomb of Petosiris, as documented by Lefebvre, in which we see both craftsmen and fieldworkers and the upper (native Egyptian) class wearing Greek- and Egyptian-style dress.[10] The Greek-style tunics are easily recognised by their shortness, horizontal slit neckline and bright colours, indicating that they were probably made from wool, which was far easier to dye than flax. As this tomb is dated to the very beginning of the Ptolemaic period, it seems that the adoption of Greek-style clothing was more context-dependent than connected to status. This is remarkable since it is often assumed that (in the past) there is a time lag between the upper and lower classes adopting new clothing styles.

Rome's influence had been growing, and from 30 BC onwards Egypt officially became a province of the Empire. As described by Rowlandson, the Romans left the Ptolemaic administrative system largely intact and Greek continued to be the official language.[11] The Roman system of citizenship was superimposed on the Greek system. By this time Egypt was thoroughly Hellenised and the entire population (including the Greeks) was referred to as *Aiguptioi*, although a distinction was made between the rural population and the city elite, the *metropolei*, a hereditary (Greek) group associated with a gymnasium education.[12]

Again, from the Roman period not many textiles have survived, but there is plenty of visual evidence in the shape of the Fayum mummy portraits.[13] They show that the elite quite enthusiastically adopted *clavi*, two vertical stripes running next to the neck opening over the length of the garment. This Roman type of decoration had originally been an indicator of class; as described by for example Stone, senators wore broad purple stripes (*latus clavus*) on their white tunics, while the lower ranking *equites* wore narrower ones (*angustus clavus*).[14] By the first century AD *clavi* restrictions seem to have worn down and Wilson notes that Pliny (*N.H.* XXXIII. 29) even reported public criers wearing them.[15] One interesting feature of their adoption by the Egyptian elite is the fact that women wore them as well. As also remarked by Wilson, this was not at all the norm for Roman women at that time.[16] Moreover, while men seem to have stuck with the white tunic with purple *clavi*, women used all types of colour combinations. *Clavi* were not directly copied but rather adapted to fit the Egyptian context. Although the exact meaning and history behind this decorative feature was not clear to the Egyptians, there was still an association with status and wealth, which made them attractive (to both men and women).

In general, what we see in the Graeco-Roman period is that the native Egyptian population adopted a number of features of the dress of the occupiers of the time. This is not very remarkable, because in order to rise within society, one would have to adopt the customs of the colonizers. To be viewed as an equal one cannot appear a savage. The question is whether this adoption was truly a calculated act. Moreover, it seems that this is not a case of straightforward copying. Elements were adopted, adapted and reinterpreted to a certain extent. Also, within other contexts related to religion, Pharaonic-style clothing seems to have lasted much longer, as visible in depictions of Egyptian gods, priests and worshippers. The knotted wrap-around dress, for example, seems to have become a symbol of the Isis cult, as also noted by Goldman.[17]

C. The Late Roman and Byzantine Period

In the third century BC Christianity was gaining more and more followers in Egypt, although at the time Christians were still persecuted by the Romans. In general the third century was a period of unrest, as Rome was losing its grip on the Middle East, suffering from attacks by the Sassanians. In the beginning of the fourth century AD persecution of the Christians ended and in 380 AD Christianity became the official state religion. From this point onwards, Bowman notes its power also growing in secular institutions.[18] At the end of the fourth century the Roman Empire was split in two, with the Eastern half ruled from Constantinople. In 451 AD the Council of Chalcedon aggravated internal struggle between the Egyptian church rulers in Alexandria and the Byzantine rulers in Constantinople. A large number of Christians, later called the Copts, split from the mother Church by rejecting this Council. Internal struggle weakened the Byzantine Empire and Egypt was captured and again left by the Persians in the beginning of the seventh century AD, only to be conquered by the Muslims in 632 AD.

The tunic changed significantly in this period. One of the most striking changes was the addition of sleeves, although it was still woven in one piece. Perhaps this is better described as the subtraction of the excess cloth underneath the arms, as in the Roman period the tunic was simply a rectangle of cloth folded over, but wide enough to at least cover the upper arms. Tunics dating to the third and fourth centuries AD usually have very wide sleeves (often half of the length of the tunic wide), while most fifth and sixth century tunics are tight-sleeved. In depictions both versions also appear next to each other, indicating that this division should not be taken too strictly, although there was clearly a slow shift from wide sleeves to tight sleeves.

The decoration of the tunic became more elaborate over time. *Clavi* remain a central feature, but other decorative elements are added, such as roundels or squares on the shoulders and near the knees, and additional bands of decoration on the cuffs or along the neck slit. These bands, stripes and decorative elements were no longer plain, but increasingly patterned. At first this decoration was still largely

geometrical and floral and monochrome, but as noted by Pritchard, from the late fourth century onwards figurative themes are also incorporated, including objects, animals and people, and other colours are added.[19] Tunics often depict Dionysian scenes, which according to Török were probably an expression of the Hellenised education, although they might have been reinterpreted to fit the new Christian context.[20] In later times more Christian themes, such as crosses and Biblical scenes are also incorporated. Men abandoned the classical white and purple, now also wearing other colour combinations.

The relative diversity in clothing and decoration in the Byzantine period is partly due to the increased commercialisation and specialisation of the textile trade. In the Pharaonic period there was only household and estate production, and in the Graeco-Roman period private entrepreneurs first arrived on the scene. However, in the Byzantine period also larger workshops sprung up and Wipszycka notes that producers became increasingly dependent on a small class of wealthy merchants, who would order garments with the intent to sell them on.[21] Also for the lower classes, clothing was increasingly bought instead of home-made. For example, the Edict of Diocletian, a list of maximum prices, in its translation by Wilson, also mentions various garments of 'coarse linen for the use of common people or slaves'.[22]

Sleeved garments as well as patterned decorative elements could already be spotted in Palmyra, on the border between the Roman and Sassanian (Persian) Empire, during the Early Roman period.[23] The Sassanians were well known for their love of pattern and colour, their pants, short mantles and jackets being heavily influenced by their horse-riding origins.[24] It seems that the Egyptians were borrowing 'Eastern' elements. Other garments, such as the pants worn by men and headdresses by women, can also be traced back to West Asia. This influence was probably due to a number of factors; the origins of Christianity in the East, increased trade with the East, and the split of the Roman Empire. This was not a phenomenon limited to Egypt; Middle Eastern and Persian influences are visible throughout the Byzantine and Western Roman Empire.[25]

As mentioned above, the Church became a power to be reckoned with in this period. Within Egypt the tension between the Alexandrian patriarchate with its armies and the Byzantine Imperial forces must have been palpable. Interestingly, distinctive clerical dress seems to have started to develop in this period. Saints and the clergy are often depicted in archaising clothing styles that refer back to the Early Roman period, the time of Christ. Priests are depicted in white long tunics with purple clavi, combined with a wrapped mantle. Their clothing is, however, not directly continuous with Roman traditions, as the long length of the tunics and the use of sleeves are new; instead they seem to have been re-using old elements to legitimate their authority in the present. Their costume contrasted with the short colourful tunics and short pinned cloaks, probably influenced by military garb, popular among men at the time. It resulted in a sharp and perhaps deliberate

distinction between religious men and the rest of the populace. It visualised the schism in politics at the time, between the Imperial government enforced by its officials and the army, and the Church enforced by its clergy, both wearing their respective uniforms.

3. *Reconfiguration* **Theory**

To understand changes in the tunic over the ages, I turned to existing fashion theories. The reason for borrowing from another discipline is that dress cannot be simply equated to for example pottery, flint or architecture, and therefore specific dress theories are preferred over other theories on changes in style. Moreover, the 'why' is in this case as important as the 'how'. However, I found most theories lacking; *Zeitgeist* (as described by Entwiste),[26] and Blumer's collective selection[27] do not actually clarify the process, and trickle-down theory, based on Veblen[28] and Simmel's work,[29] could only be used to explain parts of the story. However, there is a common thread to be noticed in the narrative of the Egyptian tunic. Starting out from a critique of trickle-down theory, I devised a model that I feel best explains the main mechanism behind changes in dress (or fashion in the long term, if you will).

Trickle-down theory explains changing fashions by the fact that the elite distinguish themselves from the rest of the populace through dress. However, over time the lower classes emulate the dress of the elite, and the elite are forced to opt for a new style to set themselves apart once more. This model has been criticised by many; Entwistle notes for example that it does not explain fashion phenomena such as jeans, originating from among the lower classes.[30] My main criticism is that this model exists on the premise that society is relatively static, consisting of several classes above one another, a 'layer-cake society'. It denies the pluralism and dynamic nature of actual societies. In reality, most societies look more like a layer cake that is regularly hacked into pieces, reshaped, and stuck together again with a large amount of icing. There is not only vertical, but also horizontal differentiation; there are not only classes but also different groups or segments of society. Within these groups there might again be some strata or levels and between groups there can be vertical, horizontal or more diffuse relations. These groups, both vertically and horizontally distinguished, are regularly reconfigured, due to, for example, external influences or internal changes. New groups are added and existing groups merge or split, thereby restructuring society, as should be clear from the Egyptian story above.

I would like to propose here that this particular quality of society (the *reconfiguration* of group identities) is actually the key mechanism behind change in dress. As Barnes and Eicher have stated, 'dress serves as a sign that the individual belongs to a certain group, but simultaneously differentiates the same individual from all others: it includes and excludes.'[31] Dress is a means in the definition of new group identities and redefinition of old identities during the

reconfiguration of society. Through (elements of) dress, identity is expressed and reinforced; it visually creates distinctions and therefore also a sense of belonging. This definition is usually done in opposition to other groups; a lower class (or a higher class), another segment of society, a group outside of society (foreigners) or even the old group identity. Of course, one person has several identities, which may be expressed or ignored, emphasised or de-emphasised through separate elements of dress.

These abovementioned reconfigurations of society can take place rather slowly but more often correspond to a punctuated equilibrium. In between these periods of major societal change, there are also periods of relative stability, such as visible in the Pharaonic period. This does not constitute stasis, however. Using Bourdieu and the concept of *habitus*, 'systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures', a group identity is constantly reinforced, regenerated and renewed by its actors.[32] Accompanying dress codes are therefore also constantly slightly changed and elaborated upon. Remarkably, when there is relative stability, there are often attempts from the elite to consolidate and institutionalise their power, through regulations on dress or restrictions on the access to materials for example (instead of the elite looking for new ways to distinguish themselves). In fact, for dress codes to be broken there *needs* to be a reconfiguration of society.

The adoption of other clothing styles is often described as a search for newness or exoticness, indicating a certain arbitrariness. In my experience dress elements are taken over or adopted and adapted (from several sources of inspiration such as paintings or architecture, not just dress), because they have a particular value or meaning, which can be diffuse or specific, to the person or group adopting them (that does not necessarily correspond to its original meaning). This is for example very clear in the adoption of Roman *clavi*. New features are adapted to suit the context, both in a physical and social sense, and will therefore not cross taboos or norms that are still intact after major societal reconfigurations (usually because they transcend group or class identity).

Meaning is mostly determined through referral or association. Elements are frequently found attractive because they are associated with wealth or status, such as those worn by a (foreign) elite. Other examples are the mental link between the cross motif and divine protection, and Dionysian design and the celebration of the good life and a Greek background. Apparently this is what the wearer wanted to be associated with. Most often elements were chosen because of their association with power, whether this is in the monetary, political or divine sphere. Unlike trickle-down theory, this allows for elements to be picked from all kinds of sources; outside of the hierarchy, time period or even society, but also from so-called lower classes or groups, resulting in bottom-up fashions, such as the use of military elements in the dress of the (Imperial) elite in the Byzantine period.

'Choosing' elements is perhaps not the right term, because it implies that this process of redefinition of identity through clothing is a singular event and, moreover, that a group would be consciously selecting elements for their new dress codes. Individuals could to a certain extent commission or make their own clothing, and choose to incorporate elements that, as explained above, they found attractive because of its implicit meaning. However, this attractiveness to the individual is of course very much determined by what others within the group are wearing. A specific dress element gains the added association of being connected to this group identity, with which the individual identifies him- or herself, creating a snowball-effect (which also explains the punctuated equilibrium character of many changes).

4. Conclusion

The model described above, is based on a longue durée case study. It can be termed generalising, descriptive and functionalistic. Of course, when analysing changes in dress a number of other factors should also be taken into account; such as official regulations or limitations, technological innovation, organisation of production, and exchange systems, which all limit or facilitate creativity. Also, *reconfiguration* theory describes the *main* mechanism behind changes in dress, not necessarily the only one. However, I hope it provides a new way of looking at and understanding other case studies. In contemporary cases where we see a restructuring of societies, such as situations of (de)colonisation, migration, or globalisation it might be useful to understand the case study within a l arger context. *Reconfiguration* theory points out the relation between major societal change and major changes in dress. It is supported by the Egyptian case study, but needs further corroboration through application in other case studies.

Notes

[1] J. Entwistle, *The Fashioned Body: Fashion Dress and M odern Social Theory*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2000, p. 44.

[2] Ibid., p.46.

[3] Based on MPhil thesis *Changing Dress: The Tunic and Society in Egypt from the New Kingdom to the Byzantine Period*, Not yet published, but available upon request at tineke.rooijakkers@gmail.com.

[4] See also G.M. Vogelsang-Eastwood, *Pharaonic Egyptian Clothing*, Brill, Leiden, 1993, Fig. 8.2.

[5] G.M. Vogelsang-Eastwood, 'Textiles', *Ancient Egyptian Materials and Technology*, P.T. Nicholson & I. Shaw (eds), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2000, pp. 278-279.

[6] J. Baines & N. Yoffee, 'Order, Legitimacy, and Wealth in Ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia', in *Archaic States*, G.M. Feinman & J. Marcus (eds), School of American Research Press, Santa Fe, 1998, pp. 206-207.

[7] A.K. Bowman, *Egypt after the Pharaohs: 332 BC-AD 642 from Alexander to the Arab Conquest*, British Museum Publications, London, 1986, p. 122.

[8] Ibid., pp. 30-1.

[9] E.B. Abrahams, 'Greek Dress: A Study of the Costumes Worn in Ancient Greece, from Pre-Hellenic Times to the Hellenistic Age', *Ancient Greek Dress*, M. Johnson (ed), Argonaut, Chicago, 1964 [1908], pp. 39-48 & 57-72.

[10] M.G. Lefebvre, *Le Tombeau de Petosiris*, Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, Cairo, 1924.

[11] J. Rowlandson, *Women and Society in Greek and Roman Egypt: A Sourcebook*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1998, pp. 12-13.

[12] Ibid., pp. 11-12.

[13] For information and a great catalogue of these fascinating funerary portraits see S. Walker & M. Bierbrier (eds), *Ancient Faces: Mummy Portraits from Roman Egypt*, The Trustees of the British Museum, London, 1997.

[14] S. Stone, 'The Toga: From National to Ceremonial Costume', *The World of Roman Costume*, J.L. Sebesta & L. Bonfante (eds), University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1994, p. 15.

[15] L.M. Wilson, *The Clothing of the Ancient Romans*, Hopkins Press, Baltimore, 1938, p. 61.

[16] Ibid., p. 138.

[17] N. Goldman, 'Isis Revealed: Cult and Costume in Italy', *Archaeological Research in Roman Egypt*, D.M. Bailey (ed), Journal of Roman Archaeology, Ann Arbor, 1996, pp. 246-258.

[18] Bowman, op. cit., pp. 47-48.

[19] F. Pritchard, *Clothing Culture: Dress in Egypt in the First Millennium AD*, The Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester, 2006, p. 60.

[20] L. Török, *After the Pharaohs Treasures of Coptic Art from Egyptian Collections, Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest: 18 March - 18 May 2005*, Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest, 2005, p. 156.

[21] E. Wipszycka, *L'Industrie Textile dans l'Egypte Romaine*, Zakład Narodowy Imienia Ossolińkich Wydawnictwo Polskiej Akademii Nauk, Wrocław, Warszawa & Kraków, 1965, pp. 94 and 101.

[22] T. Frank, *An Economic Survey of Ancient Rome: Volume V, Rome and Italy of the Empire*, Pageant Books, Paterson, 1959, p. 388.

[23] See on Palmyran dress for example H. Seyrig, 'Armes et costumes iraniens de Palmyre', *Syria*, 1937, Vol. 18, pp. 4-31.

[24] See on Sassanian dress for example on B. Goldman, 'The Later Pre-Islamic Riding Costume', *Iranica Antiqua*, Vol. 28, 1993, pp. 201-46.

[25] See for example A.T. Croom, *Roman Clothing and Fashion*, Tempus Publishing, Stroud & Charleston, 2000, p. 145.

[26] Entwistle, op. cit., p. 61-64.

[27] H. Blumer, 'Fashion: From Class Differentiation to Collective Selection', *Sociological Quarterly*, Vol. 10, No. 3, Summer 1969, pp. 275-291.

[28] T. Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, George Allen & Unwin Ltd, London, 1925, pp. 167-187.

[29] G. Simmel, 'Fashion', *Georg Simmel: On Individuality and Social Forms*, D. Levine (ed), University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1971, pp. 294-323.

[30] Entwistle, op. cit., p. 62.

[31] R. Barnes & J.B. Eicher, 'Introduction', *Dress and G ender: Making and Meaning in Cultural Contexts*, R. Barnes & J.B. Eicher (eds), Berg, New York, 1992, p. 1.

[32] P. Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 72 & 78-87.

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C.T. Rooijakkers obtained an MPhil in Archaeology at Leiden University and is now a PhD candidate at the Leiden University Institute for Religious Studies and an associate of the Textile Research Centre (Leiden, the Netherlands). She has studied textile production techniques in Egypt and the Middle East, but her main interest is dress and identity. She is currently writing a dissertation on religious identity and dress among the Copts in the past and present.

Show Ponies and Centaurs: The Male Dandy Revisited

Jess Berry

Abstract
The dandy, as an historic figure and literary symbol of male narcissism has played a central role in our understanding of men's engagement with fashion. As a social, intellectual and visual construct dandyism has been attributed to a diverse range of masculine identities and fashionable styles through its Regency, Aesthete and neo-Edwardian formations. Throughout the 19th century the austerely tailored gentleman featured as an heroic figure of power in painted portraits, while quite paradoxically, the luxuriously attired fop was seen as a figure of ridicule in popular culture caricatures. Despite these inconsistencies, the overarching similarity between varying modes of dandyism and its representation is the link between sartorial self-construction and artistic self-invention. This chapter will examine the social identity of the twenty-first century dandy as portrayed in contemporary fashion and art. Alexander McQueen's Fall 2009 menswear collection can be understood to critique the dandy image through immaculately tailored finery that hints at the artifice of aristocracy. McQueen's contemporary dandy is significant in that he is provocatively underpinned by darker, more sinister elements that reflect unease with the glorification of the self. This chapter argues that dandyism, as represented by McQueen, is a construct of consumer culture that not only promotes flamboyance, narcissism and surface identity, but also highlights the artificiality of constructions of masculinity. The posturing and double-edged character of the dandy is even more pronounced in recent paintings by Michael Zavros. The artist evokes the contemporary dandy through his images of fashionably clad centaurs that contrast natural beauty with the contrived fashion figure. These images consider a modern dandy who is simultaneously a show pony of conspicuous consumption and a mythical being whose strength is only reinforced by the artifice of his performative gestures and elegant attire. In considering representations of the contemporary male dandy in fashion and art this chapter underlines the relevance of such cross-disciplinary formations to questions of gender, performance and masculine identity.

Key Words: Alexander McQueen, art, dandy, fashion, menswear, Michael Zavros.

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Dandyism is generally associated with the cult of personality and the wearing of clothes as an art form. However, this seemingly superficial performance of male narcissism and surface identity has been countered by the more serious role of social and political reform through oppositional dress. These distinctions of purpose are further complicated by the contrasting appearances of gentlemanly

restraint and effeminate finery that have been adopted by dandies across history. Often cited examples of this contradictory formation of the dandy include Beau Brummell's Regency challenge to social class distinctions through austere tailoring and Oscar Wilde's Aesthete style representing sexual emancipation. While there are many such figures who rebelled against the prevailing masculine dress identities of their time, by 1965, according to fashion historian Christopher Breward, the dandy had all but disappeared. He argues that after that time the dandy only survives as an adjective of men's fashion, related to no clear direction or style.[1] Paradoxically, more recent writing by Breward, as part of an exhibition celebrating English tailoring, repositions the twenty-first century dandy as a direct descendent of Brummellian sartorial style.[2] This view is supported by Susan Fillin-Yeh's edited volume, *Dandies: Fashion and Finesse in Art and Culture*, which provides diverse contemporary and cross-cultural examples of dandyism in both sexes.[3]

The resurfacing of dandyism in contemporary culture has been recently surveyed with a focus on the British menswear industry. The *21st Century Dandy* exhibition and subsequent book by Alice Cicolini also draws parallels with historic examples of dandyism.[4] While Cicolini's insightful analysis is focussed on 'real-life' manifestations of dandyism in the dress of English men, this chapter considers the symbolic appearance of the male dandy in contemporary fashion and art. In particular, I am interested in the double-edged character of the dandy who is positioned as both gentleman and rogue, natural and artificial, frivolous and serious, masculine and feminine.

The dandy has come to represent a broad spectrum of historical, sociological and literary inquiries. While this chapter will draw on some of these analogies in establishing a context for the analysis of the dandy in contemporary culture, its scope dictates a focus on Regency representations. The Regency dandy took numerous forms, from heroic figure to ridiculed fop and it will be argued that such modes remain relevant to his contemporary formations in both fashion and art. This is argued through the analysis of Alexander McQueen's Fall 2009 menswear collection and Australian artist Michael Zavros' paintings of centaurs that effectively identify dandyism's double-edge. The dual imperatives of flamboyance and austerity and the implied gender distinctions that this entails will be explored in the hope of a broader understanding of the relationship between men, their bodies, their clothes and their identity.

1. Regency Representations

Richard Dighton's *Portrait of George 'Beau' Brummell* (1805) is a prevailing image of the iconic Regency dandy. The caricature print is almost a diagram of the Brummellian costume described by Ellen Moers that

consisted of a coat buttoning tight over the waist, tails cut off just above the knee, lapels (perhaps lightly boned) rising to the ears and revealing a line of waistcoat and the folds of a cravat. Below the waist, form-following (rather than form fitting) pantaloons tucked into Hessian boots cut almost to the knee. He used only two colours: blue for the coat, buff for the waistcoat and buckskins, these set off by the whitest white of his linen and the blackest black of his boots.[5]

Moers describes a simplicity and naturalness of dress that was in direct contrast with the flamboyance of aristocratic accoutrements prior to Brummell's influence on the sartorial style of the future King George IV. Elizabeth Wilson sees this dissent from prevailing styles of the day as an oppositional form of dress but similarly highlights that Brummell's dandy uniform would largely establish the standards of male anti-fashion for centuries to come.[6]

Brummell's style was equestrian in origin. An almost identical costume can be seen in Jacques-Laurent Agasse's portrait *Francis Augustus Eliott, 2ⁿᵈ Baron Heathfield* (1812-1814). Thus Brummell's dress was no different in superficial appearance to that of typical rural gentry, yet his promotion of this fashion would arguably bring about a democracy of men's dress. As Moers suggests, it was 'a style suitable for any man, king or commoner, who aspired after the distinction of gentleman'.[7] While this style might have been democratic, the devil was in the detail. Brummell's compulsive obsession with cleanliness and the perfection of his tailoring have become legendry. Numerous stories of his idiosyncratic and time consuming 'country washing' ritual attest to the elusive nature of his style.[8] Despite the effort of his grooming habits, Brummell's aim was to achieve an elegance of understatement. As Farid Chenoune argues, his impeccable dress bordered on the invisible, yet was so spectacular it was impossible to imitate.[9] The paradox of Brummell's attire thus emerges. While this simple dress could be worn by anyone, its flawless élan was only available to the elite as it required a cut and quality of cloth coupled with the luxury of time to achieve.

Rhonda Garelick credits Brummell's form of dandyism for 'creating an aristocracy of the self that does not require the nobility of birth'[10] but rather was achieved through dress and attitude. Brummell was of more humble origins in comparison with many of his peers and patrons yet this did not diminish his desire for expensive clothing and superiority of taste in all other aspects of his milieu.[11] Refined language, charm and wit were all part of the dandy persona coupled with the less appealing attribute of aristocratic arrogance. M. Egerton's print *The Cut Direct!* (1827) depicts the dandy's penchant for public snubbing which underscores his persona of self-interest. According to Dorothy George, the triumph of the dandy was impudence, where the art of not knowing even one's best friends on the street was typical behaviour[12] an idea clearly illustrated in Edgerton's image. Thus,

Brummell and his followers performed aristocracy and reinforced that the promotion of style was equivalent to social and political power.

The less flattering view of the dandy described in Edgerton's print was also taken up by the graphic artist George Cruikshank, who created numerous caricatures with sardonic titles such as *A Pretty Pair of Pups* (1818), and *The Dandy Taylor Planning a New Hungry Dress* (1813). In these satirical sketches, and others like them, Cruikshank exaggerated the effeminate dandy silhouette, where full chests heave above wasp thin waists and spindly legs. This distorted appearance of the body was due to the contrasting effects that corsets, cravats and breeches had on the male form when coupled with a trend in tailoring to pad men's chests, shoulders and calves.[13] Breward points out that this so obviously falsely constructed figure was a s ource of ridicule and an affront to the perceived effortlessness of true dandy style.[14] Cruikshank's image *Dandies Dressing* (1818) clearly illustrates these deceptions of deportment. In representing dandies as what George terms 'languid and effeminate nincompoops',[15] Cruikshank visualises the social anxiety that is often coupled with changes in men's fashion especially when it challenges stereotypes of gender and sexuality. Chenoune cites the publication *L'Hermite rodeur* as propagating such views in 1824:

> Even as our ladies have usurped trousers, the sex that should remain masculine in everything has borrowed the feminine toilet, by wearing corsets, quilted stomachers, [and] trousers as wide as petticoats.[16]

Interestingly, Cruikshank presents an alternative dandy figure in his illustration for Pierce Egan's journal *Life in London.* Cruikshank's image, *Jerry in Training for a Swell* (1821), depicts the Regency dandy as an athletic figure framed by images of the hunt, horse racing and boxing. While this caricature might portray the sport-mad buck of the era, he and the dandy are largely conflatable as they both shared a similar wardrobe and interests. This heroic sporting figure provided a counterpoint to the claims of effeminacy in dandy dress. The athletic dandy demonstrated a performance of masculinity that denied what was at the time seen as problematic sexual representation. As Breward contends, 'here was a feisty and classless corporeal identity that rejected the foppery and elitism of previous incarnations'.[17] It is this version of the dandy that is picked up most visibly by fashion designer Alexander McQueen in the twenty-first century.

2. The McQueensberry Rules

Alexander McQueen's Fall 2009 Menswear collection titled *The McQueensberry Rules* reconfigures the heroic Regency dandy. Combining perfect English tailoring learnt on Saville Row with Brummellian gestures including dapper frock coats and well fitted pants; the collection's references to the dandy

are numerous despite McQueen's official refusal of such readings.[18] As is typical of McQueen, the refined elements of his garments are countered by a b rutal aesthetic. In this collection Edwardian tailored suits are coupled with the accoutrements of the boxer including the model's cotton strapped hands and breast-plates that resemble the pugilist's muscled torso. This arrangement neatly encapsulates the dandified body as both heroic athletic figure and fastidiously dressed gentleman, where even the athleticism of a masculine body can be put on like a coat as opposed to being achieved through training.

According to reviewer Tim Blanks, 'McQueen elided his own name and that of the nineteenth-century aristocrat whose title became synonymous with fair play in the boxing ring'.[19] Thus it could be argued that McQueen presents the ideal dandy put forward by Pierce Egan in the Regency era. As Breward contends,

> [Egan] presented the heroic figure of the boxing champion as the apotheosis of a desirable modern masculinity made material. Truly naked in action, aside from his leather breeches, the pugilist offered his body as a living model for the man who aimed for antique minimalism in his clothing and modern rationalism in his philosophy.[20]

Egan's boxing figure of the dandy as seen in Cruikshank's image *Jerry in Training for a Swell* presented masculine sartorial desire in a form that was largely acceptable to a s ociety that ridiculed effeminacy in dress and deportment. However, McQueen's sporting dandy appears to challenge the rules of gender performance. The austerity of his tailoring is countered by flamboyance in fabric, where staid grey and black suits are counterpointed by plush fur collars, a mulberry coloured coat and a long-line knitted cardigan. In such details we can see strong connections to the Aesthete dandy. As Talia Schaffer argues, during the Aesthete period similarly opulent materials, colours and forms were considered female conventions of dress and when Wilde wore such elements 'he was implying that men's and women's spheres might be contiguous properties similar enough to contain nearly identical, interchangeable, commodities'.[21]

The allusion to the Aesthete and thus feminine forms of dress in *The McQueensberry Rules* collection is subtle, but if considered in conjunction with the title of the collection, this aspect of McQueen's use and construction of the dandy becomes more apparent. Queensberry rules, as endorsed by the Marquess of Queensbury, inform the sport of boxing but the name is also linked to the famous defamation case that Oscar Wilde brought against the Marquess in response to his saying that Wilde was 'posing as a sodomite'. Wilde's success in arguing that he was indeed a sodomite and not merely posing as such resulted in the author's own conviction.[22] So while McQueen's promotional material insists that the luxurious elements to his designs are not 'remotely dandyish or fey',[23] McQueen's boxing

reference also alludes to the history of the Aesthete dandy and so confirms the designer's interest in an artifice of dress as explored by the so-called green carnation, or homosexual, dandies of Wilde's time.

The artifice of appearance and identity is central to the McQueen fashion project. The performative aspect of *The McQueensberry Rules* runway show in Milan underpins his version of the contemporary dandy where prevailing gender distinctions of masculine identity and sexuality are contested through distinctions of dress. While I am arguing that there is an element of the Aesthete dandy in the details of his garments, the overwhelming effect is one of aggressive masculinity. This is achieved through the dramatic use of stylisation.

Drawing on the imagery of Dickensian London, the catwalk was transformed into an ash grey footpath lined with glowing gas lamps. The models (some of whom were boxers) forcefully walked down the catwalk gripping silver-topped shillelaghs that were closer to cudgels than walking sticks. Other theatrical accoutrements included butcher's aprons, boxing gloves and leather skull-caps worn under hats all of which add to the impression of aggression generated by the show. One reading of this collection and its showing might be of overt aggression and violence as a performance of masculinity to counteract any perceived details of femininity in dress. There is also an illusion to the gay beat and the implied violence of rough trade sought or unsought. The spectacle of violence, or at least the tension generated by its possibility, has been central to many of McQueen's fashion scenarios, most prominently in his women's wear runway shows. As Caroline Evans argues, these shows 'evidenced a fascination with Baroque theatricality, artifice and the staging of perversion in the violence and drama of [his] stagecraft'.[24]

The performativity and melodrama of male violence as presented by McQueen cannot help but be seen as a type of glorification of power through violence. Even his use of the codpiece, for example, has historic connotations of power. As McDowell asserts, 'there [is] something essentially brutal and brutalising about the codpiece…From the outset, its message was to men rather than women; it [is] concerned with social, temporal and territorial power'.[25] Here we might also recall the menace of the more contemporary example of Alex the droog from Stanley Kubrick's film *A Clockwork Orange* where much of the character's authority and narcissism is tied up with his dress which includes a prominent codpiece. Moya Luckett makes the case that Alex and his fellow droogs are dandies. She argues that their investment in appearance plays an important role in establishing 'the persistence of a particularly frightening brand of spectacular attractive, aggressive and highly sexual masculinity at the centre of society'.[26] It is clear that McQueen draws on similar connotations.

The overall effect of McQueen's Fall collection is of aristocratic elegance coupled with menace. The garment that speaks this visual conundrum most eloquently is a black long line tuxedo jacket with detailing that resembles blood

splatters. The allusion is to a violent assertion of masculinity but this is countered by an aesthetic of beauty anchored by impeccable detail in dress. In this way the sinister elements that McQueen's dandy encapsulates can be understood to demonstrate a d ispassionate glorification of the self, seen in what Charles Baudelaire describes as 'an air of coldness which comes from an unshakeable determination not to be moved'.[27] McQueen's dandy demonstrates a tension between the restraint of a sexualised male body and the overt performance of male power. This aspect of the dandy can be articulated further in examining Michael Zavros' attention to men's fashion and associated representations of masculinity in his paintings.

3. Show Ponies and Centaurs

Early career, Australian painter Michael Zavros captured a mythical dandy figure in his exhibition *Trophy Hunter* (2008). Zavros takes the equestrian portrait, popular between the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, beyond its initial purpose but perhaps to its logical conclusion where horse and man are combined in centaur figures. Representing power, strength and virility the equestrian portrait takes on the dandy manifestations of narcissism and perfection of dress in Zavros' images.

These paintings provocatively underline the dandy's duality of nature and artifice. Here the natural beauty of the horse is contrasted with the contrived fashion figure of the male model whose posturing and performative gestures suggest a masquerade of male identities. Each of Zavros' centaurs are immaculately dressed and precisely posed and this is underlined by the painstaking and meticulous quality of the artist's realism. What is highlighted through this careful and controlled construction of surface image is the tension of the sexualised beast below the surface. Arguably, the emphasis on the articulated male body is a recurring mode of the dandy fashion figure. The muscular bodies of Zavros' centaurs can be compared with both McQueen's pugilist torso garments and Brummell's beige breeches. As Anne Hollander argues, Brummell's day-time dress was an erotic version of the athletic classical Greek body:

> The perfect man, as conceived by English tailors, was part English country gentleman, part innocent natural Adam, and part naked Apollo…wearing an easy skin as perfect as the silky pelt of the ideal hound or horse.[28]

In the case of Brummell and other dandy figures, the tension between natural form and containing, constructed clothing had an evocatively eroticising effect on the male body. These themes are similarly explored in Zavros' images where the centaur figures demonstrate a containment of the eroticised body through the metaphor of control over the true nature of man and horse.

Dressage is central to the interpretation of Zavros' paintings. Modern equestrian sport is judged on the elegance, precision and discipline of the horse's movements and this sense of strength and restraint also underpins the models Zavros depicts as the torso of his centaurs' bodies. For example, *Gucci/Black* (2008) equates the controlled raised leg of a white-hooved horse with the sophisticated cigarette smoking gesture of a black suited, white-cuffed gentleman. The bodily control, as pose, demonstrated by this centaur creature connotes a highly civilized man/beast.

A similar pose is found in F.C Lewis' striking *Portrait of Comte d'Orsay on Horseback* (1823), where the elegant stance of the count is mirrored by his horse's gait. According to McDowell, Comte d'Orsay understood the performative nature of dandyism and the importance of pose. He highlights the aristocrat's theatrical gestures stating that

> the count almost invariably threw his coat back from his chest to display a dazzling front, as well as allowing it to slip away from his shoulders in a way revived by high-fashion models.[29]

Zavros' painted fashion models adopt similar poses. *Armani/Black* (2008) moves seamlessly between the model's commanding stance and that of the horse. The authoritative pose taken up here is indicative of other equestrian portraits from earlier periods that depict dressage movements. According to Tamsin Pickeral, such movements were manifestations of war, borne out of the athletic necessity of the battlefield and thus demonstrate the powerful control of the rider who is often of noble linage.[30] Dressage, like other equestrian sports, such as hunting, racing and polo, carries elite connotations. While, as Hollander argues, Brummell had a distaste for horse-related activities due to his dislike of dirt,[31] for other dandies of the Regency period, hunting, riding and horse racing were a source of aristocratic and leisurely entertainment.[32] Thus, equestrian pursuits as shown in portraits suggest the political and social standing of the rider and these connotations were often reinforced through dress.

The centaurs which feature in Zavros' paintings all wear designer garments from the casual attire of the centaur/model in *Alexander McQueen/Bay* (2008) to the classic elegance depicted in *Yves Saint Laurent Le Smoking/Bay* (2006). The posturing of these show ponies in conjunction with the exclusivity of their dress tell us of the importance of conspicuous consumption to a contemporary dandy. Where the Regency mode of dandyism privileged understated elegance, Zavros' contemporary version requires the designer label to signify good taste. Cicolini makes a related point in her analysis of contemporary English dandyism citing George Walden's comments,

> Our own obsession with style and fashion is…developed in an age of unprecedented leisure, which now extends through much of society, and an aspiration toward elegance, if not elegance itself, has come within the reach of millions…does the democratisation of dandyism imperil taste – Brummell's god of gods?[33]

Perhaps taste was only ever one act of the dandy performance and it is through consumption that the dandy's character was most clearly articulated. As Breward argues, the Regency dandy employed 'fashionable behaviour in the new context of a society where social status was no longer determined solely by accidents of birth or occupation, but by the effective power of the commodity'.[34] Strikingly, it would seem that the contemporary dandy, at least the one depicted in Zavros' paintings, has grown out of an era where social status rests primarily on the power of the commodity. Tim Edwards argues men's fashion has always had a strong association with status in society, and that 'masculinity is increasingly sold, marketed and consumed as part of an overall series of social, economic and political processes that validate male narcissism'.[35] Recently, men have become more widely recognised and accepted as consumers of appearance. This is perhaps directly related to the economic need for ever-increasing consumer markets but also to the personal significance of consumption and the appearance of consumption as constitutive of identity.

In conclusion, it is clear from McQueen's fashion and Zavros' painting that dandyism continues to flourish, at least symbolically, in the twenty-first century. Many of the same tensions are apparent when we view the manifestations of the contemporary dandy in relation to his historic counterpoints. While the illusion of nature was central to the Regency dandy's Neo-classical aesthetic, for the contemporary dandy the artifice and theatricality of the masculine gender performance appears to be more pronounced in relation to the examples created by Alexander McQueen and Michael Zavros. The friction between austerity and flamboyance that underpinned many representations of the historic dandy remains relevant to the contemporary form. However, it would seem that the more effeminate aspects of the dandy figure have been at least partially suppressed by McQueen through the allusion to athleticism and aggression and by Zavros through reference to an eroticised masculine body. Dandy fashion continues to play the dualist role of containment and rupture of controlled nature, violent masculinity and the sexualised male body. The prevailing performance that emerges, whether it is McQueen's elegant but aggressive aristocrats or Zavros' posturing ponies of prosperity, is a highly masculine identity where style is equal to restraint and fashion plays a central role in conveying the narcissistic surface of the dandy which is underpinned by social prestige and power.

Notes

[1] C. Breward, 'The Dandy Laid Bare: Embodying Practices and Fashion for Men', *Fashion Cultures Theories, Explorations and Analysis*, S. Bruzzi and A. Church Gibson (eds), Routledge, London, 2000, p. 237.

[2] C. Breward, '21st Century Dandy: The Legacy of Beau Brummell', *21st Century Dandy*, C. Breward and A. Cicolini (eds), British Council, London, 2003, p. 2.

[3] S. Fillin-Yeh (ed), *Dandies: Fashion and Finesse in Art and Culture*, New York University Press, New York, 2001.

[4] A. Cicolini, *The New English Dandy*, Thames & Hudson, London, 2005.

[5] E. Moers, *The Dandy: Brummell to Beerbohm*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 1978, pp. 33-34.

[6] E. Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity*, Virago, London, 1985, p. 184.

[7] Moers, op. cit., pp. 35-36.

[8] H. Cole, *Beau Brummell*, Granada, London, 1977, pp. 44-45.

[9] F. Chenoune, *A History of Men's Fashion*, Flammarion, Paris, 1993, p. 21.

[10] R. Garelick, 'The Layered Look: Coco Chanel and Contagious Celebrity', *Dandies: Fashion and Finesse in Art and Culture*, S. Fillin-Yeh (ed), New York University Press, New York, 2001, p. 36.

[11] Cole, op. cit., p. 81.

[12] D. George, *Hogarth to Cruikshank: Social Change in Graphic Satire*, Viking, London, 1967, p. 164.

[13] Chenoune, op. cit., p. 34.

[14] Breward op. cit., 2000, p. 224.

[15] George, op. cit., 1967, p. 164.

[16] Chenoune, op. cit., p. 32.

[17] Breward, op. cit., 2000, p. 227.

[18] 'The McQueensberry Rules Runway Archive', *Alexander McQueen*, Viewed on 25 June 2009, http://www.alexandermcqueen.com/int/en/corporate/archive2009_aw_mens.html.

[19] T. Blanks, 'Alexander McQueen Fall 2009 Men's: Menswear Fashion Collections', *Men.Style.Com/The Online Home of DETAILS and G Q*, January 2009, Viewed on 8 April 2009, http://men.styl.com/fashion/collections/F2009MEN/review/AMCMEN.

[20] Breward, op. cit, 2000, p. 226.

[21] T. Schaffer, 'Fashioning Aestheticism by Aestheticizing Fashion: Wilde, Beerbohm and the Male Aesthetes' Sartorial Codes', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, Vol. 28, 2000, p. 44.

[22] M. Meyer, 'Under the Sign of Wilde: An Archaeology of Posing', *The Politics and Poetics of Camp*, M. Meyer (ed), Routledge, London, 1994, p. 73.

[23] 'The McQueensberry Rules Runway Archive', loc. cit.

[24] C. Evans, 'Yesterday's Emblems and Tomorrow's Commodities: The Return of the Repressed in Fashion Imagery Today', *Fashion Cultures Theories, Explorations and A nalysis*, S. Bruzzi and A. Church Gibson (eds), Routledge, London, 2000, p. 101.

[25] C. McDowell, *The Man of Fashion: Peacock Males and Perfect Gentlemen*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1997, p. 36.

[26] M. Luckett, 'Performing Masculinities: Dandyism and Male Fashion in 1960s-70s British Cinema', *Fashion Cultures Theories, Explorations and Analysis*, op. cit., p. 322.

[27] C. Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life and other Essays*, trans. J. Mayne, Phaidon, London, 1970, p. 29.

[28] A. Hollander, *Sex and Suits*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1994, p. 92.

[29] McDowell, op. cit., p. 73.

[30] T. Pickeral, *The Horse: 30,000 Years of the Horse in Art*, Merrell, London, 2006, p. 66.

[31] A. Hollander, *Fabric of Vision: Dress and Drapery in Painting*, National Gallery Company, London, 2002, p. 121.

[32] Moers, op. cit., pp. 63-65.

[33] Cicolini, op. cit., pp. 14-15.

[34] C. Breward 'Masculine Pleasures: Metropolitan Identities and the Commercial Sites of Dandyism, 1790-1840', *The Men's Fashion Reader*, A. Reilly and S. Cosbey (eds), Fairchild Books, New York, 2008, p. 59.

[35] T. Edwards, *Men in the Mirror: Men's Fashion, Masculinity and C onsumer Society*, Cassell, London, 1997, p. 85.

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Jess Berry, Ph.D., lectures in Art Theory, Griffith University and Fashion Theory, QUT, Brisbane, Australia.

Little Lord Fauntleroy: The Defence of a Fashion Victim

Kristen Stewart

Abstract

Little Lord Fauntleroy was written by Frances Hodgson Burnett; it was serialized in the children's magazine, *St. Nicholas*, in 1885 and published in book form in 1886.[1] Though intended for children, the book was extremely popular among readers of all ages. During the story's peak in popularity, a vogue for the 'Little Lord Fauntleroy suit' began to sweep both England and America. This ensemble, which the novel describes as 'a black velvet suit, with a lace collar, and with lovelocks waving about the handsome manly little face,'[2] was so wildly popular among mothers that many arranged for their sons to wear the requisite long blond curls and knickers. The fervour with which cartoonists, humorists, and angry editorialists reacted against the fad implied that the whole western world was under siege by a swarm of Fauntleroys or, more specifically, that the boys of the western world were under siege by a swarm of Fauntleroy crazed mothers. Reactions against the fad accused mothers of imposing their romantic (and therefore feminine) fantasies on the lives of their sons. Maternal vanity was targeted as the morally corrupt motivation that led mothers to fashion themselves into queens with sons adorned like little princes. The most damning criticism accused mothers of abusing the very nature of boyhood, thereby threatening the development of the future generation of American men. An examination of both the fad and reactionary criticism against it provides an illuminative perspective on evolving concepts of boyhood as reflective of the changing social structure of late nineteenth century American life.

Key Words: Little Lord Fauntleroy, Huckleberry Finn, Victorian, cavalier, knicker suit.

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1. Introduction

In the 2007 comedy *Blades of Glory*, 'tough-guy' figure skater Chazz Michael Michaelson, played by Will Ferrell, uses the name 'Little Lord MacElroy' in a barrage of insults aimed to malign his competitor as effeminate, weak, and priggish. The insult is effective because Little Lord Fauntleroy is widely recognized as the archetype of a fussy, effeminate boy. This universal association exists despite widespread ignorance of the novel on which the characterization is based. An examination of the contradiction between the maligned little hero's infamy and his novel's unfortunate obscurity reveals at its core the symbolic embodiment in the Victorian sensibility of late nineteenth century America, dressed up in a black velvet suit.

2. The Story

Little Lord Fauntleroy tells the story of Cedric Errol, an American boy between seven and eight years of age, who, having lived most of his short life in Washington D.C. in the care his widowed and impecunious mother, is named by his paternal grandfather as the heir to a British earldom and transported to a life of luxury in England. The power of the story lies in the ingenuous little protagonist's personality, a frank expression of childishly simple democratic principles carefully shaped according to the highest Victorian values by his modest, kind, and genteel mother. Although Little Lord Fauntleroy is well mannered (not surprising for the hero of a story aimed at children and written by adults), he is also full of the vigour and mischief traditionally encouraged in American boys. He wins races plays with soldiers,[3] and fearlessly befriends all manner of adults and creatures.[4] Nevertheless, in spite of the book's repeated descriptions of the hero as 'sturdy,' 'strong,' and 'handsome' the cultural memory of the character has been overtaken by the now feminized image of Little Lord Fauntleroy with long curls in a velvet suit and lace collar.

Novelist Frances Hodgson Burnett wrote *Little Lord Fauntleroy* as a gift to her sons and published it in children's magazine, *St. Nicholas* in 1885. In 1886 Scribner's Sons published the serial as a novel.[5] Advertised as a both charming and morally instructive story, *Little Lord Fauntleroy* and its subsequent theatrical performance were assigned a p ower rarely seen in children's literature. Oliver Wendell Holmes wrote after seeing the play: 'The lovely portraiture of a s weet child-nature in 'Little Lord Fauntleroy' is irresistible.'[6] In reference to a conversation with British Prime Minister, William Gladstone, Frances Hodgson Burnett recalled his praise:

> Mr. Gladstone sat near me at lunch, and was delightful ... Fauntleroy has charmed him – he told me he believed the book would have great effect in bringing about added good feeling between the two nations and making them understand each other.[7]

While the little lord was only once credited for his service as a diplomat, he was frequently held up as a lovable beacon of morality for both children and adults. The *Church Review* praised the novel as exemplary:

> Surely no literature can be too good which addresses itself to the sensitive minds of those whose character is forming; and we are glad of every work which, like this of Mrs. Burnett's, pushes the standard higher.[8]

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The Ladies' Home Journal and Practical Housekeeper advised that: 'Every mother who reads this chapter should secure a co py for the children: No better book could be put into their hands.'[9] It is important to note that not only the parents loved *Little Lord Fauntleroy*. Four years after its first publication, the novel was voted the favourite of 377 out of 487 c hildren under twelve in a popular magazine poll.[10]

3. The Fad

The enormous success of both the play and novel sparked an almost immediate marketing response from merchandisers. *Puck* magazine joked in March, 1889 that 'just at present the country is undergoing a very severe attack of Little Lord Fauntleroy.' The magazine identified the craze as a nationwide maternal longing for a generation of Fauntleroys:

> (M)any mothers now attire their sons in garments similar to those worn by Cedric, the lad in question, possibly with the hope that the fashion of the clothing may in some manner affect the natures of the wearers. The 'Trade,' with cheerful alacrity has sprung to meet the demand, and we can now purchase at reasonable rates and in any quantities, Little Lord Fauntleroy suits, Little Lord Fauntleroy collars, Little Lord Fauntleroy sleds, and Little Lord Fauntleroy base-ball bats.[11]

This ensemble, which the novel describes as 'a black velvet suit, with a lace collar, and with lovelocks waving about the handsome manly little face,'[12] was so wildly popular among mothers that unprecedented numbers arranged for their sons to wear the requisite long blond curls and knickers. Although similar suits had been available for fancy and party dress from as early as the 1830s,[13] the Fauntleroy cachet transformed the vogue for the suit into a mania and was eventually forced on unwilling or inappropriately aged sons.

Advertisements and style guides from the period confirm the suit's popularity, but it is the reactionary criticism against the fad that illustrates the true scope of its success. Reactionary criticism to the fad began as early as September 19, 1889 when, according to the *Chicago Tribune*,

> Mrs. Frances Hodgson Burnett is credited with saying that if she had known the penalties of fame she would never have written a line. And many a little boy, weary of life, that goes about tricked out in a little Lord Fauntleroy costume, wishes from the bottom of his aching heart that somebody had told Mrs. Burnett all about those penalties at the right time.[14]

The fervour with which cartoonists, humorists, and angry editorialists responded to the fad implied that the western world was under siege by a swarm of Fauntleroys or, more specifically, that the boys of the western world were under siege by a swarm of Fauntleroy crazed mothers. Reactions against the fad accused mothers of imposing their romantic (and therefore feminine) fantasies on the lives of their sons. Maternal vanity was targeted as the morally corrupt motivation that led mothers to fashion themselves into queens with sons adorned like little princes. The most damning criticism accused mothers of abusing the very nature of boyhood, thereby threatening the development of the future generation of American men. An examination of the Fauntleroy fad criticism will provide an illuminative perspective on the changing social environment of late nineteenth century American life.

4. The Critics: Fantasy

The earliest and most benign criticisms of the fad portrayed mothers as well intentioned, but foolish, and blind to the realities of their sons' behavior. In 1895, *The Ladies' Home Journal* printed a humorous social commentary called 'The Paradise Club' written by John Kendrick Bangs in the form of a conversation between men observing the Fauntleroy phenomenon on the schoolyard. After paying lip service to the natural superiority of women as childcare providers, the men censure the schoolyard Fauntleroy's mother for her blindness to her son's physical and behavioral divergence from her favorite literary hero:

> To his mother he is undoubtedly the most perfect specimen of a nobleman extant. She sees in him all of her own perfection, plus the perfection she had expected to find in her husband—and didn't. So she puts velveteen trousers on him; covers his calves with leather leggings, lets his hair fall in curls over his shoulders, and tops him off with a Tam o'Shanter because that lovely little fellow Fauntleroy was dressed that way ... He isn't like Fauntleroy, and you could spank him with the book forty times a day without hammering a bit of the Fauntleroy nature into him. He is a boy of the period. He'd scalp Indians if he could. He'd run about after dark and put tick-tacks on the windows of nervous old ladies; he'd fasten strings from lamp-posts to front stoop rails just low enough to knock every beaver hat that came through this street, if you let him follow his own inclinations.[15]

When the fad reached its peak in the late 1880s, the clothes and manners of the little lord were already viewed more by some as a quaint fantasy of childhood than as a didactic example of it.

5. The Critics: Vanity

The criticism of mothers who clung to the Fauntleroy fantasies of chivalry was relatively mild. Much more serious were censorious accusations of maternal vanity. Women were accused of tarting up their sons in the name of fashion and placing sartorial whims above child development. Fauntleroy following mothers were targeted for reducing their sons to fashion accessories, by trimming them with lace and velvet to match an ensemble as they would a h at or parasol. A *Puck* magazine cartoon making this accusation showed two street dogs mocking a beribboned purebred by calling him Little Lord Fauntleroy. The cartoon went after the fashionable woman's vanity as both the root of reprehensible conceit and as the motivation for her hysterical appropriation of all objects within her sphere of influence to her sartorial aspirations, dogs and miserable boys included. An article published in *Harper's Bazaar* in 1910 on appropriate dress for children lambasted mothers for abusing their sons in the name of fashion. The author squarely placed blame on mothers, referencing Herbert Spencer's tract on *Education* in which he 'considers that many are yearly sacrificed 'to the Moloch of maternal vanity,' and demands that the fathers of the race come to the rescue of their unhappy offspring.'[16]

One of the sharpest criticisms levelled at followers of the Fauntleroy fad was that they aspired to join the European aristocracy. This anti-Imperialist sentiment in America was even expressed in the novel by young Cedric Errol, a staunch republican who was at first devastated to discover his own noble blood.[17] Notwithstanding Cedric's democratic instincts, his dress reflects an early American tendency to aspire to emulate European aristocracy.[18] Since the colonization of America, the American upper social strata had sought to authenticate their social supremacy by copying the style and manners of aristocracy. A male heir legitimized the aristocratic sense of lineage by ensuring the future of a hard-won family fortune. It is not surprising that at this time young sons were often decked out in the symbols of ancient European aristocracy: sumptuous fabrics, elaborate trims, and references to military styling.

By the late nineteenth century, the great wealth created by American industry produced a trickle down effect that provided unprecedented pecuniary opportunity for a broad spectrum of Americans. At the same time, the speed and efficiency of the industrial machine made the trappings of wealth available at reasonable cost to many. When the industrial revolution supplied the confidence in the American elite that they had once sought in false titles and family crests, the Fauntleroy fad seemed vulgar, not only in its availability but also in its attempts to copy a European style of refinement. The kings of industry created a uniquely American aristocracy, one in which industry equaled success, and men of wealth appeared as industry: sparse, angular, and efficient. Proud of their accomplishments in business, American men rejected the imitative implication of the 'little lord' look for their sons. American boys began to don the livery of their fathers. Transitioning

between the velvet and lace of little lords and the fine wool and tailoring of American industrialists, the fashions of late nineteenth century sons embodied a class cultural transition from self-consciousness to self-confidence.

At the heart of all public objections to the Little Lord Fauntleroy suit was the belief that it was imposed on little boys, by their mothers. This imposition was pilloried as unhealthy, uncomfortable, and unnatural and so were the behavioural expectations of chivalry that naturally accessorized the suit. It is important to note, however, that these standards for behaviour, as well as the suit that contained them had been considered throughout the nineteenth century appropriate preparation of the cultivated man and the propriety of mothers. James Metcalfe observed in his 1888 review: 'Because sturdiness in a youngster is a thing to be admired, it does not necessarily follow that grace is a thing to be despised.'[19] Self-control and refinement were considered essential to manliness.[20] Accepted shades of Victorian masculinity are portrayed for boys in an 1881 cartoon in *St. Nicholas* magazine. Alongside a soldier, and explorer, and a sailor, a miniature Casanova cavalier charming his lady admirers instructs that masculinity required a mastery of grace and manners with which to charm the ladies. Little Lord Fauntleroy held that power over women, both real readers and fictional friends. At the novel's end, the little boy's ingenuous charm enchants one of the leading beauties of the day anticipating a successful adulthood.

What mother wouldn't have sought to raise a boy whose appearance and behaviours secured her success in the most valued field for female accomplishment? The accusation that all women selfishly appropriated their boys for fashion ignores the importance that the Victorian period placed on motherhood as the primary source of a woman's value. According to Thorstein Veblen in his 1899 *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, women were:

> not their own masters…therefore the more expensive and the more obviously unproductive the women of the household are the more creditable and more effective for the purpose of the reputability of the household or its head will their life be.[21]

In the case of the rising middle class, providing clothes and other items for their children was a culturally accepted expression of loving care where no title or accumulated wealth was available for future inheritance.[22] Women's fashion magazines detailed children's fashions and frequently depicted these styles in nurturing maternal scenes. When the same magazines seemed to depict children's fashions as ladies' fashion accessories, they were still subscribing to the assumption that a successful woman was not only an accomplished beauty but also an accomplished mother.

6. The Critics: Nature

A visible embodiment of nineteenth century grace and refinement, the Fauntleroy suit was a perfect choice for mothers fostering Victorian ideals in their sons. As the century progressed, however, the Fauntleroy fad began to be seen as a sartorial symbol of over-cultivation, both the symptom and disease. The belief was that children needed to play, outside, in the dirt, in comfort. According to one Harper's Bazaar article,

> The little Lord Fauntleroys will never be emancipated until they are excused from the necessity of all unreasonable cleanliness. There may be two or three times in the day—as at breakfast and dinner—when a well-regulated boy may be fairly asked to be decently neat in summer; but beyond that he should be left free to revel in a sufficiency of wholesome dirt.[23]

The same article provided the sartorial antidote:

> What does any boy need so much for happiness after all, when the summer freedom has set in, as to be turned out freely in garments so loose as to allow utter freedom, so obscurely colored as not to show dirt spots, and of such iron tensity of fibre that they shall be worn, if possible for a whole day's play without needing to be mended?[24]

Naughty boys were increasingly becoming the new ideal. Popular psychology supported a 'boys will be boys' approach to parenting, and bad behavior was believed to be healthy, natural, and Darwinianly advantageous. In her article, 'A 'Real Boy' and Not a Sissy: Gender, Childhood, and Masculinity, 1890-1940,' Julia Grant proposed that:

> America's foremost psychologist in the nineteenth century, G. Stanley Hall was extremely influential in articulating a scientific justification for the rowdy behaviors and activities of little boys. Hall contended that children's [in particular, boys'] development reenacted the various stages of civilization, beginning with savagery.[25]

The country required strong men to command in its new position as an international industrial contender. Grant further noted that:

> In his analysis of the American boy in *The Strenuous Life* [1900], Roosevelt insisted that a boy must *not* be a 'coward or a

weakling' and denounced the 'coward who will take a blow without returning it' as a 'contemptible creature.'[26]

Mothers were charged with tyrannical despotism and fathers were called upon to rescue their sons from the matriarchal prison of Victorian polite society. The *Ladies' Home Journal* humor piece, 'The Paradise Club' illustrated the gravity of the fathers' concerns:

> But there is one point only in which a boy gets sympathy only from his father, and none from his mother or the usually sympathetic domestics, wherein the parental tyranny is most patent, and wherein, also, all women are either the despots or sympathizers with the despot rather than with the victim, and that is in the matter of dress.[27]

Even fashion magazines began to isolate the boys from their mothers and to elevate them from accessory status to the top of the page.

Fathers feared for their Fauntleroys that they might be unprepared for the standards of success created under industrial capitalism. According to Grant:

> During the early decades of this (twentieth) century, little boys— once thought to be exempt from the demands of masculinity— were recast as men in the making, placing their behaviours, characteristics, and temperaments under a microscope for manifestations of gender deviations.[28]

In the industrial capitalist system a man's place in the hierarchy was defined by his success among his peers in business, not by the matriarchy of the Victorian social network. A boy's success among his peers on the playground was seen to indicate his preparedness for manhood. Little Lord Fauntleroy could not survive the cutthroat world of playground politics

7. A Hero for the Twentieth Century Boy

With the downfall of the Victorian Fauntleroy fantasy came the rise of a new fantasy of romantic boyhood that also found its fullest expression in a popular novel's young hero. In 1884, two years before the creation of the Victorian period's perfect little boy, Mark Twain published a novel that celebrated a hero who was the antithesis to the Fauntleroy myth and an anticipatory icon for the twentieth century, *Huckleberry Finn*. Huck embodies freedom: freedom from domestic niceties, freedom from itchy clothes, and freedom to just be who he is. 'We was always naked, day and night, whenever the mosquitoes would let us.... I didn't go much on clothes, nohow.'[29] Despite his stereotyped laziness, Huck's

adventures along the Mississippi involved a sort of honest American industry seen as more honourable than the cumbersome leisure ritualized by the cultivated classes. This was a twentieth century fantasy boyhood, one that must have appealed to the successful businessmen, who, having raised themselves to prominence without the aid of ancestry, needed a new ideal that carried them outside the confines of their city offices. Huckleberry Finn was an inspiring fantasy not only for the sons of Fauntleroy-obsessed mothers, but also for their fathers, constrained by the severe clothes and serious attitudes of late nineteenth century urban masculinity.

8. Conclusion

The second half of the nineteenth century was a time of great change in the American self-concept. *Little Lord Fauntleroy,* the poster-child of the Victorian era, was the last and most complete gasp of an expiring romantic masculine ideal. As the Fauntleroy fad faded into absurdity, what had once signified successful mothering came to imply hysterical fantasy, maternal vanity, and unnatural matriarchal oppression. Realism replaced optimism, entrepreneurship replaced aristocracy, aggression replaced grace, and fathers replaced mothers as the value of boyhood transformed in America. Although *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* was written two years before *Little Lord Fauntleroy,* it was written with an understanding of the post-Victorian man in a rapidly industrializing America. The sartorial lives of each of these iconic American boys serve as reflections and projections of the evolving self-concept of the late nineteenth-century American male as it abandoned didactic Victorian idealism and sentimentality for realism and ultimately replaced it with a uniquely American idealism grounded in toughness and a keen desire for personal freedom.

Notes

[1] *The New York Times*, New York, 21 October 1886.

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[3] Burnett, op. cit., p. 13.

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[5] F.H. Burnett, 'Classified Ad', *The New York Times*, New York, 21 October 1886.

[6] V. Burnett, *The Romantic Lady*, Scribner, New York, 1927, pp. 174-175.

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[12] Burnett, op. cit., p. 85

[13] E. Ewing, *History of Children's Costume*, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1977, p. 90.

[14] E. Ewing, 'Winnowings', *The New York Times*, New York, 19 September 1889, p. 4.

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[21] T. Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, The Modern Library, New York, 1934, p. 180.

[22] R. Rubinstein, *Society's Child*, Westview Press, New York, 2000, p. 131.

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Kristen Stewart is a Research Assistant at The Costume Institute in The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Girlies and Grannies: Kate Greenaway and Children's Dress in Late Nineteenth-Century Britain

Rebecca Perry

Abstract

This chapter examines the influence of the British children's book author and illustrator Kate Greenaway (1846-1901) on the fashion for historicizing clothing styles for young girls in the late nineteenth century. According to Greenaway, the ideal 'girlie' of the day emulated her 'granny's' dress, as she clothed her Victorian era children in Empire-inspired fashions. However, Greenaway's work did not just demonstrate the aesthetic of an idealized childhood: her storybooks instigated a trend for children's historicized costume. Greenaway's illustrations inspired a number of fashions sold at Liberty's of London, one of the foremost purveyors of Aesthetic textiles and dress for women and children in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. A close analysis of Greenaway's picture books, Liberty's catalogues and contemporary literature reveals not only how the vision of the ideally innocent girl was constructed through revival fashions in late nineteenth century Britain, but also how mothers prepared their daughters to become properly aestheticized adults.

Key Words: Aesthetic, children's dress, Kate Greenaway, girlie, granny, Liberty's, revival fashions.

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1. Introduction

In late nineteenth-century Britain, aesthetically minded mothers dressed their daughters in historicizing fashions that were inspired by children's literature; they believed that these clothes from the past projected an appropriately innocent appearance for their young girls. The children's book author and illustrator Kate Greenaway exemplifies these revival fashions in her work, as she adorns her fictional 'girlies' in a combination of various period styles dating from the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. However, Greenaway's work did not just demonstrate the aesthetic of an idealized childhood: her storybooks instigated the trend to dress one's daughters in the style of their grandmothers. Many dress historians, such as Linda Martin, Elizabeth Ewing, and Clare Rose, cite Greenaway's illustrations as the inspiration for children's historicized styles of dress, yet these fashions are not often investigated in depth, as they were popular for only a brief period in the late nineteenth century.[1] Although it initially appears that these revival fashions were the mere caprices of mothers who wanted their children to look like storybook characters, it is my contention that Greenaway's historic styles and the culture surrounding the sale of these garments at the

department store Liberty's of London reveals how parents attempted to groom their young girls into the properly aestheticized women of the future.

2. Kate Greenaway

Kate Greenaway published her first book, *Under the Window: Pictures and Rhymes for Children* in 1878; she conceived of the entire design and wrote all the text for this book, which depicted an idealized childhood in the English countryside. Greenaway carried this theme throughout her body of work: her girls jump and skip in meadows, bake apple pies, and stroll through English gardens. Her girls very much embody the Rousseau's ideal of the child existing freely in nature, as the simple silhouette of the girls' Empire-waisted dresses allows them to engage actively with the world around them. In fact, Greenaway was so concerned with the appearance of her subjects' dress that she had some of the children in her town pose for her while wearing historically-inspired clothing that she designed herself.[2] Greenaway drafted all of her illustrations by hand, and according to her biographers, she was in the habit of drawing in her figures' dresses first and then adding the limbs in later.[3] This unusual practice suggests that Greenaway was most concerned with what her characters were wearing rather than an accurate depiction of anatomy or conveyance of individualized facial expressions. In fact, after the release of *Under the Window*, one *New York Times* critic complained that, 'Miss Greenaway seems to be lapsing into a rather lackadaisical prettiness of style. Her little people are somewhat deficient in vitality.'[4]

In Greenaway's storybooks, children are clothed in a strange conglomeration of various period styles: her girls, whom she refers to as 'girlies,' wear mob caps and huge straw hats or bonnets, with nineteenth-century empire-waisted dresses or voluminous eighteenth-century petticoats and skirts. Her children's clothing borrows from styles ranging from the seventeen-nineties to the eighteen-twenties-styles which Greenaway would have never witnessed herself at the height of their fashion, as she was born in 1846. In short, Greenaway's ideal 'girlie' of the Victorian era regularly emulated her 'granny's' dress from the Empire period.

One of her signature looks for her girlies were hats with such absurdly large brims that they completely obscured the profile of the wearer.[5] In the poem 'Three Bonnets' from *Under the Window*, she describes the oversized head-wear of three young girls, purchased for them by their mother:

> A bonnet for each girl she bought; To shield them from the sun;
> They wore them in the snow and rain; And thought it mighty fun;
> But sometimes there were naughty boys; Who called to them at
> play; And made this rude remark, My eye!; Three Grannies out
> today![6]

'The Three Bonnets' poem demonstrates that Greenaway was aware of the connotations that her girlies' dress provoked, as she humorously acknowledged that her depictions of children's dress are outdated and out of line with modern fashions, so much so, that her 'girlies' looked like 'Grannies.'

As one modern critic describes her sartorial innovations, 'All of the various elements [of costume] are combined with no attempt at period accuracy.'[7] However, Greenaway's disregard for historical accuracy was not seen as a fault, but rather it added to the charm of her work. Following the release of *Under the Window*, the literary critic Austin Dobson wrote, 'The old-world costume in which she usually elects to clothe her characters lends an arch of piquancy of contrast to their innocent rites and ceremonies … there is a fresh pure fragrance about all her pictures as of new gathered nosegays.'[8] Critics were so enamored with Greenaway's work that they began to adopt equally quaint and flowery language to lavish praise upon her picture books.

Under the Window became hugely popular in Great Britain: Greenaway sold nearly 70,000 copies of her first book by 1880.[9] Although her works were written and designed for children, parents would have purchased these books, read them, and thus be influenced by the style of their illustrations. Greenaway's evocation of a simpler time was, in the eyes of critics and parents alike, suitably matched to the presumed innocence of childhood. The architectural historian Mark Girouard states that Victorian parents found Greenaway 'irresistible' because 'she portrayed exactly the kind of children they would like to have. They set about producing them, and in no time aesthetic nurseries and playgrounds were full of children dressed up in Kate Greenaway clothes.'[10]

3. Liberty's of London

Parents 'set about producing' these Kate Greenaway protégés through the help of the department store Liberty's of London. Liberty's offered a full range of aesthetic styles of dress for children, including some that were modelled directly after Greenaway's illustrations. Throughout the last quarter of the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth century, Liberty's promoted 'Artistic Dress for Children' as well as 'quaint and dainty little frocks after the 'Kate Greenaway,' 'Patience' and other models.'[11] These kinds of dresses appeared as early as 1884, but the style for these historically influenced fashions seems to have peaked in the mid-to-late 1890s.

Relatively few garments are specifically labelled as 'Kate Greenaway' designs in the Liberty's catalogues, but her stylistic presence is felt throughout the store's advertisements for children's dress. For example, in the 'Fancy Dress for Children' catalogue of 1899, Liberty's features a 'Freda' coat for girls ages four to seven, which they describe a 'coat, in cloth, lined Liberty-silk, and collar hand-embroidered with silk.'[12] The 'Freda' coat has a ruffled yoke collar, and is paired with a large hat trimmed with oversized bow: this ensemble closely resembles the

costume depicted in Greenaway's frontispiece for *Marigold Garden*, published in 1884. Furthermore, the Freda coat has the same Empire-waisted silhouette and subtle ruffles that Greenaway chose for the adornment of nearly all of her 'girlies.' In the same catalogue, Liberty's pictured several other Greenaway-style dresses, including an evening frock for girls ages three to six called the 'Blue Bell.' The Blue-Bell dress, made of silk-crêpe, again embodies the typical flowing Kate Greenaway silhouette, but this time with more voluminous sleeves for evening.

However, only a few children's outfits, categorized under the 'Fancy Dress and Costume' section of the Liberty's catalogues, were explicitly labeled as being modeled after Greenaway's illustrations. An 1899 catalogue features a 'Kate Greenaway' empire-waisted dress and mob cap for a young girl, as well as a matching skeleton suit for her male companion. The girl's dress is described as a 'frock in muslin with a silk sash' and a 'muslin cap,' and the boy wears a pink suit with blue socks and a 'white beaver hat with a band of green.'[13] These outfits are lifted directly from the pages of Greenaway's books: both children's costumes are illustrated in the poem 'Wishes' from *Marigold Garden*. The boy and girl in 'Wishes' discuss why they would want to assume the other's gender for a day, and wear a blue skeleton suit and matching hat, and a pink dress with a sash and a mob cap, respectively. The fact that the few outfits clearly labeled as 'Kate Greenaway' styles were categorized under the 'Costume' section suggest that direct translations of Greenaway's outfits were seen by many parents as suitable only for fantasy and play within the context of a costume party. An 1898 Liberty's Catalogue suggests that, 'In dealing with fancy dress for children the endeavor should be to suggest appropriate and harmonious models and colorings, and to impart an added beauty even to the most beautiful gift of nature-a happy child.'[14] These costumes were supposed to not only spark a child's imagination through creative play, but also enhance their natural beauty through the adaptation of historical dress.

However, it remains unclear exactly how much of a role Greenaway herself played in the creation of these styles sold at Liberty's. Her 1905 bi ography suggests that she collaborated with the department store and designed many of the fashions herself:

> The smart dress with which society decks out its offspring, so little consonant with the idea of a natural and happy childhood, was repellent to Kate Greenaway. So she set about devising frocks and aprons, hats and breeches, funnily neat and prim, in the style of 1800, adding beauty and comfort to natural grace.[15]

The Aesthetic styles available at Liberty's become especially significant when compared to the 'smart dress' that Greenaway's biographers allude to. B right colored silks, velvets, lace, large bows, and a g eneral excess of decoration characterized girls' fashions of this period. The last quarter of the nineteenth

century was an era in which children were still obliged to wear 'very uncomfortable and elaborate styles of dress' which aligned their appearances with that of their parents.[16] Adults dressed their children in such a manner not only to advertise their wealth and social standing, but also to instill proper manners and comportment, which by definition were adult. James Laver suggests that this practice is rooted in the doctrine of Original Sin:

> The doctrine of Original Sin made it seem as if there were something regrettable in being a ch ild at all. Parents… were supposed to have overcome their natural tendencies to evil, and so were never tired of pointing out to their offspring that there was only one way for rational beings to behave, and that was to imitate their elders as closely as possible.[17]

Girls' fashionable dress followed the silhouette of adult female fashions with only minor adjustments. Laver goes on to state that, 'In the eighteen-seventies, girls' clothes took a leave of common sense all together' for the popular style of a tightly gathered bustle skirt 'impeded the free use of the limbs' such that a little girl could hardly move at all.[18] Greenaway's girlies' 'uniform' of an empire-waisted dress made of white muslin with a coloured sash offered a fashionable and seemingly more practical alternative to the bustled velvet and lace-trimmed confections that girls were usually clothed in during this period. However, this is not to say that the Greenaway style was immune from criticism. An article in the March 1893 issue of the *Young Ladies Journal* condemned Greenaway, as the magazine states:

> Opinions remain divided as to the long skirts worn by the babies painted by Kate Greenaway. While some mammas delight in the comical look which long skirts give their little ones, others consider that nothing is more absurd and inconvenient for them than such an imitation of 'grown-up' gowns, and that a little child is not made to be dressed up like a doll for our amusement.[19]

Despite this kind of criticism, Liberty's continued to sell dresses in the mode of Kate Greenaway. Yet they were not merely concerned with dressing girls well throughout their childhood: they were also interested in training girls to make proper sartorial choices well into adulthood.

4. Advice for an Aestheticized Adulthood

In their catalogues, Liberty's continually advertised how their dresses would prepare girls to become the well-dressed Aesthetes of the future. Catalogues from

the 1880s and 90s included essays on the history of dress, to educate consumers on the origins of the revival styles Liberty's produced, as well as articles on suitable attire for children.[20] In an 1896 c atalogue, Liberty's states that their dresses are 'selected and designed from the most beautiful examples in the past history of costume. They combine refinement with distinction and are always in fashion.'[21] Rather than try to dress their children as miniature adults, parents who shopped at Liberty's chose to dress their children in timeless attire that they felt was more appropriate for young people. However, Liberty's also contends in their catalogues that their clothing will prepare children for a f ashionable future: 'Through the refinements of dress, [children] are being insensibly educated into the canons of good taste, and the artistically dressed 'girlie' of today will take care to be the well-dressed woman of the future.'[22] According to Liberty's, the best way to prepare a girl for womanhood is to dress them in the clothes of earlier centuries and train them to make their own decisions about what constitutes 'fashion': these steps will ensure that they do not blindly follow fleeting trends throughout their lives. John Ruskin, [yes, that John Ruskin] famed art critic and close friend of Kate Greenaway, writes in an 1894 L iberty's catalogue that the 'essentials in the selection of becoming costume' are self-reliance and discrimination.[23] A well-dressed person should be able to exercise 'independent personal opinion on the rulings of fashion' and recognize the fact that 'it may be an advantage sometime to ignore the popular fashion of the day, and adopt as an alternative modifications of a more slowly perfected earlier mode.'[24] According to Ruskin, historical dress, such as the Empire period styles illustrated by Greenaway, have had more time to be 'perfected' and are thus superior to the frivolous, fleeting fashions of the day.

In addition to his articles for Liberty's, Ruskin also wrote his own book of advice for girls, first published in 1879, titled *Letters and Advice to Young Girls and Young Ladies on Dress, Education, Marriage, Their Sphere, Influence, Women's Work and W omen's Rights*. Ruskin uses the format of informal correspondences to convey how he thinks young ladies should behave and adorn themselves. He urges girls to discriminate between beauty and fineness in both their own appearance and the dress of others:

> Always dress yourself beautifully – not finely, unless on occasion, but then very finely and beautifully too. Also, you are to dress as many other people as you can; and to teach them how to dress, if they don't know; and to consider every ill-dressed woman and child whom you see anywhere as a p ersonal disgrace, and to get at them somehow, until everybody is beautifully dressed as birds.[25]

Ruskin's stance that simple dress best flatters a girl, both in terms of her physical appearance and enhancement of her natural charms, can be traced back to

Greenaway. The theme of the conceited child being cured of their arrogance through embarrassment recurs frequently in Greenaway's picture books. For example, the poem 'Finery' from *Little Ann and Other Poems* (1883), relates the story of a vain young girl named Fanny, who expects to gain the admiration of her fellow guests at a party with a new lace-trimmed dress and freshly curled hair. However, it is Fanny's foil, Lucy, a girl 'only in simple white clad' that captures the attention of the other girls due to her 'cheerful good nature.'[26] The last stanza of 'Finery' clearly articulates how good young girls should act and dress:

> 'Tis better to have a sweet smile on one's face,
> Than to wear a fine frock with an elegant lace,
> For the good-natured girl is loved best in the main,
> If her dress is but decent, though ever so plain.[27]

Lucy embodies all the qualities of Greenaway's ideal girlie: she appears unselfish, acts kindly towards others and, unlike Fanny, does not preoccupy herself with her appearance. This morally upright child's white outfit is described as having no trimming, laces, or jewels: the plainness of her attire is reminiscent of the children's revival styles for sale at Liberty's. Through the purchase of a similar dress at Liberty's, parents could outfit their daughters to become as charming and selfless as Lucy.

5. Conclusions

Ultimately, the demand for and production of Kate Greenaway-inspired fashions in late nineteenth century Britain reveals parents' desire to enhance their children's appearance of innocence by means of dressing them in supposedly simpler styles of historical garb. By clothing their daughters in the style of Greenaway's girlies, parents thought that they protected their offspring from developing into vain, self-absorbed adults who could only concern themselves with blindly following the latest fashions. Simple, unadorned, historical styles, such as those sold at Liberty's, allowed girls to emulate Greenaway's storybook characters and grow into aesthetically aware adults. Fellow children's book illustrator Walter Crane once said of Greenaway:

> The grace and charm of her children and young girls were quickly recognized, and her treatment of quaint early nineteenth-century costume, prim gardens, and the child-like spirit of her designs in an old-world atmosphere, though touched with a conscious modern 'aestheticism,' captured the public in a remarkable way.[28]

Greenaway successfully created a world of fantasy and escape for children and their parents that was firmly rooted in an idealized, pastoral past, yet subtly aware of the concerns of the modern aesthete. Greenaway's stylistic influence extended far beyond her picture books, as it seeped into the pages of Liberty's catalogues and onto the dress of young people throughout England. Though fashionable for a relatively brief period, Greenaway's illustrations and their consequent sartorial inspirations produced a legacy in children's dress that deserves to be studied in depth.

Notes

[1] Some sources on the history of children's costume that cite Kate Greenaway or her book illustrations include: I. Brooke, *English Children's Costume Since 1775*, A&C Black, London, 1930, p. 14; E. Ewing, *History of Children's Costume*, B.T. Batsford, London, 1977, pp. 106-108; L. Martin, *The Way We Wore: Fashion Illustrations of Children's Wear 1870-1970*, Charles Scribner Sons, New York, 1978, p. 8; C. Rose, *Children's Clothes Since 1750*, B.T. Batsford, London, 1989, p. 142; and D.L. Moore, *The Child in Fashion*, B.T. Batsford, London, 1953, p. 85.

[2] R. Engen, *Kate Greenaway: A Biography*, Shocken Books, New York, 1981, pp. 90-92.

[3] Engen, *Kate Greenaway*, p. 92.

[4] Engen, *Kate Greenaway*, p. 81.

[5] Walter Crane once commented, 'May I confess that (for me at least) I think she overdid the big bonnet rather, and at one time her little people were almost lost in their clothes? However, one saw this in the actual life of the day.' M.H. Spielmann and G.S. Layard, *Kate Greenaway*, Adam and Charles Black, London, 1905, p. 71.

[6] K. Greenaway, *Under the Window: Pictures and Rhymes for Children*, Frederick Warne and Co., London, 1878, p. 35.

[7] M. Girouard, *Sweetness and Light: The Queen Anne Movement 1860-1900*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1977, p. 148.

[8] Girouard, *Sweetness and Light*, p. 146.

[9] Spielmann and Layard, *Kate Greenaway*, p. 58.

[10] Girouard, *Sweetness and Light*, p. 148.

[11] 'Fancy Dress for Children (1899)' from *Liberty's Catalogues, 1881-1949: Fashion, Design, Furnishings* [microfilm], Mindata Limited, Bath, England, 1985, Sheet 58. The title 'Fancy Dress' could either signify 'Sunday Best' clothing for children or costumes for 'Fancy Dress' parties.

[12] 'Fancy Dress for Children', *Liberty's Catalogues*, 1899, Sheet 58.

[13] Ibid., Sheet 35.

[14] 'Fancy Dress for Children', *Liberty's Catalogues*, 1898, Sheet 34.

[15] Spielmann and Layard, *Greenaway*, p. 4.

[16] P. Byrde, *Nineteenth-Century Fashion*, B.T. Batsford, London, 1992, p. 79.

[17] J. Laver, *Children's Fashion in the Nineteenth Century*, B.T. Batsford, New York, 1951, p. 1.

[18] Laver, *Children's Fashion*, p. 4.

[19] See D.L. Moore, *The Child in Fashion*, p. 40.

[20] See 'The Empire Mode: The Characteristics of the Empire Revival' (1894) from *Liberty's Catalogues*, Sheet 15 and 'The Dress of Children' (1896) from *Liberty's Catalogues*, Sheet 26.

[21] 'Fancy Dress for Children', 1898, op. cit., Sheet 58.

[22] 'The Dress of Children', *Liberty's Catalogues*, 1896, Sheet 26.

[23] J. Ruskin, 'Selection of Costume' (January 1894) from *Liberty's Catalogues*, Sheet 15.

[24] Ibid.

[25] J. Ruskin, *Letters and Advice to Young Girls and Young Ladies on Dress, Education, Marriage, Their Sphere, Influence, Women's Work and Women's Rights*, John Wiley and Sons, New York, 1888, p. 23.

[26] J. Taylor and A. Taylor, *Little Ann and Other Poems*, Illus. K. Greenaway, F. Warne, New York, 1883, p. 55.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Spielmann and Layard, *Kate Greenaway*, p. 71.

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Rebecca Perry is a second year master's student at the Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts, Design, and Culture in New York. While she has focused her studies on the history of children's clothing, she is most interested in how innocence has been constructed as an aesthetic in both girls' and women's fashions throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Not Entirely Subversive: Rock Military Style from Hendrix to Destiny's Child

Michael A. Langkjær

Abstract

Rock and pop musicians attired in military uniforms belong to our collective visual memory of the popular music scene since the 1960s. There has been a tendency to overestimate the subversive and erotic appeal of the uniformed look; subversion and fetishistic eroticism need not have been all that 'rock military style' involved. In challenging a-priori psychological or semiotic approaches, a note is made of discrepancies between what military-styled stars wished to express by their look and what their audiences assumed was its purpose. A general characterization of 'rock military style' is followed by analyses of the 1960s guitar hussar look of Jimi Hendrix and the 21st century camouflaged survivor look of Destiny's Child. Elucidation of the motivation behind their respective versions of 'rock military style' is achieved through utilization of personal statements in interviews and contextual evidence linked to the histories and philosophies of Pop Art and aesthetics, current events and the cultural and social histories of particular groups. Differences and similarities between Hendrix and Destiny are noted, which include gender-specific attitudes toward the use of uniforms and military textiles as decorative devices, male status display and female empowerment.

Key Words: Uniforms, camouflage, fashion, semiotics, gender, aesthetics, empowerment, rock music, Jimi Hendrix, Destiny's Child.

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1. Introduction

My chapter examines the motivations of rock musicians in dressing up in military uniforms.[1] Their motive is traditionally explained as transgression, viz. the deliberate subversion of established tradition, decorum and sensibilities; that a symbol – the uniform – was being transgressed in order to make a social or political statement.[2] But might it have involved something other than transgression? Following a brief overview, two cases of 'rock military style' have been selected to demonstrate the wider potential of my research. I start with the vintage regimentals of Jimi Hendrix in the 1960s to exemplify convergent hierarchies of motivation. I then flash forward some 40 years to the camo-look of Destiny's Child where I argue the drawbacks of semiotics and the advantages to be gained from applying the historical critical method, as, for example, when considering the ethics implicit in a particular military look.

Although the mainstream doubtlessly looked upon rock performer reuse of military uniforms as a debasement of the traditions represented by the uniform, it

need not necessarily have been what the rock performers themselves either felt or intended. As Eric Clapton put it,

> I don't think I've had that many people on the same wave-length as me - you know, appreciating me for the same reason that I appreciate me. I really can't see into their minds to see if the image is one I would like or wouldn't like.[3]

Apart from defining a persona or differentiating roles within the group, assuming a rock military look would have had something to do with its intrinsic aesthetic qualities. That may, again, be connected with the Pop-art aesthetics of the British art school-educated upper working class or lower middle class. Art school bands were legion in the 1960s, especially in the UK.[4] An idea of the art schools' impact on the interplay of aesthetic and commercial judgement – defining a saleable image otherwise known as branding – is suggested by Eric Clapton's biographer Ray Coleman,

> What Eric probably did, without realizing it, was transfer his art school background into his career as much as possible … His assertion of fashion consciousness, both on and off stage, marked him out to many players ... Military jackets were fashionable, so Eric was usually seen wearing a fresh one from his vast collection in different colours on most stage shows, spreading the trend among people who thought that if their 'God' Clapton wore one, it was essential for them.[5]

As to his own role in popularizing the uniform style back in 1966, Clapton himself professed (if somewhat ingenuously) to being nonplussed:

> There's [sic] some very funny things that would go on - like, at one gig I would wear a red military jacket and for some reason I'd play and everyone would suddenly get knocked out. And then we'd do the next gig a couple of weeks later somewhere else and everyone in the audience would be wearing red military jackets.[6]

But with due respect to Clapton, the question of to whom we must assign the priority in instigating or popularizing the uniform style is entirely uncertain. No one is sure who first started selling antiquated vintage uniforms. Fashion designer Paul Smith has made the interesting suggestion, that

> It was really the shops of the times that led the bands and the bands who made a particular look a mainstream fashion ... They

all made the looks that the bands took on, and that led to acceptance by the mainstream. These shop owners and designers were the unsung heroes of fashion.[7]

Military-style or what the British satirical magazine *Private Eye* called 'the loony look' peaked during the spring and summer of 1967.[8] The vintage jackets sold at boutiques such as 'I Was Lord Kitchener's Valet', had been bought wholesale relatively cheaply. British regiments owned their uniforms making it possible for them to sell off any de-commissioned models, and for the boutique-retailers to make a killing – 'Look mate, if I can buy up a whole lot of rotten old kit on the cheap, flog it to the moddies and make a fat profit, well what's it a ll about…?'[9] – as long as the vintage jacket fashion stayed in high fashion, which was essentially the case in the spring and summer of 1967. Sales started trailing off thanks to the Beatles having done their pilgrimage to India and turned people on to TM, the sitar instrumental music of Ravi Shankar and the paisley, silk and cotton India-look.

Since the turn of the millennium and in part thanks to bands like *The Strokes* and *The Libertines*, we have been experiencing a Sixties-spirited vintage uniform renaissance on the catwalk, as well as on the concert stage. Of course, the military look has in some form or other always stayed part of the scene - typified by Waterloo era *ABBA* and *Roxy*'s Bryan Ferry in the 1970s, by Adam Ant and *Queen*'s Freddy Mercury in the 1980s, by the camouflage-clad rappers of the 1990s, and throughout the interim by the consistently military-styled Michael Jackson.[10]

2. 'Guitar Hussar' Jimi Hendrix and Hierarchies of Motivation

Jimi Hendrix in his vintage British regimental jackets is often used as the prototype when assuming that rock musicians donned military uniforms in an ironical allusion to the traditional military uniform. Fashion historian Gertrud Lehnert asserts,

> In every respect Jimi Hendrix was the embodiment of the 1960s generation's revolt against the establishment. Famous as the master of improvisation on electric guitar, he openly criticized American politics through his music and demonstrated this nonconformist attitude in his lifestyle. The colourful, richly embroidered jacket that he often wore is an ironic reference to traditional military uniforms and a subtle expression of the anti-Vietnam protest among the young.[11]

That Hendrix was a master of the electric guitar is beyond doubt; this can fortunately still be seen and heard! But one might question a number of Lehnert's other assertions.

Hendrix owned a blue single-breasted hip-length gala uniform tunic with maroon cuffs from The Army Veterinary Corps. It is not known how he acquired it. He also owned a richly gold-braided black hussar jacket or *pelisse* lined with brown fur; a short jacket of the type which the light cavalry units, the hussars, normally wore either as a true jacket (with their arms in both sleeves) or draped cape-like over a shoulder – a quintessentially glamorous garment.[12] As to his acquisition of the old hussar's jacket, one of Hendrix's musician acquaintances recalls an episode around December 1966:

> I'm a uniform freak, so in this little old corner street I see this jacket. It's the most beautiful jacket I've ever seen in my life. I walked in and talked to the store-owner and he said, 'This jacket ain't shit, it's an original – £100.' I said, 'Fuck, I only got £50. I'll run to the bank and give you the other £50.' 'You got it, give me the £50 right down in my hand.' So I came back, 'Hey man, where's my jacket?' And he said, 'I'm sorry, I sold the jacket to Jimi Hendrix.' I said, 'What?' He said, 'Look, he came in and gave me £200. Here's your fifty quid back.'[13]

Hendrix initially wore these uniform jackets in England 1966-67, both on the streets and when performing. In January, 1967, Hendrix explained in an interview with the leading popular music magazine *New Musical Express* (better known as *NME*), that:

> Some people have told me that they think wearing a military jacket is an insult to the British Army. Let me tell you, I wear this old British coat out of respect. This was worn by one of those cats who used to look after the donkeys which pulled the cannons way back in 1900. This coat has a history, there's life to it. I don't like war, but I respect a fighting man and his courage. Maybe the guy who wore this coat got killed in action. Would people rather his coat be hung up and go mouldy somewhere, to be forgotten, like him?

To which he added:

> Men like that should not be forgotten and if I wear this coat I remember. Anyhow, I wear it because it is comfortable.[14]

Hendrix took conscious pride in his attire being military and having a history. As it turns out, the impulses and motivations behind his style were rather more complex.

First of all, Hendrix was a former parachutist with the 101st Airborne Division who, although fundamentally apolitical, in 1966-67 identified in a positive way with the martial spirit and with the task of the American military to make war on world Communism.[15] Although relieved at having been discharged prior to Vietnam, he acknowledged that the military provided one of the few possibilities open to blacks for improving their social station.[16] He modified his position on Vietnam in 1968, but by then he had also changed his look to the ethnic one immortalized at Woodstock in 1969. Second, what characterized Hendrix's clothing style was an African 'polyrhythmic' feel for contrasts in colour and fabric that, along with layering, explains his finesse in bringing together differently coloured and textured uniform jackets, trousers, shirts and scarves into a single picturesque ensemble.[17] Third, as to why Hendrix had this style in clothes, what it aimed at, and what he wanted to gain by it: that was determined by his having set his heart on achieving a well-defined distinctive rock-silhouette by virtue of the African-American sartorial tradition for creating a strong identity through smart and resplendent attire known as *stylin*'.[18]

Fourth, Hendrix was actively expressing himself as a rock artist at a time especially characterized by its prevailing nostalgia for the days before the world and the Empire had gotten out of joint, and by imperial trappings, including regimental uniforms, being in high demand. The era was also marked by the Pop/Mod aesthetic, which, with its collages and striking graphics, put a stamp on the visual character of Hendrix's surroundings, and into which colourful old-fashioned regimental uniforms also fitted. It was art school-educated rock musicians like Pete Townshend, who, along with collage techniques, had imbibed principles immanent in Pop so as to simultaneously break down and revitalize symbols, emblems and icons of the past – something to which Hendrix more or less unwittingly subscribed in his 'recharging' of the long deceased warrior's uniform jacket. Fifth and lastly, Hendrix found himself in a militarily speaking comparatively nostalgic, relaxed and non-ideological Britain, which tolerated the aesthetically motivated use of patriotic symbols.

The point is not so much that of Hendrix not having had any subversive intentions, but that if a single rock-uniform-wearing icon like him can be shown to have been motivated by altogether different impulses, it raises the question of what manner of impulses and motivations other rock-musicians might have possessed.

3. Destiny's Child's 'Glamazons' and the Limitations of Semiotics

The extremely successful pop R&B female group Destiny's Child was featured on the May 2001 cover of *Rolling Stone*.[19] There, the three young women,

Beyoncé Knowles, Kelly Rowland and Michelle Williams, were outfitted in, what art critic Terry Barrett, applying the semiotics of Roland Barthes, denoted as:

> brief halter-tops, ... short shorts [or] long, tight-fitting pants with designed tears in them ... clean and shiny black leather boots with laces [while] the woman – Beyoncé – in the middle holds a belt of large-calibre bullets [and] a green helmet that says 'U.S. Army' on its front, and all three are scantily dressed in pseudo-camouflage attire that includes fabric adorned with sequins.[20]

These were the costumes used in the music-video for Destiny's Child's top hit 'Survivor'. In his analysis Barrett goes on to describe the connotations of the physical aspect of the women as an unmistakable play on physicality and the erotic.

Barrett has noted that, among other things, 'whereas boot camp prepares one to fight, booty camp apparently prepares these three for sex.'[21] This is underscored by the projected sexuality of the women, which he terms 'ambiguous.'[22] The allegedly ambiguous character is evidenced, on the one hand, by Destiny's Child 'revealing their conventionally attractive bodies in sexually provocative ways, yet [being] dressed and armed for battle' while, on the other, they are merely posturing since they 'wear military attire and have bullets, but because they have no guns or other weapons, they are susceptible to being overcome by stronger or better armed predators.'[23] Sex – oh yes, but is this all?

What initially caused me to question Barrett's approach was the group history of Destiny's Child, more specifically that Beyoncé, Kelly and Michelle all are devout Christians, in all likelihood Republican, and that Beyoncé Knowles' canny manager-father Mathew and stylist-mother Tina have surrounded them with a protective bubble against exploitation. Tina Knowles created the group's signature style statement, claiming to have a solid idea of the statement she wants to make: 'Sex appeal should be something that's implied, not stated.'[24] Knowles considers the army camouflage look one of her favourites:

> I thought of putting the girls in camouflage because it fit the 'survival' theme of the *Survivor* album. ...They wore the outfits a lot while promoting the album and consequently revived the camouflage trend. Pretty soon, I couldn't walk down the street without seeing someone wearing the camouflage look.[25]

Knowles is not entirely accurate in that regard. Camouflage, aka Disruptive Pattern Material, has been worn by musicians from almost every genre of contemporary popular music, often with very distinctive interpretations.[26] Since the late 1980s, Public Enemy, Wu-Tang Clan and other urban rap and hip-hop 'crews'

had emerged with a heavily politicized and militaristic imagery: 'On these New York City sidewalks we walk. Camouflaged, dodging the eyes of the hawk,' and 'Put on my fatigues and my camouflage. Take control, 'cos I'm in charge.'[27] Destiny's Child took up the issue of the battle between the sexes, an assault on the male ego, while retaining an urban-combat look.

They took the concept a step further at a Houston record release party for the *Survivor*-album in May 2001 when they were driven to their camouflaged stage in a Humvee by members of the US Marine Corps.[28] This event strengthens our supposition of more being involved here than 'mere sex' – a Humvee, a camouflaged stage and marines as 'roadies', it all adds up to a total scheme playing on the military camouflage phenomenon. On the one hand, the takeover of a pattern having clear macho-associations would suggest feminist empowerment and connect with the 'survivor'-theme. On the other, green signifies growth, fertility and the Earth, even to reminding us 'more about the Earth than war.'[29]

As a stylist, one of Tina Knowles's basic principles is the idea of improvisational inventive recycling. This might also hark back to old African and African-American *bricolage* traditions, as well as being part of a Western 'ration of fashion' and the DIY-ethic of hip-hop, inherited from that of Punk. And there is the high-street fashion appeal of camouflage since the 1990s.[30] So, along with its protective concealment and militaristic associations, camouflage is an abstract decorative device. Thus, the partiality of African-American rap and hip-hop groups for camo could possibly be ascribed to the allure and dazzle of its disruptive patterning, being, in a manner similar to what we previously noted with Hendrix, reflective of the African aesthetic sensibility for a mélange of contrasting and conflicting 'restless' colours.

As in the case of Jimi Hendrix the attitude to the military and to uniforms in parts the African-American community seems to have some connection with the circumstances of belonging to (or aspiring to) the middleclass with its conservative pro-establishment values, possibly in part connected with the military as an opportunity for social advancement. The fact that DC performed at the George W. Bush presidential inauguration and apparently subscribe to his addressing their perceived good influence that 'it was kind of our duty and responsibility to hold up high standards and a good image, because so many people look up to us' and that 'after all, he's from Texas, too, so we could relate,' would indicate a certain level of philosophic (and with their Christian fundamentalism, religious) if not actual political congeniality.[31] Suffice it to say: these are not Dixie Chicks!

4. Concluding Remarks

I am not saying that the semiotic approach is wrong. What I am saying is that it can be misleading in relation to what was originally meant by an image or to what has been depicted – as here, the rock military look. Then again, one cannot really get around the erotic associations of the *Rolling Stone* cover. Camouflage is also

about fooling the observer, so does this mean that the Knowles's with all their protestations of purity of intent are in fact laughing all the way to the bank? The ambiguities seem far too many and complex for a definite answer. While insisting that one must 'assume that everything is coded and in need of interpretation,' Barrett also recognized that 'codes are open to some and closed to others because of culture, age, gender, and familiarity with current and past events.'[32] It needs re-emphasizing: in order to gain a full appreciation of what's going on, one should familiarize oneself with what the protagonists themselves, the performers and their promoters, intended by projecting certain images and with the contexts of the image-projection.

What at first glance would appear transgressing and exploitative turns out, via a historical-critical approach, to be otherwise motivated, though by no means precluding transgression, subversion or exploitation. Cynical deductions regarding transgression or fetishism of the uniform can be circumscribed or qualified through the application of well-chosen sources and their critical analysis. The tendency to ignore that there are two sides to rock military style symbolism, involving discrepant or even contradictory attitudes of the artist on the one hand and the audience on the other, can be counteracted by a serious working knowledge of the musicians and bands in question and their histories.[33]

Notes

[1] For an expanded version of this chapter, see: M.A. Langkjær, 'Not Entirely Subversive: Rock Military Style from Hendrix to Destiny's Child', *Fashions: Exploring Fashion through Culture*, J.L. Foltyn (ed), Inter-Disciplinary Press, Oxford, forthcoming, 2011.

[2] N. Joseph & N. Alex, 'The Uniform: A Sociological Perspective', *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 77, No. 4, January 1972, pp. 719-730; J. Craik, 'The Cultural Politics of the Uniform', *Fashion Theory*, Vol. 7, No. 2, 2003, pp. 127-148; J. Craik, *Uniforms Exposed: From Conformity to Transgression*, Berg, Oxford and NY, 2005, pp. 16, 22, 38, 177, & 205.

[3] 'Rolling Stone Interview: Eric Clapton', *Rolling Stone*, 11 May 1968, p. 13.

[4] S. Frith and H. Horne, *Art into Pop*, Methuen, London and NY, 1987, pp. 1, 43, 73 & 125-127; J. Lewis, 'Art School Rock', *London Calling: High Art and Low Life in the Capital Since 1968*, Editors of Time Out, Ebury Publishing, London, 2008, pp. 187-191.

[5] R. Coleman, *Survivor: The Authorized Biography of Eric Clapton*, Sidgwick & Jackson, London, 1985, p. 44.

[6] 'Rolling Stone Interview: Eric Clapton', p. 13.

[7] Smith cited in J. Sims, *Rock/Fashion*, Omnibus, London, 1999, p. 26.

[8] 'Madness 67, A Private Eye Psycho-Guide to a New Craze that is Sweeping London: The Loony Look', *Private Eye*, No. 138, Friday, 31 March 1967, p. 9.

[9] Ibid.

[10] M.A. Langkjær, 'Then How can You Explain Sgt. Pompous and the Fancy Pants Club Band?': Utilization of Military Uniforms and Other Paraphernalia by Pop Groups and the Youth Counterculture in the 1960s and Subsequent Periods', Supplement, *Textile History and the Military*, Vol. 41, No. 1, May 2010, pp. 182-213.

[11] G. Lehnert, *A History of Fashion in the 20th Century*, Könemann, Cologne, 2000, p. 60, caption; and p. 61.

[12] G. Mankowitz, *Jimi Hendrix: The Complete Masons Yard Photo Sessions*, Schwarzkopf & Schwarzkopf, Berlin, 2004; M. Hearn (ed), *The Jimi Hendrix Experience: Rex Collections*, Reynolds & Hearn, Richmond, 2005, pp. 52, 54-55, 59, 60, 62; F. Smith, *A History of the Royal Army Veterinary Corps 1796-1919*, Baillière, Tindall & Cox, London, 1927, Appendix I: The Uniform of the Army Veterinary Service, 1796-1911; R. Barnes, *A History of the Regiments & Uniforms of the British Army*, J.M. Dent & Sons, London, 1954, p. XIX: 1904; Appendix III, 1914: Regimental Titles and Uniforms, p. 331; R. Barnes, *A History of the Regiments & Uniforms of the British Army*, 5th ed., Seeley Service & Co., London, 1962, p. 270; C. Chant, *The Handbook of British Regiments*, Routledge, London and New York, 1988, p. 282.

[13] R&B musician Geno Washington quoted in J. Black, *Jimi Hendrix: Eyewitness*, Carlton, London, 2004, pp. 68-69; E. Burdon with J.M. Craig, *Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood*, Thunder's Mouth Press, New York, 2001, p. 126.

[14] Ibid., pp. 74-75; Hearn, *The Jimi Hendrix Experience*, p. 7, caption.

[15] Black, *Jimi Hendrix*, p. 115; Burdon, op. cit., p. 79.

[16] J. McDermott & E. Kramer, *Hendrix: Setting the Record Straight*, Little, Brown, London, 1993, p. 170.

[17] J. Picton, 'What to Wear in West Africa: Textile Design, Dress and Self-Representation', *Black Style*, C. Tulloch (ed), V&A Publications, London, 2004, pp. 28-32; R. Thompson, *Flash of the Spirit: African and African-American Art and Philosophy*, Vintage Books, New York, 1984, pp. 207-220.

[18] G. O'Neal, 'The Power of Style: On Rejection of the Accedpted [sic]', *Appearance and Power (Dress, Body, Culture)*, K. Johnson & S. Lennon (eds) Berg, Oxford, 1999, pp. 130, 135.

[19] *Rolling Stone*, No. 869, May 24 2001, cover, with theme-article by J. Dunn, 'A Date with Destiny', pp. 52-62. Formed in 1997 in Houston, Texas, the Destiny's Child lineup has changed several times; Michelle, Kelly and Beyoncé comprised the group during its most successful stretch 2000-2002.

[20] T. Barrett, 'Interpreting Visual Culture', *Art Education*, Vol. 56, No. 2: 'Why Not Visual Culture?', March 2003, pp. 6, 8-9.

[21] Ibid., p. 10.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid.

[24] T. Knowles with Z. Alexander, *Destiny's Style: Bootylicious Fashion, Beauty, and Lifestyle Secrets from Destiny's Child*, HarperCollins/Regan Books, New York, 2002, pp. xvii-xviii, 8, where Knowles states that: 'I've made the conscious effort to make sure the DC wardrobe is eye-catching without the girls out there half naked or in clothes that are all-fitting or too tight – we call that look 'hoochie'.'

[25] Ibid., p. 64.

[26] H. Blechmann & A. Newman (eds), *DPM Disruptive Pattern Material: An Encyclopaedia of Camouflage: Nature, Military, Culture*, DPM Ltd, London, 2004, pp. 550-599.

[27] Tony Touch featuring Wu-Tang Clan (Inspectah Deck's verse), *The Abduction*, Tommy Boy Records, 2000, and M.C. Rakim, both cited in Blechmann & Newman, *DPM*, pp. 418, 582.

[28] Ibid., p. 557.

[29] H. Blechmann, 'Preface: Colour Symbolism: The Allure of Green', *DPM*, H. Blechmann & A. Newmann (eds), DPM Ltd, London, 2004, p. 16.

[30] J. Sims, 'Culture Fashion: Civilian Adoption of Camouflage', *DPM Disruptive Pattern Material: An Encyclopedia of Camouflage, Nature, Military, Culture*, H. Blechmann & A. Newmann (eds), DPM Ltd., London, 2004, pp. 431-455.

[31] B. Knowles, K. Rowland & M. Williams, with J.P. Herman, *Soul Survivors: The Official Autobiography of Destiny's Child*, HarperCollins/Regan Books, New York, 2002, pp. 42, 58, 139, 165-175, 185.

[32] Barrett, 'Interpreting Visual Culture', p. 10.

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Michael A. Langkjær, PhD is an assistant professor at the Saxo Institute, Department of History, University of Copenhagen, with published work in Egyptology, counterfactual history, 18th century intellectual history and 1960s studies. His current research is devoted to fashion and in particular to the phenomenon of 'rock military style'.

Second Skins: Spandex Pants and the New American Woman

Ericka Basile

Abstract
This chapter discusses the influence of Lastex and spandex textiles upon the new freedom of movement and body consciousness embraced by women in the late 1970s. In particular, the discussion focuses on the racy, body-hugging spandex trousers popular for wear at discotheques of the period. Lastex and spandex fibres were previously utilized in foundation garments and close-fitting body wear for women throughout the twentieth century. However, it was the lingerie innovator Frederick Mellinger of Frederick's of Hollywood that first created the satin lastex pant as early as the 1950s, which had evolved from his variety of 'second skin' panty girdles. The relation of the skin-like girdle of Lastex to the skin-tight pant of spandex revealed the significant changes in the relationship of clothing to the body that emerged in the late 1970s. Spandex created a new body-conscious dressing for the modern American woman that allowed for an ease of movement and a freedom of corporeal expression. The liberty of motion that disco inspired in women was a perfect complement to the shimmering, slim fitting trousers that acted as a second skin to a confident and self-determined female. As women became more independent, modernity demanded a second skin. A woman was not herself in her clothes, She was simply herself, and clothes were a part of her.

Key Words: Spandex, lastex, disco, pants, trousers, 1970s, Frederick's of Hollywood, women.

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Such were the revolutionary shaping qualities of the new stretch fabrics that in a 1940 issue of *The Science News-Letter* Robert D. Potter exclaimed:

> For the first time since Adam killed an animal and used its skin for clothing, man has at last achieved a fabric that will hug the figure and not hang in folds.[1]

Potter's biblical reference took fashion back to basics, before heavy draperies and superfluous layers, before structured garments with boning and hoops. It signalled a new body consciousness and a determination on the part of science to develop new figure-hugging materials. These fabrics were akin to the animal skins worn by the couple banished from paradise. As they attempted to survive on their own outside of the Garden of Eden, they wore second skins, a new layer demanded by modernity.

Perhaps the Adam and Eve figures are best represented by Danny Zuko and Sandy Olsson from the 1978 film *Grease*, whose matching skin-tight ensembles in the film's last scene come together to represent a l usty freedom of sartorial expression in their snug, black second skins. In the scene, Sandy reveals her dramatic change from a conservative schoolgirl in full skirts and bobby socks into a sexually charged woman in body-hugging spandex pants, tempting her 'Adam' with a shapely figure, accentuated by stretch material. Sandy's transformation signalled the discovery of the woman's body by women themselves.

This new social consciousness of the figure prevailed as fashion evolved over time, but the female figure underwent many significant changes during the course of discovery. Moulded, shaped, flexed, and manipulated by the whim of the designer and the silhouette of the period, waists have been tightly cinched, bodices curved, hips exaggerated, breasts flattened, shoulders padded, legs both hidden beneath long layers and brazenly exposed from underneath miniskirts. In its endless variety of looks, trends and fashionable shapes, sculpting the ideal female figure has been a significant aim of twentieth century fashion. In the midst of these changes the idea of fashion as a second skin had been lost, until materials utilized in foundation garments, such as lastex from the late thirties and 1940s were later used in pants of the same material manufactured by Frederick's of Hollywood in the fifties and sixties. As women became more active and aware of the health and fitness of their figures in the 1970s, silhouettes began to narrow, and by the latter part of the decade when disco became mainstream, slim fitting pants were a must have article for evening wear. These narrow pants represented a new freedom of movement and daring personal display of the body for women. Giving her an almost naked look sheathed in shiny confetti colours, the skin-tight trouser was the ultimate symbol of second skin exposure, a cel ebratory layer allowing for the raucous freedom of movement associated with the 1970s disco club scene.

1. The New Stretch Fibers: Second Skin Beginnings

The development of stretch materials began before World War II as scientists began to experiment with new materials for use in fabrics. Ushering in a period of major innovations in the textile industry, glass, metal, nylon, vinyon and pervel fibres were made for important industrial uses and select fashion purposes. Lab researchers developed nylon threads for use in women's stockings, to give a woman's leg a more streamlined, longer wearing hose. Vinyon fibres were used in cotton stockings to better hug the curves of the legs, rather than sag like pure cotton.[2] Scientists also began to develop rubber threads for use in textiles as early as 1940 and this 'unusual material … finding a steadily increasing use in modern clothing'[3] provided new ways for women to comfortably shape their figures. Reading almost like an advertisement for ladies underclothes, Potter's article in *The Science News-Letter* evincing the uses of lastex used seductive verbiage to describe the effects of this new material:

[It] literally covers the figure with slender, tiny rubber bands which are skilfully wrapped round with coverings of silk, cotton or linen … now lastex fabrics have come out into the open and appear not only in clinging, form shaping (and revealing) bathing suits but also in many articles of clothing where snugness is desired.[4]

The development of new stretch fibres such as these gave birth to the idea of clothing as a second skin for creating an ideal figure. Second skin like a second self, began with underwear, and the garments in closest proximity to the body were often made of lastex. The material was touted for its worthiness to the makers of women's girdles and foundation garments because a more intense degree of curve-hugging stretch was achieved with the introduction of the textile. Real-form Girdles of lastex were called 'Soft-Skin' because of their ability to both comfortably shape and mimic the smoothness of skin desired by the consumer. Undergarments from other retailers created words to relate their products to second skins, and according to a study conducted by Charles E. Bess of American mail-order catalogs from 1941, 'the more intimate the garment, the more glamorous' the name.[5] For the woman that desired more control Montgomery Ward sold flexible corsets like 'Twin Lastique' 'Super-Lastique' and 'Roll-ons of Lastex.'[6] The retailer also sold underpants which they termed 'Undikins … in several styles: Slendikins, Flarikins, Smoothikins, Lastikins, and Minnikins.'[7] The addition of the ending 'kins,' short for 'skins' provided the garments with an aura of close to the body snugness.

2. Glamorous Skins: Frederick's of Hollywood and the New Pant

By the 1940s stretch fibres had become the norm in second skin glamour and provided a way for women to feel more confident about their bodies. If glamour was the word for lastex undergarments, the definition of the word was the domain of entrepreneur Frederick Mellinger. After serving in the army Mellinger worked for a small mail order firm in New York and noticed a deficiency in the market for the satin and lace negligees that he and other men preferred for women's underwear.[8] After encountering opposition to his lingerie advertisements in New York's conservative newspapers, which deemed his ads pornographic, Mellinger moved to Hollywood where a community of movie stars and entertainers readily embraced his designs and became his customer base. As his business grew, so did his clientele, and Mellinger set out to clothe the everyday American woman in Hollywood glamour through his mail order catalogue of inner and outwear.

Catalogues mailed to American women via Frederick's of Hollywood promised styles that would bring them 'Hollywood glamour and allure' 'many flattering compliments' 'thrilling new romance' and 'dreams come true.' Through the affordable styles dotting the glossy pages of its mailings, Frederick's fulfilled the

dreams of women living far from Hollywood to take control of their sexuality and femininity with clothing that simultaneously covered and revealed the body. The lingerie innovator created the satin lastex pant, which was the result of an evolution first from his 'Snip Hip' panty girdles, then to his 'Lady Long Johns' and finally into the transferred use of lastex material from body slimming undergarments to body revealing outer garments.

From the late forties onward Frederick's of Hollywood designed fashion forward undergarment supports to be worn underneath the company's most alluring, curve revealing costumes. As a result, innovations in innerwear beneath 'come hither' dresses were what the company became best known for. Panty girdles of two-way stretch allowed women to 'wear snug clothes, without a ripple' in order to 'look and feel so shapely'[9] underneath feminine garments. The 'free 'n' easy' sarong style easy-action girdle made waist, tummy, hips and thighs slim and youthful while still allowing women to 'dance, walk … move and bend like mad.'[10] While the waist, hips and legs were contained underneath the second skin of Frederick's of Hollywood lastex shaping garments they were still encouraged to move, and the focal point of the female look turned to the legs. Paired with the goal to shape and contain bulging tummies, thick thighs and problem hips was the aim to create the illusion of lengthy legs and 'svelte long lines' under the most 'clinging costumes' and 'slim-jim' pants with Snip Hip panty girdles.[11] A style of long legged girdle developed by Frederick's called 'Lady Long John' was the ultimate slim look undergarment for pants.[12] Legs, hips and thighs proved to be quite revealing, and the sultry curves and unbroken leg lines produced by Frederick's of Hollywood innerwear let women everywhere dare to bare their glamorous gams.

As early as 1957 body-baring lastex pants were found gracing the pages of Frederick's of Hollywood catalogs. Advertised as weapons 'mightier than the sword in shaping the affairs of man,' styles ran the gamut from 'Curve-clinging lastex batiste Torreador pants' and high-waisted satin lastex 'Sizzlers' to striped satin lastex play pants and close-fitting, elasticized satin faille trousers.[13]

> He won't let you out of his sight in these sensational pants that reveal every single line of your body! Elasticized satin faille clings and clings and clings! High rise construction acts like a waist nipper, pulling in your waist to nothing. Beautiful braid embroidery runs up and down both sides, heightening that lean, long look.[14]

In a spread from the 1963 catalogue, a display of six pairs of shapely legs shine one after another in a chorus line of body-clinging trousers. The snug pant styles from the spread reveal more casual and structured looks for legs in nylon stretch denim as well as simple styles in satin lastex, stretch lurex and stretch velveteen.

The absence of the top halves of the illustrated models allow the focus to remain on the pants, which are complete with descriptions convincing the fashionable female consumer of their 'shimmering, curve- revealing allure.'[15]

3. The 60s and 70s: Narrow Trousers, New Woman

The satin lastex pants and sparkling lurex leggings created by Frederick's provided new excuses and demands for women to publicly display a shapely figure through tightly fitting, glistening pants. Created for decadent evening at-home play or entertaining, the trousers initiated the vogue for sexy, skin-tight, narrow pants, leading to the emergence of the spandex disco pant of the late 1970s. While the more daring woman in the 1950s or sixties would wear her black satin lastex pants to a public event, many of the styles were still suggested for at-home entertaining. Later, when the narrow silhouette of the 1970s brought the second skin stretch fabric pant back into vogue, the nylon and spandex trouser had a life of its own some twenty years later on the dance floors of discos, no longer confined to the at-home cocktail party of the late fifties and sixties.

It was in the late 1960s that trousers for women began to gain acceptance as an everyday garment worn in public. Their comfort and ease of wear spoke to a generation of women more active and career oriented than the last. Women had embraced the short hemlines of the decade, exposing their legs while dancing and moving their bodies more freely to the rhythms of rock and pop music. Dominant styles were slim, but not skin-tight like the provocative lastex pants of Frederick's of Hollywood. Pants of the decade were generally straight and narrow much like the trousers of André Courrèges, which were slit at the front to present an exaggerated elongation of the leg. The designer's focus on the leg produced looks for his couture collection that included crisp, white wool pantsuits, which helped the women's trouser eventually move into the public sphere.[16]

Fashions designed for a woman's ease of movement that experimented with new stretch fabrics, were gaining popularity by the end of the 1960s. According to Joel Lobenthal's assessment of the period, 'The tactility of fabric clued in to the heightened sensitivity engendered by the LSD experience and the hedonistic euphoria resulting from a breakdown of sexual taboos.'[17] As a result, clothes that felt good to the touch and the body dominated, leaving many designers speculating on the body's role in fashions of the future. Jacques Fontery, the costume designer for the film *Barbarella* predicted the 'body stocking' to be a major element of future fashions. Paco Rabanne felt that upcoming styles would be 'glued on' to a woman's body.[18]

As some designers in the late 1960s had imagined, the idea of clothing as a second skin did indeed become an important aspect of fashion in the years to come. During the 1970s two designers, Giorgio Sant'Angelo and Halston, created fashions that would become significant contributions to the body-focused styles of the 1970s. Giorgio Sant'Angelo's wild jumpsuits constructed of stretch fabrics and

Halston's bias pants and slimming bodysuits, revealed and let loose the female form to celebrate its powerful elegance and freedom of movement.

The sixties had blown a breath of youthful fresh air into the fashion atmosphere and by the end of the decade free-flowing styles accommodated new stretch fabrics like spandex and lycra. In the early 1950s, spandex was created as a replacement for rubber and was used in later decades in combination with other materials to shape, support and mould the body in active sportswear, hosiery, leotards, leggings and other body fitting apparel.[19] One of the most ardent proponents of these materials was Italian designer Giorgio Sant'Angelo. In the 1960s Sant'Angelo was experimenting with stretch fabrics and by the 1970s the designer was creating clothes that championed the freedom of the female figure. The ease of the designer's creations in stretch chiffon and lycra reflected the intoxicating haze of the drug-filled parties of the 1970s. Many in the industry, including Calvin Klein, agreed that 'he was a genius with stretch fabrics,' famously utilizing the materials in garments created for the 1973 film *Cleopatra Jones*.[20] Stretch was an appropriate choice of textile for the wardrobe of a powerful, gun-toting, karate chopping female action hero, who saved the day in a wardrobe of stretch chiffon and slinky, body-hugging trousers.

Halston's female heroines saved the formidable state of 1970s fashion, injecting a dash of modernity and elegance into the mix. His simple garments were the ultimate complement to a range of female figures, highlighting its assets and concealing its flaws beneath swaths of luxurious fabrics that both clung to and cascaded off the shape of a woman's body. In these thin, lightweight stretch fabrics he created glamorous trousers and bodysuits during a time in which pants were not usually a choice for eveningwear. Though he rarely used spandex blends, Halston's narrow, bias-cut silk pyjama pants subtly revealed a woman's curves but hung loose, allowing room for an elegant ease of movement. In 1977 the designer introduced figure-revealing bodysuits in stretch cashmere and satin, giving the woman's legs and torso complete freedom to move as they pleased. Halston's narrow pants and bodysuits considered the curves of the female body, but were never extremely close fitting. Former *Vogue* editor Grace Mirabella recalled, 'Halston's clothes followed the shape of a woman's body without being tight; they held the body while still retaining a certain languor.'[21] With his ability to sense the appropriate body-focused looks for the new American woman, Halston was an innovator of pieces that called for motion. Considering them a wardrobe staple as early as 1970, Halston compared pants to pantyhose, 'They give a woman a freedom she's never had before and she is not about to give it up,'[22] he said, considering the liberating woman's trouser an extension of herself, or second skin.

The liberated American woman that Halston described possessed a freedom in all of her activities. On daily excursions for work or leisure, she was out and about in narrow pants or cashmere bodysuits, free to choose the comfort of slacks over the confining nature of socially necessary garments like tailored suits. Furthermore,

in the evening she chose to go wherever and do whatever she desired, sipping cocktails with friends or swaying, thrusting and twisting her body on a disco dance floor. As Mirabella described her, she was 'a modern woman, feeling fantastically feminine in her pants … the Halston woman- comfortable, dashing, supremely self-confident.'[23]

Although body-baring styles of skin-tight pants for the self-confident, modern American woman had been produced by Frederick's of Hollywood since the late 1950s, couture and high-end ready-to-wear designers were slow to narrow the pant, and it wasn't until the late 1970s that designers like Halston and Sant'Angelo were creating luxuriously seductive narrow trousers with varying degrees of slimness. Though long and lean, their designs were rarely skin-tight, often partially covered by loose blouses and flowing dresses. A variety of leggy looks graced the fashion runways of New York and Paris. Both Ungaro and Marc Bohan for Dior created sophisticated designs in black silk satin. Yves Saint Laurent designed jewel colored pajama styles and Valentino's shined in metallic brocade. In the California shows, Marion Kops II made the tightest pants of the bunch in a variety of jewel box colors. Other designers created peg legged looks in leather, wool and silk jersey.

4. Fitness Spandex Pants and Disco Dressing

Major changes and shifts in lifestyle and popular culture eventually prompted many designers to completely narrow the pant and glamorize its look through stretch textiles and synthetic blends. The rising popularity of the fitness movement greatly slenderized the ideal female figure and by the end of the 1970s, the arrival of disco had heralded in a seductive exhibition of the female figure in body-hugging looks for night. With the new emphasis put on the body as a result of fitness and dancing, the changes that occurred in the 1970s resulted in a complete second skin look for trousers by the end of the decade.

In January of 1977 *Vogue* magazine declared fitness to be a woman's 'best investment.'[24] As a vigorous start to the New Year, the issue was full of editorials on fitness and bodily health, advocating 'intelligent' exercise and calorie burning activities suited to the individual woman. The 'Body Now' feature became a regular part of the table of contents, and the appearance of fashion models in leotards extending their bodies in exercise positions accompanied spreads of stylish mannequins in couture and ready-to-wear creations.

The exercise trend popularized the incorporation of activity into a woman's lifestyle and gave her control of both her body in motion and her figure in clothes. This corporeal focus gave a sense of empowerment to the fashionable woman now able to enhance her overall well-being and physical appearance through exercise. An April 1977 article from *Vogue* mused about the issue, asking 'What Has Fitness to Do With Fashion?' It was concluded that the two were connected

... because it's where people's heads are- wanting to feel well,
look well. And it has nothing to do with crash diets for the sake
of wearing pretty clothes. It goes a lot deeper- and it lasts a lot
longer: it's caring enough about yourself to want to feel good
about yourself, and doing something about it in an unfaddy, day
to day, lifetime way- and the clothes just fall into your lap. [25]

The new focus on the self, encouraged a whole new way that women perceived the
role of their bodies. With an additional spotlight on fitness, women of the 70s were
in possession of bodies that were well cared for and maintained, rendering them
sartorially eager and ready to do anything. Eventually, as societal mores and
boundaries expanded, body conscious dressing led modern women to put their
bodies on display in the narrow, figure-hugging nylon and spandex pants of the
latter part of the decade.

As a result of the vogue for keeping the body in shape, styles influenced by
dance and exercise graced the pages of fashion magazines until the end of the
1970s. Clothing producers and designers were working with the idea of
'multipurpose' clothes to 'work for an active life,'[26] and accordingly, leotard,
legging and maillot layers became a part of the new body dressing. Danskin, a
company that manufactured professional dancewear, combined the sporty look of
their lycra and spandex dance leggings with the casual look of slim, figure-
revealing trousers, creating their popular line of Pantskins. A series of
advertisement headlines for the product read: 'Danskins are not just for dancing,'[27]
declaring their daring and 'skinny ankle-draped Pantskins' not 'just for daytime'
either, illuminating with 'shine when the sun goes down.'[28]

The seductive cling of scanty leotards and leggings from the boom in body
wear made an easy transition into a woman's eveningwear wardrobe. Disco
dancing was encouraged as a form of exercise to achieve a healthy heart and
beautiful shape, and women were urged by their doctors to do it as a form of
therapy.[29] With the opening of Steve Rubell and Ian Shrager's club Studio 54 in
April of 1977, disco moved into the mainstream and fashion magazine editorials
began to show disco fashion looks that were narrower and tighter than ever before.
'Disco-ing and jogging' created 'a lot of great-looking legs' and women weren't
afraid to show them in the 'more feminine, sexy, body conscious dressing.'[30] Long,
toned and shapely, legs were seen everywhere at night 'hugged by tighter,
narrower, closer-to-the-body pants' which aptly showed off a woman's most
important dancing assets.

Disco dressing put its emphasis upon comfort and spectacular, glamorous
effects. At nightspots like The Loft, Studio 54 and Xenon, women wore tight,
shiny, spandex trousers that showed off their curves and glistened beneath the
slender rays of the disco ball. Though form fitting, the pants allowed a woman to
let loose her inhibitions, moving her body in an exhibitionist display of vigorous

dance motions inspired by the pulsating beats of a never-ending stream of beautiful dance music. As Village Voice columnist Michael Musto remembered, it was a time to 'check your disillusionment at the door and surrender to upbeat music, unabashed line dancing … and other acts of communal funning.'[31] The freedom of motion that disco inspired in women was a perfect complement to the slim fitting trousers that acted as a second skin to the confident, self-determined female.

In the creation and production of the most body-hugging trousers of the twentieth century, Frederick's of Hollywood utilized new stretch fabrics like lastex and spandex to accentuate and hug the female figure. Early styles of the pant were constructed in a variety of lastex blends with nylon, wool, cotton batiste, lurex and satin. The latter was the most popular for its glamorous shine, and lurex made every curve of a woman's hips and legs sparkle. Throughout the fifties and sixties, the lastex pant aimed to lengthen and slenderize the natural shape of the feminine leg with its light-catching shine and sinewy lines.

In the 1970s the California based Frederick's remained the most prolific manufacturer of the garments, still faithfully producing the shiny trousers in spandex rather than lastex. Most styles were constructed of ninety percent nylon and ten percent lycra or spandex, combining shine and stretch to make a sturdy material that provided support. Straight-as-an-arrow off the body but spectacularly full of life when worn, the two-pocket, zip front pant became the ubiquitous figure-revealing garment of the late 1970s, leaving a woman looking as if she had been dipped in any vibrant colour of the rainbow: gold, electric blue, pink, red, green, orange, brown, white, burgundy or black.

As its popularity grew, other brands produced 'body-beautiful' [32] versions of the sought after trouser. Le Gambi, Michi, TA, Jean St. Germain, DBA for Bojangles and Bojeangle's Skin Ease were the most popular makers besides Frederick's of Hollywood. Other brands followed suit, producing spandex and lycra pants in addition to their own designs. Danskin had their popular 'Pantskins,' Frangipani of California created a line of 'Franiskins,' Gilda-Santa Monica made 'Flexatard Body Designs,' and jean companies such as Sassoon and Chemin de Fer also came out with clinging stretch trousers. With an overwhelming variety of companies manufacturing the garments, they were readily available to women everywhere, allowing them to make daring statements from the waist down in snug but comfortable second skin stretch materials.

5. Spandex and Sleaze: The Sexualized Disco Era

The skin-tight spandex pant made a woman shine as she lived out her wildest fantasies in the dark shadows and colourful lights of the discotheque. Frederick Mellinger, whose aim was to 'glorify and re-glorify a woman's figure,'[33] had been producing various styles of these fantasies since 1957, selling them to women across America through his famous Frederick's of Hollywood catalogs. Styles like the 'Sizzler' 'Cock-O-the-Walk' and 'Wow!' [34] had names and looks with a

dynamic aura of brazen sexual confidence. This self-assurance could be found in the illustrations of women posing seductively on the pages of Frederick's of Hollywood catalogues through the 1950s, and into the sixties and seventies. However, it wasn't until the late seventies that the sexually confident woman, aware of herself and her body, made her entrance into the world of fashion.

With its high waist and conservative cut, not an inch of skin was revealed, but in its body-hugging fit it was a skin in itself, revealing every curve of the female figure. The disco spandex pant blurred the lines between demure, celebratory clothing and powerfully sensual women's garments. Before ultimately finding a home in the extravagant, glittering discos of the 1970s, the trouser was a daring public statement, primarily worn in the home for the pleasure of the woman and her man. Though confined to the private sphere, the pant 'brought together the pornographic with the everyday in a format geared toward female pleasure and autonomy.'[35] This injection of sexuality into everyday clothes through the use of new stretch fabrics as second skins, gave women a new sense of freedom in their dress and encouraged a focus on the body, eventually 'deconstructing the private-public division that … [had] worked to contain female sexuality within a traditional definition of home.'[36]

This new sense of freedom, elicited by body-focused styles, also had associations with the erotic and pornographic. 'Pornographic' was the precise word used by conservative New York newspapers to describe Frederick Mellinger's lingerie ads in the 1940s, leaving him to pursue his design interests in California where his undergarments found fans amongst actresses and showgirls. Though intended for the everyday woman and her general shaping needs, Mellinger's catalogues contained a palpable sexual aura that continued well into the late 1970s when his signature disco spandex pant was at the height of its popularity.

While worn primarily in dance clubs, the skin-tight pant had sleazy associations for many that regarded the ubiquitous spandex pant paired with a tube top to be a veritable 'bad girl' ensemble. This was revealed in what many critics of television shows like *Charlie's Angels* called the 'jiggle factor,' likening the three detectives in figure revealing outfits to prostitutes in the service of a 'pimp' named Charlie. In writer Judy Kutulas' examin-ation of popular culture and popular music in the 1970s, she discusses the role of females in 70s television as both 'independent women and sex objects.'[37] For women of the 1970s whose aim was to achieve new fashion independence through body revealing styles, the sexualized look that was a result became an unexpected issue of their new femininity.

The 'jiggle factor' extended to other females in pop culture, especially disco divas, whose tight, shiny trousers left little to the imagination. Kutulas notes the sexualized nature of the disco fashion scene with its promise of sexual liberation as little more than 'surface glitz,' and asserts that its sexy look was a bold contrast to 'work shirts and jeans,' the uniform of the women's movement. With this contrast, Kutulas says, disco clothing 'sartorially… rejected the women's movement.'[38]

The fashionable look of sex and 'surface glitz' was especially evident in fashion editorials of the period such as *Vogue*, whose magazine images realized by photographers such as Helmut Newton often bordered on 'soft porn,'[39] resulting in angry feedback and cancelled subscriptions from many of its more conservative readers. For editor Grace Mirabella the popularity of new body-bearing clothes presented a chance to put 'long repressed male fantasies on paper,' not liberate female readers.[40] Nonetheless, the elongated traipse of photographed women in motion wearing seductively skin-tight trousers signalled a change in sartorial norms, making it fashionable for one's lower half to be a zone of taut, suggestive, sex appeal. It may not have been the aim of *Vogue* to liberate its female readers, but while slinky, stretch textiles enveloped female bodies on the pages of glossy magazines, real American women either ignored or embraced the sensuality inherent in the clothes and wore them anyway- nylon covered spandex threads glistening under disco lights.

As the curve controlling girdles of the thirties and forties evolved into the second skin fit of lastex trousers in the fifties and sixties, by the 1970s, American women had vibrant, active lifestyles and celebrated their new freedom of movement with body-focused clothes that idealized a slim, trim, fit and healthy figure. Over time, this body conscious dressing moved slowly from the mail order catalogs of Frederick's of Hollywood to the creative sketches of the fashion world's most innovative designers of the decade. Giorgio Sant'Angelo focused on producing innerwear as outerwear in new stretch fabrics for a woman's freedom of movement calling them 'the only new thing that will happen in fashion.'[41] Halston, who felt that 'women should feel comfortable in something that supports the body,'[42] produced simple, timeless styles that followed the lines of a woman's figure with elegant, slim pants and stretch bodysuits.

The second skin quality of form-fitting trousers in new stretch fabrics such as lastex and spandex introduced entirely new ideas of the relationship of clothing to the body. With their attention grabbing shine the spandex pant of the 1970s called for less fuss and more motion in its fitted, streamlined look and four way stretch. It was the iconic, transformative costume of Sandy Olsson, as she shed her timid layers and said 'goodbye to Sandra Dee'[43] to become a modern, female sophisticate in black satin stretch trousers. Like was the case of Eve in the garden, her modernity demanded a second skin. A modern skin of shiny spandex has equipped the modern American woman with a sense of figure and a sense of self. 'Walking away, the body is seen outlined … waists, hips, the stride of a leg.'[44] A woman was not herself in her clothes, She was simply herself, and clothes were a part of her.

Notes

[1] R.D. Potter, 'Work for New Fabrics', *The Science News-Letter*, Vol. 37, No. 8, 1940, p. 125.

[2] Ibid., pp. 118 & 124.

[3] Ibid., p. 125.

[4] Ibid.

[5] C.E. Bess, 'Glamour Words (Sears, Roebuck and Montgomery Ward)', *American Speech*, Vol. 16, No. 2, 1940, p. 98.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid.

[8] L. Gottwald and J. Gottwald (eds), *Frederick's of Hollywood 1946-1973: 26 Years of Mail Order Seduction*, Drake, 1973.

[9] Ibid., p. 25.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid., p. 39.

[12] Ibid., p. 135.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid., p. 136.

[16] J. Lobenthal, *Radical Rags: Fashions of the Sixties*, Abbeville Press, 1990.

[17] Ibid., p. 219.

[18] Ibid., p. 220.

[19] S.J. Kadolph and A. Langford, *Textiles*, Prentice Hall, 1998.

[20] D. Coleman, 'Wild Child', *New York Magazine*, February 18, 2002.

[21] P. Mears, *Halston*, S. Bluttal (ed), Phaidon Press, 2001.

[22] E. Gross and F. Rottman, *Halston: An American Original*, HarperCollins, 1999.

[23] Ibid., p. 149.

[24] G. Mirabella (ed), *Vogue*, January 1977, p. 120.

[25] G. Mirabella (ed), *Vogue*, April 1977, p. 121.

[26] K. Madden, 'Vogue's View', *Vogue*, April 1979, p. 226.

[27] G. Mirabella (ed), *Vogue*, April 1979, p. 196.

[28] Ibid.

[29] A.T. Mazzola (ed), *Harper's Bazaar*, November 1978, p. 136.

[30] G. Mirabella (ed), *Vogue*, December 1977, p. 28.

[31] R. Galella, *Disco Years*, Powerhouse, 2006.

[32] G. Mirabella (ed), 'Vogue's View', *Vogue*, April 1979, p. 220.

[33] Gottwald and Gottwald, loc. cit., 1973.

[34] Ibid., p. 135.

[35] J. Juffer, 'A Pornographic Femininity? Telling and Selling Victoria's (Dirty) Secrets', *Social Text*, No. 48, Autumn, 1996, p. 31.

[36] Ibid.

[37] J. Kutulas, 'Women's Music from Carole King to the Disco Divas', *Disco Divas: Women and Popular Culture in the 1970s*, S.A. Inness (ed), Penn, 2003.
[38] Ibid., p. 188.
[39] G. Mirabella and J. Warren, *In and Out of Vogue*, Doubleday, 1995.
[40] Ibid.
[41] K. Madden, 'Vogue's View', *Vogue*, June 1979, p. 162.
[42] S. Rinard, 'Halston's Inner Thoughts', *Women's Wear Daily*, Vol. 135, No. 96, November 10, 1977, p. 20.
[43] W. Casey and J. Jacobs, 'Look At Me, I'm Sandra Dee (Reprise)', (Lyrics), *Grease*, Polydor/Umgd, 1978.
[44] G. Mirabella (ed), *Vogue*, January 1978, p. 95.

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Ericka Basile is a visual artist pursuing graduate studies at New York University's Costume Studies program in Visual Culture. Her clothing and textile research interests include early 20th century modernism, street style and the fashion/art interface.

Part 3:

Fashion Forward

Culture and Fashion: A Case Study on Greek Designer Yannis Tseklenis

Evangelia N. Georgitsoyanni and Sofia Pantouvaki

Abstract

This chapter provides the first critical presentation of the work of Greek designer Yannis Tseklenis (born 1937) in textile and fashion design, with respect to the history of contemporary Greek art and culture. Yannis Tseklenis is recognised today as the leading Greek fashion designer of the second half of the 20th century. He is also considered to be the artist and businessman who introduced Greek fashion to the contemporary international fashion world. Over the course of his fashion design career (1965-1991), his textile and fashion collections were on sale in leading stores in more than 30 countries. Moreover, he organised the first group fashion shows in Greece (1970), he was the first Greek designer to open permanent showrooms in London and New York (1973) and the largest exporter of fashion in Greece. However, Tseklenis' more important contribution lay in the way he drew inspiration from local, Greek or world cultural styles, which he developed for fashion in his textile patterns. Furthermore, Tseklenis introduced theme fashion, by choosing specific themes for his fashion lines from different art periods, such as Greek history and folk art (i.e. Aegean art, ancient Greek vases, Byzantine art, etc.) and international art history (i.e. Russian art, African art, the Persian tapestries, etc.), as well as from painters' works, such as the Impressionists and El Greco. In addition, in 1983 he collaborated closely with Greek contemporary painter Yannis Gaitis to co-create the collection 'Tseklenis from Gaitis', a fashion line designed by Tseklenis based on the painter's style and drawings. This article gives a detailed chronology of Tseklenis' life, while also providing an account of his numerous - approximately 50 - thematic fashion collections, presented between 1965 and 1991. This study also aims to identify the characteristics of Yannis Tseklenis' work in fashion and textiles and to evaluate his contribution from a historical, an artistic/aesthetic and a cultural perspective.

Key Words: Tseklenis, fashion, textiles, Greece, design, culture.

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1. Yannis Tseklenis: Biographical Notes

Yannis Tseklenis, born in Athens in 1937, is recognised today as the leading Greek designer of textiles for fashion and fashion garments of the second half of the 20th century. He is also considered to be the artist and businessman who introduced Greek fashion to the contemporary international fashion world.[1]

Tseklenis was employed in his family couture-textile retail business from a very early age, since 1956, at the age of nineteen, while also pursuing his favourite

artistic activity, painting.[2] At the age of 24 he established his own advertising company, Spectra Advertising, through which he designed the campaigns of important Greek and international companies, such as Metaxas, Aegean Mills and General Motors, to name a few. At the same time, he was also involved in interior design and decoration and twice decorated the Athens Cathedral for the Royal weddings of Princess Sofia of Greece to Juan Carlos of Spain (1962) and Princess Anna Maria of Denmark to the then King of Greece Constantine (1964).

In 1965, at the age of 28, he became the owner of the family textile business and started printing his own textile designs. During the same year, he presented his work at the first Mediterranean Fashion Festival, while also collaborating with Greek fashion designer Dimis Kritsas, together with whom he presented their creations – garments designed by Kritsas, fabrics by Tseklenis – in New York, under the aegis of the Greek National Tourism Organisation. The success of Tseklenis' textile patterns was evident in the rave reviews they received: 'The clothes are cut simply; the excitement is in the fabric' writes *Newsday* fashion editor Betty Ommerman,[3] while Bernadine Morris comments in *The New York Times* that 'many of the clothes achieve their distinction from Mr. Tseklenis' prints, which look like modern abstractions but are derived from such ancient sources as a Minoan octopus and a Corinthian vase'.[4] These reviews motivated the young designer to proceed to make his own fashion proposals the very next year.

This event marks the beginning of Yannis Tseklenis' international design career in fashion textiles and garments, which lasted from 1965 until 1991. It is astonishing how, through this early success, in which he invested a great deal of his personal assets,[5] Tseklenis was able to make an astonishing debut on the US market, designing fabrics for Elizabeth Arden Couture of New York as early as in 1965. His early professional achievements include: the licensing of his prints to the US firm Puritan Fashions Corporation (1966), the licensing of his printed dress designs to Berketex UK (1968) and to David Crystal Inc. in the US (1969), while American Celanese employed him to design for 10 k nitting manufacturers in Germany (1968). Later, he also licensed his ladies' dresses to Frank Usher, UK (1970), his hosiery designs to Berkshire Hellas (1969) and to Madison S.A. (1970), and his swimwear to Benger Ribana in Germany.

In Greece, he establishes the Tseklenis chain of fashion boutiques in 1967, followed by a small garment manufacturing operation in Athens (1968), while, in 1969, he was the first to design a collection of menswear in Greece, to be primarily included in his Tseklenis boutiques. There were 9 Tseklenis Fashion Boutiques in Greece by 1976, situated in Athens, Mykonos, Hydra and Crete and elsewhere, while he also ran boutique shops on cruise ships and at the Caravel Hotel in Athens (1975). In 1971, he also opened Tseklenis Boutiques in Beirut and Kuwait, to be followed by one more in Riyad.

In 1970, he contributed largely and passionately to the organisation of the first group fashion shows in Athens; these events presented Greek fashion design to the

world press with great success. Today Tseklenis says that he had always believed that Modern Greek fashion could be inspired by Greek art and tradition, thus becoming a means for the promotion of Greek culture abroad.[6]

In 1972, he established 'Tseklenis Manufacturing Ltd.' in Athens and two years later, in 1974, he inaugurated a large and ultra-modern Tseklenis manufacturing plant. Tseklenis Manufacturing became the exclusive producer of all his products, as he withdrew all licensing of his creations previously given to foreign companies, making him the designer, manufacturer and retailer of his own designs.

Tseklenis was the first Greek designer to open permanent showrooms in London, New York and Osaka (1973) and also the largest supplier of Greek fashion to top stores in the UK and the US. In 1975, Tseklenis creations could be found in 24 countries: Canada, the US, the UK, Ireland, Denmark, Austria, Portugal, the Netherlands, Belgium, West Germany, Switzerland, Japan, Cyprus, Australia, Singapore, Thailand, Hong Kong, Lebanon, Kuwait, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, South Africa and New Guinea. In 1976, he presented a Persian-inspired collection in Iran and expanded the collaboration of his firm with Iranian companies.

In 1975, Tseklenis was diagnosed with melanoma and underwent surgery for the first time. In 1977, he was admitted to Memorial Hospital in New York, where his left arm was amputated in order to prevent a reoccurrence of the cancer. Two weeks later, he was back at work and a month later was even driving again.

During the same year, Tseklenis began to collaborate with Greece's largest department stores, Minion S.A., for which he designed school wear, while also working with the International Management Group, which launched a promotional licensing project of Tseklenis garments abroad. In August 1977, a long series of problems with the Hellenic banking system resulted in the closing of his entire operation in Greece, including his factory, the showrooms and the Tseklenis boutiques chain. This also meant the interruption of exports of Greek products to 24 countries, since Tseklenis was the biggest exporter of fashion in Greece.

He then moved to New York, where the International Management Group represented him thereafter internationally, while he collaborated as a designer for American and Asian firms for a few years. A year later, in 1978, the absence of the Tseklenis firm from the Greek industry and market became a socioeconomic issue in Greece, and thus Tseklenis was offered acceptable terms to return and to reactivate his operation.

1979 marked the beginning of the second phase of Tseklenis' activities based in Greece, and the designer collaborated with Minion S.A. to establish 'Tseklenis International Fashion Enterprises' through which he launched Ladies and Menswear, Accessories, Body wear, Action-Sportswear and Linens. Furthermore, the Hellenic Ministry of Industry appointed him to organise and head the 'Hellenic Design Centre' for two years, an institution offering Greek designs to manufacturers, thus encouraging Greek creations. In 1980 and 1981, he made a

comeback on the US and UK markets, respectively, opened a new showroom on Fifth Avenue and began selling to top UK stores again. The following year, he collaborated with the Thessaloniki Trade Fair on the organisation of the Hellenic Collections in September 1982, and two years later he opened four new boutiques in Greece.

However, since he realised that fashion production was gradually fading on the Greek market, he stopped exporting garments in 1988. In 1990, he decided to conclude his career in fashion.

Apart from designing fashion textiles and garments, Tseklenis designed uniforms for a series of clients in Greece and abroad: stewardesses' uniforms for Olympic Airways (1971, when Olympic Airways was still owned by Onassis), uniforms for the Pisteos and Postal Savings banks in Greece, uniforms for Kuwait Airways and Air Malta (1974), uniforms for the Municipal and the Hellenic Police (1984) as well as uniforms for the Hellenic Railways, the Hellenic Festivals and the Hellenic Duty Free Shops staff (1993-94). Work wear was the main type of clothing that Tseklenis still designed after the conclusion of his powerful fashion career; for example, he designed the uniforms for the staff of the Athens trolleys (1998), the staff uniforms for the Grande Bretagne Hotel in Athens and Meliton Hotel in Porto Carras, Halkidiki (2003), new military uniforms for the officers and soldiers of the Hellenic Army (2005) as well as a collection of work clothing which he designed to be manufactured in China, launched on the international market under the label 'Tseklenis Ergon' (2005).

Tseklenis also applied his design style to a series of products launched with his signature, such as collections of interior design / furniture fabrics (since 1971), wall and floor tiles (1984), bed sheets (1984), household objects such as plates, platters and candlesticks (1989), and a complete line of table ceramics / ceramic tableware (1990), while he also launched 'Nymph' and 'Pan', fragrances for women and men, respectively (1988).

In 1991, Tseklenis decided to resign from the fashion business, and in 1997 he donated his entire collection of original garments from most of his 1970's and 80's fashion lines, as well as his entire photographic archive, to the Peloponnesian Folklore Foundation (PFF) in Greece.[7]

Since 1992, Tseklenis has become more active in interior and environmental design and is the artistic director of a series of hotel complexes as well as a few restaurants. Most recently, Tseklenis has been designing and supervising the restoration of landmark buildings in the area of Metaxourgeio in downtown Athens, an up and coming historical neighbourhood.

Tseklenis has also designed the interiors of cars (i.e. Fiat 126 Personal in 1979) and later became active in the design of the interiors of public transport vehicles, such as those of the Olympic Airways aircraft fleet (1988), the interior and exterior of several types of trains and buses for the Hellenic Railways Organisation (OSE, 1996), the buses and trolleys of the city of Athens (1998), the new suburban trains

of OSE (1999) as well as the new fleet of natural gas-powered buses in Athens (2000).

Tseklenis' spirit, combined with his talent for advertising and marketing and his experience in business administration, resulted in successful professional choices, which introduced his designs worldwide. Today, Tseklenis is considered a pioneer in Greece for having adopted and applied the contemporary methods of franchising and licensing. Moreover, he is the first Greek designer to have designed his own fabrics for fashion and the first fashion designer in Greece to create complete collections of menswear and clothing for children.

2. Culture and Fashion: A Short Review of Yannis Tseklenis' Design Work in Fashion and Fashion Textiles

Tseklenis notes that from the beginning of his career, he never intended to design haute couture garments, but clothing that would be worn by everyone, because this was his greatest source of satisfaction.[8] When he is asked about the influence of Greek culture and tradition, Tseklenis remarks that he has always been influenced by Greek tradition, but not folklore. Today he says:

> I used Greek tradition a lot; actually, in the first article of *The New York Times* on my work during my collaboration with Kritsas, when I was asked 'What do you do in your collections', I answered, 'I use three thousand years of history'; by this, I meant 'of civilisation'.[9]

The emphasis on Greek culture is evident in both the themes of the designs for many of his collections and his choices regarding the artistic direction of the presentation of his collections in shows, in photographs and in films.[10] The fashion photographs for his new collections were very often presented with impressive Greek backgrounds or against backgrounds inspired by Greek themes, environment and culture, even if the theme of a specific collection was not necessarily Greek. Thus Tseklenis intended to create a feeling of Greek-inspired fashion, which for many years made a strong impression on the international market. The background of his fashion collection photographs very often featured Greek nature (fields with Mediterranean vegetation, pine tree forests and rocks by the sea), the ocean, seashores and beaches, characteristic aspects of Greek architecture, such as white houses from the Aegean islands, white island churches or stone-built mainland churches, ports, boats and Greek sailors, as well as urban symbols such as the Acropolis, the Herod Atticus Odeon, the Doric inspired columns of the National Archaeological Museum and neoclassical Greek cafés. However, in order to promote other themes of his collections, as art director he sometimes made cultural choices relevant to those themes, such as the collaboration with black models

against strong dark solid colour backgrounds for the presentation of his *Voodoo* collection.

In 1972, Yannis Tseklenis' name was included in the *Encyclopaedia of 20th century Men's Fashion* by Esquire as one of the most important designers of the 20th century;[11] while art director Jean-Paul Goude presents his work (inspired by the Impressionists) in Esquire in June 1972.

Tseklenis' creations were characterised by his original textile designs. In most of his interviews, Tseklenis left no doubt that his main interest was in fabric; in 1967 he said to *The New York Times* editor Enid Nemy: 'The collection is based on the design of the fabric; I take a basic shape and work on the print'.[12] This gave him the opportunity to create a personal style, very original and unique, as he created his own materials. The form was almost a secondary decision as the impression was always on the fabric.

Furthermore, in his career in fashion between 1965 and 1991, Tseklenis made a name for himself in the international fashion market for designing thematic textile and fashion collections. Tseklenis' most important contribution lay in the way he drew inspiration from local, Greek or world cultural styles, which he developed in his textile patterns for fashion. He most probably believed in the power of focusing on a specific theme, which gave to his collections a clear style and identity, preferably connecting to the trends – in colour and in subject – of each time. In his early years, he was focused on Greek culture and art, while later he also developed collections inspired by the history of art and the cultural characteristics of many different countries on all continents. He also developed themes based on global socio-political tendencies and fashions, such as ecology. In general, he aimed to change his themes regularly, every six months, so that each collection looked 'different than the one before'.[13]

His thematic fashion collections can be divided into the following main categories, according to their subject: a) themes inspired by specific periods of Greek art history and folk art (i.e. Aegean art, ancient Greek vases, Macedonian Mosaics, Byzantine art, Greek woodcarving, etc.); b) themes inspired by world cultural traditions or by historical civilisations and their artistic tradition (i.e. Russian art, African art, Persian tapestries, etc.); c) themes based on the work of specific artists (i.e. Paul Poiret, the Impressionists, Henri Rousseau and El Greco); and d) themes inspired by nature (waves, flowers, birds, insects, etc.).

The list of his thematic fashion collections is as follows:

> *Waves & Abstracts* (1966), *Mosaics & Minoan* (1967), *Phoenician Birds* (1967-68), *Omar Khayyam* (1968), *Heraldics* (1969), *Vase Look* (Ancient Greek vases - 1970), *Byzantium* (Byzantine Manuscripts – 1970-71), *Voodoo* (1971), *Impressionists* (1971-72), *Insects* (1972), *Czars* (1972-73), *Cartoons & Waves* (1973), *Woodcarvings* (Greek woodcarving

and paintings – 1973-74), *Boats & Sunshine* (1974), *Paul Poiret* (1975), *Persepolis* (1975-76), *Birds* (1976), *Chinese lacquers* (1976-77), *Omar Khayyam II* (1977), *El Greco* (1978), *Roses & Other Animals* (1979), *Black & Gems* (1979-80), *Aegean Polychromies* (1980), *Textures* (1980-81), *Orchids* (1981), *Macedonian Mosaics* (1981-82), *Sahara* (1982), *Vergina* (1982-83), *Gaitis* (1983), *Byzantine Naïf* (1983), *Unicorns* (1983-84), *African Fruits* (1984), *China II* (1984-85), *Aegean Whites* (1985), *Amazones & Persian Carpets* (1985-86), *Henri Rousseau* (1986), *Gas Factory* (1986-87), *Vases Remake* (1987), *Heraldics II* (1988), *Bengale Tigers* (1989), *Waves, Cartoons & Insects Remake* (1990-91).[14]

3. Art History Depicted in Yannis Tseklenis' Textile Designs for Fashion

Tseklenis' main source of inspiration for his fashion textiles has been art and particularly painting. In order to develop his designs, he usually worked on specific images, which he elaborated into textile designs from different perspectives. Therefore, he developed the following styles.

1. Realistic representation of the given theme; 2. Stylised recreation of the given theme; 3. Enlargements or blow-ups of one section or theme, of certain forms or of an individual detail of the specific image on a larger scale; 4. Abstract re-designing of the image; 5. Repetition and synthesis of a specific detail until it becomes a motif; 6. Use of colours from within the given image in a new composition, i.e. in stripes; 7. Use of one colour deriving from the given image in a monochromatic/solid-colour garment.

Several examples can be used to demonstrate these approaches. In 1978, while living in the United States, Tseklenis worked on his collection 'My Report to Greco',[15] inspired by the work of the Cretan-born Greek painter Domenico Theotocopoulos / El Greco (1541-1614).[16] The specific image which he used was El Greco's most famous painting *The Burial of Count Orgaz* (*El Entierro de Conde Orgaz,* 1586-1588), commissioned for the parish church of Santo Tomé in Toledo. The painting illustrates a popular local legend, according to which the Count of Orgaz willed a certain amount of money to the church of Santo Tomé, where he had elected to be buried; at the time of his burial, Saint Stephen and Saint Augustine themselves 'descended from heaven and buried him in front of the dazzled eyes of those present'.[17] The painting is clearly divided into two zones, the heavenly above, which is quite abstract, and the terrestrial below, where El Greco reproduced the appearances of persons and objects, the two brought together compositionally.[18]

In his textile designs for the 'Report to Greco' collection,[19] Tseklenis used: a) an abstract reproduction of parts of the painting, some of which focused on the hands; b) a repetition of small details of the painting as motifs for a smooth fabric

pattern (i.e. a detail of the fabric from the Saint's costume as well as the heads of the central figures of Toledan gentlemen, see Fig. 1a: detail from the painting, Fig. 1b: the textile design); c) a similar repetition of the artist's signature, which becomes a motif on two different scales with complimentary/ composed backgrounds. Some of the garments designed by Tseklenis combined a solid-colour item with a complex printed one. He was also influenced by the colour harmony of the painting, which he reproduced in a more contemporary and bolder colour scheme. Finally, Tseklenis also based one of his garments on the form of the hooded mantle worn by a figure to the far left of the painting, thus creating the sensation of soft velvet over garment. Tseklenis describes this work of his as 'a study of drawing and colour',[20] for which he used seven different motifs from the painting, as well as the whole painting, which he transformed into an abstract textile design.

Fig. 1a   **Fig. 1b:** Tseklenis collection, PFF.

In 1983, Tseklenis collaborated closely with contemporary Greek painter Yannis Gaitis (1923-1984)[21] to co-create the 'Tseklenis from Gaitis' collection (Fig. 2a), a fashion line designed by Tseklenis based on the painter's style and drawings. From about 1968 until his death in 1984, Yannis Gaitis focused his painting onto the stylized male figure, the 'little people', a kind of 'homunculus' which he introduced as a symbol of the alienation of modern man, of the contemporary loss of personal identity, of mass production, mass culture and classification. Tseklenis remarks that, in 1982, when Gaitis and he embarked on this collaboration, George Orwell's *1984* was very much in fashion, when people all over the world were worried about the industrialisation of mankind and life.[22] Those linear, geometrical figures were characteristic of Gaitis' artistic expression and were used both in his paintings and in his three-dimensional installations. Tseklenis collaborated with Gaitis, who created new paintings exclusively for this fashion collection. The patterns of the fabrics either reproduce the painter's images and themes or develop stylised and geometrical motifs (heads, hats, etc., see Fig. 2b) with great emphasis on repetition, as depicted in the visual artist's work as well. Other patterns show simplified geometrical stylisation of the main, linear, forms included in the drawings in black and white. This collection consists of

dresses, blouses, scarves and bathing suits, and puts great emphasis on the design of the material, while less attention is paid to the originality of the forms of the garments.

Fig. 2a: Tseklenis collection, PFF   *Fig. 2b*: Tseklenis collection, PFF.

Another interesting example is that of Tseklenis' thematic collection based on the paintings of Henri Julien Rousseau (1844-1910), the French post-impressionist painter in the naïve or primitive manner. In this collection, Tseklenis mainly elaborated on larger parts of the artist's paintings, particularly the jungle plantation that Rousseau depicts in several of his works (see Fig. 3a, 3b). These dynamic leaves and branches become the main theme of the collection, using different colour schemes. There is also a variation based on the painting 'Fight Between a Tiger and a B uffalo' reproduced in a stylised way. Another subject used by Tseklenis for textile designs is flags, which can be identified in the background of Rousseau's self-portrait in a landscape with a ship with various coloured flags at the back. With respect to this thematic collection created in 1986, Tseklenis tells us that his presentation coincided with a large exhibition of Rousseau's paintings in the Paris Grand Palais, and later at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, due to which he was lucky to receive great publicity; he describes this collection as his last one based on art, and also as a farewell to the US market.[23]

Fig. 3a: Surprised! Rousseau, 1891.   *Fig. 3b*: Tseklenis collection, PFF.

4. Epilogue

   Tseklenis' textile and fashion creations from Greece were introduced in the 1960's, 70's and 80's by the leading stores world-wide in more than 30 countries. His great success was mainly due to the thematic collections he chose, cleverly launched and often connected to timely subjects and supported by effective marketing techniques. However, Tseklenis' uniqueness lies above all in the innovative designs that he introduced with his bold fashion textiles; in his words, 'this is the reason why I rippled the surface of the lake'.[24] The review of Tseklenis' work portrays him as a strong, hardworking and clever visionary, who has always, until today, passionately defended his new design and business ideas.

Notes

[1] An extensive number of articles and press releases on Tseklenis' work by the international press were published by journalist Sandy Tsantaki with Tseklenis' own supervision; see S. Tsantaki, *Tseklenis Scrapbook*, Peloponnesian Folklore Foundation, Nauplion, 1999.

[2] For the biographical notes the authors consulted Tseklenis' CV (typescript and given to the authors for the purposes of this chapter) as well as his own narration as in the interview to Sofia Pantouvaki, 6 August 2009.

[3] See article: 'Greek Designer Introduces His Collection', *Newsday*, Tuesday, December 21, 1965, p. 79.

[4] See *Tseklenis' Scapbook*, op. cit., p. 4.

[5] Interview of Yannis Tseklenis to Sofia Pantouvaki, 6 August 2009.

[6] Ibid.

[7] http://www.pli.gr/index.php?option=com_content&task=12&Itemid, Accessed on 8 September 2009.

[8] See I. Petropoulos and Y. Tseklenis, 'Hellenic and International Fashion in Contemporary Times' (in Greek), *Archaiologia kai Technes*, Vol. 84, September 2002, p. 54.

[9] Ibid.

[10] In the early 1970's, Tseklenis was a pioneer also in the creation of films on 35mm, showing his fashion designs under his art direction, usually annotated as 'a film by Yannis Tseklenis featuring his collection …'. In 1979, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York acquired Tseklenis' fashion films for the Museum's Film Library which today belongs to the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA). See Interview of Y. Tseklenis to S. Pantouvaki, loc. cit.

[11] O.E. Schoeffler and W. Gale, *Esquire's Encyclopaedia of 20th Century Men's Fashions*, McGraw-Hill, New York, 1973.

[12] See E. Nemy, 'Vibrancy of Prints Intrigues Designer', *The New York Times*, December 1, 1967.

[13] Tseklenis' words in his interview to Bernadine Morris for the article 'Art-Inspired Reproductions That You can Wear to Dinner', *The New York Times*, July 9, 1971.

[14] Source: *Tseklenis* DVD-ROM, Peloponnesian Folklore Foundation, 1999; and Tseklenis' CV, op. cit.

[15] The title refers to Cretan writer Nikos Kazantzakis' novel *Report to Greco*, containing both autobiographical and fictional elements, and summing up his philosophy as 'The Cretan Glance'.

[16] See M. Lambraki-Plaka, *El Greco: The Greek*, Kastaniotis, Athens, 1999.

[17] See 'The Burial of Count Orgaz', http://www.mlahanas.de/Greeks/NewArts/TheBurialOfCountOrgaz.html, Accessed on 8 September 2009.

[18] Ibid., Also viewed on 19 September 2009.

[19] Tseklenis' garments from the Peloponnesian Folklore Foundation (PFF) collection were photographed by Sofia Pantouvaki with permission from PFF, http://www.pli.gr.

[20] See Petropoulos and Tseklenis, op. cit., p. 56.

[21] For further info on Gaitis' work, see the exhibition catalogue *Yannis Gaitis*, National Gallery & Alexandros Soutzos Museum, Athens, 1984.

[22] Petropoulos and Tseklenis, op. cit., pp. 56-57.

[23] Ibid., p. 57.

[24] See Tsantaki, *Tseklenis' Scrapbook*, op. cit., p. 2.

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Evangelia N. Georgitsoyanni is an Associate Professor of History of Art and Civilisation and Chair of the Department of Home Economics and Ecology at the Harokopion University of Athens.

Sofia Pantouvaki is a freelance scenographer and researcher. She holds a PhD in Scenography from the University of the Arts London, and teaches at the Department of Theatre Studies of the University of the Peloponnese in Greece.

From Cameron to Convergence: Photo-Narrative with Fantasy and Role-Play

Sarah Hand

Abstract
Tzvetan Todorov was the first scholar to apply structural analysis to the category of *fantasy* and thereby liberating it f rom historical, psychological or literary associations. His seminal book: *A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre I (l973)* focuses on the text itself from which he extracted elements that constitute the fantastic and the marvellous; 'According to Todorov, the purely fantastic text establishes absolute hesitation in protagonist and reader: they can neither come to terms with the unfamiliar events described, nor dismiss them as supernatural phenomena.' (Jackson, l998: 27). The sense of incredulity that under-pins our experience of fantasy is the perspective from which I will begin to analysing some of the work of Julia Margaret Cameron (1815-1879), in which fantasy frequently took centre stage. Cameron draped her models in swathes of cloth to accentuate their appearance as mythical, literary and biblical characters. The combination of photography with 'role-play' creates visual fantasy. Within this dual perspective the chapter will discuss the work of Cameron, Eleanor Antin, Cecil Beaton, Madame Yevonde, Melanie Pullen, Anna Gaskell, Miwa Yanagi and David La Chapelle. Current digital innovation is opening up new approaches and possibilities, which are pushing the boundaries of fantasy fashion imagery. My own photographic practice currently involves the use of convergent media through which I produce photographs incorporating fashion, fantasy and role-play. Convergent media refers to a combination of digital projections created by vector graphics, photographic stills and live and pre-recorded video, all of which are sonically activated. From Cameron to Convergence, fashion continues to be a fundamental signifier of fantasy photo-narrative.

Key Words: Photography, fashion, narrative, fantasy, role-play, new media convergence.

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Although literature is the primary medium of fantasy genre, more recently mediums such as theatre, performance, fine art, film and photography have developed new approaches to visualising fantasy. Fashion as a signifier of fantasy in a photographic context is the subject of this chapter.

In his seminal book, *The Fantastic, A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, Tzvetan Todorov describes fantasy as being that which occupies the duration of uncertainty, and the relationship between the real and the imagined. He states that:

> There is an uncanny phenomenon which we can explain in two
> fashions, by types of natural causes and supernatural causes. The
> possibility of a hesitation between the two creates the fantastic
> effect.[1]

Historically, fantasy has found expression through fairytale, mythology and allegory. Costume and masquerade have played a significant part in helping us to identify with icons, role models and characters in these genres. The subsequent associations we make with these signifiers form the basis of our personal fantasy role-play.

The photographers discussed in this chapter construct photographic fantasy narratives using fashion as the character signifier. Their work is themed around the concepts of the fantastic. Fashion is an integral part of their work in that it affords an affinity and a familiarity, albeit fantastical, in an otherwise hyper-reality. Invariably it is the costume and dress within the image with which the viewer makes the first intuitive and cognitive associations. Combining role-play with the visual nature of photography creates fantasy imagery. Therefore, this chapter will discuss photography from this dual perspective with the focus being on fantasy costume. Referring to the correlation between costume and role-play, Roland Barthes remarks that the history of dress did not develop until the times of early Romanticism,

> It is because actors wanted to play their roles in the clothes of the
> period that painters and designers began to strive systematically
> towards historical accuracy in appearances (clothing, sets,
> furniture and props), in short that denoted precisely by the term
> 'costume'. So what was beginning to be reconstituted here was
> essentially *roles*, and the reality being sought was a purely
> theatrical one: myths such as kings, queens and lords were being
> openly reconstituted.[2]

The pioneering Victorian photographer Julia Margaret Cameron (1815-1879) was one of the first photographers to explore fantasy through fashion and role-play. Recent technological developments, particularly those relating to convergent media, have enabled photographers to create ever more complex relationships between fashion, role-play and fantasy. My work in this genre uses convergent media and involves themed role-play fantasies derived from contemporised myths and legends that are constructed using actors and digital projections reshaped by sonic triggers.

1. Julia Margaret Cameron

It is a sense of the incredulous that under-pins our experience of fantasy and this is the perspective from which we can analyse those photographs by Cameron in which fantasy took centre stage. Cameron draped her models in swathes of cloth thus accentuating their appearance as mythical, literary and biblical characters. In 1874 Cameron produced a set of photographic illustrations for Alfred Lord Tennyson's interpretation of the story of King Arthur, *Idylls of the King*, (1874) based on Malory's *Morte D'Arthur* (1835). She created a series of *tableaux vivant* using static costumed figures to represent scenes from key moments in legends.

Costume provided the central means by which these fantasy images were recognised. Cameron utilised costume in its simplest form. Clothing, swathes and drapes of fabric were used to signify the context of many of her images along with minimal use of props and simplified settings. Little, if any attention was paid to the backdrops and scenery, which often consisted of drapes of fabric hung up in the converted glasshouse that doubled as her studio. Many of the photographs were taken in and around the garden of her home on the Isle of Wight. She transformed her domestic servant girls into May Queens and Madonnas, stripping them of their Victorian attire in exchange for floaty tucked and pinned fabrics, Romanesque gathers and loose flowing hair reminiscent of Pre-Raphaelite painting.

Cameron paid meticulous attention to the facial and physical expressions of her sitters, which she accentuated by simplifying the overall composition. T his combination, along with her pioneering use of soft focus, which added a dreamlike quality to her compositions, created the reminiscently evocative fantasy narrative found in her work. Cameron's contemporaries criticised the 'so-called' technique of soft focus, which she was perfecting at an early point in the development of photography. They considered it to be an inadequacy and questioned her professionalism. Cameron dismissed these allegations as insignificant and unsubstantiated. Looking at her work now it is evident that she used the technique to evoke the dreamlike quality that she admired in Pre-Raphaelite painting and to distinguish her work from the classically focused portraiture of the day.

Role-play was an integral part of her enacted charades as the models strove to hold expressions and poses in character during the lengthy and laborious exposures. The titles of Cameron's photographs reflect her intention to make biblical, allegoric and mythical images. Titles such as *The Parting of Sir Lancelot and Guinevere, The Passing of Arthur, King Lear Allotting his Kingdom to his daughters, Gretchen at the Alter of the Virgin and Mary Hillier as Madonna.*

The nostalgic narrative aspect of her work was established through this intriguing combination of costume, expression and title, each of which was used in its most uncomplicated form.

A Pre-Raphaelite Study (1870)

Mary Hillier as Madonna (1865)

*The Parting of Sir Lancelot
and Guinevere* (1874)

*Gretchen (Margaret) at
the Alter of the Virgin* (1874)

2. Eleanor Antin

Conceptual photographer and film-maker Eleanor Antin's use of costume adds a fantasy dimension to her lavish reconstructions of Roman stage sets, reminiscent of Alma Tadema paintings. Like Cameron 140 years previously, she too creates fantasy *tableaux vivant* through photography using a combination of costume and role-play. Antin has been working in this way for nearly 40 years producing ambitiously staged large-scale photography, engaging in historical narrative that allows her to indulge in her own fantasies. Her work concerns identity, alter egos and the adoption of new personas. Referring to the series *The Last Days of Pompeii* Antin states,

> Part of the fascination is Rome itself. Every century has reinvented her in the light of its own desires, fears and lies. I am

excavating a Pompeii of my own invention in which beautiful, affluent people live the good life, innocent of the disasters waiting just round the corner.[3]

Fundamental to Antin's fantasy narrative is fashion. Her models act out costume dramas in spectacular staged settings, constructed out of a mixture of the old and the new to give an historical yet contemporary feel. In some instances this mixture is used to add an element of humour to the fateful scenes that evoke the kind of presentiment often associated with film stills. *The Tourists*, 2007,[4] is a series depicting two individual personas of Helen of Troy who appear to be wandering to a shopping mall or to a beach. They wear sunglasses and carry modern baskets as they saunter along whimsically disregarding the tragedy surrounding them. Their simple brightly coloured floaty dresses and their cheery dispositions are in stark contrast to the blood-spattered half-naked Trojan warriors that they pass by.

There is added irony and humour in her choice of title for this piece reflective of the way that tourists are visitors in time and space but only consume the veneer of the locations they visit. To reiterate this point, Antin employs a certain degree of artistic licence by not sticking faithfully to historical costume, thus encouraging the viewer to see beyond the obvious and consider both the historical and the contemporary ramifications in her work. In comparison Cameron's photographs wholly empathised with the historical moment even though she too did not attempt to replicate historical costume preferring instead the creative use of available dress.

Antin's settings, although more lavish than Cameron's, still rely on costume to supply narrative context and to demonstrate that they are historical fantasies re-enacted on a contemporary stage. Antin's experience as a filmmaker enables her to apply similar directing techniques to the production of her tableaux narratives.

3. Anna Gaskell and Miwa Yanagi

Following on from the mythological and historically influenced photo-narratives of Julia Margaret Cameron and Eleanor Antin, fairy tale provides the underpinning narrative in the work of Anna Gaskell and Miwa Yanagi. Yanagi's large-scale Fairy Tale series *The Incredible Tale of the Innocent Old Lady and the Heartless Young Girl* are a mixture of archetypal myth and film noir.[5] Although the content of the imagery does not rely as heavily on costume, due to the integral styling of each character, the protagonists are instantly recognisable in the way they portray the sinister side of classic fairy tales.

Yanagi's staged settings compare with the complexity of Antin's *Roman Allegories* in the way they facilitate and contextualise the narrative. In contrast, the simplicity of Gaskell's series *Wonder*,[6] compares to that of Cameron's, in that they rely on the use of costume along with facial and physical expression to convey

narrative. Yanagi's and Gaskell's photo-narratives are similar to one another in that they depict the sinister and eerie aspects of fairy tale.

Like Cameron and Antin, both practitioners have adopted the technique of photo-narrative tableau and it is clearly apparent as to which fairy tales they refer. Yanagi creates her re-enactments in black and white, whilst Gaskell employs the use of saturated colour. And yet the resulting images of both are equally as striking and disturbing. Gaskell clothes her teenage models with child-like simplicity, akin to the classic dress worn by Alice in Wonderland, with which we usually associate innocence. It is this choice of garment on an older *Alice* that adds sexual tension which prompts us to question the traditional perception of Lewis Carroll's *Alice*.

In a review for Artnet (1997) by art critic Robert Mahoney, referring to the choice of dress, writes that it 'is suggestive of the compromised innocence of the Virgin Mary. In Gaskell's photographs, in which young women are dressed as prepubescent girls, the sexuality of the sign is sublimated into the surroundings.' He continues,

> With breathtaking economy of means, Gaskell has transformed the Alice in Wonderland story into a touching coming-of-age drama, cool as a music video, as rich in performative ambiguity as Cindy Sherman's best works (though without her Gothic inflection) -- and as new as new art can feel.[7]

4. Cecil Beaton and Madame Yevonde

In a similar vein to Cameron in the 1860s, both Beaton and Yevonde began their careers in the 1930s by photographing eminent celebrities of the day. In contrast to Cameron, both specialised in producing portraits that glamorised and fantasised their subjects. Beaton also worked as a theatrical costume designer and this enabled him to develop creative synergies between theatre and photography. Like his personality his compositions were often flamboyant, and noted for their theatrical frivolity and sparkle.

In 1935, Yevonde turned to fantasy and role-play photography that relied heavily on fashion and fashion styling. Using the newly developed Vivex Colour Process from Colour Photography Limited she was one of the first to experiment with colour photography. She used this to heighten the sense of fantasy in her work. A themed party at which the guests dressed up as Roman and Greek Gods and Goddesses, inspired her most famous series of photographs. Yevonde recreated the theme at her studio where she photographed the guests individually in character. It was at this point she began to produce costume inspired images using the Vivex process to create her photo-narratives.

Paula Gellibrand Beaton 1928

Minerva, Mrs Michael Balcon
Yevonde 1935

5. Melanie Pullen

Narrative photographer Melanie Pullen embraces the idea of role-play in the truest sense of 'acting the part'. Her *High Fashion Crime Scenes* series was based on vintage crime scenes extracted from the Los Angeles Police department.[8] What she found most intriguing was the minute detail, which inspired her to re-enact and stage over 100 of the crime scenes into her own photographic narratives using *haute couture*. Challenged by the idea of incorporating fashion in a way that disguised and distracted from the horrific acts that had taken place, she literally reversed the ideals of the glamour of fashion photography. Many fashion houses including Chanel, Gucci and Prada lent garments to Pullen for the shoots.

Pullen's use of designer labels is noteworthy because they are recognisable and this clashes with the idea of the anonymity of the crime scene. The clothing becomes a central signifier that transforms the victim into a fashion model, thus changing our attitude towards the victim. The photographers discussed previously use costume to denote identity whereas Pullen uses it to subvert.

6. David La Chapelle

Fashion and costume are rich in cultural memories that can be dramatically reconfigured through styling to create new personas. Photo-narrative photographers juxtapose costume signifiers with other elements such as location, props and lighting to prompt our underlying memories thus guiding us through their narratives. David La Chapelle's work is a case in point. He is a photographer and film director who dynamically integrates cultural memories triggered by styling in to his work for the fashion industry. Every element previously discussed is present in his images, including fantasy and role-play with highly theatrical staged sets, alongside mythical and outrageous costume and fashion, together with narrative and a l arge degree of irony and humour. Like the *Wonder* series by Gaskell, La Chapelle uses striking dissident colours to give his fantasies an other-

worldly appearance. He makes no apologies for this unconventional approach in which he mixes myths and metaphors to create his own visual language, stating, 'My work is about making candy for the eyes. It's about grabbing your attention.'[9]

Although the principal identification factor in his work often depends on fashion, the settings and surrounding are of equal importance. In this sense his photographs compare with Antin's in their lavishness, richness and humour. What differentiates them is that La Chapelle often produces work in connection with the commercial fashion industry, whilst Antin creates narrative *tableau vivant* in a fine art context. Another factor that they share in common is that they both work with film. As a result their photographs often resemble film-stills that create tensions that suggest more complex stories of which the images are fragments.

Historical and mythological concepts are embedded into Antin's and La Chapelle's narratives.[10] And for both the incongruous use of fantasy dress is the unifying force transforming otherwise historical visual re-enactments and mythical tableaux into wild contemporary fairy tales.

7. Sarah Hand

As previously mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, my photographic practice involves themed fantasy and role-play contemporised via the use of convergent media. Convergent media in this instance refers to a combination of digital projections created by vector graphics, photographic stills and live and pre-recorded video, all of which are sonically activated. Themed fashion, fantasy and role-play is incorporated into this mix through the use of models who perform, dance or enact *tableaux vivant.* The enacted narratives are drawn from historical and contemporary sources such as Tristan and Isolde, Die Fledermaus, Walter Benjamin, See Emily Play, and Cosmic Seasons.

The sonic reshaping of the digital projections creates numerous mise-en-scène thematic variations, which then form the basis of the photographic image. This is a working method that I have named Convergent Photography. Currently it is involved in themes that rely heavily on the use of fashion to evoke cultural memories. These are created by costume and fabric used as a projection surface that responds to and interacts with continuously changing projections. The themes are further developed via performance, dance and role-play.

From the series: *Walter Benjamin* 2007

From the series: *Isolde* 2008

The Pied Piper 2009

The crossover between photo-narrative and fashion photography is both exciting and problematic. To a large extent fashion photography underpins consumerism, whereas costume incorporated into photography opens it up to a polysemic discourse. On the subject of fashion photography, Olivier Zham sees the fashion image as problematic drawing our attention to the fact that a fashion image 'is above all a co mmissioned image… a co ntrolled and controlling image.' He considers the fashion photograph to be 'a hybrid icon of the present 'majority of the output consists of industrial images devoid of any kind of sensibility or polysemy or meaning.'[11]

In contrast narrative photographers use fashion icons and costume references in ways that seek to transcend the ephemeral thus elevating the status of their work. Generally this involves conceptual thinking, theoretical underpinning and research informed ideas. Their use of narrative tableaux and role-play encourages us to make mental associations that trigger our creative imagination, thus differentiating their work from consumer-driven fashion photography.

Only a sample of photographers working with fashion and narrative has been discussed in this text. There are many more of significance. For example, Surrealist photography that was based on fashion images had a particular fascination with mannequins. From 1936 S alvador Dali collaborated with fashion designer Elsa Schiaparelli to create designs inspired by Dali paintings.

Through Schiaparelli and Dali's work, the body was refashioned by Surrealism and Surrealism subsumed into the cultural mainstream.[12]

Also worth noting are: world renowned commercial fantasy photographer Bettina Rheims, fantasy fashion designer and photographer Thierry Muglar, the carefully constructed fictionalised work of photographer Philip Lorca di Corcia, two Victorian narrative photographers - Oscar Gustave Rejlander and Henry Peach Robinson who worked with composite images and montage, Tom Hunter and Neil Folberg who create contemporary reconstructions of paintings by artists such as Vermeer and Renoir, Raoef Mamedov with his highly sensitive reconstructed artworks using models with Downs Syndrome, the ethereal dreamlike quality of Sarah Moon's fashion photography, Anthony Goicolea's fantasy role-play self-portraits and the painterly and classical look of David Seidner's fashion images.

From Cameron to Convergence, fashion continues to be a fundamental signifier of fantasy photo-narrative.

Notes

[1] T. Todorov, *The Fantastic, A Structural Approach to a L iterary Genre*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 1975, p. 26.

[2] R. Barthes *The Language of Fashion*, Berg, Oxford 2006, p. 26.

[3] E. Antin, artist's statement written for an exhibition of the series of work, *The Last Days of Pompeii*, University Art Gallery, San Diego, 2001.

[4] E. Antin, *The Tourists*, http://www.myspace.com/sdmart/photos/24449308.

[5] M. Yanagi, From the series, http://www.flickr.com/photos/-l-i-l-y-/4107403728/ & http://db-artmag.com/archiv/2005/e/6/3/377.html.

[6] A. Gaskell, *Wonder*, http://www.google.com/search?q=anna+gaskell+wonder&hl=en&rls=com.microsoft:en-us:IE-Address&prmd=ivnso&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ei=Z9tnTqviI8TFsQK5z7GcDg&ved=0CCsQsAQ&biw=1280&bih=652.

[7] R. Mahoney, Review of Anna Gaskell's series *Wonder*, for Artnet, 1997.

[8] M. Pullen, *Fashion High Crime*, http://melaniepullen.com/.

[9] D. La Chapelle, *American Photo*, July/August 1995, p. 53.

[10] D. LaChapelle, Fantasy Example, ft. A. McQueen & I. Blow, http://www.google.com/imgres?q=david+la+chapelle+Isabella+blow&um=1&hl=en&sa=N&rls=com.microsoft:en-us:IE-Address&tbm=isch&tbnid=3fMowFZWolYAMM:&imgrefurl=http://fashionindie.com/god-did-not-save-mcqueenalexandermcqueen-isabellablow-davidlachapelle-1996/&docid=Ql978R70j6yp9M&w=800&h=537&ei=Z9xnTuOCL-qLsQLCh5CXDg&zoom=1&iact=hc&vpx=963&vpy=139&dur=2735&hovh=184&hovw=274&tx=198&ty=68&page=1&tbnh=142&tbnw=198&start=0&ndsp=16&ved=1t:429,r:4,s:0&biw=1280&bih=652.

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[11] O. Zham, 'On the Marked Change in Fashion Photography', *The Fashion Reader*, L. Welters and A. Lillethun (eds), Berg, Oxford, 2007, pp. 263-265.
[12] G. Wood, *The Surreal Body: Fetish and Fashion*, V&A Publications, London, 2007, p. 64.

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Sarah Hand is a photographer and teaches at Southampton Solent University, UK.

The Fashion of Virtual Space & Place

Chana Etengoff

Abstract
The value of physical place has become easily transmittable via digital means, creating virtual space and place. A primary example of this phenomenon is the popularization of massively-multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPGs) such as Second Life – a parallel universe comprised of real time interactions occurring within a '3D online persistent space totally created and evolved by its users.' The collective global construction of Second Life is simultaneously navigated by an estimated 88,200 avatars, the virtual alter ego personalized and created by MMORPG users. The real world anonymity of the virtual representation of the self, combined with the virtual dimensions of fantasy, position the avatar as an obvious medium of identity exploration via fashion choices and personas. The avatar's capability to engage in an extreme exploration of identity at a cost below real world prices has provided important market research data to physical world fashion designers as they attempt to answer the emerging needs of the 'techno-sexual' masses within the physical world. This relationship between physical and virtual space and fashion has been blatantly apparent in the synchronization of first and Second Life fashion shows as displayed by the coordination of parallel locations, schedules, and fashion trends. To date, Second Life users have spent millions of first life dollars on digital makeovers and clothing for their avatars. This perhaps hints of a parallel positioning of Second Life to the film industry during the Great Depression, as Second Life has become the 21st century's affordable avenue of glamour, fantasy, and escapism. This chapter will analyse the relation and interaction between Second Life's virtual space and the power of virtual world fashion construction based on the discourses of geography, psychology, economics, history, and philosophy.

Key Words: Virtual, fashion, Second Life, identity, anonymity, self-expression, cultural tools, humanistic technologies.

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   Fashion has been tied to the concepts of time and space,[1] both in terms of its origin and its enactment since its inception.[2] Various states of dress and undress have become fashionable in their respective countries of origin due to culture, climate, economics, and politics.[3] For example, the simple, utilitarian dress of the Russian communist in the 1950s speaks of the cultural value of honest labour and a simple life.[4] Similarly, the Italian fascist regime's emphasis upon the value of rural and indigenous female dress during the 1930s and 1940s tells the tale of a government attempting to establish cultural and financial independence.[5]

Furthermore, cultural fashion norms and ideals live on even without the domineering directives of governmental campaigns. Perhaps, at first glance, the collage of competing styles, colours, and fabrics greeting pedestrians on Fifth Avenue in New York seems to contradict the claim of a regional collective fashion consciousness without government regulation. However, this diversity of fashion speaks of the sacred American value of preserving and protecting the freedom of difference in every realm of life.

In this way, fashion has become the world's symbolic narrative of culture and history, the perfect example of Vygotsky's theory of cultural tools. Similar to the cultural tool of language, fashion transmits and constructs culturally relevant forms of knowledge in a meaningful way.[6] Furthermore, fashion's cultural voice has been additionally developed with the age of global communication and the multiplication of the image. Humanistic technologies have born the global village, a place in which the cross-cultural exchange of ideas and information is instantaneous.[7] Fashion illustrates this cultural exchange in Dacca, Bangladesh as the male Muslim population simultaneously sports baseball caps and the customary knee-length *shirvani* coats.[8] This dual loyalty to modernity and tradition is expressed via fashion and in this way the duality of identity is expressed in a public forum. The digital representation and transmission of fashion is therefore, in a sense, contributing to the collective and yet individual public construction[9] of the global self.[10] Another demonstration of this global exchange is the rapid translation of runway fashion into affordable interpretations, otherwise known as knockoffs. A couture item appears on a runway in Milan, within moments the image is sent to a factory in China, in only days it is being produced, and then the item appears in Western stores prior to the market introduction of the couture original.[11]

In which case, it seems as though the concept of space has now been altered. Physical distance is no longer the primary separation between cultures and the cause of communication delays or lack thereof. Although the globalization of fashion and trade has been present for centuries, global trade was clearly marked by the time delays that resulted from physical distance. However, while this phenomenon persists in the second-hand clothing markets of Zambia and other developing countries, it i s becoming a rarity in most of the Western world.[12] Digitalization has altered our perceptions of space and the boundaries of place. For example, as David Harvey discusses in 'The Art of Rent',[13] the contemporary process of economic globalization has resulted in the abstract and symbolic value of place, as monopolistic rent now centres on the commoditization of culture and its place of origin. In addition, despite the fact that the electronic media projects the sense of distance between viewer and event,[14] the perception of place proximity and value has altered and with it our experience of place has changed as well.

It is this change in the globalized perception of physical place which has enabled the value of virtual place to develop. Once the value of physical place becomes abstract and easily transmittable via digital means, the construct of place

is no longer bound by physical dimensions and abstract place value can then be as equally associated with both physical and virtual space. Indeed, this is what has happened with the popularization of massively-multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPGs), such as Second Life. Second Life, established 2003, is described as a p arallel universe comprised of real time interactions occurring within a '3D online persistent space totally created and evolved by its users'.[15] Similar to physical space, Second Life space, referred to as land, has monopolistic rent value and must therefore be purchased with real world dollars that have been exchanged for virtual Linden dollars. Developers may purchase this virtual land at about $200 American dollars per square meter,[16] with the average exchange rate being $400 Linden dollars per square meter.[17] In addition, businesses usually pay technology companies $100,000-$5 million American dollars to develop their virtual land space.[18]

Fascinatingly, in this virtual world of collective construction and shared space, virtual projections of physical world boundaries have been created. For example, Versu Richelieu's 72 h our construction of New York in Second Life was a popularly documented achievement. Versu Richelieu's efforts represent a growing trend of individual users spending physical world dollars and time to recreate the dimensions of their valued physical space boundaries in virtual space—an ironic idea, as Richelieu's engraving on Lady Liberty's tablet, below the date of the Declaration of Independence, reads to 'live without boundaries.' Perhaps this is an expression of Adler's psychoanalytic theory regarding the conflict of desiring both freedom and community.[19] In either case, the persistent devotion to the costly personalization and nationalistic identification of virtual space clearly speaks of the parallel relation of physical and virtual space to Harvey's theory of monopolistic rent.[20] Furthermore, physical and virtual spaces are linked by the shared construction of time. While Second Life users will refer to 'SL Time', this virtual dimension of time is in fact the Pacific Standard Time Zone of Linden Lab, the physical home of Second Life. Although users have the opportunity to change their Second Life clock, the Second Life clock must reflect some actual real world time and, in this way, the virtual and physical worlds are forever bound to each other.[21]

The collective global construction of Second Life is navigated by an avatar, the virtual alter ego personalized and created by MMORPG users. As per Second Life's user statistics, a high of 88,200 avatars simultaneously visited Second Life in the 2009 first quarter with the total number of 'in world' (in Second Life) hours reaching 124 million.[22] This visual representation of the self in virtual space shares its name with the worldly incarnation of the Hindu God Vishnu,[23] representing the question of whether it is the virtual or physical world persona which is an incarnation of the self. This question is further highlighted by the fact that while residents can create a first name for their avatar, they are bound to a pre-existing list of surnames as created by the Linden Lab. While this nomenclature system provides anonymity, it also creates a debatable fictitious family tree amongst users.

In addition, the meaning of the virtual self within Second Life is further complicated by the lack of mirror syntax within Second Life which would enable you to view your avatar just as others view you.[24] Residents can use the camera view to look back on their avatar or utilize the water ocean syntax to create a blurred reflection; however, either option lacks the clarity and realism of a physical world mirror. Perhaps the syntax ingenuity of Second Life residents speaks of the wish to pursue a relationship with the virtual self, however altered and anonymous it may be.

It has been said, that the real world anonymity of the virtual representation of the self positions the avatar as the most obvious 'online manifestation of people's desire to try out alternative identities'[25] via gender switching, the purchase of exaggerated sexual characteristics, the construction of an animal avatar, as well as clothing choices.[26] In addition, the physical intangibility of clothing within virtual space allows for the eradication of gender restricted movement as mediated by clothing constructs. Perhaps this locomotive freedom within virtual environments regardless of one's attire allows for the release of gendered sexual repression which can result from restrictive clothing, as noted by the psychoanalyst Fluegel in his benchmark work entitled 'The Psychology of Clothes'.[27] However, despite the differences between virtual and physical worlds, the symbolism of virtual identity exploration and disclosure by means of clothing choice is largely similar to physical world identity exploration, and as a result, the clothing of an avatar becomes a visual projection of their constructed identity just as it d oes in the physical world.[28]

In fact, the avatar's capability to engage in an extreme exploration of identity provides important market research data to physical world fashion designers as they attempt to answer the emerging needs of the 'techno-sexual' masses within the physical world.[29] To date, Second Life users have spent millions of first life dollars on digital makeovers and clothing for their avatars.[30] Physical world brands across the range of the fashion spectrum, such as Reebok, Adidas, American Apparel, Armani, Herman Miller, Calvin Klein, Levis, Lacoste, Jean Paul Gaultier, and Nike, have responded to this new niche market by selling and launching products in Second Life.[31] In addition, hundreds of Second Life fashion designers have introduced clothing lines which are exclusively available for purchase in Second Life alone. Some of the more famous Second Life fashion designers are Renegade, Paper Couture, FNKY/ Cake, Sidewalk Clothing, Tesla, and BareRose Tokyo.

Second Life's unique popularity in the virtual fashion market may be due to the fact that designers are given full copyright benefits for their creations. Clothing is manufactured in Second Life via a series of free Second Life templates as well as programs such as Adobe Photoshop, Paint Shop Pro, or the open-source GIMP. Second Life designers have successfully replaced fibres with pixels and have created a virtual version of the physical garment which in some cases allows users

to modify the colour and texture as they are wearing the garment. Similar to the range of physical world clothing brands, Second Life clothing lines range in price, style, and the quality of the detail and texture programming. However, fashion prices in general are usually only a fraction of what their physical world cost would be. As a result of this relatively reduced cost of virtual clothes and the current difficulty in the real world financial markets, there has been a small but growing community of avatars who purchase luxury fashion items in Second Life that they could never purchase in their first life equivalence.[32] This perhaps hints of a parallel positioning of Second Life to the film industry during the Great Depression; Second Life has become the 21st century's affordable avenue of glamour, fantasy, and escapism. Indeed, despite the increasingly difficult financial crisis, Second Life's economy has consistently displayed market growth, with first quarter 2009 user-to-user transactions reaching $120 million USD, a significant increase since 2006 when spending capped in the fourth quarter at $39 million USD.[33]

Although there is a significant price differential between Second Life and first life fashion, the physical world's fashion show schemas are present on the virtual runway. For the most part, these virtual fashion shows are modelled after the runways of London, Paris, Milan, and New York. Paid virtual models seductively walk the runway as the lighting, music, and mixed media screens set the tone for the clothing and its theatrical display. Furthermore, some Second Life fashion houses have begun to host their fashion shows in the virtual version of a real world fashion metropolis or by coordinating their events with Fashion Weeks in New York and London. In a bold move, OnOff, the unique London fashion show which attempts to bridge the gap between on and off schedule designers, coordinated a simultaneous display in both Second Life's London and real world London.[34] A similar effort was made by the Amsterdam real-world based talent management company, Artist Advice, with their live feeds of their synchronized fashion shows in both Amsterdam and Second Life.[35] Such joint fashion endeavours represent the symbiotic and interactive relationship between virtual and physical space, once again placing fashion as the symbolic spokesperson for the evolution of culture and community.

In addition, the deliberately constructed relation between virtual and real world fashion capitals could be understood as the virtual fashion world's efforts to be associated with the monopolistic rent capital of these locations. For example, a large segment of New York's fashion capital status is a result of New York's monopolistic rent value. Landmark cultural institutions, such as the Guggenheim Museum, Carnegie Hall, and the Lincoln Center for the performing arts have positioned New York as a cultural matrix.[36] The theatrical performance element of a fashion show communicates the association between the arts and fashion, and the location of this event offers the stamp of legitimacy to this association. Thereby,

the virtual fashion show associated with the monopolistic rent value of the real world fashion capital is at a distinct advantage.

For this reason amongst others, Second Life is often considered to be the parallel universe to one's first life. In addition to the transference of physical monopolistic rent value via strategically coordinated fashion shows, some virtual designers have begun to enter the market of affordable interpretations of real world couture items. For example, Anne Hathaway popularized the Marchesa off the shoulder 'goddess' dress at the 2008 Academy Awards, and the dress soon began to grace upscale events in Second Life. The virtual interpretation was designed by Second Life's fashion house ICING's owner Miko Omegamu and could be purchased for a fraction of the real world price. A similar effort took place with the replication of Haley Berry's Elie Saab dress which she wore as she accepted her Oscar in 2002. Such practices have inspired debate amongst Second Life users concerning the fear of copyright infringement and the associated decay of artistic integrity. These are interesting concerns as they are built upon the controversy regarding the similarities and differences between real and virtual space and design, as well as the issue of physical world fashions and icons serving as muses for the virtual world.

However, despite the similarities of Second Life fashion shows to physical world fashion shows, the virtual experience and anonymity associated with Second Life clearly differentiates it from the real world experience. For example, there are a large number of physically impossible styles, such as elaborate medieval armour or dragon scales. In addition to allowing for the virtual creation of practically impossible fashions, Second Life offers the opportunity for people to explore and display fashions which would normally be prohibited by social conventions. Most social conventions would forbid a public display of S&M fashion or lingerie during daylight hours and yet, it is socially acceptable in Second Life. Furthermore, a Muslim and Arab fashion show displaying women wearing any form of clothes would be widely regarded as taboo in the physical world of religious Muslims and yet, is proudly featured in Second Life. IslamOnline.net hosted the first Arab and Muslim fashion show in the virtual world on September 21st, 2008. The show was shorter and smaller in scale relative to a first life fashion show, with only 70 audience members attending an Arabian Nights-themed display of two hours featuring collections by five designers;[37] however, its' very presence speaks volumes about the virtual world. The Second Life display of fashion which would be socially taboo in the real world is representative of a virtual world which despite its physical similarities to the original world of its creators, operates on the collective understanding that avatars are not required to conform to the social and cultural norms of their creators' worlds both in terms of dress and activity. In fact, Yee has identified the 'Proteus Effect' in which there is a positive correlation between virtual clothing which reveals and avatars' risqué behaviour,[38] emphasizing once again the relationship between the virtual and the physical as

mediated by fashion choice. Just as fashion becomes the illustrator of collective community beliefs in the physical world, it b ecomes the representative of the virtual world's community culture as well.

Fashion has become the spokesperson of both virtual and physical world culture, community, and space relation. It is hardly surprising that the medium which has tirelessly transformed to reflect the changing global context has been able to successfully integrate into virtual world culture. For centuries, fashion has reflected technological advancement. The industrial revolution and the mass production of garments gave birth to the phenomenon of department stores, the creation of new fabrics such as nylon and rayon opened up the door to affordable fashion, the advent of image multiplication introduced the concept of affordable interpretations and the crafting of a multi-cultural identity, and the age of shared and valued virtual space has born a fashion culture which is related to and yet different from its real world legacy. Just as Second Life's virtual land space has inherited the physical world's monopolistic rent values despite the cultural emphasis upon 'living without borders', Second Life's fashion culture is represented by the simultaneous free-spirited deviation and mimicry of real world fashion. Perhaps one could say that clothing and fashion have always been, and will continue to be, the true narrators of the complex tale we call culture.

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Chana Etengoff is a doctoral student of Developmental Psychology at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York and is completing the interdisciplinary certificate of Fashion Studies under the guidance of Professor Joseph Glick and Professor Eugenia Pauliceli. In addition, Ms. Etengoff is a Graduate Teaching Fellow at the City University of New York and has created the interactive course curriculum for *Marketing Psychology,* a course which critically analyzes the multiple mediums of identity development and acquisition within the age of virtualization.

Rundle and Return: The Hybrid Tiger of SA Fashion

Erica de Greef

Abstract
This chapter aims to explore the memory traces that are evident in the fashioned identity constructions of a post-apartheid South Africa. Fashion can be read as a locus for local-global debates, for past-present dialogues, and for self-other discourse. Some current South African fashion investigates notions of history, culture and memory in the construction of identity. In a s ociety that has experienced radical transformation, fashion currently carries evidence of the past that is being renegotiated in the present. By exploring the work of South African fashion designers, I hope to investigate the layers in the palimpsest of this transformation. Walter Benjamin's 'tigersprung' concept for change in fashion locates traces of the past in the present. There is evidence of historical associations in South African fashion brought about by various negotiations of the past. Issues that relate to the past such as tradition, memory, culture and heritage are currently explored as a means to construct new contemporary fashion narratives. In this chapter, I will use the concept of 'tigersprung' to investigate the historical traces in fashion, as the past resurfaces in an attempt to deal with the trauma of recent South African histories. Furthermore, I aim to position Pierre Nora's exploration of 'sites of memory' and history, and how these sites could act as catalysts for remembrance. I will look at the work of designer Clive Rundle in particular; whose approach to fashion highlights the notion of fashion as a tool for social commentary and a site for negotiating memory. My aim is to question whether notions of loss, mourning, and re-definition, can be expressed through or with fashion, and whether this can help locate a current understanding of identity in a post-apartheid South Africa as expressed through fashion.

Key Words: Memory, history, tigersprung, Benjamin, Nora, identity constructs, hybridity, palimpsest, politics, South African fashion, and Clive Rundle.

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1. South African Fashioned Identities

   South Africa has witnessed a kind of fashion revolution during the last 15 years seeing the rise of a number of individual signature designers; some have negotiated a shift between formally Eurocentric and Afrocentric leanings, others engage with a new cultural hybridity[1] and yet others work with the multiplicity of histories and traumas of the recent past. The apartheid era left behind scars of poverty, anger, inequality, and crime.[2] Shortly after the first democratic elections in 1994, South Africans witnessed the public hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission[3] (TRC), which were held in an attempt to uncover 'truth' in terms of

apartheid-era human rights violations. In an attempt to heal the past, these hearings exposed events and experiences of pain and shame across a broad spectrum of the South African society,[4] reflecting upon a recent past that now no longer was; a past that some people desperately wanted forgotten, or hidden. It raised questions with regards to the construction of new national histories, and thereby new national identities.

These public re-presentations through the TRC exposed the complexity and diversity of both collective and personal memory[5] within South Africa; many of which were deeply traumatic. The challenge for many South Africans was to renegotiate these concepts of the past, and in some instances, completely rewrite these histories. This quest for memory as the search for one's identity positions the need for individuals and the collective to investigate the origins, meanings and constructs of that history.[6] Nora argued that through the 'perception that anything and everything may disappear', an obsession with memory is created which takes root in the concrete, in spaces, gestures, images and objects as *lieux de mémoire.*[7] This consciousness of a break with the past reflects what occurred in the past 15 years in South Africa, where environments of memory have been challenged, questioned, lost and re-negotiated, necessitating new sites of memory, in the construction of new collective expressions.

As South Africans dealt with the country's democratic transformation, the problematic of history and memory in terms of concepts of nationhood, identity and wounding became the focus of much visual and cultural production, including fashion.[8] Evidence of memory and its traces, as well as new historical imaginings, have impacted on the diversity of South African fashion in the years following 1994. It is through this renegotiation of the past that we find the representations of memory that evoke both the country's past and its attempted reconciliation.[9]

Benjamin called these traces of the past the 'tiger's leap' or 'tigersprung'.[10] These are the 'tools that map the modern or present' which, rather than chart the past, are a means to manage the 'changes in the structure of experience in modern life that is characterised by violent jolts, alienation and dislocation'.[11] Evans analyses Benjamin's metaphor of fashion as a historical labyrinth which allows for the juxtaposition of historical images with contemporary ones in a form that doubles back on itself in an attempt to position that which is most modern as having a relationship with what is old Evans argues that this layering of memory traces invoked in fashion often reflects historical fragments of a trauma, instability or transience from other eras, and that these traces often come back under the weight of a cultural trauma.[12]

Sanlam South Africa Fashion Week (SSAFW), established in 1997 as a platform to launch a local fashion culture, has witnessed the fashioning of new, local identities. Levin notes how local designers challenge the boundaries of political correctness, reflecting on a heritage beyond the confines of clichés, and exploring the complexity of variable pasts.[13] Similarly, Chang describes tensions

that exist between vintage European ideals and Afro-futurist possibilities which allow designers to explore new iconographies that cross cultures, and in this way losing the polarisations of the past.[14] The role of fashion in the development of post-apartheid identities can be seen through these re-presentations of a fashioned self[15] which in turn indicate social negotiations and new processes of belonging.

I have chosen to position my research around a recent Clive Rundle collection.[16] Rundle consistently explores the potential of making social commentary through his work, using fashion as a means to communicate issues relevant to the politics of the present and the past, even at times shifting their meanings by making entirely new associations. Rundle who works with this notion of fashion as a metaphor of time, often uses fashion in such a way that it acts as a *palimpsest.*[17] The concept of the palimpsest has been used more recently to explain the layered constructs in architecture and studies of the urban environment, but applying the notion of the palimpsest to fashion is less common,[18] as fashion often embodies the new, with little value placed upon material pasts or patinas.

Through an analysis of Rundle's work, I hope to identify how notions of loss, hope and history are presented by the particular use of details, textures and silhouettes, and display and design processes. The ambiguity and chaos in many of his collections suggest a parallel reflection of a contemporary South African environment. By investigating how Rundle's work engages with notions of trauma, history and memory, I aim to contextualise this work within a framework of South African visual culture and identity constructs that similarly explore these anxieties, and notions of alienation and dislocation in the context of contemporary social, economic, cultural and technological change.

2. Rundle and Return

I propose this reading as a positioning of Rundle's work; one of various approaches that could be used to analyse the creative approach, the product, and the complex displays of Rundle's fashion. Rundle presented a 'private photographic, video, sketch and text journal of exactly 40 days that culminated in the Summer 2009 c ollection' to a small group of fashion insiders (09/07/2009). This afforded insights into the work, the process and the evolution of the collection from initial concept to final actualisation; a process which in Rundle's words continues to 'find the chaos and embrace the impossible'.[19] I will be focussing on this Summer 2009 collection which showed at SSAFW, 04/04/2009, Turbine Hall, Johannesburg.

Like black and white photographs, this collection presented a blurring of the past with the present; modernity infused with the sepia tones of recollection. Rundle used specific items that recall associations with the past. Stockings (in black or white), suspender elastics (in nude) and slip dresses specifically reference turn of the century, historical styles. Lehmann identifies these references to a feminine ideal in poetry, art and contemporary fashion; of the woman who 'lifts her skirt to reveal her stockings and lace-up boots'.[20] These stockings and boots

have become markers of time, in their positioning of a sartorial representation within a timeline. Lehmann argues that fashion is infinitely self-referential, with each detail quoting or referring back to the past.[21] It is this 'tiger's leap' into the past that Benjamin used to describe fashion as having a *'sense of the modern wherever it stirs in the thicket of what has been'.*[22] Here Nora describes this identification of a past in this case, a p ast object) in the present as a site of memory, where memory becomes the bond linking the individual memory to an eternal present.[23]

In previous collections, Rundle has explored recycling second-hand men's tailored jackets and his own garments/parts of garments by remodelling them into new designs.[24] In this Summer 2009 collection though, items were used that carried metaphoric histories and meanings, recycling symbolic narratives rather than the material. Rundle's approach reconfigures these inherent narratives by breaking the weight of the past that is inscribed into or onto these items. By re-positioning the references of these items, in juxtaposition with the present, and in layers that blur the edges between their pasts, Rundle fuses time in layers. His use of layering in these outfits exposes a physical process of constructing surfaces that bear witness to the previous layers, which remain visible through the sheerness or through the openings of the outer layers. In this sense Rundle approaches the fashioned ensemble or outfit as a palimpsest, much like the concept used in describing urban environments, architecture and the dynamic aspects of the historical layers in cities.[25] Just as the marks of history, as evidence of time, leave traces on the surfaces of cities, the passage of time can be evidenced in fashion.

A number of contemporary designers have explored this witnessing of time; seen most notably in the work of fashion designers like Hussein Chalayan[26] and Maison Martin Margiela.[27] Their work explores affects and effects of time through the use of materials, shapes or details that critique similar fragmentations and dislocations in contemporary environments. Ideas of re-using cloth, history, concept or image, are key to how memory is embedded in fashion. Similarly Rundle uses techniques that include ageing processes, tailoring techniques that reference past skills and crafts, and the use of patterns that contain structural memories, in the development of his collections that in many ways reflects the past in the present.[28] Evans describes Benjamin's '*tigersprung*' as fleeting glimpses of the past as they flicker on the surface of what is presented as the modern.[29]

Rundle's use of transparency, cut-outs, and asymmetry, further allow for these glimpses of history in this complex layering of meaning. Buck-Morss argues how in the juxtaposition of images of the past and the present new meanings are often created by 'tracing previously concealed connections.'[30] The palimpsest notion presented here positions several dialectics which Ranciere describes as the 'two potentialities of the image [garment, object, etc]: the image as raw, material presence and the image as discourse encoding a history.'[31] In fashion, there is a

constant tension between the present, its relationship to the future, and the evidence of its past.

Speaking at the SSAFW Annual Seminar (2-4/04/2009), Rundle presented a discussion that outlined his use of fashion as a metaphor for a *second skin*; one that can be worn, layered, and shed in a symbolically, metamorphic process. This notion of fashion as skin clearly highlights a past problematic of race and identity in South Africa. Apartheid's measure of hierarchy and opportunity focussed on the tones and textures of one's skin. The rhetoric of race remains in a post-apartheid dialogue in terms of acknowledging and addressing past (mis)understandings of race and separatism. Rundle often selects models for his collections that highlight the multiplicity of race in South Africa, with models representing a cross-cultural diversity. The use of black stockings on fair-skinned models and pale stockings on darker models juxtaposes the politics of their skin. Using Benjamin's notion of the explosive that is fashion, Lehmann argues that fashion can reflect both a political and material concept of history.[32] In Rundle's presentation of choice and change, these models engage in the political and personal interface of a nation in transformation.

The stark, neutral tones of this collection further positions Rundle's political intention of blackness and whiteness: a concept which is explored by numerous artists within contemporary South African creative practices.[33] As evidenced in Rundle's previous displays of 'black and white', this colour dialectic continues to challenge notions of neutrality and segregation, and raises questions of 'blackness' and 'whiteness' that remain closely linked to the surface, to flesh, to skin, and to identity. It is the idea of blackness and whiteness now sharing the same bodies which blurs these notions of the self and other. Rundle's irreverent references to political slogans (completed in silver sequins) further deal with current political affairs.[34]

The use of volume, wrapping and shapes that billow, protect, suspend and cling in Rundle's collection investigates and reflects the urban landscape surrounding his downtown studio where make-shift structures convey homelessness, poverty, vulnerability and survival.[35] Even Rundle's use of 'found materials' reflects the politics of his urban context, as he assembles his collections as a *bricolage*[36] often making creative and resourceful use of materials that are at hand, including netting, tape, packaging and padding. In this sense we can start to investigate the complexity of Rundle's metaphors that span time and memory, place, purpose, politics and meaning.

3.   Healing in Transition

Preoccupations with new identities have occupied the work of many South African artists as they renegotiate the past, exploring South Africa's material history like an archive of memories, re-presenting familiar terms in new ways in an attempt to reconstruct history. South Africa's transition from apartheid witnessed these confessional and contentious voices in the Truth and Reconciliation

Commission and many artists continue to surface these memories.[37] The TRC exposed multiple traumatic experiences and inequalities, and elicited numerous forms of rupture with history and identity. The diversity of responses that surrounded the TRC often heightened, rather than resolved, the nation's differences.[38] Because the past meant vastly different things to different people, its terms were often difficult to process collectively. There are a number of visual artists in South Africa working with notions of trauma, memory and shame, for example; William Kentridge (erasure, power and identity) and Penny Siopis (trauma and history), Siemon Allen (memory and archive), Senzeni Marasela (Memory and identity), Berni Searle (gender and history), and Steven Cohen (trauma and sexuality).[39] Questions are raised whether this exploration of memory initiates a discourse on South Africa's recent history, or whether it constitutes nostalgia for the country's first phase of transition.[40]

Nora argues that the quest for memory is the search for one's history.[41] With the acceleration of history, the responsibility of memory has become individualised, multiplied, fragile and diversified.[42] South Africans experiencing a sudden rupture with history have attached memory to 'sites' in an attempt to either restore a historical continuity or to renegotiate their pasts. Debates about history and memory in an era that has, in a sense, freed itself of any past has created this preoccupation with trauma. According to Nora the need for sites of memory that are self-referential, personal and experiential constitutes the major difference between memory and history, where history remains external and impersonal, as a representation of the past and a reconstruction which is always problematic and incomplete.[43] Is it the need to go in search of a new histories and identities that has created an obsession with memory or is it the notion of oppressed historical trauma that is resurfacing in an attempt to heal the wounds of the past? Evans draws on works of Foucalt, Freud, and Buck-Morss to investigate the traces of the past that as they surface in the present which carry elements of the 'stressed' or 'repressed'.[44] Evans argues that fashion designers often locate memory traces in the context of historical rather than personal trauma and shock, hereby relating to larger questions of history. This positions the role of fashion as a metaphor for healing and transformation in South Africa, with its ability to act out or portray this instability and transience.[45]

Objects, images and even items can remain haunted by previous meanings and associations. Could the semiotics of fashion as a means of communicating transformation begin to negotiate a consensus on historical discourse within South Africa, despite its citizens' diverse experience of the past? The danger posed by this is that images or objects circulating in a contemporary South African landscape may not be able to question the meanings or memories without at times, also spectacularising them. Rundle's use of tribal accessories in this collection, particularly reference this dialectic, of notions of tribal and modern, of an African and Eurocentric interface, and of negotiating authenticity and fashionability.

This fusion of associations echoes Nuttal's 'entangled histories' that enable codes and meanings to be re-appropriated and transformed when used in the work of fashion designers as they are brought to life anew, remixed in a cross-pollinated present.[46] These forms of hybridity or hybrid identities reference Bhabha's argument of colonial hybridity, which, as a cultural form produces ambivalence.[47] The post-apartheid South African identity presents a similar identity construct to the postcolonial, which Bhabha argued as the site for creating mindsets that embody hybridity, often in association with negotiations around authority and power. The postcolonial subject negotiates the present as a palimpsest surface, often questioning the patterns of past writings and erasures on land and bodies. The politics of the traces of the past can be read in the layers of the present. Fashion that acts as a palimpsest can imply either a resistance to, or a remembrance of these variable pasts. Lehmann states that fashion is an 'indispensible catalyst for remembrance', and can equally, act out new political concepts of history.[48]

In conclusion, Rundle's work has often been compared to that of Rei Kawakubo of Commes de Garcons, Maison Martin Margiela, and Hussein Chalayan. Understanding the technical skills that underpin the composition and complexity of these designers and their work is critical to the analysis of their work. Much has been written about the use of the term '*deconstruction*' in relation to their approach to fashion.[49] Using the concept of deconstruction as a demonstration of constructedness, this is evident in Rundle's work, as it can be seen in terms of the tailoring techniques, the details, the shapes, and the questions around craft and function. This notion could also apply to Rundle's investigations into the constructions of self through fashion: be it personally, publically or politically. Much of Rundle's work acts as a political metaphor, and in his way, a deconstruction of the ideologies and identities within a post-apartheid context.

Notes

[1] H. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture,* Routledge, New York, 1994. I use the term hybridity here with reference to Bhabha, whereby individuation within cultures reverses the effects of colonialism, in such a way that other 'denied' knowledges and identities enter upon the dominant discourse, p. 156.

[2] The apartheid government represented a m inority rule of discriminatory prejudices and rights accorded by race.

[3] The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was a court-like body at which anybody who felt they had been a v ictim of violence could come forward. Furthermore perpetrators of violence could request amnesty upon giving testimony. A.E. Coombes explores the impact and complexity of this event in *History after Apartheid: Visual Culture and Public Memory in a Democratic South Africa*, Wits University Press, Johannesburg, 2003, pp. 243-278. Coombes includes Desmond Tutu's opening address 15 A pril 1996, where the commission's brief was to 'unearth the truth about our dark past, to lay the ghosts of the past so that they will

not return to haunt us and that we will thereby contribute to the healing of a traumatised and wounded people, for all of us in South Africa are wounded people, and in this manner to promote national unity and reconciliation'.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid., p. 8. Coombes accounts for the individual subjective experience and shared social processes that influence the representation of remembrances and of the past. In addition, research on witnessing and testimony collected in the aftermath of genocide, war, or systematic political repression (such as in South Africa) has pointed to the impact of trauma on memory.

[6] P. Nora, 'Between History and Memory', *Representations*, Spring 1989, pp. 7-24. Nora describes dialectics of history and memory in a modern world where these terms have become fundamentally opposite.

[7] Ibid., p. 7. *Lieux de memoire* are described as sites of memory that are simultaneously material, symbolic and functional.

[8] S. Nuttall, *Entanglement: Literary and Cultural Reflections on Post-Apartheid*, 2009, p. 117. Nuttall explores the re-appropriation and transformation of cultural codes of the past, in terms of the notion of self-styling with reference to fashion and identity construction in a post-apartheid generation.

[9] A.M. Zervigón, 'The Weave of Memory: *Screen* in Post-Apartheid South Africa', *Art Journal*, Spring 2002 offers an analysis that investigates the role of memory in the construction of contemporary South African art and re-definitions of the past and present.

[10] W. Benjamin, *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, trans. H. Zohn, Fontana/ Collins, London, 1973.

[11] Ibid.

[12] C. Evans, *Fashion at the Edge: Spectacle, Modernity & Deathlines*, Yale University Press, New Haven and New York, 2003, pp. 22-25. In this sense the contemporary preoccupation with trauma can be understood as an important contemporary articulation of the past. *Trauma theory* insists that events which pose crises for testimony, witnessing and representation continue to reverberate in the present and to shape the future.

[13] A. Levin, *The Naked Truth* in '10 x SA Fashion', A. Tischhauser (ed), Channel F Publishing, Johannesburg, 2006, pp. 17-20.

[14] D. Chang, *Conversations* in '10 x SA Fashion', A. Tischhauser (ed), Channel F Publishing, Johannesburg, 2006, pp. 7 & 13-16.

[15] Nuttal, op. cit., p. 119. Nuttall describes how 'representations of self as an expressive subject have … been seen by scholars to signal a subject that is fractured, multiple, shifting and produced through a set of social performances.' In this context 'fashion' is read as a social performance.

[16] Clive Rundel, b. 1962.

[17] *Palimpsest* is a term that denotes a manuscript written over a partly erased older manuscript in such a way that the old words can be read beneath the new. The concept of the palimpsest is also used to understand the developing complexity of cultures, as previous 'inscriptions' are erased and overwritten, yet remain as traces within present consciousness, especially in the post-colonial.

[18] Palimpsest differs from *Historicism* which also features in contemporary fashion, and which generally refers to a fashion cycle or form of nostalgia that specifically highlights or references styles of the past with attention given to the aesthetic, nostalgic qualities of the historical period being referenced.

[19] Notes taken at a discussion presentation held 09 June 2009, Johannesburg.

[20] U. Lehmann, *Tigersprung: Fashion in Modernity*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, 2000, p. 47.

[21] Ibid., p. 106.

[22] W. Benjamin, op. cit. Walter Benjamin's work has been addressed in depth by a number of fashion academics recently, including Ulrich Lehmann, Carolyn Evans, Christopher Breward, etc.

[23] Nora, op. cit., p. 19.

[24] Clive Rundle's Autumn/Winter 2008 invitation described the collection as more than 50% recycled.

[25] Extract from the editorial to 'memory, amnesia and urbanism' *mudot*, issue # 1, 2008.

[26] Evans, op. cit., 2003, p. 240.

[27] K. Debo (ed), *Maison Martin Margiela, '20' The Exhibition*, The Fashion Museum of the Province of Antwerp, MoMu, 2008. Margiela 'couture' records the number of hours invested in the production of the garment (measures of time), uses materials that carry along the traces of a garment's previous life (passages of time), and experiments with momentary materials or decaying characteristics in materials (power of time).

[28] From notes taken at a discussion presentation 09 June 2009, Johannesburg, where Rundle described his use of certain processes and techniques that were integral to the development of the individual textiles used in the collection.

[29] Evans, op. cit., p. 278.

[30] S. Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts & London, 1991, p. 250.

[31] J. Ranciere, *The Future of the Image*, Verso, London and New York, 2009, p. 11.

[32] Lehmann, op. cit., p. 235.

[33] Sarah Nuttal, Antjie Krog, Nandipha Mntambo, Lolo Veleko, Nicholas Hlobo, Pieter Dirk Uys, Craig Native, Stoned Cherrie, are a few literary, visual and fashion practitioners who position and question these false identity constructs around race and identity.

[34] The Dalia Lama was refused an entry visa to South Africa to participate in a peace conference in Cape Town, days before the SSAFW shows, with the then finance minister (Trevor Manuel) questioning the public outcry.

[35] In this sense Rundle's work reflects recent investigations into the built environment and the dressed body. See *Fashion and Modernity*, Berg, Oxford, 2005 and Lucy Orta's *Refuge Wear & Body Architecture* projects.

[36] *Bricolage* is a term used in several disciplines, among them visual arts and literature to refer to the construction or creation of a work from a diverse range of things which happen to be available, or a w ork created by such a p rocess. In a chapter 'Dividuality in Fashion Design: An Ethnography of the Dress' to be presented at the 4th International Conference on Design Principles and Practices in Chicago, February 2010, Caroline Taylor of Wits Anthropology Dept, Johannesburg expands upon how 'through the imagination of the designer as bricoleur, the partible nature of the design team - artist, pattern cutter, machinist, model, photographer and client is distilled and illuminated. The anthropological lens refracts positionality, centrifugal and centripetal forces, and energies, voice(s), mood(s) and the logistics of a constructivist design field.'

[37] Coombes explores the impact of this event in a number of group exhibitions and artists' work in *History after Apartheid: Visual Culture and Public Memory in a Democratic South Africa*, Wits University Press, Johannesburg, 2003, pp 243-278.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Trade Routes: History+Geography, Johannesburg Biennale 1998, and Africa Remix, Johannesburg 2008 were two large scale exhibitions that highlighted some of the issues explored by South African artists.

[40] Zervigón, loc. cit.

[41] Nora, op. cit., p. 11.

[42] Nora, 'op. cit., pp. 7-24. Nora describes this break with the past as crucial to the value of memory in a modern society.

[43] Ibid., pp. 15-16.

[44] Evans, op. cit., p. 296.

[45] Evans, op. cit., p. 199. Evans describes these traces of the past that surface in the present like the return of the repressed. Fashion designers call up these ghosts of modernity and offer a paradigm that is different from the historian's paradigm, remixing fragments of the past into something new. Because traumatic memories are experienced with a sense of great vividness and immediacy they seem to retain an indelible imprint of the past and thereby an incontestable link with history in an era of simulation. Traumatic experience disengages the subject from the historical agency at the same time as it registers historical change.

[46] Nuttall, op. cit., p. 108. Nuttal looks at how a contemporary 'pick-and-mix' culture is developing in this first post-apartheid generation.

[47] Bhabha, op. cit., p. 210. Bhabha analyses the liminality of hybridity as a paradigm of colonial anxiety.
[48] Lehmann, op. cit., p. 210.
[49] Vinke describes deconstruction in fashion as 'philosophically speaking deconstruction entails the demonstration of constructedness'. Further writings on the notion of deconstruction in fashion can be found in *Deconstruction Fashion: The making of Unfinished, Decomposing and R e-assembled Clothes*, Fashion Theory, Vol. 2, No. 1, 1998, pp. 25-50.

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Erica de Greef is Head of Research at LISOF, Johannesburg and is currently completing a Masters Degree in Fine Arts at Wits University, Johannesburg. Her areas of research include fashion curation, fashion theory and the history of South African fashion.

Part 4:

Consumption and Luxury

Co-Creating Emotions: Value Creation in Fashion Marketing

Constantin-Felix von Maltzahn

Abstract

The fashion industry by and large has been relying on traditional push-marketing which emphasises specific trends, looks, and ideas based on strategies such as trend scouting and 'style surfing'. As current research indicates, however, in Europe only 50% of those consumers who are willing to spend on fashion can actually be satisfied. It is suggested therefore that push marketing alone might be a means of limited reach in order to guarantee consumer satisfaction. Consequently, an alternative stance is proposed suggesting more direct engagement with consumers in order to be able to retain loyalties by appeal to emotional rather than material value connections. This chapter attempts to map a tentative approach towards strategies of consumer retention for fashion brands and their main audience groups. By taking into account central value connections of their consumers and translating those into organisational performance it is assumed that that added value is being created for certain groups, making those branded items more desirable than others. In this capacity, it is further suggested that the involvement of consumers with brands ranges from loosely committed to relatively tight and loyal consumer groups. A central hypothesis in this regard is that different levels of gradation exist for different fashion companies and types of consumers, depending on the respective level of identification. Fashion firms opting for such an approach might be able to improve consumer satisfaction and long(er)-term buying relations. One main task for companies is to conceive of strategies for extending the point of value creation from just products to brand-specific value systems and lifestyle concepts, thereby supplementing their sales pitch with emotional appeal. By introducing case studies of two fashion firms it is hoped to provide possible illustrations for these hypotheses, thereby juxtaposing examples of consumer involvement in fashion retail.

Key Words: Co-creation, Consumer involvement, Fashion branding.

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1. The Unsatisfied Fashion Consumer

In 2003, US-based consulting company Kurt Salmon Associates (KSA) conducted a study named 'European Consumer Outlook' which focused on consumer behaviour in fashion retail and related industries all across Europe.[1] The results, obtained via interviews with consumers in Italy, France, England, and Germany across diverse segments and buying groups, yield a number of interesting insights when it comes to consumer behaviour in fashion. Looking at what actually

happens after potential fashion consumers have entered a shop, the study argues that

> from the 2/3 of fashion consumers who know what they want to
> buy and are willing to spend money, only 50% can be satisfied.
> (…) Only 50% of the consumers who enter a shop or department
> store, leave the location with a bag in which we will find one or
> more fashion items.[2]

This raises two crucial questions: a.) what happens to the rest of the non-buying people - the other 50% representing 1/3 of all fashion consumers?; b.) what are their reasons to not buy fashion clothing?

The first question can be answered right away. In fact, also those consumers who are left dissatisfied and consequently don't buy at one point will do so at another. The important difference, however, is that more often than not those purchases are merely need-driven and thus still leave consumers not entirely happy with what is in their shopping bag.[3] When it comes to the reasons for not purchasing fashion items, a number of factors can be identified. As the KSA report confirms, one primary issue is price, meaning that consumers are either not willing to spend the amount of money asked for a piece of clothes or go search for garments similar in style and quality, but at a lower price. The second reason is related to availability and supply of garments, when as either a desired product or brand, or the right size, is not available. Further contributing to potential consumers going away empty-handed is that they are driven out of a retail setting because of unfriendly or unhelpful staff. Most prevalent among the factors for not buying fashion products, however, the study identified a large number of people who simply do not find the apparel products they actually want. In those cases both assortment planning as well as the actual design of clothes fail to pay heed to consumers' real wants.

So, what actually causes this lapse in consumer satisfaction? Why do so many potential fashion consumers not find the pieces of clothing they actually want? Research in this field suggests that consumers by and large are simply bored with the offerings of fashion outlets because of uniform product ranges, poor quality, too high prices, as well as a lack of styles which actually speak to their demands.[4] Interviews with consumers attest to these facts. Even research among the most spend-active groups of fashion consumers – females between 25-34 years of age - seems to confirm the tendency towards disenchantment with product offerings in the fashion sector as well as a growing sense of boredom with fashion on the whole. Statements such as the following have become anything but exceptional: '… the stuff in the stores is not very well made or too expensive for my budget; everything looks the same…'.[5]

One main reason for this development is that throughout the last decades the continuously growing number of multi-label corporations housing various brands under the same roof (e.g., LVMH, PPR, EganaGoldpfeil) and chain stores with international market orientation (Inditex/Zara, MEXX, H&M, Mango) have driven out of the market the vast majority of small-scale retailers with more particularised product ranges and strong patronage. As a result, the link between consumers and the industry got lost. The combination of these two factors has led to evermore standardised production circuits as well as more and more uniformity in attire products.[6] That means, season by season a set of trends is introduced to the market whereby real differences between brands competing in the same segment cannot be told any longer. So, while there has emerged an increasing number of retail outlets and competitors in the market, product diversity has not at all grown in sync with this development. Rather, what we see is a variety of items similar in style and quality only offered under different brand names. What this all has led towards is a tendency in fashion retail where the purchase act for many has developed into a dissatisfying experience.[7]

2. The Push-Paradigm

According to a number of authors, one explanation for the growing disenchantment with apparel products is that, when it comes to their marketing, the industry by and large still relies on traditional push marketing, which means to literally 'push' products into the market. As for fashion clothing, this strategy materialises in fashion brands determining upfront trends for the coming season based on trend scouting and 'style surfing', yet without actually talking to consumers in order to better find out about their needs.[8] Considering the fact that a large number of potential consumers apparently remain dissatisfied in terms of their demands on apparel products, it seems that this approach yields potential only for a limited share of retailers. Oftentimes, push marketing fails to meet existing demands because it misjudges consumer feedback as a vital asset in the value creation chain, thereby avoiding its active integration into business operations.[9]

So, why *does* the industry actually rely so heavily on this approach? Evidently, because for some players in the fashion industry the push paradigm works rather well. Unsurprisingly, this group is chiefly comprised of the big chain retailers by the likes of Zara or H&M on the one hand and luxury fashion brands on the other. Here, push marketing proves to be successful an instrument for profitable business operations. As Andreas Stockert, currently COO of Hugo Boss, notes,

> When H&M for example shows Naomi Campbell with sexy underwear on big city lights in wintertime, H&M dictates what young girls and those who wanted to be like Campbell will wear under their clothes. The power of H&M's push campaign was so strong that even other lingerie and underwear retailers increased

their turnover up to 30%. (…) The H&M buyers don't care that much about the fit and the quality of the garment, because they want to wear this specific H&M fashion item.[10]

In a similar key, also luxury brands make profit from push marketing campaigns when goods are advertised and introduced to the market by capitalising on strategies of scarcity and exclusivity as well as the creation of sensual experiences for consumers.[11] Notably, however, these follow the inherent logics of the high-ticket sector where top-down dynamics have prevailed ever since or might even be required to some extent. That is, as against high-street fashion, in the luxury segment the role of the designer, brand history, and patronage more often than not go hand in hand, so that market success in this respect is subject to different, more company-specific factors. Lipovetsky maintains in this respect that,

> A luxury enterprise is not just a place of creation but also of memory… because of the way it presents and promotes itself and develops its own history. The cult of the founding designers, the glorification of the spirit of the brand…, the celebration of significant events, everything that goes into the construction of a luxury brand is inseparable from the symbolic management of its origins and the work of constructing a *myth*.[12]

Still, luxury fashion constitutes only a fraction of the fashion industry at large, and also international retail chains do not make up for the remaining portion of fashion consumers on the whole.[13] Consequently, we can concede that push marketing works for those kinds of fashion retailers with the economic resources to afford top models, high-profile advertising, and quick response rates to newly-emerging trends, and will do so also in the future. But what happens to the remainder of fashion brands – small- to mid-scale businesses competing with both the large-scale retailers as well as with each other - which have to position themselves in the market?

As a number of studies suggest, here push marketing does not travel very well and increasingly fails to address consumer needs.[14,15] For the other 50% of consumers in the KSA study, namely – those who cannot be satisfied by fashion products from large chain stores and neither are willing, or able, to thrive in high-ticket fashion - this approach increasingly has proven to be ineffective. This phenomenon is chiefly owed to the fact that either fashion firms have eschewed the hot potato of deep consumer intelligence altogether or because of conflicting interests.[16] For brands in this group more attention to consumers' actual demands is needed to position themselves against large retail companies and multi-brand corporations.[17] Put another way, as against the development of evermore uniformity consumers' values and their integration into the value creation chain

might constitute a linchpin for securing competitive advantage. The fact that push marketing has become a means of limited reach for many therefore may just as well be viewed as a chance to make a difference and regain the loyalty of those consumers who are left dissatisfied with a vast variety of product ranges in the market.

3. Shopping for Emotions: From Product-Centric to Value-Centric Consumption

Evidently, each and any of us dress in particular ways, depending on occasion, in order to portray specific images of ourselves.[18] In order to invest those multiple identity-constructs with aesthetic content, part of the motivation to actually purchase clothes stems from a desire to position ourselves in society. Using clothes as a visual medium for affiliating ourselves with some while keeping distance from others we try to give expression to different images of ourselves.[19] Accepting this dynamics as a given of people's dress-body relations, one main reason why fashion has become a jaded pleasure for many may be explained by the fact that product ranges have become strikingly similar in appearance as well as increasingly commodified in terms of product and purchase experiences (retail settings, quality of garment etc), thereby making it much harder for the individual to actually make distinctions by means of his or her wardrobe.

This chapter attempts to show how fashion firms for which push marketing has become an instrument of limited effect can attract and retain consumer loyalty by building on value-centred sales pitch. Instead of relying on push marketing and similar strategies, successful implementation of consumer knowledge and emphasis on company philosophies and lifestyle concepts could shift the point of value creation from clothes' material properties to emotional connections between brand and consumer. That is, added value is being created through appeal to particular value connections and emotional sales arguments. Drawing on Gilles Lipovetsky's concept of 'emotional luxury',[20] I hope to able to show how fashion firms can co-create consumer identities and in this way satisfy a demand for a higher degree of individuality and diversity in the fashion market. At the same time, this approach assumes that establishing emotional points of connection between brands and consumers helps enhancing market performance.

Lipovetsky's idea of emotional luxury is defined by a sense of uniqueness that is integrated into the value creation chain. Fastening on the guiding principles of the luxury industry - namely appeal to sensual experiences and emotional values - firms create bonds with their main audience groups by providing experiences that reach beyond their products' functional or aesthetic properties. The author himself explains the approach:

> the luxury universe no longer functions exclusively along the
> classic lines that oppose the rich and the less rich, the dominant

and the dominated […]. Rather it is a way of expressing a specific personality, of being original and revealing personal tastes free from conventional forms and trappings.[21]

Following this argument, above all luxury has become an issue of emotional relevance, speaking to the individual on a level which translates individual motifs and aspirations into material culture. Applied to the fashion industry that means taking into account emotional needs and translating those into organisational concepts. Letting consumers experience fashion brands on multiple sensorial levels consequently extends the point of exchange away from material to emotional concerns. For example, by providing to consumers an understanding of brands which appeals to their sense of self and reflects certain values connections, firms enhance their sales pitch by extending the focus away from concrete products to company philosophies or lifestyle concepts. This approach calls for a broader scope with a multitude of symbolic and emotional anchorings that consumers can identify with.

Pioneering this approach, jeans-turned-lifestyle brand *Diesel* represents an interesting case. Cleverly, with the onset of the new millennium and market expansion and global communication technologies accelerating at a fast pace, *Diesel*'s marketing department conceived of a business model focused on 'Planet Diesel'. Most generally speaking, the concept stands for a global company with no national or racial boundaries, where the 'I' is traded for a 'We'.[22] In order to establish a basis for that feeling of 'We-ness' the concept of 'Planet Diesel' set out for making available to consumers exclusive events such as music concerts, invitations to fashion preludes, but also give-aways, Christmas gadgets, as well as an exclusive lifestyle glossy.

Their approach to doing business - capitalising on emotional instead of material assets - can also be traced in the brand's public presentation. Throughout the years, *Diesel* has launched a number of memorable, with deliberation not fashion-focused marketing campaigns, setting the brand apart from the majority of business rivals.[23] Company founder Renzo Rosso explains the approach: 'Our advertising is… not product advertising. It's the message that's important, a common, shared way of seeing things… We make ad campaigns for our own amusement, that's why they succeed'.[24]

In doing so, the brand successfully has established a clientele identifying with a whole '*Diesel* lifestyle' which reaches beyond the brand's clothes. Through demarcating a terrain of its own *Diesel* creates boundaries between those subscribing to the company's philosophy and other consumer groups, thereby extending brand identification away from products to company-specific value systems. *Diesel*'s approach in this respect emphasises an attitude of cosmopolitanism and open-mindedness, whereby the desired brand image is supposed to be matched by that of its consumers.[25] In an effort to further

supplement that stance and arrive at more rewarding experiences with the brand, *Diesel* also was amongst the first to establish on- and off-line communities around festivals and fashion parties.

Elevating involvement with the brand from material to emotional points of connection and from purely aesthetic concerns to a whole register of value connections has proven to a highly successful strategy also in economic terms. Next to registering double-digit growth rates, steadily increasing revenues, and remarkably stable sales *Diesel* has also been able to establish a relatively loyal consumer base.[26] In doing so, the company has outsold a lot of business rivals by securing a unique position in the fashion market. In terms of consumer satisfaction and retention strategies *Diesel* may facilitate an example of a company where a whole lifestyle concept underscores its branding philosophy, which is rewarded by lasting relations and relatively stable purchase behaviour. By making consumers part of a globe-spanning network the brand apparently has succeeded in supplementing material with emotional assets and underscoring consumer involvement with fashion products with a specific mindset and company philosophy.

4. Research in the Dutch Fashion Industry

Looking at the example of *Diesel*, this research builds on the hypothesis that the Dutch fashion industry, in its capacity to combine innovation and commercial interests, tries to forge bonds with consumers by appealing to their emotions and central value connections. It is suggested that the creative industry of fashion in the Netherlands has increasingly been able to capitalise on its unique cultural background of individualism, innovation and sober design, by relating certain brand identities and identities of specific consumer groups. Based on this assumption this research project attempts to analyse the interactive ways in which fashion firms co-create the collective identities of their audiences, thereby appealing to the cultural values their consumers foster. It is our hypothesis that economic performance of these firms is enhanced by participating in the identity performance of these groups.

One core theme in this respect is that for different types of consumers different levels of brand involvement exist. Central to this reasoning is to try to find out about different gradations of consumer identification with brands and products. Assuming that better matches between brand and consumer identities will be followed by more successful sales pitch and patronage this research will try to interrogate the following dimensions: a.) What are the main value connections between the fashion firms and their consumer groups actually? More general values (e.g. environmental awareness) or more specific identities (e.g. a certain fashion or music style)?; b.) What are the different levels of involvement and their impact on purchase behaviour?; and c.) What is the impact of national identity? What level holds strongest – local, national, or international?

In the following an example will be presented in order to give an idea of the aspects that will be considered in this respect. As part of a number of case studies, Dutch brand *Cora Kemperman* will be studied for its relation and interaction with consumers. Emerging from Dutch fashion house *Mac&Maggie* in 1995/1996, the brand has been enjoying enduring market success and, over the years, has been able to establish a relatively committed and loyal base of consumers. With an alternative and colourful, yet equally fashion-conscious look and mid-market price level *Cora Kemperman* attracts women from chiefly (higher) middle-class backgrounds as a main audience group (see Appendix; Plates 1&2).

At the same time, with a total number of only nine retail outlets (6 of which in the Netherlands, 3 in Belgium) the firm is positioned in the market as a small-scale business. In contrast to other Dutch fashion firms such as *G-Star* or *Vanilia* the brand has no ambition to grow business towards large-scale operations. Instead, it emphasises exclusivity for well-heeled women in ways described by the brand as 'feminine and elegant', frequently paired with an ethnic touch.[27] Other attributes include, for example, 'surrealistic, with a humorous edge'.[28] At the same time, the deliberate choice for retaining a small-scale business promotes sales pitch for a relatively confined group of consumers. Unlike most mid- to large-scale business operations which settle for a fairly heterogeneous audience *Cora Kemperman* chose to focus on a rather specific clientele and narrowly defined sales approach.

The firm's branding philosophy above all builds on issues over ethics and corporate social responsibility. As co-founder Gloria Kok explains their business approach,

> We wanted to do it differently and better with … thirty years of accumulated experience and professional know-how. Not only in the field of C.S.R. but also with regard to business, commercially, qualitatively and socially. For both of us it was obvious that Corporate Social Responsibility be an important part of the quality of our product… and we would earmark a part of our profit to try to improve the living conditions of the people who are making our products in poor countries as much as possible.[29]

The brand thus features C.S.R. not only as part of its general corporate image, but turned it into the linchpin of an entire business model. These policies, included in their founding tenets, endorse proper working conditions in developing countries, the use of environmentally-friendly fabrics and fibres (e.g., hemp, linen, naturally-drawn cotton), dyestuffs, as well as packing materials (e.g., cotton, recyclable paper and plastics). Next to more product-related issues, the firm also set up the charity foundation 'Amma' which supports with its funds development projects in Romania and India as the main countries of production. In a similar key

also the company's attention to fabric evidences this strong emphasis on sustainable production and longevity of garment. In fact, a co mpany folder specifically devoted to that very issue provides detailed information about how and where fabrics are sourced and processed, what respective differences there are between fabrics, yarns, and fibres, but also in what way *CK*'s clothing should be cleaned in order to not cause damage to the material.

In view of these different aspects, *Cora Kemperman* represents an interesting case for researching the interactive dynamics between Dutch fashion firms and their consumers because both company philosophy and public image seem to play off a number of facets that extend the point of connection from just fashion towards factors that follow a different motivation, that is, social responsibility and environmentally-friendly conduct as part of a system of shared values between the brand and its consumers. One research assumption here is that market success and steady growth rates are based on a consistent and unique business concept. It is assumed here that *Cora Kemperman*'s strong emphasis on C.S.R. policies and its public image of social and ecological awareness constitute emotional sales arguments for certain consumer groups because they resonate with value connections that exist irrespective of the actual product. Apart from design and quality issues, the brand's clothes consequently might be purchased for reasons other than 'just fashion'. Put another way, purchase behaviour may not be intrinsically-motivated, but equally portrays a specific self-image of the wearer and her ideas about social and environmental conduct.

5. Conclusion

What this chapter has tried to argue is first that, due to uniform retail settings and oftentimes indiscernible product ranges, a large portion of fashion consumers in Europe is left dissatisfied with the offerings of retailers. Second, this development has been linked to the emergence of large-scale retail chains that have driven out of the market a vast majority of smaller businesses and, as a consequence, a missing link between available products and consumers' actual demands on fashion clothing. Third, it h as been maintained that another factor contributing to the growing disenchantment with attire products is the industry's reliance on push marketing and similar strategies. While for both large-scale chains as well as the luxury industry this paradigm still works rather well, the same cannot be said for the middle market where the economic means for launching high-gloss campaigns and supermodels are limited, thereby controlling the options to guarantee sales pitch by means of push campaigns.

It is at this nexus that chances open up for smaller fashion brands to regain consumer loyalties and offer more diversity and individual product ranges. By including feedback relays into the value creation chain and appealing to central value connections of their consumers the point of exchange can be extended away from product-centric to emotional sales arguments. Introducing the example of

Diesel as an exemplary case for such an approach, it has been tried to illustrate how providing to consumers a feeling of belonging and actual identification with a brand mentality can function as a strategic ploy for improved consumer satisfaction and retention in the long run. Lastly, by looking at current research in the Dutch fashion industry in this respect it has been attempted to provide an insight into possible future developments as well as certain areas of interest that might be considered in this respect.

Notes

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[2] Ibid., pp. 3-4.

[3] J.E. Workman and C.M. Studak, 'Fashion and Problem Recognition Style', *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 1, January 2006, p. 77.

[4] M. Solomon and N. Rabold, *Consumer Behaviour in Fashion*, Prentice-Hall, Upper Saddle River, NJ, 2004, p. 491.

[5] Ibid., pp. 490-491.

[6] L. Bovone, 'Urban Style Cultures and Urban Cultural Production in Milan: Postmodern Identity and the Transformation of Fashion', *Poetics*, Vol. 34, 2006, pp. 376-78.

[7] M. Sherrill and C.A. Carmel, *Style Makers: Inside Fashion*, The Monacelli Press, New York, 2001, p. 27.

[8] T. Jackson, 'The Process of Fashion Trend Development Leading to a Season', *Fashion Marketing: Contemporary Issues*, T. Hines and M. Bruce (eds), Butterworth-Heinemann, Oxford, 2001, pp. 170-171.

[9] J. Entwistle, 'The Cultural Economy of Fashion Buying', *Current Sociology*, Vol. 54, No. 5, 2006, p. 709.

[10] Stockert, pp. 7-8.

[11] G. Lipovetsky, 'Luxury and the Sixth Sense', *Fashion & Accessories*, J. Teunissen and J. Brandt (eds), Terra Press, Arnhem, 2007, p. 26.

[12] Ibid.

[13] G. Lipovetsky, *The Empire of Fashion: Dressing Modern Democracy*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 1994, pp. 77-79.

[14] G. Birtwistle, I. Clarke and P. Freathy, 'Customer Segmentation in Fashion Retailing: A Conjoint Study', *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*, Vol. 3, No. 3, 1999, p. 253.

[15] G. Birtwistle, I. Clarke and P. Freathy, 'Customer Decision Making in Fashion Retailing: A Segmentation Analysis', *International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management*, Vol. 26, No. 4, 1998, pp. 148-189.

[16] D. Jacobs, 'The Promise of Demand Chain Management in Fashion', *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*, Vol. 10, No. 1, 2006, p. 93.

[17] Ibid., p. 92.

[18] G. Simmel, 'Die Philosophie der Mode', *Georg Simmel: Gesammelte Schriften*, M. Behr, V. Krech and G. Schmidt (eds), Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt, 1995, p. 28.

[19] A. O'Cass and C.C. Julian, 'Fashion Clothing Consumption: Studying the Effects of Materialistic Values, Self-Image/Product-Image Congruency Relationships, Gender and Age on Fashion Clothing Involvement', *ANZMAC Conference: Bridging Theory and Practice*, S. Chetty and B. Collins (eds), Massey University Press, Massey, Auckland, 2001.

[20] G. Lipovetsky, 'Modern and Postmodern Luxury', *Fashion & Accessories*, J. Teunissen and J. Brandt (eds), Terra Press, Arnhem, 2007, p. 31.

[21] Ibid., p. 32.

[22] D. Gilbert, 'Urban Outfitting: The City and the Spaces of Fashion Culture', *Fashion Cultures: Theories, Explorations, and Analyses*, S. Bruzzi and P.C. Gibson (eds), Routledge, London, 2000, p. 9.

[23] Businessweek Online, January 20, 2003, Retrieved on September 22, 2009, http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/03_03/b3816135.htm.

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[25] Gilbert, op. cit., pp. 10-11.

[26] Businessweek Online, loc. cit.

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Constantin-Felix von Maltzahn is a PhD student at Radboud University Nijmegen/University of Amsterdam. The research project 'Social Economics and Business: The Construction of Brand Identities by Designers and Consumers' is concerned with how different processes of identity construction work within the Dutch fashion industry. The underlying research hypothesis reads that Dutch fashion firms increasingly co-create the collective identities of their main audience groups and in this way try to enhance economic performance in the market.

Defining the Fashion City: Fashion Capital or Style Centre?

Nathaniel Dafydd Beard

Abstract
Paris, London, Milan, New York and Tokyo: this is the familiar roll-call of grand fashion capitals as we know them today. Each has striven to attain, and indeed maintain, its place in the hierarchy of style. Yet what is a fashion capital? What makes a city a fashion city? The city is a site for both the production and the display of fashion, from shops and factories, through to bars and the street. Although many authors have described fashion cities, including Benjamin,[1] Breward and Gilbert,[2] O'Neill[3] and Steele,[4] an exact definition of the fashion city has proved elusive. Towards forming a definition of the fashion city, this chapter will address how the culture of fashion is used in the promotion of the economic and cultural vitality of a city. Fashion today is packaged and sold as a commodity, not only as a physical object, like a dress or a coat, but also as a cultural commodity used to promote a community, a city or a nation. This may take shape in the form of Fashion Weeks or advertising campaigns. Yet, what does this cultural commoditisation mean to the citizens and visitors to the city? What sense of identification or belonging does it engender? In a globalised world, a sense of the local remains as pertinent as ever. In the 1980s a new kind of fashion city, the style centre, emerged to challenge the impersonality of the fashion capital. Antwerp and Copenhagen, for example, demonstrate how smaller, nimbler cities, can become style leaders in their own right. Could these cities usurp the fashion capital status of Paris? Outlining how the style centre has come to gain influence, this chapter will conclude with an insight into possible future developments for the changing hierarchical scope of the fashion city.

Key Words: Antwerp, city, fashion, fashion capital, fashion culture, London, Paris, style, style centre.

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1. Introduction

In introducing the fashion city, it is extraordinary to note a definitive definition of the concept of the fashion city has yet to be reached. Yet the relationship between fashion and the city is an interdependent one, as Hudita Mustafa Nura notes: 'Fashion needs a stage, we know, and cities need spectacles.'[5] This elusiveness is perhaps understandable, given the very changeable and intrinsically unsteady nature of fashion, and indeed of the city itself, the context in which fashion is dependent upon. In writing about fashion, putting it into the context of an urban environment is particularly pertinent, as fashion is in essence about display. Fashion is a display of style and status, character and commerce, while the

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city itself provides both a backdrop and an audience for this display. As Steele states: 'Paris was for many years the ultimate stage on which to act out the drama of seeing and being seen.'[6] Although perhaps considered the fashion city *par excellence*, Paris itself has since been joined by London, Milan, New York and Tokyo. Not just mere fashion cities, they are often referred to as *Fashion Capitals*. Indeed, Paris, London and Tokyo are the actual capitals of their respective countries, France, Great Britain and Japan, where they are centres of both political and economic power. Milan and New York, although not official capitals, are equally important in their respective countries as centres of trade and also the media, an important component in the dissemination of fashion.

Today, each of these *Fashion Capitals* appears as an unshakable bastion of fashion influence, yet their position as such has not always been sacrosanct. Over London, in particular, there has always been a question mark over its position as a true Fashion Capital, not least due to the lack of financial investment and backing by the both the British government and the fashion-buying public it serves.[7] Even Paris has had to fight in order to retain its supremacy, for example during the 1960s, when: 'Lacking a genuine youth culture, French fashion designers tended to use futurism as a metaphor for youth.'[8] The fact that only one of the cities listed as a fashion capital is in Asia is another curiosity, since the raw materials of fashion, such as wool, cotton and leather, are derived as much from South America, Asia, Australasia or Africa as they are from Europe or North America. Traditionally, this is culturally determined as the fashion *system* as we know it today is Euro-centric in form and construct, differing from other systems of status display found in other parts of the world. This rather simplistic viewpoint on fashion is changing, however, as evidenced by the work of designers located in the cities in the Southern hemisphere. São Paulo in Brazil, for instance, has become renowned as a centre of expertise in lingerie and swimwear as its own local fashion culture is specifically concerned with a very demonstrative display of body-consciousness. It is this concept of developing new sites of fashion culture related to specific and nuanced lifestyles or activities that have led to the need for a reassessment of what constitutes a fashion city today.

Since the 1980s, however, a new model for the fashion city has evolved, as the fashion industry itself has changed, as a move to a more globalised and interconnected world has occurred. This new type of city may be referred to as a 'Style Centre', and its original model may be found in the example of Antwerp in Belgium. In the introduction to their book *Fashion's World Cities* Breward and Gilbert refer only fleetingly to Antwerp in relation to newer *world cities of fashion,* such as Moscow or Mumbai.[9] While these cities have their own indigenous fashion industry, as far as many fashion brands from the West are concerned, these are cities merely in which to set up shop to sell branded luxury goods or sportswear. In contrast, smaller cities, like Antwerp, which have developed their own distinct fashion culture to become influential within and even beyond their own local

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market, offer a distinct and separate model of the fashion city. At first glance this concept of the *Style Centre* may appear completely new, and yet it has historic precedents which can be found throughout the 20th Century. In 1920s France the beach resorts of Deauville and Biarritz became fashionable, where the newly popular activities of sunbathing and swimming could be practiced. Both Coco Chanel and Jean Patou opened boutiques in these towns specifically to cater for the sophisticated *international café society* set who flocked to these resorts each summer.[10] To take another example, in the 1970s the Height Ashbury district of San Francisco became a *Mecca* for *hippies*. Here it was possible to purchase the accoutrements of the *hippy lifestyle*, long flared trousers, embroidered waistcoats, and beaded necklaces.

2. Developing the Fashion City

In the same way that fashion firms use marketing and PR activities to *brand* themselves as desirable, so too are cities, even nations, now adopting similar strategies in order to market themselves on an international stage. The cultural sector has proved to be a particularly attractive field in which cities can engage new audiences and, importantly, to attract publicity, with the hope of it leading to lucrative inward investment. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the universal appeal of fashion has proved a popular method in engaging with both the interior and exterior audience of a city. As Loshek notes:

> Fashion has proved itself an extremely successful cultural melting pot. In fashion there is talk of sampling, redesigning or mapping the world. In this context, the global design is orientated on local traditions; it assimilates everything – whether Romanian peasant blouse, Mongolian waistcoat, Japanese labourer's pants or Hawaiian shirt – and puts it together in a new way to create a new whole that is available across the globe.[11]

Fashion is therefore an understandable language, whose concepts are understood and recognised by all, in what anthropologist Ted Polhemus refers to as the *style supermarket*.[12] In a society engaged in the phenomenon of globalisation, connected through technological means such as the Internet, it is now possible to access the fashion cultures of cities in even remote parts of the world. While this has, allegedly, brought about a greater homogeneity in consumer goods and lifestyles, it remains necessary to ground this internationalism in a specific locality. Even for the very young, the allure of specific localities, such as fashion cities, that have developed a potent fashion culture retain their relevance and importance. For this reason, in developing a fashion culture, cities cannot import this culture from outside; instead it must be developed and nurtured from within.

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The hosting of a *Fashion Week*, often with an attendant Fashion Trade Fair, has proved especially attractive to cities wishing to promote themselves as a *Fashion City*. The purpose of the Fashion Week is often not only to establish a city's credentials as a fashion city, but also to act as a catalyst to attract inward investment into other sectors, creating urban regeneration, growth in tourism, and perhaps re-igniting interest in the local fashion market. As van der Zwaag states:

> Most fashion weeks are internationally orientated, but there are also fashion weeks geared to the local fashion market...What is of crucial importance is the development of a national fashion industry. If such an industry scarcely exists, then the fashion week is primarily aimed at stimulating and creating a market for it.[13]

Although a city may play host to a Fashion Week, this does not mean that a city automatically qualifies as a *Fashion City*. Many cities, in particular those that hold regular trade fairs related to the fashion industry, such as the International Lingerie and Swimwear Exhibition held in Harrogate, UK, or Tissu Premier in Lille, France, can hardly claim the status of a fashion city outside those times their particular trade fair is held. Beyond the Fashion Week or fashion trade fair, there needs to be a direct underpinning supplied by the presence of a fashion industry in the city. Off-shore manufacturing, whether in far flung territories such as China or Ecuador, or closer to home in Turkey or Portugal, is now an integrated part of the structure of manufacturing clothing. A city can, however, provide a home for the *soft* elements of fashion culture, such as fashion design, Fashion Weeks, magazines and media to showcase fashion, a vibrant street culture in which to contextualise the city's fashion culture, and shops in which to purchase fashion. It is these elements that are now at the core of fashion culture, as it is observed in developed economies throughout the world.

A city that wishes to develop specifically into a *Fashion City* needs to have a clearly defined strategy, as fashion is already a very over-crowded marketplace. Even those cities who have attained the desirable status of Fashion Capital can find themselves to be *out of fashion*. As a recent guide to London's fashion scene asserts:

> ... London is a complicated beast. Like any self-respecting metropolis, it's in a constant state of flux. Areas rise in prominence, culturally and economically, only to fade as other boroughs and postcodes find favour and become fashionable. It's a cycle observed in cities across the globe ...[14]

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Of all the creative industries, fashion is perhaps most obviously susceptible to this kind of cycle of favour and influence. Technological innovations and improved communications have assisted in speeding up this cycle. Alongside this, an increasing sophistication in fashion consumers has occurred. Many are now much less enamoured of dictates emanating from a select group of *fashion gatekeepers*, such as buyers, designers and journalists. In turn, the city as a site of fashion has also been transformed. In the past, as Steele observes, in the late 19th and early 20th Century large metropolitan cities such as 'London and Saint Petersburg were closer to Paris than many a small French town'.[15] Today, this no longer remains the case. With innovations such as the Internet and flights on low-cost airlines the physical, and indeed psychological, differences between large cosmopolitan cities and their, so-called, provincial counterparts are becoming increasingly narrower. It is no longer necessary to be *plugged in* to metropolitan life, of which fashion is a part, on a constant basis. As this would imply, it appears that traditional ideas surrounding what constitutes a Fashion City, and in particular the Fashion Capital, are set to change.

3. The Fashion Capital: Style versus Commerciality

Elsa Schiaparelli, the celebrated Italian couturier and rival to Chanel, '...found the contrast between London, the most masculine city in the world, and Paris, the most feminine, vastly stimulating.'[16] Today this analogy of the two cities is perhaps as pertinent as ever within the context of fashion culture. Paris today remains the spiritual home of haute-couture, evocative of luxurious and extremely feminine elegance. In contrast, London's stance is rather mixed, contradictory even. Having established itself as the centre of a vibrant youth culture in the 1960s, which continues today in the form of its vibrant high-street fast-fashion retailers, this culture is underpinned and set in opposition to the high-quality wool and tweed suits made by the tailors of Savile Row. Pitched as they are both culturally and politically as rivals eyeing each other across the divide of the Channel, it is remarkable how similar some of their traits as fashion capitals are. In effect, it could be said, that London and Paris are mirrors of each other. Not exact opposites, instead they *mirror* the traits of fashion culture the other would like to possess.

In many respects Paris is the archetypal fashion city, and is often cited as the most prestige amongst the fashion capitals. When French fashion is referred to, often what is meant is the fashion found in Paris. Indeed, the city has developed an ideal persona who epitomises all that Paris fashion represents: *The Parisienne*. So ingrained is the idea of the Parisienne, the woman who is the perfect encapsulation of Paris fashion culture, that Yves Saint Laurent's most recently launched perfume is called *Parisienne*. Rather ironically, perhaps, the advertising campaign for the perfume features the very English model, Kate Moss, clutching a pink rose, with the Eiffel Tower looming behind her in the distance. The inclusion of Moss, however, is telling, revealing that it is not necessary to be French to be a

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Parisienne. In the arena of fashion advertising, which aims to appeal to a global audience, it may even be a hindrance. Yet at the same time, so intrinsically linked are Paris and fashion, it is difficult to imagine one without the other. In the words of Agnès Rocamora:

> The celebration of Paris as the capital of France and a site of prestige has gone hand in hand with its celebration as a fashion city, with haute couture in particular a prestigious field of practices, experiences and representations that has fed into the city's mythological status.[17]

It is clear that fashion in Paris is taken very seriously, not only as a site of cultural prestige, but also as a demonstration of economic power. Today, many of the city's iconic fashion names, such as Dior, Givenchy, Cartier, Louis Vuitton and Balenciaga are owned by a handful of luxury conglomerates such as LVMH, Richemont and Gucci Group. While many of these firms retain workshops or links with small firms that continue the artisan traditions of haute couture, it is the commercial licensing of these brands names, in the form of perfume and cosmetic lines, bags or sunglasses; that ensure they are kept financially afloat. More recently, designer names previously always associated with the highest echelons of fashion are no longer averse to being associated with fast-fashion, mass-market brands. Karl Lagerfeld's collection for Sweden's H&M, and Jil Sander's new line for Japan's Uniqlo, are demonstrations of the increasingly hybrid nature of fashion. In many respects, and often to the envy of the seemingly more staid, and bourgeois approach of Paris, London has offered a model for this kind of hybridity. Yet, unlike in Paris, London's relationship with fashion has often been unsteady and un-supported. As Caroline Evans remarks:

> London fashion has huge cultural capital, even where there is almost no economic capital to support it...But it may be this very poverty that is the motor that drives London fashion, with its 'have a go' ethic that forces young designers to extreme postures to get attention in a country that lacks industry infrastructure.[18]

While London is rightly famed as a *laboratory* of stylish invention, with the city used as a platform to launch the talents of new designers, the businesses of these designers have in the past not often been underpinned by sound commercial backing. This is changing; however, as the up-coming generation of today's designers are more realistic in their aspirations than their forerunners were, such as Body Map in the 1980s. Yet London is also home to a number of highly successful, and well regarded, commercially-orientated brands and designers. Leading the way are high-street names such as Top Shop, New Look and River

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Island, providing affordable and stylish fashion, often at a faster turnaround rate than their high-end designer rivals. While Paul Smith and Vivienne Westwood are perhaps the best known internationally, not least due to their large retail presence in markets like Japan, other names such as Nicole Farhi, Betty Jackson, Jasper Conran, John Richmond and Margaret Howell have all established successful, and relatively stable, high-end fashion brands. From the younger generation, Matthew Williamson and Alice Temperley both demonstrate that it is possible to be based in London and grow a successful luxury brand catering to a niche market, even if it is sometimes necessary to showcase their collections abroad.

During the 1970s and 1980s Paris and London have been joined by New York and Milan as Fashion Capitals. Both more obviously commercially orientated in their, respective, areas of sportswear and high-end ready-to-wear and leather, they both demonstrate a change in focus for the Fashion Capital, and the necessity to develop a specific area of specialisation. Tokyo emerged as Asia's Fashion Capital not least because several of its leading fashion designers decided to show their collections in Paris. Following Kenzo and Issey Miyake in the 1970s, Yohji Yamamoto and Rei Kawakubo's Comme Des Garcons vision of deconstructed clothing in the 1980s both shocked and piqued the interest of the Western fashion media and buyers. It was this idea of showcasing their collections directly before the relevant audience that indicated a direction for other designers in other so-called *non-fashion* cities to take in asserting their influence in the fashion industry. The *Antwerp Six* in the mid-1980s, for instance, and later the *Cri Nederlandais* designers from the Netherlands, who included Viktor and Rolf and Saskia van Drimmelen, in the early 1990s followed the example of these Japanese designers by showing their collections in London or Paris. Through the 1990s and early 21st Century, however, a brand new way of showcasing fashion and fashion culture has developed. The Internet, in the form of websites showcasing fashion designers and their collections, has meant it is now possible to discover and promote fashion without the restriction of physical proximity to significant sites of fashion culture, such as Paris or Tokyo. As the astute fashion commentator Suzy Menkes notes:

> Weaving a web is a traditional concept in fashion. It is the fabric of fashion history. And now that a worldwide version has appeared in cyberspace, we should do what smart people in our industry have always done: grab it with open arms-and tailor it to our needs.[19]

Since the early inceptions of fashion's exploration of the Internet, with designers such as Helmut Lang showing fashion shows via his website in the late 1990s, the apparent tactility of fashion has proved little obstacle to its embrace of this new technology. Web-based shops such as Net-a-porter.com successfully demonstrate that even the experience of purchasing luxury fashion can be replicated via the Internet, offering a different, yet complimentary, service to that

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offered by traditional flagship stores on Bond Street in London or the Via Della Spiga in Milan. Experimental websites such as ShowStudio.com, set up by photographer Nick Knight, and Diane Pernet's Iqons.com, a kind of social networking website for the fashion industry similar to MySpace or Facebook, showcase new talent and experimentation in fashion culture, without the need to wait for permission from established bastions of the fashion media, such as Vogue or L'Officiel magazines in Paris. While potentially the Internet offers a venue as perhaps the largest *Fashion City* of all, globalisation has not yet totally taken over. The overwhelming vastness of the Internet means that the city as a smaller, more contained structure for fashion culture retains its allure and relevance. Rather than opposites, the city and the Internet will each be involved simultaneously in the development and showcase of fashion culture.

4. The Style Centre: Fashioning a Future

In contrast to the grand fashion capitals like Paris and London which have long-embedded fashion cultures, the process of developing fashion cultures in smaller cities has taken a different course. Tending to focus on a smaller, localised scene encompassing a few individuals with a passionate interest in fashion, they seek to first conquer their peers before setting out to engage with the wider fashion industry. This type of fashion city may be defined as a *Style Centre*, and the pioneer of this model may found in Antwerp, the second city of Belgium, and the self-styled capital of the region of Flanders. As Breward and Gilbert state:

> Another model of the fashion city has been pioneered in Antwerp, where increased state support for local designers has promoted fashion design not so much as creative industry, as a part of the creative infrastructure of the city, with anticipated positive consequences for gentrification and urban regeneration.[20]

While in the past smaller centres of fashion influence may have acted as a filter of fashion trends from the Fashion Capitals, like Paris, since the 1980s these centres have taken to carving out their own identifiable and distinct fashion culture. It is this very affinity with a particular locality that enables fashion designers based in these smaller cities to engage with an audience that is on the look-out for something that is genuinely different. As Cathy Horyn states:

> ...while we would never say that the French designers have a special affinity for Paris or the Japanese for Tokyo - to make such a claim in a globalized world seems archaic - I think it can be said that the Belgian designers are different precisely because they live in Antwerp.[21]

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In the case of Antwerp this point of difference was realised in the mid 1980s by a group of designers who decided to pool their resources to demonstrate a cohesive vision of Antwerp as a Style Centre. *The Antwerp Six*, as they became known by the media, were six graduates who had been taught by Linda Loppa, then head of the Fashion Department of Antwerp's Royal Academy of Fine Arts. The six were Walter van Beriondonck, Dirk Bikkembergs, Ann Demeulmeester, Dries van Noten, Dirk van Saene and Marina Yee. While these six were not the first graduates from the Academy, they decided to take a pro-active stance in promoting their work to the wider fashion industry by deciding to show their collections in London as a cohesive group, yet with each designer retaining their own individual vision. As Van Noten recalls of the time:

> We had very little to show and I can remember all our first collections...We realized that it would be better just to show shoes or shirts, if that is all that you can be sure to deliver, than to do a whole collection that you can't get to the shops on time. We learned a lot from the British designers: they had fantastic ideas, but their organization and their delivery were hopeless.[22]

It was this combination of chutzpah in showing in London, combined with enough business nous to realize it was better to show a neatly edited collection of well-made clothes, easily deliverable within the confines of each fledgling designer's enterprises, which stood them in good stead. From these beginnings each of the Antwerp Six developed their own businesses through the 1980s and 1990s, with varying degrees of success, while at the same time developing an international reputation that piqued the interest of buyers and the media around the world. Their model of remaining based in their home city, yet showcasing their work on the catwalks of the Fashion Capitals, in London, and later, in Paris, demonstrated a way forward for other designers. Not only those who came later from Antwerp, such as Veronique Branquinho and Bernhard Wilhelm, but also those from other cities, such as Amsterdam, Barcelona, Berlin, Copenhagen, Lisbon and Stockholm. As Aynsley reflects on successful German designers, such as Jil Sander, who came to prominence at the same time:

> ... in a decentralized Federal Republic the idea of a leading or single fashion city, following the model of the post-war couture industry, did not naturally fall onto the German political and cultural map. Instead, it was through the projection of fashion brands onto a global context, rather than through a fashion 'locus', that German fashion designers made their mark in the 1980s and '90s.[23]

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While the traditional format of Fashion Weeks in cities like Paris, London and Milan offer a useful platform for designers based outside these cities, it is the intrinsic point of difference of being based in a city such as Antwerp, which enables them to compete in a globalized context. The very smallness of the Style Centre may even contribute to this success, as a nimbler entity, with less of the rigid structures and weighty sense of tradition found in the fashion capitals. Rather than being a hindrance to their development as fashion cities, instead their smallness may assist in their appeal. Referring to Amsterdam, a city famed since the 1970s for its vibrant, alternative street culture, Polhemus asserts:

> Amsterdam is a tiny city, but an enormous fashion catwalk. In fact its geographic compactness contributes directly to its in-your-face stylishness.[24]

Rather than being dictated to or being subsumed by a small number of fashion brands offering a similar range, consumers can instead seek out fashion that appeals specifically to them and, significantly, fits in with the activities of their daily lives. For example, as sunbathing was a popular activity in the 1920s, more active sports such as surfing have developed their own fashion culture today. The appeal of surf-specific brands such as Billabong and O'Neills from Australia have focused attention on the locales of Sydney and Melbourne as new and aspirational sites of outdoor, healthy living. As Breward and Gilbert note:

> Maybe...this is an era where dynamism in fashion shifts to the margins of the corporate fashion system, to transnational populations in the established world cities, and to the hybridizations of local and global influences in emergent fashion centres.[25]

Here, in the closing year of the 21st Century's first decade, perhaps it is the Style Centre, rather than the Fashion Capital, that is better positioned to provide this.

5. Conclusion

Now, as never before, trends and fashion styles can emerge through any aspect of society. As they are unrestricted in their source and manifestation, in turn they are disseminated in equally more fluid and seemingly irreverent ways. Pictures of the haute couture collections in Paris can be up-loaded and circulated on websites viewed in New York or Shanghai within an hour of them being shown on the catwalk. As Polhemus describes it,

> The tribes of the past were limited to a particular geographic area: today's style tribes have an enormous impact, because they

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use the media to create an international network of like-minded people.[26]

Yet it remains curious how attached the *style tribe* of journalists and buyers are to the physical locations of fashion display in the bi-annual circuit of fashion weeks, encompassing the Fashion Capitals: London, Paris, Milan, New York and Tokyo. The appeal of this circuit is understandable, however, as it offers a structure and a sense of permanence in an industry where so much appears to be based on a state of flux. Yet, increasingly, this style of fashion display and promotion is beginning to look archaic, as consumers of fashion no longer seek out *the look* of the season. Instead, they are more interested in the look of the season that suits them, and perhaps more importantly, is appropriate to their lifestyle and associated peer group. The island of Ibiza, off the coast of Spain, is one such place that can now claim to be a Style Centre in its own right. The famed Ibiza nightclub culture, which in turn affects fashion trends filtered through the vision of high-end and high-street brands, is ardently watched by trend forecasters and designers alike. As Lucinda Cook, Fashion Director of Deliciously Sorted, an Ibiza concierge service, states,

> Ibiza is loved by the fashion industry...Models, designers and photographers holiday on the island year after year and I think they are naturally influenced by their surroundings. The beauty, the beaches, the music, the people.[27]

Far from being on the periphery, such Style Centres as Ibiza are increasingly becoming part of the mainstream fashion circuit. This is a situation only likely to increase as denim and sportswear brands, in particular, seek to extend their market reach. Yet rather than aspiring to become Fashion Capitals in the style of Paris, many of these Style Centres instead pertain to be leaders of their own local region, or specific fashion market. Stockholm, the capital of Sweden, is currently *the* city in which to find the most exciting denim, skate or street wear. As James Collard recently reported on the Acne brand,

> Stockholm feels like it's also on a high right now. It has emerged as an unexpected hothouse of fashion talent, from jeans brands Hope, Nudie and Whyred to the global fast-fashion giant H&M...the label [Acne]-which couldn't be more now-somehow does what it does without aiming to be completely in synch with what's happening in the fashion capitals of London, New York, Paris and Milan.[28]

Rather than Paris, Stockholm is instead in competition with its old adversary, Copenhagen, home to the very commercially orientated CPH Vision trade fair,

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with each city competing for the crown of *Fashion Capital of Scandinavia*. While the allure of the grand Fashion Capitals of Paris et al retain their potency as the benchmark against which global fashion culture is based, their position as such is no longer unassailable. Cities such as Antwerp, Amsterdam, Berlin and Stockholm, are no longer mere satellites of fashion culture. In partnership with the Internet, they are centres of their own, increasingly authoritative, sphere of fashion influence.

Notes

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[3] A. O'Neill, *London-After a Fashion*, Reaktion Books, London, 2007.

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[5] H. Nura Mustafa, 'La Mode Dakaroise: Elegance, Transnationalism and an African Fashion Capital', in Breward and Gilbert, op. cit., p. 195.

[6] Steele, op. cit., p. 8.

[7] R. O'Byrne, and A. Worsley-Taylor, *Style City: How London Became a Fashion Capital*, Frances Lincoln Limited, London, 2009.

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[9] Breward and Gilbert, op. cit.

[10] G. O'Hara, *The Encyclopaedia of Fashion: From 1840 to the 1980s,* Thames and Hudson, London, 1993, pp. 68-70 & 190-191.

[11] I. Loschek, *When Clothes Become Fashion: Design and Innovation Systems*, Berg, Oxford and New York, 2009, p. 108.

[12] T. Polhemus, 'Ted Polhemus', *Fashion Statements: Interviews with Fashion Designers*, Skira Editore S.p.A, Milan. 2006, p. 42.

[13] A. van der Zwaag, 'Fashion Weeks', *Global Fashion, Local Tradition: On the Globalisation of Fashion,* Uitgeverij Terra Lannoo BV, Arnhem, 2006, pp. 38-40.

[14] B. Quested, *The Guide, The Definitive Guide to London for Global Style Hunters,* Prestal Verlag, Munich, London and New York, 2008, p. 6.

[15] Steele, op. cit., p. 26.

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[18] C. Evans, 'Postscript: Beyond 2000', *The London Look: Fashion from Street to Catwalk*, Yale University Press, New Haven, and Museum of London, London, 2004, p. 161.

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[20] Breward and Gilbert, op. cit., p. 31.

[21] C. Horyn, 'Identity in Antwerp Fashion: This is How it Really Is', *6+ Antwerp Fashion*, Ludion, Ghent, 2007, pp. 112-123.

[22] D. van Noten, *Dries Van Noten: Shape, Print and Fabric*, Thames and Hudson Ltd., London and New York, 1999, pp. 10-11.

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[25] Breward and Gilbert, op. cit., p. 31.

[26] T. Polhemus, *Ted Polhemus*, *Fashion Statements: Interviews with Fashion Designers*, Skira Editore S.p.A, Milan, 2006, p. 44.

[27] A. Fisher, 'That's Hot! Ibiza Style 2009', *The Observer Magazine*, 2 August 2009, pp. 32-37.

[28] J. Collard, 'The Man who Made Acne Cool', *The Times Magazine*, 22 August, 2009, pp. 42-44.

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Nathaniel Dafydd Beard, a graduate of the London College of Fashion and ArtEZ Hogeschool voor beeldende kunsten Arnhem, is a writer, curator and conceptualist. Currently an MPhil/PhD candidate in the School of Fashion and Textiles at the Royal College of Art, his current practice focuses on ethics in fashion, cultural identity, fashion tourism and the development and role of the fashion city.

Developing the Perfect Fashion Archive

Claire Evans

Abstract
It is common practice for designers to draw inspiration from fashion garment archives. Many established companies and fashion houses hold their own private archives, going back to their company's beginnings. These collections provide invaluable resources that are essential to fashion designers who constantly draw inspiration from them when developing new ranges, they use them to re-examine, reconstruct and re-evaluate the design process, as can be see by the following quote:

> Christopher Bailey – always up for a rummage in the archives –
> has obviously had some great fun. Never too obvious – there's
> no reissue here – he instead infuses heritage into modern pieces.[1]

The ability of students to understand the use of archives as primary research material when designing is essential. Archives become key learning resources that provided an understanding of the use of physical garments to create and inspire the design process. Current fashion archives tend to be large; however there is a need for small teaching archives to be established on a more manageable scale. Archives are held with specific aims in mind with their planning and development being essential. This chapter discusses what would constitute the perfect fashion archive for a fashion department. Researching the creation of a specialist fashion reference collection that functions as a teaching aid within a department with limited space and finances.

Key Words: Fashion archives, fashion reference collections, garments teaching aids.

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1. Established Fashion Archives

There are vast arrays of fashion archives both public and private that the general public are able to access and the interest in them seems to be increasing. Italian fashion companies such as Armani, Pucci, Ferragamon, Fendi and Mantero have recently begun to visibly invest in their company archives. With their archive resources playing 'a significant role in the development of design and fashion trends'.[2]

For fashion companies to establish and dust off otherwise neglected fashion archives is also a vogue that seems to be suddenly re emerging. Phillip Sykas from Manchester Metropolitan University comments:

> In this new design and art environment design archives are growing in importance, not just as a source of untapped imagery, but as a memory of technique.[3]

Fashion archives can comprise of records of a number of varied fashion products ranging from garments to company marketing material. Currently the UK houses a number of extensive fashion archives with permanent public exhibitions. The Victoria and Albert Museum's Fashion, Jewellery and Accessories collection of 'fashionable dress from the 17th century to the present day' being one of the most extensive.[4]

The often hidden resources of archives held at established fashion design companies/houses and by private collectors are less well recognised. Manuela Morin creative director of Tanner Krolle (bespoke British made luggage supplier formerly to the royal family) explains:

> The history is such an attractive element, both in terms of the product's look and the story behind it. The extensive archives have been inspirational for my designs, and this integrity is what will put Tanner Krolle back on the fashion map.[5]

These fashion archives are made up of physical collections of garments and samples from company back catalogues and bought in pieces. They provide invaluable primary resources materials from which design inspiration and trends can be gleaned. Elisa Palomino (former head of studio at John Galliano) when asked what her collection of John Galliano and vintage had taught her responded 'My Galliano wardrobe has helped me create my own universe, playing with colour, mixing prints, textures and vintage. There is no limit!'[6]

Designers find themselves working from these pieces and often with the pieces to develop garments and ranges, bring the pieces into the studio environment to be examined, sometimes dismantled, sampled and reworked:

> Michael Hertz and Graeme Fidler, the fashion designers behind Aquascutum, have managed to combine history with modernity by designing a collection for next winter which delves deep into the fashion archives, dismantles models and puts them back together again giving rise to highly appealing creations with rich detailing.[7]

Using fashion archives within design teaching provides a stimulating creative facility that is both hands on and easily accessible. Yet few education establishments are officially supported by such fashion archives and of those that are they usually comprise of extensive reference collections. For example the

Museum at FIT (Fashion Institute of Technology) in New York whilst operating as a museum of clothing, accessories and textiles also runs alongside (literally in the same building) FIT's established fashion courses as a 'think-tank' for fashion studies.[8] The Yorkshire National Fashion Archive (YNFA) at University of Leeds focuses on the 'historical and cultural record of Yorkshire life in the 20th century through the prism of fashion' says David Backhouse, deputy chair of the archive's executive committee.[9] The extensive archive is currently used to support the teaching of students and research and is currently looking for a permanent home.

Similarly, other education establishments holding design archives are mainly again on a large scale. Examples include Central St Martins, Museum and Study collection, which holds teaching examples from the original Theatre Costume course; Heriott-Watt University Archive, with its focus on Scottish textile heritage and University of Leeds International Textile Archive (ULITA), which houses a collection of textiles and related design material.

Reference collections and archives are often extensive and specialist with some finding themselves struggling against space and budgets. Many also require special handling which restricts their use in a teaching environment where handing, putting on mannequins, photographing and sometimes even dismantling is to be encouraged.

2. Creating a Working Fashion Archive in a Fashion Department

Establishing such a learning resource archive within a fashion department does not however have to be costly and with careful selection a small key reference range can be formed that will become invaluable. The challenge of curator/ tutor is to initially identify the overriding nature of the collection and its function.

A. Creating our Specialist Fashion Archive

The following provides an outline of how a small teaching archive has been developed and integrated into the fashion department at University of Huddersfield. This is very much a reflection on an on going process that is been researched and developed as time progresses. It provides a point of reference for similar projects with in other departments.

B. Collection Size, Storage and Preservation

As with most departments our space is limited and, when researching the creation of an archive, the space that it would take up was a major issue. In order for the collection to be manageable, it was decided that its size needed to be controlled and restricted so that it remained static once it reached a certain scale rather than growing and becoming unmanageable. As staff started to take pieces into the studios, the maximum number of garments it soon became apparent. Twelve seemed to work with our class sizes, space (or lack of it) and need, so became the natural maximum for us.

It was decided to store the garments in boxes. Firstly consideration was given to storing the garments on hangers, however it was then realised that this was going to be difficult from both a storage and preservation point of view. It was also established that boxes were less cumbersome and could be moved around with relative ease, extra additional related items could be added and they could be labelled clearly. Archive boxes were sourced at A2 size and 10cm depth, a generous size for holding most pieces. Acid free tissue paper and handling gloves are also used to help preserve the more delicate items.
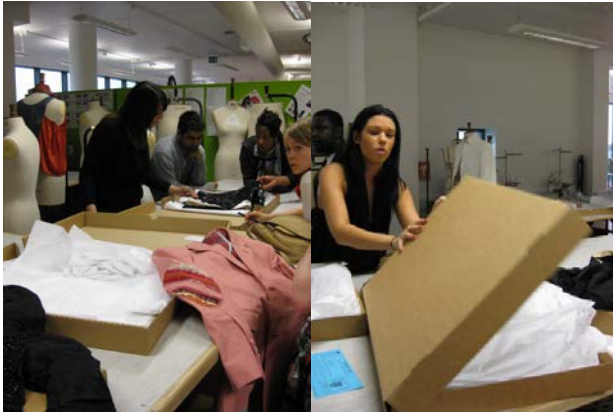
Figure 1. Garments being accessed by students.

C. Access

This needed to be a working archive that students and staff felt able to access effortlessly. It is held in the department rather than the library and boxed garments can be loaned out for use in the department's studios by any of our students or staff members. The aim was to encourage an ethos of researching garments in the design process at every stage as can be seen in Figure 1.

D. Selecting the Garments

Thanks to the donations from personal staff archives, we were soon able to bring together around four suitable pieces. This process of donations could have continued; however, it was felt that some truly contemporary and historical pieces needed to be brought in to stop the collection becoming staid. In order to add this contemporary/historical feel to the collection, a university capital funding bid of £1500 was successfully awarded.

Staff from across the department were then asked to complete a survey to establish what other garments they would like to see in the collection to support their teaching. The results showed that the collection needed to encapsulate the new, the old, specific techniques, fabrics, menswear, womenswear, and the list

goes on. With this in mind a collection of garments started to come together. After further discussion it was decided that garments from high end markets, couture and ready to wear were more essential that garments from low end markets. This was due to the availability and relative ease with which students could access lower budget garments.

The staff needs within modules were then explored. For example a tailored womenswear garment incorporating hand finishing was needed for demonstrating techniques on one of our manufacture modules. Bias cutting techniques were needed to demonstrate on ou r module developing moulaging techniques. Promotion staff requested garments that came from established labels so students could 'share their knowledge on the designers, the garment, fabrics and construction techniques, target customer and a d ate of when the garment was made'. See figure 2.
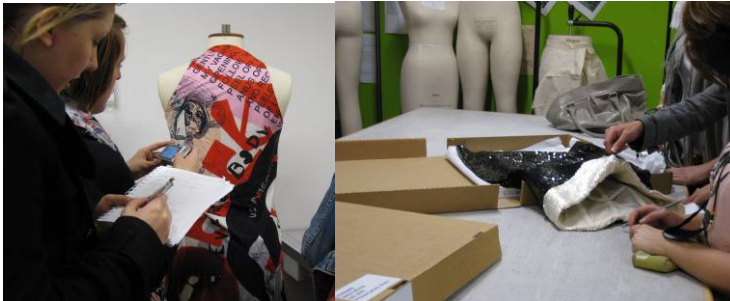
Figure 2. Garments being recorded and investigated in the studios

E. Buying the Pieces

We wanted some pieces that were current and contemporary, but realised the pieces would be out of date the minute they were purchased due to the transient seasonal nature of fashion. Therefore it was decided that the current and contemporary pieces were to be seen as design classics that maybe slightly out of date. This also helped with our budget, as we could source bargains during the end of season sales. Any additional information that came with these garments was also kept in the boxes, their swing tags, packaging etc; anything that we felt added an additional link to the original garment.

To source the historical pieces, antique clothing fairs were attended. These brought up some real gems at very reasonable prices. These garments were often in poor repair – having been handed down, altered and repaired over their life time – yet this is the nature of these garments and is wonderful from an historical perspective. Specialist second hand clothing stores were also visited to source design classics and garments with specific manufacturing finishes, textures and prints that fitted between contemporary and historical.

Consideration was also give to sizing and it was resolved that any size between UK 8-14 could be considered; it was the pieces that were more important than the size.

F. The Fashion Archive Online

> The music television/video games revolution is cultivating a generation of new learners and consumers who demand a more graphical, integrated, and interactive multimedia presentation of information.[10]

In order to be used successfully by students the fashion archive had to be distanced from the often perceived feeling of a stuffy specialist collection. It had to provide students with all the facilities to appreciate fully its value and relevance as a working fashion archive, which could support their studies. It also required a platform for the dissemination and integration of additional information and to be accessible to the widest possible audience.

Fashion garments bring with them a whole host of additional material, which goes way beyond the garments. The contemporary pieces have been instigated through an entire chain of events; they are part of a collection that was presented at a fashion show, photographed, reported and advertised in the press. The older pieces hold an historical and cultural significance that can be tracked and recorded.

In order for us to disseminate as much information as possible the fashion archive went online, with the university's virtual learning environment (Blackboard). See Figure 3. It has provided a platform for students and staff to contribute and collaborate in the development of the body of information surrounding the fashion archive pieces. Projects have been set with students investigating and recording the garments and the findings have been posted online. A blog was established where contributors are asked to record and talk about pieces they own; that they feel maybe of interest. A quiz testing students' knowledge was introduced. The online archive has added an extra dimension to the fashion archive and has resulted in a large amount of documentation been continuously put together with relative ease. It has allowed the fashion archive to develop its own community of practice supporting the learning and sharing of information.

Figure 3. The online archive

G. The Future

The fashion archive has been available for over two years now. It has been successfully integrated into teaching with staff constantly thinking of new and innovative ways of using it.

The area that now needs addressing is change. In order to abide by the original aims, the archive will not grow in size; it will stick to twelve pieces, but needs variation. Some of the older pieces are looking tired and a contemporary piece or two require up dating. Replacing selected pieces on a perennial basis appears to be the ideal solution, adding flavour and variation whilst allowing the archive to remain manageable. This will have cost implication, but these will be minimal and due to the resource now been recognised and established finding funding should be easier. Pieces are still been offered to us regularly by staff and this is also an additional option to consider. There is no reason why, however, the online resource cannot grow, with the information on garments that we replaced still remaining accessible. This would also help to establish further the online resource as a key research platform for students whilst giving it greater diversity.

Analysis of student feedback questionnaires indicates that students have been utilising the fashion archive in there studies. A student discussing one of the historical pieces stated: 'it brings history to the archive and you have to look back to go forwards'. Interesting suggestions for the future development of the archive were also presented by students: 'More on show, a bit like V&A in glass cabinets with a bit more information about them, but also make them just as accessible'; 'Student work from the university would be interesting'. Many students however, felt 'it is the variety that is important'.

The fashion archive has been a highly successful creation. This has been a simple and relatively straightforward facility to establish. It has become invaluable in teaching and learning and due to its size and accessibility has integrated effectively into the studio situation. Students appreciate having the pieces readily available as reference and staff value the additional in-house resource. Work still needs to be done to encapsulate a fully divers collection of pieces, all of which are in equal demand. Some pieces seem to be accessed less extensively than others and

could be replaced. The main recommendation when forming an archive for in-house teaching purposes is ensure you work with your space and budget. Remain mindful of your need and keep the archive focused.

Notes

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Claire Evans, Fashion Department, University of Huddersfield, United Kingdom.

The Future of Fashion: Something out of Nothing?

Karen Marie Heard

Abstract

'Leftovers' is a r esearch project focusing on some unexpected approaches to design methodologies. Routine approaches to design are challenged when ingredients from the process are unavailable or removed. To date discarded manufacturing materials have been transformed into fashion ideas - utilising a range of processes, including draping, jigsawing, laminating, bonding and juxtaposition. The concept of 'leftovers' is dependent on the materials that are left over from production and manufacturing. This has focused on waste from clothing and accessories but could be 'anything'. Dustbin waste is repurposed to become valuable and desirable. Nothing becomes something where leftover shapes and pieces that are left over, actually shape new designs. With extensive focus on ethics, climate change and environmental impact the fashion and textiles industry has particularly come under scrutiny in relation to these issues. Specifically concepts of waste, mass consumption and greed have left us with a quandary. Do we remain engaged with the fast paced fashion system that rotates fashion out of factories for fractional cost and fashionable solutions or do we refer back to times where individuals were forced to rework, re think and reutilise materials and garments? Research influences include constructivism, smart textiles and 1930-40's designs. This concept reaches deeper into our consciousness as it also explores the joy of uniqueness: A stark contrast away from mass production and towards individual celebration. It allows craft to be elevated and extracted from its homespun housewife associations. The questions raised though are of viability, manufacturing and if it can be respected and applied somehow by the industry? It follows a journey of materials, silhouette and intuition. It is full of suggestions, ideas, possibilities to give breath and life to things redundant and discarded. 'Waste' materials are transformed, reworked and renewed. The outcomes are sometimes abstract and exist as installations or visual stories, alternatively they morph into useable pieces; the reinvention of 'off cuts' to become desirable and useable items. This is a piece in progress and will evolve as long as the materials that we live in do. Reinvention. Reworking. Rebirth.

Key Words: Leftovers, off-cuts, waste, repurposing, reworking, reinvention, intuitive design.

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1. Metamorphosis of Waste?

It began as a thought. A moment of possible madness. As the students added waste to the bin, I removed it. I became a thief in the night, tip toeing up to the

studio to try and salvage another bag of delights. My mind worked over time trying to work out how I might re-use and re-energise these scraps. Yet I could not admit the interest I had in this material - it felt almost illicit. For me these leftovers had enormous creative potential and like a magpie I grabbed at anything that glittered. When I could see the possibilities it was hard to comprehend that others just saw unwanted leftovers: waste.

In a culture of mass consumption and greed, there is always waste. Growing awareness of climate change has become a r ecent influence in the fashion and textiles industry and challenges previous approaches. Overall it is apparent, that these issues are not just a current hot topic, but an opportunity to re-think and re-work the future of the industry. The possibility of new approaches flies in the face of today's mass consumerism and reaches deep into our consciousness.

Materials offer the possibility of colour, pattern and texture. They influence shape and structure through the way they behave. How they are used is dependent on a series of problems, conclusions, design, function and need. Materials are the driving force of this concept and all related research, and I searched out factory floors and dustbins for my starting points. The materials available limit the pieces and consequently challenge, yet also complement usual fashion and textiles processes such as forecasting trends. This is because the leftovers will reflect colours, patterns, and fabrics filtered and selected through the prediction process that leads many of the design decisions that go into production. The overall process of design relies on materials, techniques and processes. What happens when these are unusable, unavailable, undeveloped, overlooked, overused?

From as early as the fifteenth century in France, fashion was considered important enough to suggest that a 'Ministry of Fashion' should be developed.[1] I interpret this to confirm that 'Fashion' a term often associated with frivolity and materialism actually has and will continue to have significance beyond our expectations. Fashion and costume have evolved leaving a rich historical time line, featuring a co llage of fabrics, cuts, patterns, details and silhouettes. Design processes are illustrated within this time line and at times demonstrate invention, practicality or sheer beauty. In contrast there may be evidence of restriction in terms of materials, colours and technology. Social status and wealth can be measured as well as political, religious and gender based codes. The past will always influence and affect the future. As designers we are constantly faced with challenges and limits, and are often obsessed with the ideas of 'new'. The future is unknown and whilst we often make forecasts for that journey – we will never be able to predict the final stages. Can designers make a difference?

> Fashion is perplexing, intriguing, irritating and above all, compulsive. Like it or not, fashion exerts a powerful hold over people, even those who eschew it. While reactions to fashion are ambivalent, there is no doubt that clothes matter.[2]

The traditional fashion cycle comprises of many levels: trend forecasting, design process, fabric and yarn sourcing, garment manufacture, buying, production, wholesale, marketing and retail consumption.[3] Due to accessibility of catwalk information many consumers are often hungry for the looks and can have a desire for immediate gratification. This has resulted in huge waste, the suppliers selling excess wares in markets and shops are poignant examples of this. Unfortunately landfill is not a sympathetic or viable long-term solution.

My investigation into surplus materials 'leftovers', highlights a manufacturing problem. However transformation into products that consumers want and desire is part of this process. Designers have been experimenting with contemporary approaches to the idea of 'recycling'. Jackets have been reinvented into handbags and blankets have become dresses. Creative's exploring this field include Gary Harvey, Comme des Garcons, Worn Again by Terra Plana, From Somewhere and Lucy Orta to name a few.

Along with others, I am interested in taking this further. Recycling of products has become increasingly cool. In the fashion and textile industry considerable attention is paid to the elimination of waste during production. Explorations of waste from a short production run have been reduced to zero by returning all off-cuts to the garment as decoration. This makes waste visible and crucially elevates its status to form that of rubbish to beauty, emphasising a connection between the garments value and its material qualities. Recycling of fabric has been a way to create new products and ideas. This is environmentally friendly, cost effective as well as inspiring and creative. New products have been invented from fabric, old silk, woven blanket and selvedge waste from looms. I prefer to use the word repurposing instead of recycling as I believe this evokes new perspective on previous concepts and associations.

Couture for example offers bespoke and longer life solutions. The products are luxurious and have the potential to be treasured and valued as opposed to throwaway fashion. Focus on craft and skills are essential parts of this process. It is the designer's role to come up with smarter solutions.[4] Events such as Estethica (London) and Ethis (Paris), are high profile events that promote sustainable fashion initiatives. Fortunately during the time I have been focused on this research the arena has been expanding at a rapid pace, although this is still underdeveloped at mainstream level and this is where the future of fashion needs to rethink.

Fashion encourages want not need. Yet what we choose to wear affects people and the climate across the world. We are now in a position where consumers are becoming increasingly knowledgeable. As consumers ourselves can we really ignore the impact of our choices? What we need to know is can fashion be made with less waste? And can what is wasted become fashion?[5] Given the complex nature of the fashion industry the implementation of sustainable solutions is highly challenging. It surely requires a massive shift in thinking from every aspect of the supply chain, from designer to growers and from factories to point of sale. As an

educator I am focused on ways to deliver this to students, who in turn can potentially makes changes and progress how the Industry operates.

If design is essentially the visualisation of an idea, as a lecturer of fashion and textiles, my challenge must be to consider the role of the design process as a vehicle to promote change. Design can incorporate the concept of environmentally responsible and ethical products, in order that actual physical changes might impact on the local, national and international industry. Of course there are such products already and support and recognition for this approach is being distributed via associations, groups, books and conferences. But how does this filter through to the market place? Can it initiate a mass cultural shift?

Our world has never been so vulnerable yet progress is rooted in the economy. Do we have then, in the present economic crisis, an opportunity to promote a cultural shift away from mass production and disposable consumerism and towards an attitude where resources and products are precious possessions and the individuals' creativity is welcomed?

This concept is about reinvention: reinvention of materials and the way we use them, reinvention of the value of waste, reinvention of both the role of the designer and of the individual wearer. This is a personal perspective but also one that has potential relevance for future change. It's for the learner, for the educator, for the customer, for the manufacturer - for change and for vision about the way we approach 'design'.

2. Ways of Seeing / Thinking

My interest in leftovers has led me to look at ways to repurpose materials through design and manufacturing. The Landrover is an example of design by leftovers. The original design was built using leftovers from aeroplane manufacturing. Salvaged materials such as those in reclamation yards are often featured in architecture and design. We can source examples from the past such as Make do and Mend where parachute silk (lost in transit) was reworked into underwear and outerwear or alternative creative ideas were explored in response to limitation:

In current times designers are playing with discarded materials such as Marian Schoettle who has designed and produced a collection called 'Post-Industrial Folkwear' from surplus industrial materials.[6] On a more domestic level there is the example of the decorative 'leaf shapes' on pies, which come about from an attitude where leftovers were seen as wasteful and were therefore used creatively to add a little ornamentation. Equally the patchwork quilt was developed by frugal housewives who used the scraps of fabrics, which were leftover in their sewing baskets.

Textile recycling is one of the longest running forms of recycling; however in the UK we generate around 650,000 tonnes of textile waste of which only around 25% are currently recycled.[7] All types of textiles can be recycled and they are used

in a variety of different ways. The majority of waste textiles generated in the UK arise from household or post-consumer sources. These are usually clothing or household linens. These materials can either be re-used e.g. collected by charities for re-sale, shipping to developing countries or they can be returned to textile mills for reprocessing. This may be as simple as cutting garments up into rags and wipers, or may involve breaking down the garments into thread and re-spinning or combining them with new fibres to make new fabrics.[8]

Scavenging, collaging and sourcing snippets of materials from garment / accessory manufacture is the specific focus of my research. Partial sections have been rescued to be treasured, reworked and recorded to make new shapes and forms:

This process engages with 'leftover' waste from production and seeks to work with materials at the beginning of the design process. I believe that materials offer significant influences and excellent starting points for the design process but changing this process at industry level is unlikely at this stage. Even in times where consumers are aware of both ethical and environmental issues, significant proportions do not see value in spending money on a 'recycled' garment. Although some pioneering brands and designers are changing such perceptions, this area of clothing can be perceived as cast-off and second rate in comparison to brand new, trend led outcomes. A large sector of modern fashion is cheap and disposable and as a result some individuals dismiss the idea that salvaged or recycled products can offer interesting, modern and new solutions.

The ways we view things is essential to future change and the curation of the Spectres Exhibition (Victoria and Albert Museum, 2005) played with such ideas. Mirrors, peep holes, moving exhibits allowed viewers to consider objects and clothing in alternative ways. Surely through the metamorphosis of selected, even rescued materials and their conversion into something new, we are offered potentially innovative and precious outcomes? If embraced, this new way of seeing could utilise somewhat mathematical approaches to production, utilising the waste that is normally dejected to the factory floor.

3. Past Shapes make Future Design?

In fashion we have been trained to understand the expected silhouettes of the human form - namely the differences between men and women. Over the chronological story of fashion we have witnessed ongoing variations and changes in the fashionable silhouette.

Constructivist ideas focused on simplifying the construction of clothing; in order to create alternative types of garments which were more adapted to a new revolutionary life. It was believed that the body should be divided into geometrical forms to facilitate the construction of the garments sweeping away the prejudice of fashion and allowing wearers to be experiment with individual ideas.[9] Contemporary designers also implement such strategies.

Yeohlee Teng for examples uses a ci rcle to create a g arment whilst Isabel Toledo's surreal lines and futuristic content, offer simple but beautifully elegant pieces which define this label. Interestingly Toledo considers herself a seamstress rather than a d esigner. Which means that like Madame Gres and Madeliene Vionnet she does not start from a flat sketch but envisions clothes in 3 dimensions, often working with circles and curved lines.[10]

When designing, the process *can* be more creative if working with unexpected forms rather than existing or traditional garment shapes. Ruben Toledo's Wheel of Fashion for the Spectres Exhibition, illustrates this clearly in Victorian shadow painting style. Over a wide period of time the silhouette undulates, exaggerates and manipulates the body. Materials would have been cut, draped, ruched, pleated, shaped and at times scaffolded to the figure. In costume and fashion, past and present the body shape is mimicked, occasionally it is fashionably distorted and often it exaggerated.

As discussed the wheel of fashion captures evolving silhouettes. Ideas are constantly being revisited as designers respond to the times they live in. The fashion of the late 30's early 40's is a key example of the way fashion reacts to context. An archive visit to the V&A showcased numerous examples of utility dress, where routine approaches were challenged and rethought in response to restrictions of materials and the quantity available. Design restricted by government edict is unimaginable in our current climate but the garments produced were extraordinarily beautiful, sophisticated and unique; a direct result of the severe limitations placed on the design process.

Clever cutting, resourcefulness and attention to detail resulted in costume and fashion that had style and longevity. The attention to detail in terms of construction was absolutely reliant on tailoring processes, an approach that has been lost by the mass produced clothing practice associated with lower market fashion of today. The minimised range of fabrics, reduced colour palettes and standard guidelines for silhouette and detail led to inventive solutions by the individual wearer who would find ways to customise the standardised garments they bought as well as update and mend old ones.[11]

Points in history such as this, where restrictions changed the face of design are striking influences on our 'way of seeing'. Normally when constructing garments we are led by the 'design' (i.e. a sketch, or illustration), which is then converted, into a pattern, toiled, then cut in the appropriate materials and produced. This is the process from couture through to mass production. What happens when we question the process of design and as I have investigated, reverse this process? What if, as in the 1940s, we start with the materials only now our battle is with dwindling resources and with the amount that goes to waste?

> If Utility design is not regarded as the poor product of a wartime
> economy in dire straits, but as a co mmon-sense practice that

engaged actively with the conditions of the time, it is more possible to understand the importance of finding ways to take command of the creative sense of urgency that makes it possible to effect change.[12]

The Second World War marks a key period, which changed the face of fashion. There was rationalisation of production, elimination of unnecessary waste, restriction through government licensing, regulation of tax, price and profit limits, materials and labour. Design reformers saw it as opportunity to 'Instil an appreciation of Good Design in the general population'.[13] This theory was aimed at classic design, perhaps eliminating 'fashion' as it then existed. There was a desire for new thinking, which was known as back to basics design. There are key periods, which redefined design and this has been very influential for me. From this starting point I have delved into other research influences including constructivism, utility, and reform. Of course there are many more.

Modernism consciously got rid of the styles from the past and included a commitment to industrial materials and belief for change in design. Post modernism was a 1970's response – a variation on the theme. But we have since had new directions including a 'concern for design which promotes the ecological welfare of the planet'.[14]

New design focused on surface appearance. The use of geometry and abstraction were key design influences. The belief in industrial materials and techniques were valued as a means to good design and took of ideas of the machine age. We have been left a rich archive from the 'make do and mend' era. Minimised availability and government enforced rationing forced the form of dress to be led by rule and availability rather than trend or flattering styles but if this challenged and aided inspiration resulting in surprisingly sophisticated outcomes where style has been stripped to its essentials.

Machinery provided many contradictions for design, for example invention often removed drudgery but also self-expression. It allowed for the development of new materials and new forms from old materials. It saw the birth of the sewing machine, which in turn democratised the making of garments by allowing individuals to make their own garments relatively quickly. In turn unsupervised manufacturing led to standardised design and mass production. Of course there was soon a r ebellion against the machine age as for some the regimented look to products led to further change.[15] The reaction included revisiting craft based approaches, unique one-off finishes and individual, personal design and perhaps we need to continue to analyse this archive to find future strategies?

4. Alternative Approaches to Design?

So can we integrate alternative approaches to the design process at industry level? Design processes are often influenced by a theme or concept and these are

often repeated and echoed across the design or range. Conceptual design duo, Viktor and Rolf play on repetition within their collection, including a well known shirt featuring multiple collars. Repetition is a simple process and has been an ongoing design tool for my work and is explored later in my concept for reworking production off-cuts. Repeated shapes from machine cutting processes offer formulas or systematic opportunities for manufacturing the 'off-cut' waste.

The fashion cycle: production, consumption and disposal - demonstrate repeated processes that may need to be reconsidered in the future. Seeing off-cuts as pattern pieces could change the way we understand and treat design. There is however a certain lack of control about the production of the waste which commercially would be much more difficult to accept and manage. This process relies on intuitive design; and most likely will distort the silhouette via layering, overlapping, asymmetric features that show distorted views of the body. This is not new though as the manipulated structure is recurrent in fashion; Corsets, bustles, bandages, padding's, layers, structures all feature at points in the fashion spectrum.

Constructivist thinking explored expected and unexpected shapes in design. For Nadezhda Lamanova the future of dress was an outfit adapted for the individual figure, similar to the concept of dress reform or personalised dress. This utopian idea though could not be reconciled with the industrial process of fashion. Shapes and forms inspired the evolution of dress and led to the exploration of geometry and form within dress.[16] For Sonia Delaunay,

> A dress or an overcoat was a fragment of space that was designed and structured according to its material and dimensions, forming an organised whole obeying laws that became a standard of her art.[17]

The machine-age transformation looks at two aspects – approaches to the design process and also a concern for design which considers and potentially promotes ecological concern / welfare of the planet.[18] Whilst I am not necessarily a crusader for sustainable design, I am interested in change and potential solutions for the better. Modernism, Futurism, Constructivism were movements which demonstrated a belief in industrial materials and techniques. The regimentation associated with machine made goods and the demands of machine production have questioned the role of hand made, craft and unique, limited edition ideas and products. Machines can manufacture the same design endlessly and create visual coherence. The process of transformation therefore is not a new idea. The process is especially important in the thinking behind many clothing production processes.[19]

The designer is normally charged with specific ingredients such as forecasted shapes / silhouettes, colour palettes and celebrity interpretation. However the process of design may be restricted to that of availability as witnessed in the make

do and mend campaign, where utility clothing restrictions changed the design and making process through to the buying and availability of such designs to unprecedented levels: Design by restriction, Design by purpose. Design by instinct. These could offer alternative approaches to design.

5. The Future of Design?

To produce fashion that utilises salvaged materials on an industrial level however, there would need to be new approaches to production. At present recycled production, can only be commercially viable on a small scale. The raw materials are subject to a huge array of processes (collection, cleaning, inspection and potentially deconstruction). These processes are challenging in terms of time and labour, and so it becomes more financially attractive to produce fabrics from scratch. And yet the textile industry must address manufacturing in a sustainable and environmentally friendly manner if it is interested in its long-term survival.[20] The research references included in this have focused on sourcing unused, waste products from the manufacturing process.

This journey began when I questioned the way we see or view waste and the value we see in used objects and materials. This concept demonstrates and utilises new ways of seeing and indeed thinking in the hope that the fashion industry can reinvent itself to be more resourceful, more prudent. We have opportunities as well as the need to identify new ways, evolve new thinking and learn alternative approaches. The ability to see potential in anything and possibly everything is at the heart of my teaching and my own creativity and I believe is the future of design as it h as been its past. Can leftover pieces of turf cuts be utilised to provide alternate garden designs? Can misshaped sections of bread be manipulated to form a new kind of crouton? Can interfacing from the shoe making process be realised into objects of fashionable beauty?

Let's start then with that waste: leftovers. And let's not start designing through a flat illustration but through the physicality of those leftovers: Repeat, invert, deconstruct, reconstruct … This concept offers a new way of thinking and potentially doing. Although it needs to be needed and that is difficult in the fickle world of fashion.

Notes

[1] L. Svensen, *FASHION: A Philosophy*, Reaktion Books Ltd, London, 2006.
[2] S. Black, *Eco-Chic: The Fashion Paradox*, Black Dog Publishing, London, 2008, p. 7.
[3] Ibid.
[4] C. Evans, *Fashion at the Edge: Spectacle, Modernity and Deathliness*, Yale University Press, New Haven & London, 2003.
[5] Black, loc. cit.

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[6] Extract about the work by Marian Schoettle from Cold War Modern Exhibition (shop), Victoria & Albert Museum, London, Visited 2 October 2008.

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[11] J. Attfield (ed), *Utility Reassessed: The Role of Ethics in the Practice of Design*, Manchester University Press, 1999.

[12] Ibid., p. xv-xvi.

[13] Ibid., p. 2.

[14] British Galleries, Victoria & Albert Museum, Visited 25 March 2008.

[15] Attfield, loc. cit.

[16] Stern, loc. cit.

[17] Ibid., p. 68.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Attfield, loc. cit.

[20] Black, loc. cit.

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Karen Marie Heard, lecturer on the BA (hons) Fashion and Textiles programme at Thames Valley University. I have recently completed my MA Fashion Design for Industry at Kingston University, and this chapter reflects research from my major project.

The Future of Eco-Fashion: A Design-Driven Approach

Desiree Smal

Abstract
Awareness of the impact current practices have on the environment is applicable to all spheres of life, industries, and countries, with emphasis placed on the wise and sparing use of resources. Similarly, eco fashion has become one of the lifestyle issues of the twenty-first century with some designers in the global and local fashion arenas developing their collections around this concept. Yet, as Lee and Sevier[1] pointed out, in recent discussions and debates on eco fashion, differing interpretations and endorsements of eco practices emerge. However, for eco fashion to have a real impact on the environment it needs to: (1) remain a trend, (2) become best practice supported by all involved with the development and production of eco fashion and (3) be sustainable and thereby ensuring a healthier environment. The point of departure for the chapter is, in order to achieve the above, eco fashion should be volume based and by implication - driven by design. In a design-driven approach, the concept of eco fashion becomes part of the decision-making process during the design stage. Such an approach adds environmental value to the fashion product at its design stage, and eco awareness is enforced through the design. This approach should be seen as instrumental in developing eco fashion as a sustainable trend for the mass market. This chapter aims to explore the suggested design driven approach in eco fashion.

Key Words: Design, design driven, Eco fashion, sustainability0

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1. Introduction

Going green, being eco friendly, acting in a responsible manner now that will protect the planet for future generations; are all concepts or ideals that a l arge percentage of citizens on planet earth subscribe to. Yet, an understanding of what these thoughts and actions might entail is not always clear. This is quite evident in the discourse in fashion. Although promoted heavily as green being the new black, the nature of fashion currently and the importance of trends in fashion could jeopardise the above. This chapter forms part of a larger body of work investigating the role of eco fashion in the South African fashion industry.

In a recent exploration on the concept of eco fashion[2] I realised that in order for fashion to adhere to/or be considered as environmentally friendly, thus have a positive affect on the environment and have a measure of sustainability, it needs to be driven by design and practiced by all involved in the pipeline of product development. Part of this reasoning also stems from my involvement in fashion education. The mentioned exploration unveiled a number of problem areas that

could jeopardise the future of eco fashion, viewed from both a producer and a consumer point of view. This is specifically applicable in a country such as South Africa, with the decline of the textile industry over the past few years a major contributor.

This chapter does not aim to find a quick win solution for all the issues related to eco design, but merely explores the concept of eco fashion and the success thereof by means of a design driven approach. I will therefore firstly review design driven as a concept. Secondly, I intend to focus on design in the pipeline of product development and end the discussion with a model for design driven eco fashion. Although I briefly describe the importance of consumer participation in eco fashion, it is not dealt with in-depth. In the same manner, distribution is briefly discussed, but the debate thereof not included. However, both debates are of immense importance and warrant studies of their own, part of which would need to be sourcing and the global manufacturing arena for textile related products.

2. The Concept: Design Driven Eco Fashion

In order to grasp the objective of eco fashion, I would like to elaborate on a number of concepts that are commonly used. Firstly, I need to expand on the use of fashion and why I have chosen this particular collective name and what is commonly understood and accepted when referring to eco in relation to fashion. Secondly, for the purpose of this chapter, what is considered design driven eco fashion.

A. Fashion and Eco Fashion

Fashion is a collective name that could include several aspects. Malcolm Barnard[3] mentions that the concept fashion is most common associated with frivolity. This also leads to the lack of seriousness of the discipline. According to Kawamura fashion is a co llective activity created by all that partake in its development and eventual acceptance. Gavin Waddell[4] describes the fashion industry as an industry where there is

> … so much misconception, deliberate and inadvertent misinformation, and ignorance surrounding the world of fashion that it is difficult to get a clear, unbiased picture of how it really works.[5]

The word clothing refers to items/garments/apparel. For this chapter I therefore use fashion as the collective name describing all clothing items, and volume fashion as clothing produced 'en mass' for retail.

It is generally accepted that eco fashion should address *components* - the parts the product consists of, and *process* - method by which the product is manufactured and distributed. To achieve this, I group the development of

sustainable eco fashion into two categories, namely (1) raw materials, components and processes and (2) product criteria and subsequent lifecycle. I need to briefly elaborate on each of these, as this will enhance the argument. The selection of raw materials and how they are produced have a significant influence in whether a fashion product can be considered an eco product or not. The components used in the production of an eco fashion product could be organic in nature (such as using organic cotton) or recycled such as the well-known Patagonia model, where soda bottles are recycled for the production of fleece shirts.[6]

The processes used in the manufacturing of an eco fashion product need to adhere to value adding to the environment as opposed to using processes randomly without consideration of the effect these could have on the environment. Cleaner production methods applied during cloth development or product manufacturing all speak to the above. Some examples are recycling of the wastewater used in dye houses and the use of energy when recycling soda bottles to generate the fibre needed for the fleece tops.[7]

Product criteria and lifecycle are equally important and relate to raw materials and processes. To date recycling clothing has largely been done for the individual. Re-using products for new applications is in effect not a new concept at all. In volume production, re-using clothing for retail becomes problematic, as large quantities of the same product in a varied size range are required and are produced in a standardised and mechanised process.[8] However, recycling of used/vintage products has an important role to play in the discussion on eco fashion. The type of product that is used and what is made from it is largely dependant on the needs of the individual and the availability of the 'raw' material. I therefore refer to this as consumer driven.

B. Design Driven

In volume production, market preferences are key to successful product lines. In essence therefore, all volume production is informed by consumer needs and preferences. If that is the case, is there a difference in developing fashion as opposed to eco fashion? Janet Hethorn[9] mentions that the role of the market, ultimately the consumer, needs to be viewed in a different light. She specifically promotes a holistic approach to defining consumer preferences and that successful eco fashion requires the consumer be placed as a focal point in the design process. Eco fashion should address need as well as have meaning. By doing so, eco fashion feeds the 'feel good factor' that eco issues evoke in most consumers.

How does the consumer view eco fashion? Does the average consumer understand what constitutes an eco fashion product? Most consumers only associate eco fashion with organic products, and would not fully understand or be interested in the process of eco fashion development. Is a consumer aware that the fleece garment made from recycled soda bottle is also classified as being an eco friendly produced product? Eco fashion based on consumer acceptance might place

the eco debate in fashion as a current hot topic, a fad or a trend, and the danger with a trend is that it has a limited lifespan.

It is my view that the success of eco fashion should be viewed from a product development perspective, where design is driving the process. Design driven eco fashion therefore refers to the role of design in product development where environmental value adding principles are taken into consideration at product development stage. For eco fashion to have an impact on the environment and answer to the requirements set earlier, eco principles and practices need to be embedded in product development and not merely added on as an extra. For example, the t-shirt that consists of organic cotton must be produced according to cleaner production principles. Should cleaner production processes not be applied, all the effort and energy used to develop organic cotton could be deemed worthless. The polyester fleece made from recycled soda bottles can only be considered an eco product if the energy used is less than the energy used in the development of virgin polyester. The above information is irrelevant to the consumer and eco principles are automatically factored into the product. This integrated approach is key to development of sustainability in eco fashion. A suggestion of how an integrated approach can be achieved is discussed in the following section.

3. Design Driven Product Development

Laura Dias[10] divides the process of design into five stages, namely (1) research and planning, (2) design conception, (3) design development and (4) planning and completing production and (5) distribution. Each of the five stages is influenced by decisions made during the design of the product. The following diagram explains the interrelation design has with each of the stages.

Figure 1. The design process (adapted from Dias).
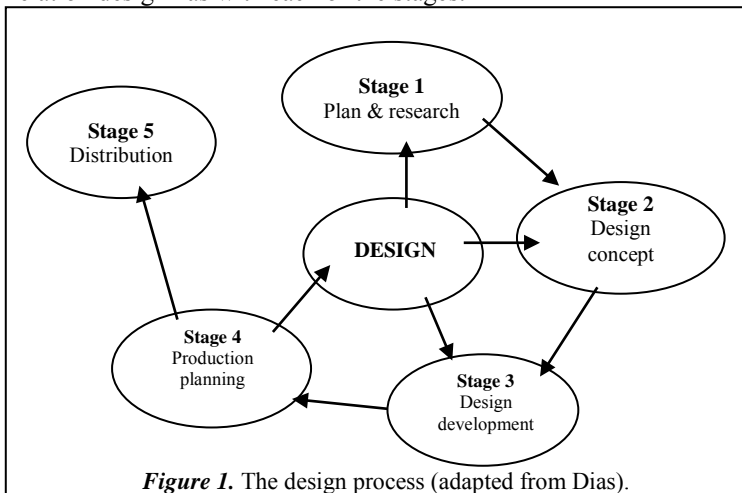
The above diagram starts to form a spiral with design as its centre. The planning of the product is informed by season, trend, market needs, criteria, price category and the objective/goals as determined by the manufacturer. The design concept, stage two, is the actualisation of the research. In stage three the intended product takes shape, informed by stages one and two. Stage four, production planning, informs design in relation to product specifications, production processes, resources and cost. Distribution is the only part of the process that has no influence on design as such; neither is informed by it. In volume production one could view the above diagram as the macro plan for the season, out of which micro plans for product lines could be developed (a spiral within a spiral).

4. Thinking Eco

I would like to take the above diagram (fig. 1) and view it through an eco lens to determine if and how the five stages of product development have changed or not. The spiral as described above is often found in nature and generally associated with a holistic approach. Janet Hethorn and Connie Ulasewich have used a similar approach when describing their 'model of interconnectivity' in their discussion on eco fashion and subsequently connect people, processes and the environment.

> The potential to have a large impact on sustainable issues *through fashion* can be realised when we explore how fashion interacts with all three interconnected areas. Since fashion is more than materials that garments are made of, we have broader opportunities to explore. The possibilities are much greater when this concept is core to our thinking.[11]

The relation between the three components on the interconnectivity model is key to the development of eco fashion. If one views figure 1 in relation to the model developed by Hethorn and Ulasewich,[12] the following could be the result. Each of the five stages needs to relate to each other keeping the objective of eco fashion in mind in relation to the two groups identified earlier in the conversation, namely (1) fabric, components and processes and (2) criteria and lifecycle. The type of material and components selected for eco fashion influences design and similarly, when developing an eco design an in-depth examination of fabrics and components selected is necessary.

In the process of design development, a designer would consider fabric to use, design style, prevalent trend, cost and manufacturing constraints. This process as reflected in figure 1 is far more intricate when environmental practices become an integral part of the process. The designer would have to consider where/how the fabric was manufactured and if the components selected for the design are compatible to the goals and objectives set by the company. The above can be elucidated by the following example. A major retailer in South Africa has decided

that within a certain timeframe, only organically produced cotton is to be used in their products, yet the textile industry and the manufacturing infrastructure in the country is not able to sustain this vision, therefore products need to be sourced in the global arena.

As designer, you need to be aware of the processes used in developing this fabric and whether it relates to, and adds value to the goals set by the company regarding the environmental considered approach. This approach forces the designer to consider all aspects of product development, those you see and which you don't generally see (which is not directly prevalent). Susan Kaiser,[13] refers to this aspect as the bathtub and ties this type of thinking in a holistic manner. In her metaphor the tap refers to that which goes into a product (components and processes). The bath refers to what the product needs to do/achieve (product criteria). The drain refers to the lifecycle of the product and relates to disposal of the product. In this approach everything, from type of fabric to subsequent lifecycle of a product is essential when developing eco fashion.

5. Design as Core

With the above in mind, the following model places design at the centre of development in eco fashion. The suggested model, as shown in figure two, relates to both figure one and the Hethorn model of interconnectivity and is based on a helix structure. In a helix structure the interconnected outer strands spiral around the inner core with the assumption that the spirals interconnect/feed into the inner core. A similar structure is applicable in core thread (i.e. cotton covered polyester core) where two opposing fibres, one synthetic, the other natural, in a combined effort add value to the final product (polyester is a stronger fibre and cotton has a greater affinity to absorb colour).
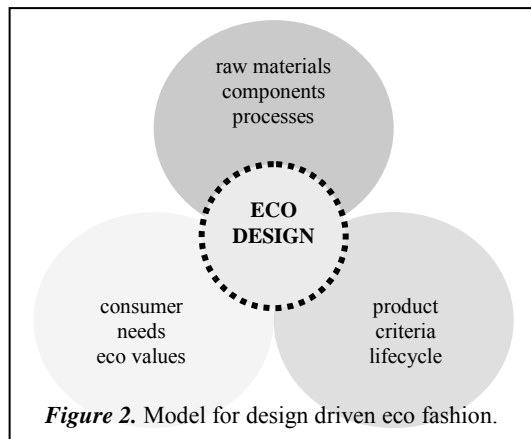

Figure 2. Model for design driven eco fashion.

In model two, the three strands of the helix are (1) raw materials, components and processes of manufacturing, (2) criteria and lifecycle of the eco product and (3) consumer needs and eco values. As within a helix structure, the three strands are interrelated and support each other. The centre of this structure has a core, which in this case is design. Placing design in the centre allows the design process to relate/connect to all aspects of eco fashion development.

6. Conclusion

Why then: design driven? In my opinion, the success of eco fashion is currently largely dependant on consumer participation, in other words consumer acceptance on eco fashion products. The consumer buys what is required or needed, and might not be knowledgeable on eco fashion products or might not have an interest in 'going green'. Apart from this, current eco fashion products are pricier than normal products. Price alone could deter sustainability in eco fashion development.

The above model places the responsibility of eco on product development and manufacturing. Success of eco fashion requires an intrinsic understanding of the complexity in the development of eco fashion products and requires that this should become 'best practice by all'. By doing so, all products could in future be considered as eco friendly.

Notes

[1] Lee and Sevier, 'The A-Z of Eco Fashion', *The Ecologist*, 2008, Available: http://www.theecologist.org/pages/archive_details.asp?content_id=1149, Accessed 15/09/2008.

[2] D. Smal, 'Eco Fashion: Fad or Future trend?' *Image and Text*, No. 14, 2008, pp. 100-112.

[3] M. Barnard, *Fashion as Communication*, Routledge, London, 1996, pp. 1-3.

[4] G. Waddell, *How Fashion Works*, Blackwell Science, Oxford, 2004.

[5] Y. Kawamura, *Fashionology and Introduction to Fashion Studies*, Berg Publishers, New York, 2005.

[6] For further reading consult S. Locker, 'A Technology-Enabled Sustainable Fashion System: Fashion's Future', *Sustainable Fashion why Now?*, J. Hethorn and C. Ulasewicz (eds), Fairchild, New York, 2008, pp.120-121.

[7] The Patagonia model as I refer to it here, only adds value if the energy used is less that developing a new fibre from virgin polyester.

[8] G .Waddell, *How Fashion Works*, Blackwell Science, Oxford, 2004, p. 194.

[9] Further reading: J. Hethorn, 'Consideration of Consumer Desire', *Sustainable Fashion why now?*, J. Hethorn and C. Ulasewicz (eds), Fairchild, New York, 2008, pp. 53-76.

[10] L.P. Dias, *Core Concepts in Fashion*, McGraw Hill Irwin, New York, 2008.

[11] Hethorn, op. cit., pp. 53-76.

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Desiree Smal, Department of Fashion Design, University of Johannesburg, South Africa.

Sustainable Fashion in the Building Design Professions

Alissa de Wit-Paul

Abstract
The Interior Design and Architecture professions have spent much of the twentieth century denying their links to fad and fashion. Practicing architects and designers have been avidly and loudly defending their purest, or anti-fashion, roots.[1] However, much of their designing is based not only on current technological styles, but media imprinted looks.[2] The modern idea of fashion is based on four concepts: the thriving on urgency, the celebration of the immediate, the dual nature of tension between individual expression and conformity, and an indicator of economic prosperity.[3] Architecture and Interior Design generally follow these principles without acknowledging them. Design styles rise and fall, whether they are based on philosophy, technology or just the desire to change. Today, the current fashion is based on the word Sustainability. This has become the definer of quality Architecture and Interior Design. This fashion construction resembles other fashion industries today, in that it is media driven.

Key Words: Sustainable, Fashion, Interior Design, Architecture.

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> Mode and modernity were connected by more than semantics. Fashion's obsession with change, its constant search for the newest design, gave it a formal similarity with other systems that demanded continuous innovation.[4]

As Architecture and Interior Design are systems and art forms that constantly evolve they also are affected by the same four concepts of fashion theory; thus building design has its roots in fashion. So, what is the current fashion that architecture and design professionals are judging aesthetically desirable today? Sustainability as a design ideal today defines building quality. In the building professions, schools are being mandated to teach green practices, seminars on sustainable practices are popular, and systems, such as the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) and Energy Star rated homes, are being created for designers to follow. These systems impose and define this new style through a series of rules about what actions and results constitute sustainable design. Although well intentioned, most of their applications follow along the same lines of any typical fashion and will not be maintained or become universal. The 'eco-friendly' trend is constantly changing and relies on the media to create its importance; '… the concept of a green building is a social construct. This is not to

say that the range of environmental innovations are not valid socially, commercially, or technically, in their own terms.[5]

This fashion trend is also an indicator of wealth and social acceptance. We can follow the fashion route of *sustainability* through these four concepts: first, urgency is derived from media pressure to solve global warming, secondly, the call for use of 'green' technologies, thirdly, a socially acceptable fashion theory, sustainable consumption leads to satisfaction for those who have gone 'green' as on the cutting edge of building aesthetics and lastly, an indicator of prosperity as shown by only those who are economically prosperous can afford to own or create eco-friendly buildings.

1. Thriving on Urgency

The first indicator of fashion is how it thrives on urgency, or the social pressure to act.[6] 'Fashion styles thrive on the urgency that they create. Indeed, fashion's modernity lies in its celebration of the immediate.'[7] The action in this case is to consume an idea, a word, a symbol. The word S*ustainable* is the symbol of being more environmentally conscious than your neighbour. According to James Russell *10 Shades of Green* Architectural Record 2000

> Yes, the environmental crisis makes green buildings an urgent priority. A deep-seated desire for more appropriate buildings may be asserting itself even without the crisis that is currently helping to precipitate the changes in our values. These buildings don't deliver just low fuel bills and reduced emission of pollutants, they celebrate and symbolize human aspiration. [8]

One of the most common human aspirations is the desire to prove one is better than one's neighbours, for example, helping to solve the world's crises. Robert states that 'The economy, health, even war pale by comparison to the stresses of rising pressure to our planet's ecosystem.'[9] Those in the know must act and be seen to act in how they build their environment.

Although fashion changes are often based on mysterious beginnings, we can see in the graph 1 that there is a definite rise in the use of the word *sustainable*. It shows the rise in both the average amount and the total amount of use of the word *sustainable* in reference to eco-friendly concepts in general, architectural and interior design magazines. The next graph (graph 2) shows how many times each magazine used the word over a period of twenty years. There is a slight rise in the use of sustainable after 1997 but a significant rise between 2002 and 2005 with a slight falling off after 2006.

Graph 1
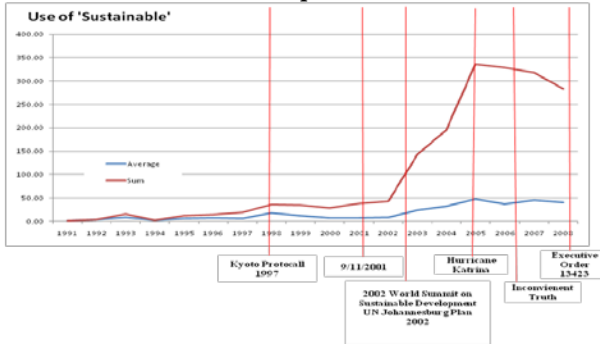
Graph 2
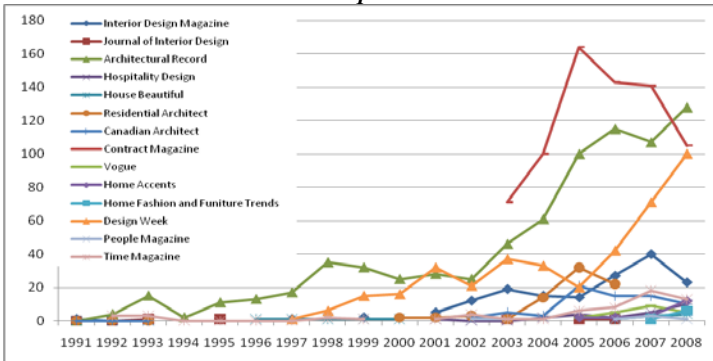
'Environmental concerns are both time and space specific and are governed by a specific modelling of nature.'[10] But what were the catalysts that drove the media, and the resultant rise in action by the building design community, to use this word so often since 2002?

In 1987 the concept of sustainable development was introduced by the United Nations *Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development*.[11] The US government began to mandate green practices in the building of new government structures. Yet only a small rise in the use of *sustainable* followed the 1997 Kyoto Protocol[12] and President Clinton's executive order, 'Greening the Government through Efficient Energy Management.'[13] Several state and municipal governmental agencies demanded the development of sustainable buildings, the most publicised being Chicago's rooftop garden.[14] While these directives created some published interest, they did not generate the large upswing found between 2002 and 2005. This culminated in little actual interest in the 2007 Executive Order 13423 signed by President Bush.[15]

Mandates at all levels of government have given rise to unprecedented interest among U.S. design professionals in protecting and preserving the natural environment. For the first time, developers and owners must ensure their properties aren't gas guzzlers … And they need architects to help them do it.[16]

What occurred in 2002 was in international policy.[17,18] Yet, as seen in the graphs 3 and 4, in the Residential Design literature and in the more general magazines, this peak at 2002 fades within a year. The use of the word became a minor trend without a lasting and large audience appeal.

Graph 3
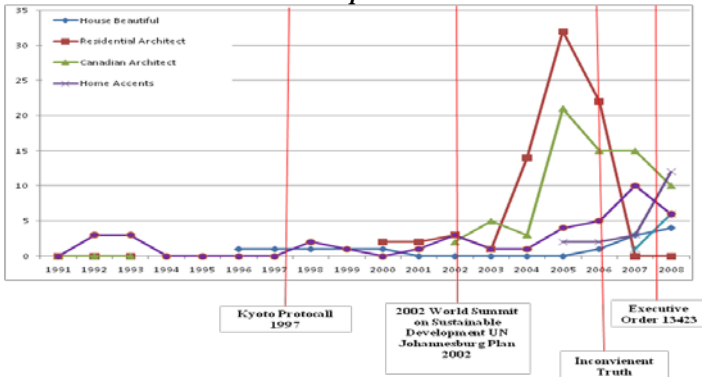
Graph 4
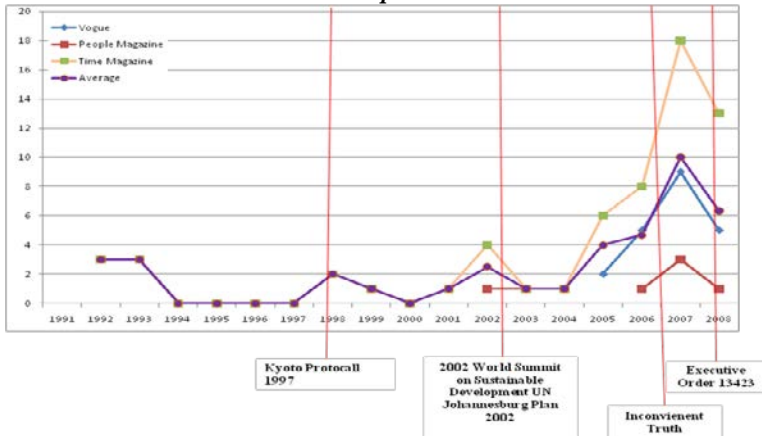
The hype around the 2005 book and 2006 Global Warming documentary *An Inconvenient Truth* by Al Gore occurred right before 2005. This came fast on the

heels of Hurricane Katrina: '[m]ost likely, though, a sustainable future will not come from policy wonks, but rather from a broad change in values as ordinary people react to ecological disasters around them'.[19] This call-to-action began as a serious response to both national and international policy debate,[20] but did not explode into a true fashion until it was taken up by the general media in the form of a movie.

> Up until all-too recently words like green hotel, eco-tourism, and sustainable design sounded, to the average hotel guest, very similar to barebones, roughing it, and crunchy hippie retreat. But thanks to a flurry of media and celebrity attention to global warming (thank you, Al and Leo), and growing consumer concern of health and wellness (bed bugs anyone?) it looks like hospitality has finally hit a tipping point.[21]

2. Celebration of the Immediate

The second indicator of fashion is its celebration of the immediate. This immediacy is the taking of action.

> I am not particularly eco-conscious. But I am increasingly eco-anxious. Every day, it seems, I hear of some new way the world around me is going aggressively green. So it was with some relief that I learned that eco-anxiety is a diagnosable condition. A so-called eco-therapist in Santa Fe, N.M., reportedly sees up to 80 patients a month who complain of panic attacks, loss of appetite, irritability. Yes, the truth is inconvenient. But I'm trying. I am attempting to reverse my eco-unconsciousness,[22]

The eco-boom in the media since the millennium, especially since Al Gore's infamous movie, instilled the urgency to act.[23] This frenzied pace sparked a whirlwind of activity in the design field, most prevalently in the marketing of goods and materials. In 2003 when I began teaching sustainable building design, the manufacturers of common products were just beginning to generate information on how 'green' their products were. The information is ubiquitous as more manufacturers claim an eco-friendly venue, or rework their literature to certify that their existing line meets some sustainable standard. This call for immediate action is being fuelled by the media, the definer of fashion and acceptability.[24] For example

> Designed by Envision, the headquarters reflects current thinking about sustainable office design, as companies up the ante of coolness to attract the best employees. A sustainable office that

doubles as a party space says, 'We're serious and fun.' Envision Principal Ken Wilson.[25]

Another issue in the design world is the idea that sustainable building design is not a fleeting fad but it will become permanent. One example is found in the June 1, 2003 issue of Interior Design magazine in an article called *First, do no harm* by Laura Fisher Kaiser about Robin Guenther and her mission to transform medical facilities into truly healthy places.[26] The interesting concept here is that to defend that sustainability is not a fashion is to define it as such and to state that it is over.[27] '[L]ike the building process itself … a torpid cycle of production that can never match fashion's rapid rhythm of consumption. Always, already passé.'[28]

3. Tension between Individual Expression and Social Pressure

The third aspect of fashion is the tension between individual expression and social pressure. The duality of wanting to be unique and yet be accepted as part of a group, community, and the greater world, is now expressed by how eco-friendly we are by comparison to others.[29] This tension creates competition to conform quickly and in a unique manner.[30] The recent evaluation systems of LEED, Energy Star Houses, and others being mandated by the government and praised by the media create urgency within the profession to conform. However, when clients ask for a sustainable building, they are often talking about the *sexy* technologies: wind turbines, ground source heat pumps, passive solar heating, sun spaces, natural lighting, solar electric, bamboo flooring, and concrete floors. These outward signs of 'eco-friendliness' are the least effective and often counterproductive aspects of building energy efficiency.[31] Much like Architectural Record's announcement in 2007 to encourage sustainable design by featuring eco-friendly projects in their magazine, they are not changing the way they do things, not even the look of the magazine, just adding a new category in choosing projects to highlight.

> Beginning in April 2007, architectural record will feature sustainable houses in its signatory Record Houses issue. For the first time in decades, suitability will trump aesthetics, although we hope that featured architects manage to synthesize the two. … record will present performance characteristics for all subsequent projects, pointing out where and when architects have met the basic challenges.

Time magazine followed in 2008 with their 'war on global warming' issue;

> It won't be simple, and it won't be cheap, but the war on global warming must be won and *TIME* is ready to help … we've exchanged our trademarked Red Border for a green one. By

doing so, we are sending a clear, and colourful message to our readers about the importance of this subject….[32]

Are they winning the 'war on global warming' when they change just the color of their border and not the paper, toxic ink, delivery, or myriad of other production issues that affect the environment? The next question is: Who do the general public really wish to emulate?

> What's great about all of this is that where Hollywood leads, the rest of us tend to follow. Who cares about politicians? The real power to change people's attitudes and lifestyles is with our celebrities. And for every Paris Hilton, with her gas-guzzling Mercedes and her serial handbag habit, there is an Angelina Jolie or a Scarlett Johansson – role models who are cool and care.[33]

A perfect example is Brad Pitt and his six-part series entitled e2, the Economics of Being Environmentally Conscious.[34]

4. Indicator of Economic Prosperity

Lastly, fashion is an indicator of economic prosperity. These 'sexy' technologies are the most expensive. It is no surprise that most of the Energy Star rated houses are also very large buildings, beyond the means of the average house owner in the United States. 'Architecture and haute couture… [are] both situated between economic and symbolic/artistic fields' [35] For clients these ratings become symbols of wealth and sensitivity to the environment. 'Obviously, then, the acquisition of the taste needed to become a connoisseur was not value or class free: ample capital was essential like architecture, fashion served as a marker of difference'[36] and still does.

It defines the 'environmentally friendly' as preferable in today's social hierarchy and social hierarchy emulates Hollywood.[37] In *Green is the New Black*, the author tells that both Brad Pitt and Orlando Bloom 'Have … built green houses. Bloom says his new London pad is 'as green as I can make it'. It's got solar panels on the roof, energy-efficient light bulbs – newer technology basically that is environmentally friendly'.[38] Other examples are found in the 2007 highlights of the Robb Report where eco-chic is the rage for those whose assets start at $5 million or higher. 'Those homes, of course, were in each case about the size of a college dorm and executed in a buttery, grandiose, marble-heavy style that might be called Château Vert'.[39] This new exclusive fashion sense reflects the late twentieth century ideal where to be socially conscious is a 'new way of demonstrating sartorial superiority.'[40]

5. Conclusion

Why is 'sustainable design' not 'above mere fashion'?[41] Improvement in our building practices is important to lessen our negative effect on the planet, but the expression of eco-friendly design is an aesthetic response of our 21st century times. Deconstructivism, our last fashion, became more common and less interesting, so now we have a new aesthetic to enjoy. Venturi says: 'My feeling is that we shift sensibility before we shift fashion and that these shifts … tend to go along with social movements more than with technology. Architectural change responds to our seeing something different.'[42]

Should Architecture and Interior Design not be 'above mere fashion'? Even the universal premises of modernism, renaissance, and revival are less interesting over time. They no longer hold our interest so we find other ways to express ourselves through architecture. 'If style is the language of architecture, fashion represents the wide – and swirling- cultural currents that shape and direct that language'.[43]

The remnants of the sustainable movement that will become building standard will not be the aesthetic, material, and spatial ideas but will be in the technical side of building. It is the heat loss due to air infiltration that creates the greatest energy loss, according to computer models by Marc Rosenbaum at a Northeast Sustainable Energy Association workshop, 'Fix the building first - then add a point source heater.'[44] It is the reduction of energy loss through the building envelope, not sun rooms, building materials, photo-voltaic cells, wind turbines, etc., that will reduce our energy foot print.[45] These are the aspects that will allow for the 'distinctiveness of the original product [to be] wasted away through diffusion'.[46] Bamboo (with the large carbon footprint), photo voltaic and wind turbines (with low efficiency and reliability), and compact fluorescent lamps (toxic to make and leeching mercury into the ground water of landfills)[47,48] will go out of style when 'sustainable' is more available for mass consumption and perhaps the truth of these technologies is revealed. The word will become mundane and the movement will be over.

Our current social movement is environmental responsibility. Because it is a fashion, it does not make it less important. However, to feel that changing our buildings today based on LEED or Energy Star will be enduring, is to miss-understand architecture as a social construct. Our buildings will continue to become more energy and environmentally effective, as they have been doing these last 20 to 30 years, but the excitement of 'sustainable' will become passé.

> An architecture that recognizes style – and fashion – would not
> be an architecture that is introspective and self-referential, as are
> so many contemporary buildings. It would be a part of the world
> – not architecture for architects, but architecture for the rest of
> us. And that would not be a bad thing.[49]

Notes

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Alissa de Wit-Paul, RA NCIDQ LEED Assistant Professor of Interior Design at Buffalo State College, Buffalo NY.

Part 5:

Creation of Identities

Use of Skin Whitening Products among African People: Research in Italy and the Congo

Giovanni Vassallo

Abstract

The cosmetic use of skin whitening substances (mercure, hydroquinone, steroids) by African women has been supported with documentary evidence in various research works which disclose its health risks. However research works which deal with social and economic repercussions of the issue have been reported to a lesser extent. I interpret my study as an attempt to investigate these aspects which implicate the social building of beauty as a concept and its representation. The following data have been collected in Italy and the Congo RDC by means of inspections carried out in Italian ethno-cosmetics shops, and Congolese markets and by interviewing immigrant women in Italy as well as both men and women who make use of skin whitening products in the Congo as well. This study, although not extended, has enabled us to focus on a number of points: 1.) The problem is ticklish and complex, since it involves issues strongly burdened with emotions such as one's ethnic and personal identity; 2.) Both the healthy risks and also the social and symbolic aspects of the practice must be highlighted in order to impede the practice; 3.) The practice has an addictive dimension; 4.) The speculative and market factors carried along in the ensuing marketing and distribution. Of these products cannot be disregarded.

Key Words: Ethno-cosmetics, ethno-fashion, hydroquinone, skin whitening, skin disease, Congo, skin bleaching.

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1. Use of Skin Whitening Product among African People

Voluntary de-pigmentation or the use of depigmentation products for beauty purposes has been the subject of scientific, legislative and media attention even if in a non adequate manner to the dimensions of the problem. The following table summarizes the results carried out in Africa by various groups of researchers.

Country	Users	Age	Collateral Effects
Senegal	62.7%	32	
Congo Brazzaville	65.7%		
Togo	58.9%	< 40	69.2%
Senegal	37%	32	62.3%
Burkina Faso	44,3%	25	55,5%

The dates summarized put into light the mass diffusion of the phenomenon and it appears that the percentage of people who have suffered collateral effects of voluntary de-pigmentation is dramatically high. In particular, it s eems to be demonstrated the relationship between the use of hydroquinone creams and exogenous ochronosis,[1] a localised hyper-pigmentation in the area where the product was applied. In practise, in the areas where the skin is lighter and more exposed to the sun, the skin becomes darker. You can understand that the character even paradoxical to this complication risks triggering off a vicious circle. The negative effects of mercury on human beings are well documented: damage to the central nervous system, to the skin and retarded neurological development in children.[2] A group of Danish researchers in Tanzania[3] found a co ncentration of mercury in women's hair that use lightening soaps, much more superior even to those that eat fish contaminated with this metal. But probably the biggest risk for public health is tied to the diffusion of cortisone creams. The use of these really potent medicines for cosmetic purposes provokes skin problems and systemic damage like diabetes and hypertension. According to a study carried out in Dakar[4] these illnesses are respectively four or five times more frequent in the people practising de-pigmentation.

A simple way to estimate the dimension of the problem in Italy is to verify the quantity of products with lightening actions on sale in those cosmetic shops frequented by African immigrants.

In the shops in the historical centre of Genoa, the de-pigmentation products occupy, at least, one third of the space on the shelves. The forbidden products are exposed next to those containing allowed active principles. In one shop I count 24 different types of cortisone creams. Some have normal packaging of pharmaceutical products, others, although, have been given the appearance of cosmetics. All have the form which identifies them as medicine.

The hydroquinone products are of two types: 1) those of American production, where this component is allowed up to a concentration of 2% and 2) those produced in Africa, which do not have the quantity of the active principle written on the packet .Tests taken out on some samples indicate that the concentration can be superior by 16% or even 20%.[5]

Products containing mercury are rarer; in fact it seems that this metal has been substituted in disinfecting soaps by a germicide that has no lightening effect. Soaps with abrasive and exfoliating effects are however used to prepare the skin for the actions of the de-pigmentation products.

After a s eries of examinations in some cities, which permitted me to have an idea of the dimensions of the phenomenon, I interviewed 16 African immigrants. These interviews permitted me, above all, to discover the method of use of all these products: Normally the clobetasol is added in variable proportions (from 1 t o 4 tubes of 30g) in a tub of hydroquinone cream of 500g or 250g, sometimes the concentration of hydroquinone is increased by adding concentrated serum of the

same company. This mixture is applied 1 or 2 times a day all over the body, after a shower and after having prepared the epidermis with the use of disinfecting soap. In this way the tub of 500g lasts a month.

During the interviews I found myself confronted by a series of psychological defence already described by other researchers.[6]

> a)   Negation: I interviewed a group of Nigerian protestant women who meet and pray in a Genovese theatre, they initially denied the practice giving religious motives: It's not allowed to change the body that God gave us. But, when I showed them a sample of products, and immediately informed themselves of the health risks, in the end, a number of them admitted to using them or to have used them in the past.

> b)   Removal and Frivolity: like when is not denied the use of the product, but the will to lighten the skin, 'I only use them to eliminate spots'. Or even, 'I'm trying to find my original colour, naturally light, which has been lost for some reason'.

> c)   Pseudo Rationalization: Many people believe that black skin needs special treatment to keep it in good condition, which of course is scientifically untrue. Different studies[7] show that the cost for cosmetics of an African American is, on average, two or four times more than that of a white. Other times it can happen that the interviewee becomes aggressive and attacks with statements such as: 'you white people produce these creams'. Often the negative effects become attributed to other causes, like a refugee Congolese girl who sustained firmly that her acne was due to stress and not to the hydroquinone cream she uses. Another Senegalese girl reported to have consulted her doctor in her country who told her that the products used (an exfoliating soap, a hydroquinone cream mixed with a cortisone cream) would not do her any harm because they are 'suited to her skin'. The same girl gave a lot of importance to the subject of safety, the fact of using soaps creams and lotions of the same brand. He girl believed that by using all products of the same brand that she was taking better care of her skin and thus acting 'safely?'

I have been able to compare the data gathered in Italy with the situation of a country like Congo, one of the places where the voluntary de-pigmentation is widespread. My research was carried out in the capital city Kinshasa and in Kimbau, a small rural centre near Kenge, where there is a hospital sustained by the

N.G.O. in which I'm engaged. The research lasted 2 weeks in which I visited shops and interviewed people.

In Congo the cortisone creams and the hydroquinone creams are found in all shops and soaps with mercury are still very widespread. The widespread diffusion indicates a mass use of the product, which, contrary to what emerges from research carried out in other countries,[8] is not limited to town but present in rural areas: The shops in the market of Kimbau are only slightly more than huts and we find ourselves in a very internal area of the country, yet inside we find almost more packets of lightening creams than tins of sardines and tomato conserves. I visited different shops also in the nearby villages, less frequented than Kimbau and its hospital, and in all there were de-pigmentation products on sale, the local people told me that the travelling salesmen take them even to the most secluded places lost in the savannah.

Proof of the diffusion of the use of lightening products is the fact that in the country there is a line of products for men, greatly advertised and sold, whereas, in other African countries the use of de-pigmentation products by men is considered not very dignified and even the sign of belonging to the criminal underworld.[9]

The cost of the practise can quite easily reach 2,000 Congolese francs a month (about 4 1/2 USD). a really significant figure in a country where the average annual earnings do not reach 100 USD. Considering that a hospital nurse earns 10,000 francs a month (approximately 23 USD/month or 300 USD/year) the percentage of earnings dedicated to a unnecessary expense is really high. These data give the idea of a social status which is behind this practise. The cortisone creams are not available with cosmetic style packaging but I understand that their pharmaceutical aspect is of benefit in a country where the perception that medicines can cause damage doesn't exist (during my visit the signalman who helped us to pull our jeep out of a sandpit for payment asked us for anti-inflammatory, to use as a remedy for fatigue).

Some facts suggest that the referring model for people who use bleaching products may be the light skinned pop stars like Beyoncè, but some people seem to think that 'more white' is 'more beautiful and more healthy'. Various fonts reported to me that during an argument a light skinned black (*pembe* in kikongo) can insult one darker skinned black (*muindu* or *ndombe*) accusing him of being dirty. The most obvious of messages are found in the adverts: the one for Clotex (clobetasol) manifests not a black with a light skin but a northern European white woman with blonde hair and blue eyes

The cortisone cream, Dermotyl, is advertised by a local star Amida Shatur. Although his Lebanese origins are clearly indicated by her surname, rumours has it that she was once dark skinned and became light skinned using the de-pigmentation products.

Even when the adverts do not resort to photos, but rather to the pictorial decoration, the colour of the people portrayed is not that of an African. The

comprehension of the voluntary de-pigmentation social phenomenon is a very complicated business. They are certainly not immediate reasons for which, in our society, people begin to smoke, colour their hair and become tanned. The simple request for explanations from those who use these products is not particularly useful. In most cases we obtain generic answers or even obvious ones like: 'Light skinned girls are liked more', 'Who lightens themselves feels more beautiful', the fact that people don't spend money and risk their health to feel worse or to feel less appreciated seemed obvious.

The debate on this argument is polarised on two explanations full of emotive contents: one that focuses on the inferiority complex of blacks in relation to whites, the other that focuses on of fashion, the natural tendency to adorn and transform ones appearance. The inferiority complex explanation has been criticised by research in the field[10] which highlights the hedonistic and aesthetic reasons of the use of skin bleaching products. The same research remember that the use of de-pigmentation is not limited to Africans and that this practise is part of the actions that young people, all over the world, copy to make themselves more attractive. Through de-pigmentation, therefore, the African boys and girls are not looking for identity, but, more trivially, for a husband or a wife.

Finally the last researches[11] put into light the addictive dimension of voluntary de-pigmentation. The use of these products are to be compared with tobacco addiction and alcoholism, negative habits of which is not important the motive why one starts (imitation, desire to be accepted, shyness etc.) but the fact that they become difficult to stop, even though damage to one's health is obvious. To 'addiction' in psychiatric terms, one needs to add strong social pressure. Not only does light skin have a strong social advantage but the abandonment of the practise and the consequent darkness (which can be very pronounced by means of the said 'rebound effect' up to reaching a darker colour of the initial one) provokes many negative consequences. The person can change up to being unrecognisable and, a more serious thing, his change can be interpreted as a sign of financial or marriage difficulty, with a grave loss of prestige.

At the end of this descriptive analysis I want to decry that there is a speculation in course. Products containing substances known to be damaging are made and sold to be used for de-pigmentation. I think that it should be forbidden the sale of soaps containing mercury and cosmetics containing hydroquinone. For its therapeutic uses, however, it's not possible to stop producing cortisone creams, but it should be prohibited, however, the disguising of these medicines through the use of packages for cosmetics.

The same strategies as have been for cigarette packets should be applied to signal the risks, not a simple illustrative form, that a low cultural population has difficulty reading, but clear visible warnings, and also eloquent photo of the damages that they can provoke.

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Acknowledgements

Giovanni Vassallo graduated in Ethno-anthropological Studies at the University of Genoa's Faculty of History. At the moment he is specializing in Anthropology and Ethnology at the same University and researches in the Congo RDC and among African immigrants in Italy.

Gastronomic Fashions, Luxury Concepts, Consumption Practices and the Construction of Identity

Cecilia Winterhalter

Abstract
The object of this chapter is the new gastronomic fashions and how through innovation of luxury concepts and consumption practices, mentalities change and new identities are built by means of food. The Luxury concept changes and its changes are important, because gastronomy is considered to be the new Luxury industry. Consumption is observed because of the close metaphor between eating and consuming and of the tight ties between food and identity formation. Gastronomy has been transformed by new ways of eating, new ideas on food and new fashions. A new cooking developed, with simple preparations, seasonal products and creative techniques. Gastronomic tourism grew with the restaurant guides and the request for new eating experiences. But luxury food is not synonymous with excellence. Other qualities are crucial for the new gastronomy, whose necessary requisites are changes in mentality and a renewal of taste, focused on the excellence of the food. The Slow Food Movement promotes the excellence of food, the protection of the eno-gastronomic patrimony and the preservation of local cooking. The regional cuisine is used to re-invent a historical and cultural identity. Various groups of people use their way of eating to define their identity. The consumption of 'foreign' food, a luxury food for a cosmopolitan elite, produces a global food consumer with a transnational identity. The consumption of food is thus a way to construct identities and to assert ideas, which bring about the evolution of mentalities.

Key Words: Alimentation, consumption, gastronomy, gastronomic fashions, identity construction, luxury, mentality, regional cuisine, Slow Food Movement, transnational identities.

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This chapter studies the new gastronomic fashions and how through innovation of luxury concepts and consumption practices, mentalities change and new identities are built by means of food. Gastronomy is seldom analysed within the complex of fashion, luxury, consumption and identity.

1. Luxury

Luxury is a relative concept that changes with time, age, social class and taste. It contains the notions of excellence, exclusiveness, representation of self[1] and identity construction.[2] Luxury is traditionally associated with precious objects or

productions of high value goods, as for example fashion, design or the so-called 'made in Italy'[3] production.

More recent luxury ideas concentrate on immaterial values such as pleasure, special services, time,[4] cultural goods[5] or unique experiences. Even food is re-invented as experience, for example the event '22 designer cakes' at the manifestation 'Dining design' or the exposition 'Street Dining Design' organised at the Triennale in Milan in 2004.[6] The communicative and social qualities[7] of luxury and its capacity to act as 'identity builder'[8] are particularly interesting for this chapter.

Since the 1990ies the luxury market was brought to a considerable expansion.[9] To force its growth, it did not only increase in quality, with the production of high value goods, but also in quantity, with the democratisation of luxury.[10] The production of goods accessible to more consumers, like the fashion designer perfumery,[11] the secondary 'pret-à-porter' lines, as Armani's Emporio Armani or Valentino's Oliver, or even the star chef's 'pret-à-manger' food, like Fauchon's or Moreno Cedroni's canned food, is welcomed and sustained because it increases consumption. At the same time this mass production does no longer respond to the exclusive requests of the very rich and 'dematerializes'[12] luxury, by subjecting it to the dynamics of fashion.[13] This democratisation of luxury, compromising its exclusivity,[14] is the sign of a changing concept of luxury.

2. Consumption

The consumption studies analyse food fashions, myths and representations, the value and the meaning of food consumption and are part of a major discipline called food studies, which deals with the anthropological, historical, psychological and sociological aspects of alimentation. Food consumption is a p ractice that allows to construct and break social rules and hierarchies.[15]

Although consumption changes, one of its main characteristics remains the continuous process of democratisation of voluptuary goods.[16] The rise of consumption due to popular diffusion of luxuries is not only a form of democratisation. With the progressive possibility to distinguish oneself it also leads to a growth of individualism. The consumer society is not only the result of economical wealth which allows superfluous consumption, but also of a new way of considering oneself which changes mentality. The distinction processes, generated by the individual choice of goods, are a definition of identity[17] and the identity of different communities determines a diverse consumption. There is for example a gendered consumption[18] and a gendered food production.[19]

Consumption practices are dealt with in this chapter because of the close metaphor between eating and consuming[20] and because of the tight ties between food and identity formation,[21] which suggest that identities are also 'built, interpreted, negotiated, narrated and altered by means of food'.[22] Consumption practices can thus be said to 'perform identities'.[23]

3. Innovations in Alimentation and Gastronomy

New ways of eating, new ideas on food and new gastronomic fashions have transformed alimentation and gastronomy. Gastronomic tourism[24] became a topic and grew in importance with the restaurant guides, like the *Michelin guide*[25] or the *Guida del Gambero Rosso*, with the so-called 'starisation' of the chefs[26] meaning the awarding of stars in order to classify their cooking skills and with new clients demanding new, surprising eating experiences. Gastronomy and high quality alimentary products are considered to be the 'nouvelle industry du luxe'. The quote is by Alain Duchasse, who having been awarded the highest number of Michelin stars[27] ever, is considered to be one of the most distinguished cooks.

But food traditionally associated with luxury, like truffles, lobsters, caviar or oysters, is not necessarily synonymous with excellence and with *haute cusine*. Other qualities, like freshness, local products, skills in preparation and cooking, are the crucial points of the new gastronomic fashion.

Paul Bocuse[28] by inspiring the article *Vive la nouvelle cuisine française*[29] published by the Gault Millau guide, brought about the triumph and the questioning of the consumer society. He aligned a new cooking to modern taste with short cooking times and simple preparations, which renounce heavy sauces for healthier diet principles. A new cuisine developed which introduced cooking *à la minute* and the so-called *cuisine du marché,* made of regional and seasonal products, which are to be bought freshly on the market. More recently aesthetic presentations, foreign techniques and creative cooking, an issue very often translated by untalented epigones,[30] prepared the coming of the international cuisine,[31] which is very similar all over the world, in Rome, New York or Shanghai. Necessary requisites for this revolution are the imagination of the chefs, but mainly new clients with new gastronomic values, as fineness, lightness, healthiness, pleasure, and a renewal of taste, whose new criteria are not only 'luxury', in the sense of 'expensiveness', but the excellence or the high quality of the food.

In Italy the Slow Food Movement,[32] a 'resistance movement' against homologation,[33] promotes, since 1986, a 'democratic' excellence of food to be shared by more people, the pleasure of eating, the protection of the world's eno-gastronomic patrimony, the preservation of regional food plantations, productions and cuisines, but mostly the education of new consumers towards gastronomic, environmental, political and social quality choices.[34]

This democratisation is a contradictory issue as an 'excellent food for all' or a 'global distribution of small local productions' is nearly impossible to achieve. The alliance with alimentary industry, in the attempt to democratise and recreate *haute cuisine* for the consumer masses, has proved incapable to reproduce traditional cooking.[35] Without doubt only a very small part of the *Pachino* tomatoes or the *Culatello di Zibello* sausage meat sold to the masses on the market under these names, is effectively coming from local producers in Pachino and Zibello and is

thus effectively entitled to carry the protected denomination. In France as well there have been disputes on the legal delimitation of the Champagne region[36] and wines from new vineyards have been allowed to carry this protected denomination, to satisfy the growing requests of the booming markets of Russia and China. On the other hand to control the danger of a devaluation of Champagne due to an excessive growth of the offer, in occasion of the recent global crises, the producers have decided to wait next year to put the *millesimé* on the market.[37] This case is particularly interesting because Champagne holds an important place in the idea of luxury food and because of the close identification between France and Champagne.[38]

4. New Gastronomic Habits and Fashions that Construct Identity

Alimentation and gastronomy, fundamental elements to define one's historical identity,[39] have been transformed by new habits and fashions.

In alimentation the main novelties in our nutrition since 1900, are a drop of cereals and legumes, a slow growth of vegetables, fruit, meat, fish and diary products, contrasted by an astonishingly high increase of sugar and fat.[40] Other innovations are the industrial conservation techniques,[41] like canning and freezing, and the introduction of an alimentary 'morality' of health nutrition and diet, the new nutritional theories.

In gastronomy the fast food industry found a new opponent in the regional cuisine,[42] which existed since long without conscience of its originality. The regional cuisine, as we consider it today, is nothing but an invented myth of a 'true' transmitted traditional cooking. Today it has become a high value[43] and is used by urban modernity to re-invent an historical identity. It has been shown that in Italy, which is rich in regional dishes, but lacks a unified cooking tradition, the myth of a regional cuisine was used to reinforce a common cultural identity.[44] In China as well to construct a new Chinese identity a regional cuisine was invented,[45] defining a small number, usually 8, regional 'culinary systems', called *caixi*. These systems, which are deemed to be building on older classifications,[46] have been defined since the 1990s and what is known as 'Cantonese' cuisine today, referring to *Yuecai* or *Gangdong cai*, the Chinese terms for the cooking of Guangdong province or the culinary style of Guangzhou and the surrounding Pearl River delta,[47] is not the original way of cooking of this province, but rather a re-interpretation of it. The large scale evolution of new cooking styles in Hong Kong's restaurants is closely related to the huge influx of migrants and evolved in contact the with other 'regional' and 'foreign' cuisines,[48] as we will see. The eulogy of diversity, the defence of cultural identity and of regional cooking are, all over the world, very recent acquisitions and examples of invented traditions.

Cultures can be imagined, invented and asserted not only via goods, but also via food or via images and ideas about food. Various groups of people use their way of eating to distinguish themselves and to define an identity.

To represent themselves as cosmopolitan epicureans, the so-called *foodies*, a group of people typical for the booming urban life of the late 80ies and early 90ies, chose as their main activity to eat out in fashionable restaurants.[49] This activity made of gastronomy a *mise en scène* of their identity.[50]

More recently food consumption is again one of the ways chosen to express identity by the so-called *poorgeoisie*. The name of this group of people is a fusion of the two words: 'poor' and 'bourgeoisie'.[51] This new social class brought by the first global crisis and described in various articles on the newspaper *The Guardian*[52] finds its origins on the Pacific coast of the United States. It is born in cities like San Francisco, Portland and Seattle, the homeland of the digital economy wealth and of most of the newest products, ideas and trends.[53] These wealthy people have chosen to appear poorer than they are, because they hold that exceeding luxury and flash slammed in everyone's face is synonymous of bad taste and inappropriate at a time of mass economic woe. They are convinced that the era of 'conspicuous consumption', a term coined by the economist T. Veblen in his *The Theory of the Leisure Class* in 1899,[54] is over and is to be substituted by a form of 'incospicous consumption'. In this inconspicous consumption quality is preferred to quantity and good taste to brands. The poorgeoises blend perfectly with today's landscape of genuine privation and adopt a form of consumerism against consumerism. If the products on the market are 'loathsome', the 'problem is solved by buying' and by eating 'different stuff'.[55] The countercultural poorgeoises spend, looking as though they haven't spent, drive hybrid cars, have creative jobs in the arts, fashion or the marketing business and therefore renounce suits for pricey handmade clothes. The idea of a 'looking poor luxury' is present also in their eating habits and in their food consumption. The poorgeoises do not eat luxury food, as caviar and champagne, but slow food.[56] While buying they care for social equity and have an eco-friendly, grow-your-own philosophy. The food they consume is ecologically and locally farmed or in many cases grown in their own back yard or home-made, as for example self-made boar prosciutto.[57] It can be said that the gastronomic fashion invented and practiced by these people defines again their identity.

Another recent fashion is the consumption of 'ethnic' or 'foreign' food. This gastronomic fashion represents a lifestyle and is instrumental in rejecting the past, which is strongly linked to traditional eating and food habits,[58] in favour of an advanced, modern and progressive way of eating. This new alimentation captures the exotic, cosmopolitan or global.

When Chinese consumers are encouraged to be cosmopolitan and to dine in Western restaurants, as the Pierre, the main restaurant of Mandarin Oriental Hotel in Hong Kong, 'Western' can be equated with *haute cuisine*[59] and Western food, as spaghetti, snails, crab, lobster or asparagus, with luxury.[60] In the same way in which these images of a Western food are constructed in China, imaginary visions of a luxurious Eastern *haute cuisine*, are present in Europe. The fashionable Nobu-

Armani-Restaurant in Milan for example represents this costly cosmopolitan way of eating. The new gastronomic fashion with short cooking times and cooking *à la minute*, raw and thus very fresh ingredients, a way of cooking introduced after Raymond Olivier, as first Western cook, visited Japan in 1964, owes a lot to the oriental influence.[61] World food and fusion cooking[62] have been imported into the West as new trends and re-discovered as luxury food for a new cosmopolitan elite, as for example the Sushi, Sashimi or Dim Sum consumed by managers.

In these constructed and imaginary visions the 'foreign' is used to change ideas on food and on luxury. The gastronomic guides of East and West,[63] far from being only practical user's guides of modern gastronomy, enable a v icarious consumption of the new, expensive and exotic cuisines and show the complex interaction between the invented representations of the 'self' and of the 'other' within a global context. This gastronomic fashion produces a neither Western nor Eastern, but global food consumer, with a new transnational identity.

The consumption of food is thus a way to construct new identities, to imagine culture and to assert new ideas, which bring about the evolution of mentalities.

Notes

[1] F. Celaschi, 'Osare pensare il design del lusso', *Lusso versus Design. Italian Design, beni culturali e luxury system*, F. Celaschi, A. Cappellieri, A. Vassile (eds), Franco Angeli Editore, Milano 2006, p. 22.

[2] R. Sassatelli, 'Presentazione' *Dal Lusso al Capitalismo*, W. Sombart (ed), Armando Editore, Roma, 2006, p. 20.

[3] F. Celaschi intends with 'made in Italy production' the production of Italian Luxury and Design goods. Celaschi, op. cit., p. 16 and A. Cappellieri, 'Dalla focaccia di Platone alla cravatta di Marinella: storie, contesti,e valori del lusso', in Ibid., p. 81.

[4] A. Vassile, *Immaterialità, globalizzaione, esperienza* in Ibid., p. 100.

[5] A. Cappellieri, 'Dalla focaccia di Platone alla cravatta di Marinella: storie, contest,e valori del lusso', in Ibid., p. 80.

[6] Ibid., p. 106, note 16.

[7] M. Douglas & B. Isherwood, *Il mondo delle cose*, Il mulino, Bologna, 1984, p. 6; F. Braudel, *Civiltà materiale, economia e capitalismo nei secoli XV-XVIII*, Einaudi, Torino, 1993, p. 161.

[8] F. Celaschi, 'Nuovi confini etici del lusso: l'eumerce', in Celaschi, Cappellieri, Vassile, op. cit., pp. 65 ff.

[9] V. Codeluppi, *Dalla corte alla strada: Natura ed evoluzione sociale della moda*, Carrocci, Roma, 2007, p. 92.

[10] Sassatelli, op. cit., p. 24.

[11] Perfumery represents today 25% of the high of value world market, M. Turinetto, 'All inclusive: trasversalità dell'Italian style', in Celaschi, Cappellieri, Vassile, op. cit., p. 122.

[12] Codeluppi, op. cit., p. 156.

[13] Sassatelli, op. cit., p. 25.

[14] T. Paquot, *Elogio del Lusso: Ovvero l'utilità dell'inutile*, Castelvecchi, Roma, 2007, p. 16.

[15] A. Guigoni, 'Introduzione à la carte', *Foodscapes: Stili, mode e culture del cibo oggi*, Monza, Polimetrica, 2004, p. 13.

[16] Sassatelli, op. cit., p. 34.

[17] Douglas, Isherwood, op. cit., p.13.

[18] A. Arru and M. Stella (eds), *I consumi una questione di genere*, Carrocci, Roma, 2003.

[19] W. Jansen, 'French Bread and Algerian Wine: Conflicting Identities in French Algeria', *Food, Drink and Identity: Cooking, Eating and Drinking in Europe since the Middle Ages*, P. Scholliers (ed), Berg, Oxford & New York, 2001, pp. 195-218.

[20] R. Wilk, 'Morals and Metaphors: The Meaning of Consumption', *Elusive Consumption*, K.M. Ekström & H. Brembeck (eds), Berg, Oxford & New York, 2004, pp. 11-26.

[21] P. Scholliers, 'Meals, Food Narratives and Sentiments of Belonging in Past and Present', in Scholliers (ed), op. cit., pp. 6 and 17.

[22] Ibid., p. 5.

[23] Ekström, Brembeck, op. cit., p. 3.

[24] A. Drouard, *Historie des cuisiniers en France XIXe et XXe siècle,* CNRS Editions, Paris, 2007, pp. 103-105.

[25] *Storia dell'alimentazione,* J.L. Flandrin & M. Montanari (eds), Laterza, Roma-Bari, 2003, p. 652.

[26] Drouard, op. cit., p. 114.

[27] Ibid., p. 127.

[28] Ibid., p. 119.

[29] H. Gault, 'Vive la nouvelle cuisine française', *Gault Millau*, October 1973.

[30] Drouard, op. cit., p. 121.

[31] A tendency in line with what has been called the internationalisation of luxury, cfr. Turinetto, op. cit., p. 116.

[32] More information in the Slow Food Movement can be found on the website http://www.slowfood.it, Viewed in 2009.

[33] Guigoni, op. cit., pp. 22-23.

[34] Cited from the *Slow Food Manifesto*, 9.11.1989, Viewed in 2009 http://www.slowfood.it; cfr. also C. Petrini, *Buono, pulito e giusto: Principi di nuova gastronomia*, Einaudi, Torino, 2005.

[35] Drouard, op. cit., p. 125.

[36] Scholliers, op. cit., p. 14.

[37] From a conversation with A. Isinelli, cfr. *Le 99 migliori maison di Champagne*, L. Burei & A. Isinelli (eds), Edizioni Estemporanee, Roma, 2010.

[38] Cfr. J. Gronow, *Caviar with Champagne: Common Luxury and the Ideals of the Good Life in Stalin's Russia*, Berg, Oxford & New York, 2003.

[39] Flandrin & Montanari (eds), op. cit., p. 702.

[40] Ibid., pp. 569-592.

[41] Ibid., pp. 616-618 & 623-631.

[42] Ibid., p. 645.

[43] Ibid., p. 703

[44] Ibid., p. 655.

[45] J. Klein, 'Changing Tastes in Guangzhou Restaurant Writings in the Late 1990s', *Consuming China: Approaches to Cultural Change in Contemporary China*. K. Latham, S. Thompson & J. Klein (eds), Routledge, London & New York, 2006, p. 105.

[46] Ibid., p. 108.

[47] The culinary style of Guangzhou and the surrounding Pearl River delta is subdivided in Guangzhou cuisine, Chaozhou cuisine and East River (Hakka) cuisine.

[48] Ibid., p. 108.

[49] Scholliers, op. cit., p. 7.

[50] Guigoni, op. cit., p. 21.

[51] E. Franceschini, 'L'Inghilterra scopre la poverghesia va in archivio l'età dell'apparenza', *La Repubblica*, 16.6.2009, p. 43.

[52] S. Jeffries, 'The Poorgeoisie', *The Guardian*, 12.6.2009, p. 13; cfr. S. Kandell, 'How Looking Poor became the New Status Symbol', Viewed in 2009, http://www.men.style.com.

[53] Franceschini, op. cit., p. 43.

[54] T. Veblen & M. Banta, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, Oxford World's Classics, Oxford, 2008.

[55] Cfr. T. Frank, *The Conquest of Cool: Business Culture, Counterculture and the Rise of Hip Consumerism*, Chicago University Press, 1997 cited in Jeffries, op. cit., p. 13.

[56] Franceschini, op. cit., p. 43.

[57] Jeffries, op. cit., p. 13.

[58] Latham, op. cit., p. 232.

[59] Klein, op. cit., p. 109.

[60] Ibid., p. 107.

[61] Drouard, op. cit., p. 118.

[62] Ibid., p. 122.

[63] Klein, op. cit., pp. 104-120.

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Cecilia Winterhalter is an independent scholar and contemporary historian, interested in social history and in the history of mentalities, with main researches on the construction of identity through the selectivity of memory (Second World War), the construction of transnational identities through food and on the construction of gendered identities through religion. She works as a consultant in the staff formation for human resources and as a translator. She is fluent in four languages and devotes her free time to agonistic sailing. Born in Seattle, she is currently living in Rome. After her studies, she left Switzerland and employment at the Swiss Ministry of Culture, to write her Ph.D. in History and Civilization at the European University Institute in Florence.

Fashion as Confession: Revelation and Concealment in Personal Identity

Lucy Collins

Abstract
Fashion is often thought of as an important mode of self-expression. But while it may be a significant proclamation of an individual's uniqueness, I'd like to discuss how fashion may provide a moment of self-concealment, even while the self is revealed. My chapter will deal with the following questions: How is fashion both a veil and a performance? What are we performing in our fashionable costumes and what are we concealing? To what degree are we actually concealing aspects of ourselves in the public performance of dressing? I argue that fashion is intimately connected to both the notions of secrecy and concealment as much as it may be to self-expression. In this sense, the act of dressing may be similar to confession – as it becomes a public act of revealing what was once concealed. So what then is the confession of fashion? One possible conclusion may be that fashion is both an admission and a concealment of consumerism/materialism. While we proclaim our individual 'conspicuous consumption' in the articles of clothing that we wear, we are also displaying our desire to form relationships. Fashion is fundamentally about a deep desire to become a member a group and build relationships. In the same way that narcissism is a focus and love of the self, born from insecurity, fashion is an overt drawing of attention to the self, but in an effort to form relationships. And, like narcissism, fashion cannot be avoided. One cannot merely opt out, for to be 'dressed' is a necessary condition for anyone living in contemporary society. Therefore, the way we choose to dress ourselves has everything to do with the ways an individual seeks to be known and understood against the background of social life.

Key Words: Fashion, confession, transformation, identity, selfhood, revelation, groups, intimacy0

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Clothing is a means of hiding the self. Clothing is also a means of revealing the self. Through the sartorial choices we make regarding what to reveal and what to conceal through dress, we bring attention to ourselves as individuals. Many people understand this focus on the individual through clothing as simply a form of self-expression, but I wonder how it may also be similar to confession. Although it might be inaccurate to argue that all fashion is explicitly or overtly confessional, it seems that there is a connection between the psychological needs filled by clothing and the role of confession in society. I'd like to use the notion of confession to shed light on the underlying sense of inclusion that I believe most people are after

in the ways that they dress. Following the argument of Georg Simmel among others, I think that looking at the concept of confession, as both an existential and psychological tool, can help point us to the fact that group inclusion and the seeking of membership must be the most fundamental driving force behind fashion.

Confession is simultaneously a self-proclamation and a self-concealment. It both hides and displays. But through these opposing actions, confession seeks to accomplish an acknowledgement, an affirmation, and forgiveness from a select audience. Fashion employs these same means to accomplish similar goals. Fashion utilizes the interplay of self-expression and self-concealment in order to provoke a response from a certain group of others. Through the dual activities of revealing and concealing the self, confession and fashion both appear to be endeavours which seem especially self-indulgent, but they are in fact two unavoidable aspects of living in, and navigating throughout, a world of others.

What is the philosophical concept of confession? What and why do we confess? Confession is an idea intimately linked to the notion of sin. It appears most often in a religious context where one is called to 'own up' to his/her guilt in an effort to be forgiven, and then redeemed. Confession can also be more loosely understood as taking responsibility, or claiming all aspects of oneself, good and bad, pleasant and unpleasant. With or without the notion of forgiveness, we sometimes have a difficult time addressing and acknowledging certain traits and features of ourselves that even we might find deplorable. This is the notion of confession I'd like to focus on. But what are we confessing when we confess, generally speaking? A failure, a mistake, an incompleteness, a lack, a separation? Some write that confession reveals interior thoughts, the state of the soul. It 'shows the heart.' Confession from sorrow and shame should reveal contrition, for the purpose of absolution from sin. For my purposes, however, I'd like to define confession as the public admission of something deeply personal and intimate, often revealed through a spectacular display (such as the rending of clothes and covering oneself in ashes which accompanied many medieval religious confessions).

So, what does this concept of confession add to our notion of the self or to our understanding of fashion? Confession simultaneously constructs the self and deconstructs the self. It is both self-identifying and self-transforming. Drawing from its three primary uses in religion, law, and literature, I think we can assume that an individual who confesses is seeking to accomplish three distinct goals. Initially, a confessor is seeking *acknowledgement* (of oneself, of one's sin) by an other. Secondly, one who confesses is seeking *affirmation* (of oneself, of the authenticity of his/her sin). Finally, one is seeking forgiveness, or, as I'd like to understand it, *transformation*. Whether or not one is willing to accept my argument that fashion involves the kind of 'sin' or recognition of shame and guilt necessary for confession to occur, surely it may be clear that individuals dress with these

three psychological goals in mind – even if not consciously, then certainly subconsciously.

Indeed there are some ways in which confessions through dress are particularly obvious, such as the case where someone acknowledges a shift in his/her gender or sexual orientation by changing his/her style of clothing. Or perhaps a person wears a suit to work every day in order to 'confess' that s/he is a business person.[1] There is a sense, as well, in which all manner of uniforms are a particular kind of confessional dress, but this is really not what I am addressing. All these sorts of 'outer layer' sartorial confessions may be interesting, but they really do not explore the existential reasons why we dress ourselves in certain ways.

Fashion explicitly seeks to accomplish the deeper goals of confession in the following ways. Through fashion, one gains acknowledgement as the other gazes at him/her and says: 'I see you.' We seek this kind of acknowledgement when we dress in ways that make us stand out as individuals. Affirmation is accomplished as the other says: 'I recognize you.' Affirmation is sought when we dress utilizing items that are signifiers to particular groups (as in the case of wearing noticeably trendy clothing). Finally, transformation (or forgiveness) is accomplished as the other says: 'I accept you as a member of my group.' Therefore, the individual is transformed as s/he acquires the status of membership into a particular group.

Although the processes of acknowledgement and affirmation are significant (as there has been much written on the importance of the 'gaze of the other' as self-validating), it seems that the issue of transformation, or forgiveness of guilt, is especially significant. It's in this desire for forgiveness or transformation that fashion can be understood as a sort of confession – as a performative announcement of lack or a description of sin in which a plea for restoration is expressed. In this sense, not only is a person seeking recognition from others in the way that s/he dresses, but a fashioned confessor is looking to his audience for interpretation and evaluation – to offer an ultimate appraisal of his worth.

But where does the forgiveness come in? What is the source of the guilt? It seems possible that fashion allows some sort of selfish involvement with artifice. To what degree is our dressed or fashioned self an authentic self? Some might argue that the moment we begin to wear garments of clothing at all we lose all authenticity. (This is in fact a large part of the rhetoric behind nudist societies.) So then are we all, in a final fashion confession, admitting to playing roles, creating personas, and becoming the false social selves that fashion allows us to cultivate? Are we simply acknowledging the game of fashion, but in shame? Perhaps this what we are revealing in clothing – the very fact that we are acting. To wear clothing is to admit to playing a role. It is to admit to presenting a false appearance.

In light of this understanding of confession, as that form of self-accounting which reveals an innate lack (or irreconcilable duality), we may begin to see fashion as more self-revelatory. It's often said that fashion conceals, as it presents the self as a masquerade, a duplicitous false façade, but I argue that it does exactly

the opposite. Fashion is always revealing. But it reveals things we may not even know we had to say. Things we couldn't even be aware of saying. Clothing reveals, with or without intention, one's body; one's materialism; one's desire for relationship, group membership, and intimacy; and one's innate duplicity.

Most basically though, fashion can be interpreted as a kind of confession in that it is a visual mode of speaking, or subtly saying: 'Yes, I have a b ody. Yes, I acknowledge that I can be objectified. Yes, I accept it.' Or: 'Yes, perhaps I even enjoy playing the game of fashion. Perhaps I spent too much money on my shoes. Perhaps I didn't darn my sweater and you see, visibly, my lack of care for my appearance, myself.' Words can be manipulated, personalities can be concocted (con men, false personas), but clothing (and our body) is screaming loud and clear – *this* is what I am: this fat, bulbous lady or this slim waif. I cannot hide. I *must* confess.

Confession is a way we bring attention to 'sin,' but in so doing we are seeking forgiveness. Through the very process of bringing attention to it, we are simultaneously being freed of it. So, in the very act of bringing attention to the body we are in a sense freed of it. Since fashion (clothing) is the way we are able to make something that inherently objectifies us (we are our body as object) into something highly subjective, we are in some way released from that objectivity. At the same time though, fashion is the very means by which we express our subjectivity in our effort to be part of a group. Fundamentally, fashion highlights our *intersubjectivity* as well as our subjectivity.

One great example of the sort of confession I am speaking of is from the popular film/musical 'Grease.' The climax of the story occurs when the primary female character Sandy undergoes a co mplete transformation as she remakes herself into a cool sex kitten, complete with black leather pants, red lips, stilettos, and blown-out hair. At this point in the narrative, not only is Sandy accepted by the Pink Ladies, the high school clique that she longs to join, but she also shows her love interest, Danny, that she is willing to become a part of his 'cool' world in order to win his affection. Surely there are other makeover stories which might serve to illustrate my point, but I think that in this case 'Grease' is especially pertinent. Even after Sandy's transformation, the audience is left wondering: who is the real Sandy? Was she always the popular vixen, dripping with sex appeal, or is she still the innocent naïve girl, now just wearing different clothing? So the question of whether or not Sandy is essentially playing a role is a valid one.

Another reason this particular makeover is so relevant to my argument is that it has all the characteristics of a confession: as Sandy presents her made-over self in a very public way, she is seeking acknowledgement from the 'cool' kids at school, and she ultimately undergoes a real transformation as she becomes accepted as one of the Pink Ladies. Finally, Sandy's sartorial confession exclaims her desire for relationship – broadly, in her yearning to relate to the popular kids at school, but specifically as she longs for the love of Danny.

Through our choices in dress, we present a self that we hope will be included by a certain audience. We wear particular items of clothing that serve as social cues to alert others to our desire to be included. I see this tendency as a subtle confession of a desire to be accepted. More fundamentally, though, this desire to be included in a certain group can be understood as an innate desire for intimacy. Although in contemporary society, we are told that we should stand alone, unique and powerful in our individuality, each of us yearns for a deep, intimate connection to others. I believe this urge for intimacy is expressed in clothing.

Also connected to the paradoxically narcissistic nature of fashion is the confession of materialism that fashion embodies. Materialism is an unavoidable fact of clothing. Clothing is literally material – textiles, fabric, material garments that cover our material bodies. Additionally, those who care about staying 'in fashion,' in the sense of following trends and styles, are even more materialistic. They may have more articles of clothing than are necessary in order to maintain their 'fashionable' status. So the very act of wearing clothing itself confesses to a kind of materialism, an unavoidable materiality of social life.

In contemporary society, we are encouraged to stand as individuals, without anyone else. Yet, we are told that a focus on the self, through telling our own stories, or confessing our own guilt, is too self-indulgent. We are told that as consumers we are to possess things in order to become 'someone,' yet we are also told that we are to be satisfied from within and that to revel in ourselves (as in material greed) is too self-indulgent. We are told not to need anyone, but yet the only reason we buy the things we do is to be accepted by others. It seems that dissecting fashion through this notion of confession helps shed light on the many mixed messages that we receive from contemporary society.

But, what is it about modern society that wants every moment to be a moment of self-exposure? Perhaps we are so lacking in genuinely intimate moments that we crave that kind of self-affirmation everywhere – from the market to the street corner. In order to be accepted by others, in polite society, or in fashionable society, we must accept the inevitability of clothing. We cannot be nudists, eschewing all lies and deceit, just letting the 'free self' reign. We also cannot be such extreme individualists, dressing in all manner of odd garb, just for the sake of individuality. Because fashion is one of the very first cultural cues we send out to others, we simply must be aware of what message we are sending, and to what audience. Such awareness might involve making some compromises in order to gain the benefit of creating relationships with others. Society might be based on artifice, and we may all be actors, but without these seemingly 'inauthentic' attitudes that allow us to interact with others through social roles, we would all be alone.

Notes

[1] The hugely popular 'message t-shirts' also serve as some sort of confession.

Lucy Collins is a PhD candidate at Temple University. Her dissertation research is related to fashion and questions of personal identity and group membership, specifically examining the connection between the narrative self and trends.

Italian Haute Couture: First Attempts of Emancipation from France (1906-1959)

Luca Lo Sicco

Abstract
This study investigates the economic and social relevance of the textile industry in Italy in the first half of the 20th century and the consequent stimulus to create an independent fashion industry, separate and autonomous from France. The aim is to re-discover and acknowledge the work of those pioneers who started what we now know and study as the Italian Fashion system. Several examples such as Rosa Geroni, Simonetta Visconti, Sorelle Fontana, Emilio Schuberth, Jole Veneziani, Carosa, Vanna, Germana Marucelli, Vita Noberasco and Alberto Fabiani will be presented. This chapter analyses important previous studies and then conducts an investigation that centres on a series of Fashion houses and several correlations between Rome, Florence and the Industry. This research will contribute to future investigations on similar topics as well as promote the teaching of History of Fashion.

Key Words: Fashion pioneers, Italian Haute Couture, Autarchic fashion, Franca Florio.

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1. 1906: The Pioneers

The strong social and economic importance that the Italian textile industry has had is most likely the two key factors that stimulated the genus of creating an independent fashion industry separate from French dominance. In 1876 with a population of over 28 million, the industrial sector employed a small but impressive 383,131, just 1.36% of the total population. Silk production on its own had 200,393, employing mainly women and children. Only 15,692 male adults were employed. The origins of the textile industry in Italy are ancient and reach far back into Italian history. Indeed, in the ninth century in Sicily there were already major centres of textile production based in the cities of Palermo, Agrigento, and Messina. Noted for its beauty and the intricacy of designs, Italy and in particular Sicily, was known throughout the ancient world for its quality of fabrics. Many examples of this early craftsmanship can still be admired today. The museum collections of the Cathedral of Palermo and the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, have various fabric samples from this era that stand testimony to the beauty and skill of these early producers. In truth, these materials were so highly sought after that the coronation mantle of King Roger II of Sicily used these very fabrics. From these early beginnings in Sicily and indeed throughout Italy, the seeds of these 'Renaissance' factories began to bear fruit early on in their histories

and it's largest harvest was to come in the twentieth century, when the material Italy was producing was finally in the hands of Italian designers.

The seamstress Rosa Genoni was a p ioneer in this field, presenting a groundbreaking collection at the Milan International Exhibition of 1906. S he presented a revolutionary line of clothing made exclusively from Italian fabrics. Inspired by the works of the most famous artists of the Renaissance and included many of these early motifs and materials in her collection. Some of these dresses are still kept (in excellent condition) at the Museum Galleria del Costume of Florence. Like most of the high qualified seamstress she trained in Nizza and Paris. In 1895 she moved to Milan where she got a j ob at the very famous Maison H.Haardt et Fils clearly a French Fashion House. In 1903 she became the director of the company and almost immediately starts to promote clothes with, in her own words, 'puro stile italiano', a pure Italian style.

But sadly, this attempt by Rosa Genoni was not a great success. Many of the Italian fashion houses kept producing clothes copied from the more famous and dominant Parisian ateliers and women's magazines. This perpetuated the influence of the French model of aesthetics and design on both consumers and readers. At that time, it was considered that fashion was dictated solely by France. Many examples of this mimicry can be found to illustrate this strict adherence to the '*Parisian style*'. The famous socialite, heiress and noted fashionista Franca Florio bought her clothes directly from Paris, mainly from *Maison Worth*. These were shipped to Palermo and once she was seen in them, these garments were immediately copied and imitated by high society, and from there, they had a direct '*trickle down*' effect to the rest of the population. But at the beginning of the new century Franca Florio, who was a very intelligent and modern woman, understood the actions of Rosa Geroni and decided together with Giuseppe Visconti di Modrone, the famous owner of the fabric company that still bears his name and is still in operation today, to sponsor a committee for '*moda di pure arte Italiana*', or fashion of pure Italian art. As we will see later with the relationship between art and fashion in Italy, Florio started to give a sense on nobility and importance to what was for many years considered a craft industry. Unfortunately in 1928 Madame Geroni was forced to leave Italy because of her antifascist sentiments and in doing so put an end to her committee and her involvement in the design and development of an independent Italian fashion.

Futurism was another factor that lead to the revival and further development of a national style. Starting with the leader of the futurist movement Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, who in 1919 wrote a famed manifesto against the luxury. This in reality, especially in the context of fashion, was a direct rejection of French haute couture, which was considered the epitome of luxury. The Futurists developed several innovative and radical proposals in the field of clothing. In particular was the birth of a new aesthetic, typified by the use of bold patterns and the striking use of colour. These clothes were designed and manufactured by the

exponents of the futurist manifesto like Giacomo Balla and Fortunato Depero. Ironically, it was the famous suit designed by the artist Thayaht, a pseudonym of Ernesto Michahelles, that sticks out as a key example of the futurist work in fashion. His *TuTa* was also adopted as a f ad by high Florentine society, demonstrating the appeal and need for something different from what was currently being offered by the French and to a l esser extent, Italian houses. Although not long lasting, the Futurist did have a very profound impact on the developing psyche of the emerging Italian fashion industry. For the first time, clothes made and designed in Italy were beginning to hold their own and could prove popular, and also for the first time, Italian fabrics were in the hands of innovative Italian designers.

2. The Royal Influences and the Fascist National Board of Fashion

Another important contribution to the development of the Italian fashion industry came from the outcry sparked by several marriages of the Savoy Princesses: Yolanda with Count Giorgio Carlo Calvi di Bergolo, Mafalda with Prince Philip of Hesse, Giovanna with King Boris III of Bulgaria and Maria with Prince Louis of Bourbon Parma followed by the wedding of the Crown Prince Umberto of Savoy and Princess Maria Jose of Belgium on 8th January 1930. The wedding dress of the newly Crown Princess was made by the tailor Ventura, but the design was made by Prince Umberto himself. Without forgetting the Duke Amedeo of Savoy Aosta that in 1927 m arried Princess Anna d'Orleans. This contribution was also given by another wedding celebrated April 24, 1930 between the Count Galeazzo Ciano and Mussolini's favourite daughter, Edda, who wore a dress tailored by Montorsi. The political climate of those years was pushing for a national brand. The aristocracy and high society present at these happy events worn clothes made and designed in Italy and using only Italian fabrics. These occasions gave Italian fashion houses and textile industry the confidence, prestige and popularity that boosted public interest and began to create a strong and very long desire to be recognised nationally and internationally.

> The Fascists were next to take up the fashion industry as part of
> their agenda of managing the cultural expressions of nation, class
> and gender in the construction of a New Italy and New Italians.[1]

Italian Fascism, from the outset, fought against the importation of clothes from France as a consequence of its autocratic and nationalist propaganda, but also to address the economic crisis caused by the First World War. During the 1930s a stronger commitment to support Italian fashion became more and more intense. By 22 December 1932 the Italian Government had created an autonomous organisation for the national exhibition of fashion called '*L'Ente autonomo per la Mostra permanente nazionale della moda*', based in Turin. The main purpose of

this organization was to promote and exemplify clothing made entirely in Italy. In 1935 this group was transformed into the more powerful '*Ente nazionale della Moda*' or the National Board of Fashion, whose main purpose was to promote the use and purchasing of clothing produced in Italy, but with the added agenda of quashing French dominance.

This agency also created a special brand: MADE IN ITALY. This label was a kind of guarantee, stating that the garment was of Italian manufacture. This was one of the ways the Italian Fascist government promoted it own nationalist agenda and appealed greatly to popular support. In reality, many tailors were keener to avoid the risk of being fined by the Government for their non-compliance to the rules, rather than disappointing their customers, who were always attracted to the still popular Parisian high fashion. The label was in fact, a poisoned chalice, with both positive and negative connotations and associations as far as branding was concerned.

Italian fashion magazines were obliged to follow a similar agenda. They published less Parisian inspired silhouettes and designs and the ones that did feature in the magazines often omitted the name of the French creator.

Now Italian Fascism started a cultural battle to impose a new model of femininity: one of a traditional wife and mother capable of giving sons to the country and newly emancipated from French fashion. This was in stark contrast to the model of modern woman of the time, who was represented as free and independent and styled heavily in France.

3. After World War II

But only after the Second World War towards the end of the forties and early fifties did Italian tailors of high fashion really begin to free themselves from the French model. The causes that underlie this self-development of Italian fashion are mainly attributable, to the rich artistic heritage, which stimulated the development of sensitivity to aesthetics.[2] Furthermore Stefania Saviolo suggests that the practice developed by the Italians to be in contact with a wide variety of climates and landscapes, but above all uses of people and cultures.[3] It is for these reasons that Italian designers together with the Italian textile industry were capable of developing a newer and more innovative but formal research-based design process rather than creations that differentiate themselves from the French one solely on decoration.

Certainly the inroads made by the new Italian fashion industry could not have been made if it had not had the chance to be extremely competitive in terms of quality and cost. The lower cost Italian labour force allowed the industry to have the final retail prices that were up to 50% less compared to their French competitors. Thus making it even more attractive and appealing to the wallets of a post war-new market economy. Younger clients with a more modest income could now afford good fashion.

Moreover, Italians could sense that to win in the prestige and importance of fashion in Paris they would need to create a range of sports and leisure/casual clothing to further appeal to a younger market. Fashion with a practical bent was needed. This in itself cemented an Italian victory, as this more practical and economic approach found a huge market outside of Italy. It was immediately appreciated by the American women who already realized the need for clothes to be functional and suitable for the needs of modern living. The ornamentation of Parisian fashion was now considered very '*old world*' and out of step with modern living. Modern women demanded fashion and practicality in her life. Gabriella de Bosdari di Robilant, just to mention one example, revolutionized fashion, long before Emilio Pucci, with her sportswear clothes branded Gabriellasport as Vogue called it '*full of freedom, sobriety and modernity.*'[4] Again Edda Mussolini now the Countess Ciano, was among her customers and as Gabriella wrote in her diary, it was '*the best publicity you could get*' at that time. In 1937 s he was invited by Bergdorf Goodman to the United States to present her collection which resulted in international fame and an increase in clients. She was billed in the US as the chicest house of fashion in Italy. After her divorced she married the Sicilian Prince Francesco Starrabba di Giardinelli and moved to Palermo where she died in 1999.

4. Palazzo Pitti and Florence

In the development of Italian high fashion (*Alta Moda*) a fundamental role was played by a Florentine marquis called Giovanni Battista Giorgini. Although some fashion houses had been quite successful in the United States, by the end of the decade the shoes of Salvatore Ferragamo, Roberta di Camerino's clothes and accessories, as well as the colourful sporting clothes of Emilio Pucci were proving extremely popular.[5] Giorgini carefully selected and presented to international buyers, predominantly from the US, Italian fashion houses who were trying to break free from the French style. This '*new market*' approach, finding a new market where Italian fashion would be desirable, was key in establishing Italian fashion as an identity.

Moreover Giorgini was aware that Italian Haute Couture was not very attractive in the eyes of some foreign markets, because many of the brands were not well established in these markets and they weren't strictly speaking fashion designer but were more tailors and seamstress than creators. So it was a r eally innovative idea that hit the traditional French hegemony.

With the exception of Roberto Capucci, who opened his first atelier in Rome in 1950, many designers such as the Sorelle Fontana, Emilio Schuberth, Simonetta and others made use of outside designers who often worked for several fashion houses simultaneously. An example of this is Pino Lancetti, who in 1954 ope ned his own studio in Rome in via Margutta and then later moving to the very fashionable via Condotti. Having had a background in painting, he initially

collaborated with several houses before breaking through in 1962 with his own collection inspired by military uniforms.

Italy lacked a historical unity, and the fashion culture was fragmented not only in style, namely traditional versus the more popular styles, but we have to remember that Italy is in fact a v ery young country, whose present state was founded in 1861. Previously, Italy was a series of seven independent states: The Kingdom of Sardinia, The Kingdom Lombardo Veneto, Dukedom of Parma, the Dukedom of Modena, Gran dukedom of Toscana, the Stato Pontificio and the Kingdom of Two Sicilies.

Perhaps the most innovative idea that Giorgini had that hit the traditional French hegemony was to bring together in one physical space several very different fashion houses, allowing the Italian fashion industry to give an impression of unity and wholeness. This not only gave credence to the Made in Italy label, but also aided the buyer and the media in saving time and making it a more convenient way to deal with each of the houses represented.

The first of these shows was in Florence, held on the 12th of February 1951 at Villa Torregiani, the private residence of the Marquis Giorgini in via de' Serragli. The first group of 13 houses who participated in the first edition were all Haute Couture. These included Simonetta Visconti, Alberto Fabiani, Sorelle Fontana, Emilio Schuberth, Carosa, Germana Marucelli, Jole Veneziani Vita Noberasco and Vanna. And four for the so called '*Moda Boutique*' consisting of Giorgio Avolio, Franco Bertoli, Emilio Pucci and the company named *Tessitrice dell'Isola*, lead by the Baroness Gallotti.

In the show's third year, given the enormous success, was held on July 22 1952 in the so called Sala Bianca of Palazzo Pitti, where it remained till the end of the sixties.

Giorgini was a r esident buyer for major American department stores and promoted for many years with moderate success to place in the American market Florentine straw hand made products. After the Second World War, managed to convince his customers of the high quality, besides the obvious convenience, of the Italian clothing products. To encourage this initiative he asked to perfected models sizes of the articles exported according to the physical structure of the American women and the U.S. measures, he also understood, first in Italy, the importance to adapt the product to customer needs, the basic rule of marketing. These were the foundations of the next idea: to promote Italian fashion shows alongside the French one. Moreover, the Italian fashion of the 50s understandably, was an expression of the desire for luxury that at that time Italy was sicker than ever, given the recent war and the state of prostration in which the country was and the Sala Bianca corresponded perfectly to this request.

Despite this outward image of a united industry that the Marquis Giorgini sought to give Italian fashion, a heated rivalry between the fashion houses caused a major schism. This split effectively divided the industry into two camps: Rome and

Florence. Some of the Roman houses such as Sorelle Fontana, Simonetta and Emilio Schuberth, stopped showing in Florence and went back to presenting their collection privately, usually at their own ateliers. Rome, in this way, became again the protagonist of Italian fashion during this period from post-war years of '45 till the late 1960s. Rome dominated much of this era, due in part to the Italian movie industry as well. Thanks to the role performed by the promotion of cinema in those years, Rome became the so-called '*Hollywood on the Tevere*'. This created a hub for international celebrities, movie-makers and media, therefore attracting many of the notable film stars and directors of the day. Among the customers of the Fontana sisters in the 50s were the likes of Barbara Stanwyck, Deborah Kerr, Elisabeth Taylor, Kim Novak and Audrey Hepburn. Hepburn was a great advocate of Italian fashion design, choosing not only to marry in Rome but choosing a Roman designer for her wedding dress, although, sadly never worn.

However it should be mentioned that Ava Gardner in particular established an intense relationship with the Fontana sisters, to the extent of using them as costume designers for many of her movies. They could be practically credited with creating *the look* of Ava Gardner. A style that was to have a long and lasting impression on Hollywood, and indeed in cinema aesthetics.

During this period, Italian fashion still bore some of the hallmarks of French fashion. The silhouette still possessed a strong and traditional French styling: the narrow waist, with a strong focus on the breast area and long, wide skirt forms. The Italians couturiers of this period were trying to differentiate themselves from their French rivals, mainly through the use of highly skilled local craftsmen, producing specialized details and materials like traditionally made lace, embroidery, fabrics and wools that were transformed and included into beautiful yet practical garment collections.

By the 1950s, the image of the woman had changed somewhat to that of a reassuring mother. Italians wanted to forget the horrors of WW II. Most Italian women obviously could not afford Haute Couture clothing, but through their own skill, most women were able to cut and sew a d ress, or at least find a t rusted seamstress who could imitate the fashion leaders of the time, by introducing small but personal variations and modifications. This was an extension of the practicality that women were starting to demand of fashion. These were the subject of conversation among the women, who in turn gave life to the spreading of the cultural and social life of Italian fashion, and the *bella figura* and above all the art of '*home creativity*'. Fashion now was moving from the gilded halls of privilege to everyday households.

With illustrious support provided by the members of the aristocracy, movie stars, the US and other '*new-market*' buyers and of course the obligatory 'Grand Tour', this assured stable press coverage and a continual and inexhaustible resource of new clients, who over time, embraced and promoted Italian fashion themselves. Indeed it started to come off the top shelves and was greeted and

accepted by more and more people worldwide. This course of action started in the 50s in Florence ended in the late 70s when new business models, a new society and, of course, new women refocused Italian Fashion in Milan.

Notes

[1] E. Paulicelli, *Fashion under Fascism*, Berg, New York, USA, 2004.
[2] S. Saviolo and S. Testa, *Strategic Management in the fashion Companies*, Etas, London, 2002.
[3] Ibid.
[4] M. McKenzie, 'Gabriellasport', *Vogue Italia*, September 2009.
[5] S. Grandi, A. Vaccari and S. Zannier, *La moda nel secondo dopoguerra*, CLUEB, Bologna, 1992.

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Luca Lo Sicco, Independent Scholar, United Kingdom.

Part 6:

Identity of Creation

Retro Fashion: A Way to Deal with History and Construct Identities? Case Study of Denis Simachev, the Soviet Retro Fashion Brand

Ekaterina Kalinina

Abstract

The evident revival of retro fashion trends makes one contemplate about the causes and effects of this phenomenon. On the one side it can be nostalgia and longing for the past, on the other a logical turn of the fashion circle. Closer research provides deeper and more dramatic insights: for cultures that have gone through drastic times of turbulence, retro fashion became a means to deal with the legacies of the past and reconstruct cultural identity of a nation. By applying visual analysis to the products of the popular Soviet retro trend and studying modern Russian consumer culture, it can be learnt that: thanks to the playful and ironic tone of the popular retro of fashion brand Denis Simachev (which carefully selects positive cultural memories – mostly from childhood – and drops out unnecessary, negative and ambiguous symbols and approaches the difficult past in a simple and easy-to-understand manner), the Soviet époque can be seen from an absolutely fresh perspective. It became possible only now, when the generation of consumers of the Soviet retro trend (who were children in Soviet times and therefore have nothing but positive childhood memories and associations with it), are able to pay for the products of the trend. Now, in the time when Russia is working on the restoration of its image as powerful empire, Soviet retro embraces all the best from the Soviet identity, in order to shape a new one.

Key Words: Fashion, retro, reconciliation, cultural identity, Soviet retro trend, past.

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1. Introduction

In 2003, thousands of people came to Paul McCartney's performance on Moscow's Red Square wearing t-shirts with 'USSR' on it. That night McCartney sang the Beatles' hit 'Back in the USSR' and young people sang along with him. There is no doubt, retro rules! The USSR is back in fashion!

Soviet retro invaded Russian cultural space starting from advertisement campaigns and food chain, and later ended up on the catwalk in the garments of a designer Denis Simachev, who reintroduced the symbols of the Soviet époque to the modern context of rapidly developing Russia. Since then the process of rediscovery and introduction of Soviet history and culture took place and also began to influence modern Russian cultural identity.

Standing on the theoretical point that cultural identity is a 'collective or true self' of a group of people with a shared history and culture, and is in the constant process of change and transformation,[1] and observing that in the present increasing numbers of countries are moving towards the European cultural and political space, the question of cultural identity is under debate and plays an important role in the establishment of the communities.

In the contemporary situation, the Russian nation, which went through ambiguous times and époques of turbulence, stands on the door step of a new rebirth and needs positive myths in order to recreate its powerful image, identity and prestige. In search of these myths, according to Anthony Smith, a theorist of *Ethno-symbolism,* the nation sees national history selectively, as a treasury of the victorious events and symbolical images.[2] While working with history and its elements, the nation carefully selects the ones that are seen as appropriate to the general myth the nation is creating about itself, and leaves out the ones that do not correspond with the main idea or ideology. Using cultural wealth from the history, the nations, picking facts very carefully, might even transform them radically, as the scholar of the *Modernist* theory, Ernest Gellner, sees it.[3] The approach taken to retrieve the necessary myths, symbols and events can differ, and, presumably, one of them can be retro fashion. Therefore, it is in the scope of this chapter to show that retro fashion is one of the possible examples of dealing with history and a tool to construct identity.

Despite the fact that literature on retro fashion and identity construction exists,[4] little research has been carried out in the area of retro fashion in the relation to its ability to deal with ambiguity of history and construct identities. Even though some Slavic researchers in the recent years started to pay attention to the phenomenon of Soviet fashion and the new phenomenon of Soviet retro trend,[5] little is written about the actual soviet retro fashion brands.

Against this background, the purpose of this research is to open up a discussion on the role of retro fashion in the process of identity construction and formation of a new perspective on arguable historical events.

More specifically the research has three objectives: 1.) to investigate how Soviet retro fashion approaches different symbols of Soviet époque; 2.) to determine what attitude is built up by the Soviet retro fashion towards the past; and 3.) to study how the modern Russian cultural identity is being constructed by specific fashion brand in the relation to the Soviet past.

For that reason the research is built upon a concrete example of contemporary Russian fashion brand Denis Simachev, who derives his inspiration from the Soviet époque. This brand is chosen because: a.) it is built upon the reminiscence and symbols of the past; and b.) it is the first and only fashion brand in Russia that has such a strong cultural message/reminder of the past.

In studying the collections of Denis Simachev (collections 2004-2008 which were inspired by Soviet nostalgia), visual analysis of the garments and their

elements was employed. In order to understand cultural codes iconography was used in a broad sense, as implying both direct and indirect visual meaning. First of all, the garments and the models, when possible, were described, or 'recognised', in order to start pinpointing important elements and details. Then at the next level, the visualization of a garment was deconstructed and every specific element of it was analysed from the perspective of what kind of ideas or concepts were attached to it. As the next step, the cultural and political context of the images was revealed. Here it is important to state that, because the chapter deals with the phenomena of retro and nostalgia, in order to decipher images correctly, two layers of cultural context must be included. The first one is when the fashion garment was created, the years 2004-2007, and the second is giving the inspiration for the particular nostalgic style of Denis Simachev, the period between 1960-1980.

In order to trace what cultural meanings Denis Simachev's garments may hide and to trace famous cultural representations of Soviet era, films and cartoons from that period were studied. In order to see what associations the generation 1974 - 1982 (young generation of Russians, to whom the brand is addressed) has with the brand, interviews were conducted. The main goal of these interviews was to see what memories and associations people had when they saw the clothing of Denis Simachev. These interviews helped to see where Denis Simachev derived his inspiration from and to understand how one or another piece of clothing was used during the Soviet times. This method was used for there are no previous scientific studies on this topic.

2. Denis Simachev: Remembering the Past: Constructing the Future

A. Cultural Brand

In studying the collections of Denis Simachev, one can observe that each of the garments portrays a symbolic representation of the past. These symbols and concepts of the past are exist in different forms and cultural settings of the present-day Russian society. All the icons and topics that are used by the designer as inspirational material are either under discussion in the public sphere, like the mascot for the new Olympics in Sochi, or persistently exist within Russian modern life, like *telnyashka*,[6] as a piece of clothing worn by youth, soldiers and sailors. Taking this finding into account and applying the theory of Douglas Holt on iconic brands, one can deduct that by integrating elements and values of culture, fashion brand Denis Simachev has a tendency to introduce new re-created values and therefore forge existing social communities. This phenomenon, according to Holt, is called *cultural branding* and can be defined as 'set of axioms and strategic principles that guide the building of brands into cultural icons.'[7]

As the designer himself states, in producing the garments, he, subtly feeling the emergence of consumer interest and nostalgic feelings towards elements of the Soviet époque, started and continues to reflect everything that was going on around

him.[8] Namely, to absorb the rudiments of a new trend. As a creative person who was born in the middle of the 70s and having his own memories and perceptions, he tends to shape and to play with the elements of the époque he was born in.[9] He leads it through the prism of his own *Weltanschauung* (world-view), in the form of reviewed symbols and signs, such as the Olympic mascot,[10] Soviet coat of arms, fur-caps and the net bag called avos'ka,[11] black training pants[12] etc. Each of this symbols and signs are repeated, disseminated and dissolved in the cultural virtual and urban context of modern Russia.[13] In other words, the designer addresses to the 'collective anxieties and desires of a nation.'[14] In the case of Russian Soviet nostalgic trend these 'collective anxieties and desires' of the Russian nation are the memories of the past, nostalgia for childhood and Soviet culture, which are employed by the designer Denis Simachev. Following Holt in the discussion on cultural branding,[15] one must assume that by embodying emerged nostalgia in the products offered to the consumers, brand provides an 'extraordinary identity' for the limited circle of people. They are those who are on the same page with nostalgic trend and find it amuzing, funny and cool. It can be assumed that for that reason they need to belong to the category of young Russians, mostly of the age 24-35. Because the brand is rather expensive, accordingly the income of the consumers should be rather substantial. And the products of the brand are distributed mainly in megapolice areas, such as Moscow and St.Petersburg,[16] therefore, in theory, there are also geographical limitations.

However, the next phenomenon proves the statements that 'these desires and anxieties linked to identity are widely shared across a large fraction of a nation's citizens. These similarities result because people are constructing their identities in response to the same historical changes that influence the entire nation.'[17] As we see with the Russian case, Soviet nostalgia is not only embodied in Denis Simachev fashion brand, but embraces all the aspects of social life and is not downsized to some specific geographical areas, but is spread over the whole country and therefore influences the entire Russian nation. Which with no doubt can be explained by the shared history and culture of the country as a whole. Nostalgic bars and cafés are found in many Russian cities and the trend itself has developed from food and service towards communication technologies and advertisement compaigns launched in many Russian cities. Case, as Denis Simachev brand is financially and in terms of location of the stores unreachable for many people residing not only in big megapolices but also on periphery, the demand for the exclusivness and this very specific identity is apparently high, todays Russian fashion market is flowded with knock-offs of Denis Simachev products.[18] This, of course, does not provide the same 'true identity' for those who possess them, but at least the feeling of belonging to the group. It can be said that is how the identity of the brand penetrates the masses.

B.   Emotional Bond

While working with the cultural codes, the designer Denis Simachev creates a myth not only about historical past, but also about the present. This myth is being empragned into the products of the brand is sold in the stores and distributed to the consumer. As a r esult the consumer, in reverse, starts to create other myths, respectively, that will strengthen the reason why he/she has chosen this particular brand and consolidate the connection between him/her and the brand itself. It happens because a brand manages to get to the customer via their emotions. Indeed emotions serve as a connection between the brand and the consumer. And with no doubt, Denis Simachev builds up very tight emotional bonds with his costumer by choosing elements as cartoon character Volk, comedy heroes such as Shurik and Semen Semenich, and everyday things that the Russians used to possess (net bag avos'ka, newspaper hat), but do n ot anymore. Relying on Douglas Holt, it is assumed that by being an emotional brand, Denis Simachev has a potential to favor the creation of a new identity and myths that are constructed as a result of this new identity.[19] In other words, customers of Denis Simachev buy the product to experience the stories that the brand tells: Soviet childhood, the Olympic games, the first flight to Cosmos, comedies, etc. By reminding the customer of an emotion he/she has experienced before, these stories evoke strong emotional bonds in order to support the brand's story: happiness, joy, pride, excitement. And maybe even the pride one feels towards the achievements of his/her country can gradually grow into the willingness of further developing his/her country. Dominating nostalgic feelings can lead to the reviewing and rewriting of the history books; or to the creation of films based on old traditions, like *S legkim parom 2,* the remix of the soviet film. Respectively, these stories themselves are not only derived from historical experiences and social particularities, but they also tend to create new history and culture of the society these brands exist in.

C.   Retro as a Tool

Another question is: What kind of mechanisms can be applied to historical material to create the 'story' and to make the brand interesting for the customer to tighten emotional bonds with? It seems that the method to be exploited by this brand is *retro*.

First of all, retro in this case is an instrument to approach the past and reconcile with it. The revival of Soviet past in the beginning of the 2000s is an outlook of Russian people on their lives that most probably signifies a result of the corrosion of the modern Russian society in the 1990s, right after the fall of the communist regime. As it is described by A. Nagorsky, the dark époque of Soviet power, compared to the mistakes and misguiding of the early democratic period of Yeltzin's Russia - with all the crises and misfortunes, the Chechnya war and the unsatisfaction and fear for the future that predominated the society - felt much brighter, happier and more secure than that of the Russian Federation of the 90s

and today. However, the comparison of these two time periods is rather complex. For some even with all the difficulties that the population had during the rule of communism such as shortage of goods, lack of civil and political freedoms and rights, their futures felt sure and secure. The 1990s on the contrary, even with a new democratic rule and the abilities and rights the Russians all of a sudden had, were not more than a façade that disguised the corrosion of values and norms, the loss of cultural roots and the shortage of those rights that were obtained officially, and moreover the insecurity of the future.[20] However, there is also another opinion that even with the difficulties Russian faces today, the society is moving towards more democratic and prosperous, free and developend future.[21]

Therefore, in this complex discrepancy in the opinions and attitudes towards the past, retro comes to help as it 'suggests a fundamental shift in the popular relation with the past.'[22] What retro does is it changes and transforms the perspective we take while studying, reflecting and, most important, using history for the construction of everyday life. Because retro ignores remote history and focuses only on the recent past, it can play with a memory of still alive people and transform it into something that it intends to. And this is the first specifc feature of retro.

A similar pattern can be seen in the work of Denis Simachev, who searches inspiration from recent events, namely from the recently passed Soviet époque. By selecting elements that are alive in personal and cultural memory of people, he merges his own personal experience with reflective nostalgia of the nation. This reflection consists of individual and cultural selective memory and omits the black pages of the country's history. As it was seen from the visual analysis of the apparels, Denis Simachev, even choosing ambiguous époques of Russian history, still tends to integrate positive elements and media rather than negative ones.

The second feature is that Denis Simachev as a retro brand keeps temporal and semantic remotability from the object, symbolical substitution, semantic game, according to strictly defined rules, in the core of whose the principle of specific selection lays.[23] He respects two main rules. The first principle is the 'omission' of unnecessary symbols of the époque and the selection of necessary ones.[24] By that, retro approaches the past easily and playfully and is very theatrical when appropriating the symbols and icons. By choosing the particular symbols, retro selects them only because they are amusing and funny.[25] The designer searches for cartoon or comedy characters. Respectively, he does not make the goal of his brand to revive 'real' history, but rather create some decorative façade of it that might not serve the idea of the true reality, but more be essential for the decorativity and coolness. That is why the retro of Denis Simachev is not a restorative nostalgia that is concerned only about restoration of the past symbols and state, but reflective nostalgia that 'cherishes shattered fragments of memory and temporalises space.'[26] Second, the selection of symbols that is used by the brand implies positivation of these symbols and simplification of their meaning and thus simplifications of the

époque these concrete symbols are related to.[27] Moreover, while using the symbols and elements of previous times, retro does it half-ironically, half-longing with an unsentimental nostalgia[28] or reflective nostalgia,[29] which might be the case with Denis Simachev also. The images that he creates in some cases (though not all of them) do not evoke sentimental perception of the past, but rather ironic and therefore buyers describe this brand as funny and cool.[30]

So, these two tools of retrofication (simplification and selection) are doing the major work of transforming complicated historical material into an easily perceptible one. At the same time, as Samuel notices, the past in retrochic is basically used for humanizing the present and substituting personal for corporate image.[31] So therefore the synopsis of the historical époque might not always be the correct one, but more or less falsified - however made very accessible for the normal person, living in the present day. Logically, retro is not just a summary of the real history, but it is principally new matter, which has gone through the machinery of popular culture to become easy to understand for people. Soviet retro of Denis Simachev, that has its real basis in Soviet reality and then is led through the designer's own perception of the past and imagination in the first place and then adopted to the modern Russia in the second, is absolutely a new cultural phenomenon. Moreover, by making the perception of the past easily understandable and removing the complicated matters and issues, the brand drives away everything that can be threatening for the mind and leaves only positive symbols and connotations.

The irony that with no doubt is present and dominant in the collections of the designer, sometimes is accompanied with sentimental emotions from the past. It happens when the garments evoke positive emotions, as is the case with the designs depicting the Olympic mascot. As it is seen from the internet forums and discussions, this image is very sentimental for Russians.[32] Respectively, this case can build an argument against Elizabeth Guffey's and Rahael Samuel's statement that retro is only ironic, but not sentimental.[33] By choosing elements and symbols of the childhood and of a concrete époque, it sentimentalizes the past. Even if it slips away from one time to another, major symbols will carry the importance of the époque that is needed to be remembered. Retro sometimes can create an emotional bond, as was noticed in one of the interviews about the Denis Simachev brand.[34] It deals with childhood and therefore with emotions and sentiments.

D. Perception of the Past

Because Simachev remembers the good Soviet times by using elements of Soviet past that are considered to be the ground for national pride - Soviet Cosmos and Soviet Sport and choosing only specific aspects of cultural life with positive connotations like the ones from Soviet comedies or cartoons, his brand proves the statement of Ernest Gellner, that for the creation of a national identity the method of picky remembrance and forgetfulness is working.[35] Soviet comedies and their

characters: Semen Semenich and Shurik, elaborated in the collection 2004, work respectively as myths and national heroes, which nations use in order to create the idea of unity and therefore forge national identities.

Soviet sport - and most of all the Olympic Bear, Yuri Gagarin and Soviet Cosmos are examples of the symbols that are used to evoke positive emotions in the minds of Russian people. All these chosen symbols are easy, well-known and well-recognised by the Russian people. They do not carry any ambiguous subtext, but reflect positive sides of Soviet life, which were appreciated by the nation.

Soviet comedies and cartoons serve as a rich treasury of prototypes and characters, episodes and events, that can be used for creating new ones. They depict Russian national characters as loyal and patriotic, honest and modest, intellectual and funny, but complex and strong.

Introduction of the historical symbols and icons into the contemporary Russian society happens also at the expense of old fashion and its negative, unattractive appearance, and is replaced with new, expensive fabrics and combinations of different details, as it occurs in the case of the Soviet black training pants. These clothes become ultra-fashionable and super modern and do not feel the same way as the old ones, because of the new European materials that were used for it.[36]

Retro becomes modern and fashionable because it comes at exactly the right timing, as scholar Lenor Goralik suggests.[37] Soviet retro is successful because the audience that perceives this trend and is ready to pay for it exists. These are the people in the age of 25 to 35 and make up a substantial percentage of the population of modern Russia. They do not only have high economic standard, but they are also from the so-called generation of 'last Soviet children', who have had a 'Soviet childhood' and do not remember the negative sides of Soviet life and therefore do not associate with them.[38]

E.   New Russian Identity

The new Russian identity embodies Soviet, to transfer Russian national and cultural identity to the next level of complexity. For Denis Simachev, the Russian man is a man who has multiple identities: he is different in each situation and with different people. He changes attitude depending on the time of the day and environment. But whatever identity he takes, it is always deeply rooted in the historical and cultural past of the country he is from. Every detail of his costume has its very profound meaning and every print connects present and past. He is born in the Soviet Union and remembers it as the best time of his life, because it was his childhood. He is not afraid of his past and proud of his country and its achievements. He does not want legal comeback of the Soviet regime, but he wants Soviet past to be part of his present and future.

His identity is part of a recent cultural trend of *New-Sovietism*, a re-regarded and re-thought Soviet past put into the modern context. It is retro culture of modern Russia, where Soviet symbols and nostalgia, memory and perception exist without

fulfilment of Soviet powerful ideology. *New-Sovietism* is a reality that contains a fragile connection with Soviet past and exists on the t-shirts and trousers, in the restaurants, bars and clubs, advertisement and internet communities.

The most interesting observation is that the identity that is created shows that modern Russia does not move towards the European community and tends to forge its culture regardless of its europeanisation and cultural relations with Europe. On the contrary, it seems that there is not so much place left for European heritage that the Russian nation was proud of for centuries. There is only its own individual experience. The new Russian identity seems to be more focused on its own past, including the Soviet, and not European.

3. Conclusion

Apparels of Denis Simachev are embodied reflections of Russian past, because they have a potential via visual *Gestalts* to narrate many aspects of the Soviet people's lives. However, each of the garments is not only comprised of the shadows of the past. By addressing to very sensitive elements of Russian culture and to childhood, the fashion brand builds up very strong emotional bonds with its customers and creates its own stories. The stories incorporated in the creation of the garments tend to create new history and culture of the society these brands exist in. In other words, being a cultural brand, Denis Simachev constructs present and future by using elements of the past. Moreover it uses a very specific tool to approach the past and to integrate it into the space and the fabric of the society. This tool is retro.

Retro in this case is an instrument to reconcile with past: to make it e asier understood and to integrate it into the new reality of present. A big role here plays the visuality of Soviet retro. As retro accumulates visual images impregnated with strong emotional and semantic power, referred to both past and present of Russian culture, it uses the 'power of images' to influence the minds of the consumers and form their identities. Chosen visual symbols and symbolics of Soviet time are led by retro through the machine of modern popular culture. They are introduced into a new modern context and time, and therefore acquire completely new meaning: funny, friendly, sensitive and devoid of any negative political connotations. The strong ideological power which was behind them during 'real' Soviet times is faded away and substituted by amused and derisive tone of retro.

Notes

[1] *Questions of Cultural Identity*, S. Hall and P. du Gay (eds), Sage Publications, London, 1996, p. 4. The same ideas are also expressed by E. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1983.

[2] A.D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, Basil Blackwell, London, 1986, p. 9.

[3] Gellner, op. cit., p. 55.

[4] H. *Jenß*, 'Dressed in History: Retro Styles and the Construction of Authenticity in Youth Culture', *Fashion Theory*, Vol. 8, No. 4, December 2004, pp. 387-403 .

[5] Frumkina, R., 'Chelovek Epokhi Dificita', *Teoriya Mody*, Vol. 3, Vesna, 2007, pp. 139-143; L. Goralik, 'Rosagroeksporta Syrka. 'Simvolika i Simvoly Sovetskoy Epokhi v Segodnyashnem Rossiyskom Brendinge', in Ibid., pp. 13-300

[6] Sailor striped shirt.

[7] D. Holt, *How Brands Become Icons*, 2004.

[8] Interviews with D. Simachev; E. Blinova, 'Denis Simachev nazval fashion industriej geev'. Timeout Moskva, 6-12 July, 2005, Retrieved from http://www. timeout.ru/journal/feature/1135/, on 12.10.2009; S. Kunicina & V. Riklina, 'Interview Denisom Simachevim. Investicii v design – dolgosrochnie'. Published online, http://rapps.ru/main.mhtml?Part=45&PubID=2581, on 17.01.07, Retrieved 12.10.2009; T. Medovnikova, 'Vihodja na Zapad is Rossii, mogno vzjat tolko odnu ideju: Russkuju'. Gazeta, 17 June, 2005, Retrieved from http://www.peoples.ru/art/ designer/simachev/interview1.html on 12.10.2009; A. Kurmanaeva, 'Interview s designerom Denisom Simachevim', *RBK Daily Weekend*, 25 January, 2008, http://weekend.rbcdaily.ru/print.shtml?2008/01/25/shopping/316117, Accessed on 12.10.2009.

[9] Blinova, 2005; Kunicina, Riklina, 2007; Medovnikova, 2005; Kurmanaeva, 2008.

[10] It is the iconic Olympic mascot bear from the 22nd Olympic games that took place in Moscow in 1980.

[11] The appearance of avos´ka is traced back to the 1930s, when people carried with them small netbags, that were easy to put in the pocket and take it out, if there was a chance to get or to buy anything at random 'na avos'.

[12] Black training pants were a part of a training costume, sometimes worn at home.

[13] The same symbols and many other from Soviet times (pioneers' dress codes, Soviet newspapers, furniture, extracts from the films etc) can be found in the advertisememt compaigns, new featured films, interiors etc).

[14] Holt, 2004.

[15] Holt, 2004.

[16] See the official website http://denissimachev.com/content/stores.html.

[17] Quoted in Holt, 2004, p. 6.

[18] There are stores in St.Petersburg, for example, retailing counterfeited Denis Simachev clothing, produced in China.

[19] Holt, 2004.

[20] A. Nagorski, 'Kissing up to the Past: Will the Politics of Nostalgia Pull the Communists back to Power?', *Newsweek*, 1996.

[21] Ibid.

[22] E. Guffey, *Retro: The Culture of Revival*, Reaktion, London, 2006, p. 10.

[23] Goralik, 2007, p. 15.

[24] Goralik, 2007.

[25] R. Samuel, *Theatres of Memory, Vol. 1: Past and Present in Contemporary Culture*, Verso, London & New York, 1994.

[26] S. Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, Basic Books, NY, 2001, p. 49.

[27] Goralik, 2007.

[28] Guffey, 2006, p. 11.

[29] Boym, 2001, p. 49.

[30] Interviews with Svetlana, Uppsala, 2009; Tatyana, St. Petersburg, 2008; Anna, Moscow, 2008.

[31] Samuel, 1994, p. 93.

[32] In Live Journal people shared their own experiences and memories on Olympic Bear. They are almost always very colourful and positive. See http://70s-children.livejournal.com/5697.html.

[33] Samuel, 1994, p. 112; Guffey, 2006, p. 11.

[34] Interview with Olga, St.Petersburg, 2008.

[35] Gellner, 1983, p. 55.

[36] See the official website : http://www.denissimachev.com.

[37] Goralik, 2007, pp. 13-30.

[38] Interviews with Nadya, Groningen, 2009; Tanya, St.Petersburg, 2008; Svetlana, Uppsala, 2009.

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Ekaterina Kalinina, ALM Institution, Uppsala University, Sweden.

Conceptual Resistance of Hussein Chalayan within the Ephemeral World of Fashion

Şölen Kipöz and Deniz Güner

Abstract

Within the homogenized environment of global fashion system where the creativity and differentiation has almost been reduced in to forms and silhouettes and the clothing has been transformed in to a commodity, Hussein Chalayan has taken over the critical position of Martin Margiela being the pioneer of *deconstructivism* in fashion, through his controversial discourse and designs against consumer culture by the end of 1980s. Chalayan has put up a resistance against image-oriented approach of fashion industry through his conceptual attitude by deconstructing meaning of the clothes in order to re-semantify them and change their ontology. In order to construct the meaning Chalayan develops three different conceptual paths as; addressing to a social problem, a symbolic narration or a phenomenological event. In all of these paths the idea is the epicentre for his inter-disciplinary design process in which he does not draw any distinction between the world of clothes, objects, images and spatial environments. Within this chapter, Hussein Chalayan will be analysed as the designer who pioneered the radical and critical channel in the global fashion system, thus signed a new era in fashion history in terms of the possibilities of incubating a critical role through design discourse.

Key Words: Hussein Chalayan, deconstructivism, radical fashion, object-clothes, re-semantification.

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Prologue

Within this study, Hussein Chalayan as a dissimilar figure in fashion industry has been analyzed due to his conceptual attitude which he developed opposed to the operation of the global fashion industry and through the ways and methods that he adopted in order to achieve this.

The structural transformation in the 90s, which laid the groundwork for the deconstructivist attitude in fashion, changed conventional understanding of image, technique and meaning radically. This attitude which produces tactics and strategies against global fashion system, reverse the operating mechanism of current system and creates counter-positions to the power. Within this transformation Hussein Chalayan's conceptual resistance towards re-constructing meaning of the clothes will be examined through his unconventional design instruments and methods which make this resistance possible.

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1. Conceptual Resistance in Contemporary Fashion

By the 80s some of the prominent figures in contemporary fashion have opened a new frontier towards breaking the conventions of fashion. The attitude of deconstructivism appeared as the most critical and theoretical base for contemporary fashion design practice. Being considered as the pioneer of deconstructivism in fashion lexicon, Martin Margiela, adopted this philosophy with the motto 'In order to say something new you don't have to produce brand new things.'[1] Departing from this idea, first, he conceived second-hand clothes from used men's' suits, and accessories and then, introduced fashion world with the concept of 'semi-couture' reflecting a design language with unfinished garments, and aged fabric surfaces. The trajectory which he opened in contemporary fashion remarked a period of structural transformation of fashion system. This transformation has been characterized with conceptual and discursive attitude instead of aesthetical and visual; controversial and destructive rather than conventional and expected; irritation and resistance instead of compromising and contingent; counter position of the power and guerrilla vs. trend and style oriented fashion practice.

To create a resistance against fashion system and to turn the rules of fashion upside down Margiela, adopted a material-oriented design language. On one hand, he was marking to a transformation in understanding of luxury, value, quality and essence of fashion products in the industry, while on the other hand he was bringing the halo of high-end fashion down through his recycled and semi-couture garments. By giving credit to the ordinary and everyday aesthetics instead of precious, precise and unique crafted things of high fashion, he resisted against temporality of fashion by reacting to use new fabrics. In addition to this, he reflected his appreciation to reclamation of the old and aged things to give them new lives as he expresses by saying 'I love the idea of recuperation. I believe that it is beautiful to make things out of rejected or worn things'.[2]

Along with Margiela, another influential figure in terms of implementation of deconstructivist approach in fashion practice is Hussein Chalayan. With his first collection *The Tangent Flows* which he prepared as a graduation project in Central Saint Martins, London in 1993, Chalayan interpreted this theoretical approach into design process. Even before Margiela, for the first time in fashion, he made the process of design visible through which the silk clothes are buried with iron filings and transformed under the effect of chemical reactions. He rendered the process of making clothes readable through the presentation of making iron filings move under the effect of the giant magnets. Thanks to this performance, the clothes have been impersonified with particular skills and characterized in connection with the imaginary story written by Chalayan himself.

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2. The Structural Transformation of Fashion System in the 90s.

The ephemeral nature of fashion which has been fed by fast consumerism has generated an understanding of fetishist 'use and throw away' attitude with rapid changing styles due to continuous demand for novelty. The resistance to this system caused structural transformation in contemporary fashion through expansion among young avant-garde designers. Through this resistance, conventional mechanisms of fashion industry -which aesthetically and visually consumes itself- has been reverted towards to an intellectual channel which has been defined as conceptual and 'radical fashion.'[3] This resistance has been grounded upon such socio-economical transformations:

- Transition into new liberal economy (characterized by Thatcherism and Reaganism by the end of the 80s)
- Emergence of the new consumer profile with the expectations of prestigious, luxury-oriented life styles (Yuppie culture, X-generation…etc.).
- Urge of individualism due to enthusiasm and appraisal of differentiation triggered by the excess of the 80s pop culture.
- Due to recession following the Gulf War, waning of Haute Couture industry which has been considered as a sign of artistic creativity in fashion led way to search of new artistic expressions.
- Value transformation in fashion system due to shift from uniqueness of high fashion fed by craft-oriented precision to innovative creativity developed by new technologies and materials.
- Due to this urge of differentiation, prominence of individual design languages instead of dominant trends of fashion decades.
- Visibility of individual design languages thanks to institutionalized designer brands by growing fashion media and prominent design schools.
- Emergence of a new awareness by consumers for perception and reception of the idea and design discourses instead of products/garments through the guidance of fashion media.

3. Deconstruction of Fashion and Hussein Chalayan's Role

The philosophical understanding of *deconstruction* has been interpreted into fashion as the creative design movement promising cultural phenomena to build up a new society, new identities, new aesthetics and values. It gives the possibility of re-structuring, re-semantification and re-construction the corrupted values and conventional aesthetics of modern society and identifies a new future, without

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consulting retro-futuristic clichés. Evans, refers to Richard Martin and Harold Koda to define deconstruction as 'a mode of thought current to our times.'[4] By the 90s the movement ['deconstruction' or *la mode Destroy*] referred to a trend towards hidden hemlines and seams deliberately turned to exterior of the garments, their imperfections[5] polished and arranged as ornamentation.[6] Barbara Vinken addresses this transformation as the era of *post-fashion* or *after-image* fashion. She says 'If, for a hundred years, fashion has invented and re-invented woman, post-fashion has begun to deconstruct the woman.'[7] The philosophy of deconstruction has appeared in contemporary fashion by the 80s in three different attitudes;

A. Deconstruction of Aesthetics

Japanese fashion designers (like Kawakubo & Yamamoto particularly with *Destroy* collection in 1981) contributed to that movement by their unconventional aesthetics and spiritual attitude taking departure from their culture.[8] The effect of Japanese clothing tradition in the avant-garde manner of Japanese designers is that they reject to create body fitting garments to accentuate contours of the body opposed to Western clothing.[9] Kawamura puts this as 'these avant-garde designers reconstruct the whole notion of women's clothing style; thus they do not reveal sexuality, but rather conceal it just like the kimono.'[10] Thus, their clothes are considered as 'sensual and ritualistic'[11] where as they are considered as 'pioneers of a conceptual and religious'[12] movement in fashion.

B. Deconstruction of Technique

Designers coming from Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Antwerp such as Ann Demeulemeester, Walter Van Beirendonck, Martin Margiela, Dries Van Noten, Dirk Bikkembergs known as *Antwerp Six* followed a philosophical project of deconstruction to rethink the formal logic of dress itself. In 1989 Margiela introduces deconstruction as language into fashion lexicon. With the movement of designers coming from Antwerp, the breakage occurred towards new individualism, brought a conceptual and radical understanding to fashion, through deconstruction of the conventional aesthetics and image of clothing which has been fed by consumerist culture.

C. Deconstruction of the Meaning and Process

By 1993, Hussein Chalayan appeared as pioneer figure in re-semantification of fashion by converting the ontology of clothing in to hybrid object-clothes. In addition to this avant-garde position in which he acts a 'design thinker,' adopts new methods of process design into world of fashion by deconstructing the conventional design techniques.

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4. Production of Meaning and Conceptualization in Chalayan's Works

Hussein Chalayan has called attention continuously in contemporary fashion scene due to the crucial role which he played through his contribution to open the conceptual channel in the process of structural transformation by early 90s as mentioned above.

Due to his exceptional position within the world of fashion the works of Chalayan can be considered as a threshold in terms of possibility of construction of a new conceptual and discoursive ground in reaction to ephemeral world of fashion. Thus, signed a critical understanding in fashion by irritating and agitating the system, and caused to flourish a new epistemology for fashion which will be sooner defined as 'conceptual'[13] and 'radical fashion'[14] in fashion theory. In a similar manner to Martin Margiela's contribution to comprehension and interpretation of design and production process of clothes, Chalayan expanded the frontiers of fashion theory which has been legitimately grounded upon styles, social and historical phases.

With an awareness of difficulty to stand against continuous change of forms and styles within the ephemeral world of fashion, Chalayan constructs the foundation of his works in order to re-semantify clothes and the objects. In order to construct the meaning -to re-semantify- he follows three different routes which he occasionally adopts in his design survey:

> a) *Social/De-facto*: First route that Chalayan adopts is the attitude which he has re-semantified the clothes in order to create solutions for the social, cultural and political issues of the real world as ontological anxieties of the modern world causes on human being; socio-political, apocalyptical situations. Due to this intellectual attitude and social awareness Chalayan has been defined as a 'design philosopher/thinker.'

> b) *Metaphysical/Philosophical*: Second route Chalayan adopts is the fictional understanding which he has been conceived through a symbolic narrative rather than humanist and ontological concerns of the real world. The main constituent of his design approach is that he transfuses non-fashion issues into fashion world by not drawing any distinction between the world of clothes and objects. In his collections this is conceived as hybrid design solutions such as coffee table skirt, envelop jacket, safe jacket skirt, remote-control dress…etc. By providing all in oneness of different species, he paves the way for new solutions which will expand the ontology, semantics and the perception of the clothes.

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     c) *Phenomenological*: The third route Chalayan adopts is the interaction of human body with the physical and the build environment, such as natural events, metropolitan environment and technology.

5. Interpreting the World of Object-Clothes

Interpretation of Chalayan's world could only be possible by understanding his works. On the other hand when concentrated on his works, these clothes, objects, object-clothes which could be interpreted as 'strange but familiar' opposed to the substantial aesthetical values and conventional fashion practice and language. On the other hand as these works do not give sufficient information about their conceptual background, one has to look at the design discourses which make these works meaningful. In order to conceive this stratified, as well as individual world which has been donated with an intense symbolic content, could only be achieved by deconstructing his discourse through a visual, symbolic and structural analysis. In other words in order to understand Chalayan's œuvre one has to focus on his works, whereas in order to understand his works one has to focus on his discourse; that is to say to read the subject and the object simultaneously and reciprocally.

He conceives his clothes as the instruments to create 'personal environments,' to make the wearer interact with their natural, physical, technological and social environments. For this reason the clothes are intensely charged with signs, symbols, messages and stratum of meanings. For him, the body as the 'fragile and insufficient' is the epicentre of his ideas which has to be empowered against its environment and undesired conditions of the modern world. Interaction between the body and clothes, objects, object-clothes is the representative of his ideas, fictions, stories and his concepts. He adopts two different ways to conceptualize themes to realize his ideas into designs:

- With the prediction of a negative, traumatic situation like war or accident, he develops a chaotic mise-en-scène which the individual could survive against the intolerable conditions of this situation through the use of clothes. In *After Words* collection, with a conception of refugees of the War in Kosovo, he proposed transformable object-clothes in order to enable them to leave their houses with their minimum belongings which they could carry with their body. Thus, in order to rebuild 'the nexus' created between the humans, clothes and the objects in the modern world, he translated this nexus in to coffee table skirt, table-bag, chair cover dresses.

- He interrogates the effects, problems, anxieties of modern world on human beings with ontological, philosophical, social

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and political events and concepts. The clothes, then, apart
from their inherent functional values, are designed as a *heim*
or cocoon to empower and protect the body against
unpredicted dangers, risks and anxieties of the modern world.
This protection could be provided by a self-sufficient pod, as
well as through a veil or helmet which could protect the
wearer from others' gazes.[15]

6. Translating Ideas into Designs

In the very first step of construction of a meaningful and protective world for
the individual he interrogates the capacity and the boundaries of the human body.
In order to empower the body and its capacity to adapt its environment, just like
the prosthesis attached to the body, he grafts technology into the body.

As one of most fundamental dynamics of the modern world the phenomena of
'speed' has been used as one of the main themes in Chalayan's collections. He
interprets this theme into the concept of mobility through his design solutions
which he conceives as portable environments. In his collections, these portable
environments appear as mobile object-clothes which the wearers can carry along
with their bodies. By this means just like the clothes of homeless people, the
clothes almost become containers which provide the space for the individual to
carry their belongings with them.

A semantic analysis on Chalayan's works requires concentrating on the signs
and symbols which he produces or the language which he develops. Chalayan's
concentration on the meaning rather than style induces him to use stereotypes and
archetypes of fashion library in developing forms. His collections have a radical
character due to their a-temporality, and to his design language which he progress
through the facts. He re-interrogates these facts through design methods such as
abstraction, re-embodiment, incremental-subtraction and opposition… etc.

Chalayan, after enabling these facts interrogated, he makes use of methods such
as *re-structuring*, *de-semantification*, *re-semantification*, *de-formation*, *ambiguity*,
re-functioning while he transfuses these ideas into design inputs.[16]

As stated before, the fundamental design method that Chalayan uses in his
works is to deconstruct the body and topography of the garment. While he
practices that technique he uses various design concepts and methods such as; de-
formation, re-semantification, ambiguity, re-functioning, juxtaposition, layering,
folding, presence-in-absence, morphing, variations, alterations, interconnections,
in-betweenness, symbiotic, incremental-subtraction…etc.

As an example of his way of undertaking these methods, looking at how he
developed the concept of the game and the way he transferred to fashion would be
illustrative. Chalayan, owing to the concept of game, aims to fill the gap between
fantasy and reality, thus poetizing this tension, aims to anesthetize the reality.[17]
Chalayan's effort to react to the fierceness of reality by the language of aesthetics

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and poetry carries the idea of realization of the catharsis -as the main ideal of the art- through representation. In other words, it claims to overcome the reality by its own simulation.

With an aim of producing new environments and extensions of the body, Chalayan *re-functions* the clothes and reconstructs the substantial world of meanings of clothes. With the aim of producing 'the new morphology,' he deconstructs forms as well as structures of the clothes through the technique of deformation. He brings different facts together through the techniques of *juxtaposition* and *in-betweenness.* These facts with their different ontology are subjected to *transgression* of the boundaries of fashion. The strategy of *assembling* is entirely different from 'the synthesis' of modernist approach. Here, the things/facts/species which have different roots and ontology are assembled as fragments without loosing their specificities. On the other hand these fragments have a structure which allows transitions, rather than having sharp borders like collage. At this point, these transitions appear as *interconnections, variations, alterations, morphing*. The possibility of assembling different facts, types without loosing their specificities, and the contiguity between them, represents Chalayan's logic of *symbiotic* association.

Re-semantification in Chalayan's work can be conceptualized as an attempt to redound the clothes their lost meanings and their ontological value which have already become the 'things of consumption.' He re-semantify the clothes through *incremental-subtraction* method in order to produce 'memory' for the clothes. The process which can be defined as 'production of memory of the cloth' is become evident in Chalayan's collections as the fragments of clothes. These fragments through the use of contours of form and traces of sewing of the garments recall the original form of the clothes as seen by 'Memory Denim' in *Echoform* and leather vest in *Geotropics* collections. That is why, in his clothes there are the traces of almost lost, dreamy archetypes. As another channel to produce the memory, Chalayan adopts the method of 'presence-in-absence' in a similar manner to 20th century modernist artists' practices.[18] Through this, the pieces, elements of clothes which have been reduced in to contours, recall absence rather than presence, and the lost archetype or 'the memory of archetype'

There is integrity between Chalayan's design process which he develops towards the conceptual framework of his collections and the performances that he develops towards their thematic construction. Within this context, Chalayan, reproduces the theme with its subthemes to create variations, and he transforms a group of outfits which highlights the core of his conceptual framework into a theatrical performance as the peak point of the show. These outfits could be considered as the leitmotiv of the collection with their complex structures which have a trans-disciplinary character.

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Epilogue

The radical and critical channel which Chalayan pioneered appears as a sign of a new era in fashion history in terms of incubating a critical role against the aesthetical and form-oriented understandings in fashion system. Owing to his resistance against any kind of mechanism which constructs categorical ways of thinking in the ephemeral world of fashion, Chalayan can be associated with the role of a deconstructivist-intellectual designer through his radical discourse.

The conceptual attitude of Chalayan, who gives priority to transmit the meaning without any deformation within the fashion media, leads him to manage the diffusion of the selected images of his performances. Within the global fashion system in which the images are circulated in an unmanageable freedom, this kind of will of control which he developed to preserve the meaning of his clothes is displayed as another means of resistance against the system.

Finally, within the world of Hussein Chalayan, and his practice of meaning production a conceptual attitude has been observed which he constructs by inspiring from social/de-facto themes; metaphysical/philosophical arguments and natural events and phenomenon. Consequently his multi-layered, intense and in-depth works can only be interpreted through understanding this conceptual framework. The attempts of Hussein Chalayan to develop the implicit performances of the clothes, can only be interpreted parallelly and reciprocally through his Œuvre (clothes, object, object-clothes, collections), design discourse (press kits, interviews, critics on his works), design process (design and production processes of the collections and varied design methods of Chalayan) and the ways of presentation (performances as he develops to stage his collections and other ways of visibility in fashion and design media).

Notes

[1] L. Derycke, & S. Van de Veire, *Belgian Fashion Design*, Ludion, Antwerp, 1999, p. 292 quoted in P. Mears, 'Fraying the Edges: Fashion and Deconstruction', *Skin+Bones: Parallel Practices in Fashion and Architecture*, P. Mears & S. Sidlauskas (eds), Thames and Hudson Pub., London, 2006, p. 35.

[2] Ibid., p. 35.

[3] C. Wilcox (ed), *Radical Fashion*, Victoria & Albert Pub., London, 2001.

[4] C. Evans, *Fashion at the Edge: Spectacle, Modernity and Deathliness*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 2003, p. 250.

[5] 'In fashion, it shook the very foundations of clothing creation; the aesthetic of deconstruction differed dramatically from the polished and finely finished garments that were dominant during the 1970s and 80s. Deconstructed garments are often unfinished-looking, with loose frayed hems and edges; they sometimes appear to be coming apart or look recycled or made from composite parts.' Mears, op. cit., p. 30.

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[6] C. Pantellini, & P. Stohler (eds), *Body Extensions: Art, Photography, Film, Comic, Fashion*, Arnoldsche Verlagsanstalt, Zurich, 2004, p. 171 quoted in *Dress Against Disaster*, Ş. Kipöz (ed), Izmir University of Economics Press, Izmir, 2007. p. 16.

[7] B. Vinken, *Fashion Zeitgeist: Trends and Cycles in the Fashion System*, Berg Pub., New York/Oxford, 2005, p. 35 quoted Ibid., p. 16.

[8] In the 1980s, Rei Kawakubo, redefined the body with an extended sculptural volume with a garment interacting with the movement and space (deformed the body through the garment almost recalling of humpback of Notre Dame) breaking the conventional aesthetics of fashion related to perfect body proportions or a perfect image. Pantellini & Stohler, op. cit., p. 171. Fashion critics commented on that dress as 'the ugliest dress of the year.' P. Sykes, 'Doing the Bomb', *Vogue*, March 1988, p. 188.

[9] Kawakubo explains that 'fashion design is not about revealing or accentuating the shape of a woman's body; its purpose is to allow a person to be what they are.' T. Jones, 'Comme des Garçons', *I-D Magazine-The Glamour Issue*, No. 104, May 1992, p. 72. Similarly Yamamoto says 'I like large clothes, the look of a woman in a big man's shirt.' C. Gottfried, 'Rising Native Son', *Women's Wear Daily*, April 15, 1982, p. 5 quoted in *The Japanese Revolution in Paris Fashion*, Berg, New York & Oxford, 2006, p. 137. Yamamoto goes further to put ethical standards by saying 'I think to fit clothes tight on a woman's body is for amusement of man…it doesn't look noble.' J. Duka, 'Yohji Yamamoto Defines His Fashion Philosophy', *The New York Times*, October 23, 1983, p. 63 quoted Ibid., p. 138.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Jean Michel Jarre used this definition for Yamamoto's designs. S. Menkes, 'Yamamoto: Fashion's Poet of Black', *International Herald Tribune*, September 5, 2000, p. 11 quoted in Ibid., p. 140.

[12] A Japanese fashion curator's comments were quoted by J. Withers, 'Rei Kawakubo', *The Face*, March 1987, pp. 52-53 quoted Ibid., p. 140.

[13] B. Quinn, *The Fashion of Architecture*. Berg, Oxford, 2003 and N. Khan, 'Catwalk Politics', *Fashion Cultures; Theories, Explorations and Analysis*, S. Bruzzi & P.C. Gibson (eds), Routledge, London, 2000, pp. 114-127.

[14] Wilcox, loc. cit.

[15] Chalayan expresses several times that he re-functions the clothes with an aim to counteract the weakness of modern individual, like the skirt becomes safe jacket in *Kinship Journey (2003)* collection: 'The clothing here still had some of the plant forms seen in the previous part, but also referred to elements of salvation;' like the refugees' transformable object-clothes in *After Words (2000)*: 'the refugee theme to the idea of hiding and camouflaging valuable possessions or carrying them;' a protective corset against a physical attack during the war in *Nothing/Interscope (1996)*: 'In the show, a surgical corset represented an injured body after a potential

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disaster;' a kite dress for the Rapunzel inspired story in *Lands Without (1997)*: Notably the story of Rapunzel, trying to make an escape with anything she manages to find in her cell, inspired Chalayan to design a kind of kite that she might use for a safe descent;' chair grafted to dress in *Geotropics* (*1999)* to mobilize human being: 'A chair was integrated into one of them in such a way that model and chair appeared to be a single entity and the model could sit down whenever she wished;' and the cocoon like dress in the same collection which creates personal space: 'the clothing created an extra-large 'personal space', as extra protection against external influences whilst carrying one's environment from one place to another.' C. Evans & et. Al (eds), *Hussein Chalayan*, NAI Publishers/Groninger Museum, Rotterdam, 2005, pp. 16, 16, 52, 52, 80, 136.

[16] 'Chalayan highlighted the ambiguity and ambivalence of fashion and of the creative process itself. He looked directly at the process of designing, the adding of detail, the removal of it, the empowering, fulfilling and occasionally agonizing nature of the creative process.' F. Anderson, 'Museum as Fashion Media', in Bruzzi & Gibson, op cit., p. 386.

[17] '(…) Blending the real with the fantasy, and poetizing and idea or an image…In it there is the real world, but this world is adorned with the images belonged to the world of fantasy.' H. Chalayan, & K. Laçin, 'Gerçek Aromalı Düşler' ['Genuine Aromatic Dreams'], *XXI Mimarlık, Tasarım ve Kent Dergisi*, Vol. 24, 2004, p. 53.

[18] Art historian Rosalind E. Krauss, invents the concept of 'presence-in-absence' by making a semiological analysis of Picasso's cubist painting series with 'Violin' theme between 1912-14; R.E. Krauss, 'In the Name of Picasso', *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Myths*, MIT Press, Massachusetts, 1989, pp. 23-40. Chalayan adopted this attitude with his video art 'The Absent Present' which he presented in 51st Venice Biennale which is concentrated on 'the memory of material.'

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Şölen Kipöz, Izmir University of Economics, Department of Fashion Design, Izmir, Turkey. mailto:solen.kipoz@ieu.edu.tr

Deniz Güner, University of Dokuz Eylül, Department of Architecture, Izmir, Turkey. mailto:deniz.guner@deu.edu.tr

Style Surfing & Changing Parameters of Fashion Communication: Where Have They Gone?

Claire Allen

Abstract

This chapter sets out to explore the changing face of fashion communication and its role in creating fashion ideas and promoting trends. The focus is on the generation that do not know life without the internet, looking particularly at the online material that they engage with and the influence this has on their style ideas. It draws on the theory put forward by Roland Barthes 'The Fashion System' and the importance of textual dissemination of fashion through specialist magazines and editorials.[1] The authoritative voice of the fashion journal is being challenged by assertive fashion bloggers, so much so that even a blogger can gain international recognition for their own predictions on next seasons fashion trends. If the internet has changed the process by which an expert is declared, so too is it changing the way in which the discourse or message is received and the meaning conveyed. It is therefore important to consider the fashion content of the online communications that are engaging this generation from websites, music sites, You-Tube and social networking sites like Face book and Bebo. The internet allows time and space to be treated differently. The control has shifted from the sender to the receiver as audiences are no longer passive but actively seek information and engagement with ideas and relevant discourse. However, how does this technologically savvy generation deal with a communications network that gives free access to infinite amounts of information on fashion without editorial guidance. Can they really push parameters of fashion style without a concept of the boundaries they are challenging? Do the boundaries exist within themselves and their own conflict driven by the need to express themselves and assert individual identity opposing the need to belong to a collective. Does communicating fashion ideas on the internet give them both?

Key Words: Social networks, blogs, internet, fashion communication, myth, fashion discourse, magazines, connotation, denotation.

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The communication revolution is here! The channels for communicating have mushroomed in recent years; society is quickly adapting and finding new ways to use these channels to get their voice heard, to socialise, to interact, build relationships and to learn. This creates the desire to plug in, to be connected to the stream of information constantly, creating the behaviour Linda Stone[2] describes this as 'continuous partial attention'. These activities of the internet are not all separate roles but, they are merging and interlinking as people take control for

themselves defined by their own interests and individualised agendas. The rules of engagement have changed we no longer have top down communications but we are witnessing the democratizing of communications. This chapter explores this communication landscape in the context of fashion. It has come about through my observations of students and the way in which they are engaging with fashion through multiple channels. The study draws on both the theory put forward by Roland Barthes 'The Fashion System' and observations of undergraduate students. An exploratory study of fashion interested young people was undertaken to consider the process of engagement with fashion and fashion communications. The methodology for this research combines the understanding gained from an empirical study of undergraduate fashion students over a period of three years and a snap shot survey to capture the 'top of mind' connections they have with the various fashion media.

'The Fashion System' by Barthes is consider for its meticulous focus on the written word; communicating fashion, however although noted for its' fastidious approach it is only concerned with the written word as translation of fashion.[3] As Barnard notes Barthes does later dismiss the work as a semiological disaster, this perhaps is more relating to the scientific approach taken than a complete dismissal of the work.[4] Barthes considers the denotation which he refers to as the vestimentary code the object, and connotation referred to as the rhetorical system which has the function of naturalizing the denotation.

> Precisely when fashion constructs a very strict system of signs it
> strives to give these signs the appearance of pure reasons; and it
> is obviously because fashion is tyrannical and its sign arbitrary
> that it must convert its sign into a natural fact.[5]

We are often not fully aware of connotation however the connotation does create the subjective quality of the sign. Within cultural boundaries it is fair to assume connotative meaning is often largely shared therefore making it intersubjective.[6] Fiske does note that it is easy to read connotative values as denotative facts and that semiotic analysis is an analytical method that can help to guard against such misreading.[7] This is all well and good when we had a top down communication system where the fashion magazine played a vital role in the dissemination of fashion as media channels were narrowly defined. The interpreter power was held by only a small handful of editors. These editors engaged educated writers and journalists with a degree of sensitivity for the use of language to communicate meaning and the importance of the word and the sentence as a translator and communication of that meaning. The editor was the gatekeeper to the dissemination of fashion ideas and even the embodiment of the statement made by Barthes that 'Fashion is both too serious and too frivolous'.[8] My exploratory

study as you may expect found that the vast majority of those who considered themselves as either passionate or loving fashion from the ages of 12 to 23 stated they read Vogue. It may be argued that the youngest age group of 12 to 14 may not own their own copy of Vogue but are familiar with it and consider this to be indicative of how serious they are about fashion. The most variety of different magazines read was by the 18 t o 20 a ge group who are mostly fashion undergraduate students. Surprisingly however the majority of this age group do still confine their fashion reading material to the mainstream fashion consumer magazines.

The democratization of communications that the internet has facilitated especially with the arrival of web 2.0 and the prevalence of user-generated content has increased the subjective nature of fashion writing. Blogs are becoming a popular way in which anybody can express their opinion on any subject they like. Fashion blogs are popular as the subjective nature of fashion encourages endless discussion. What is happening is the casual informal use of language no longer confined to the rules of grammar is facilitating the misreading of connotative values. The conversational nature of the communication coupled with the immediacy of the transmission means there is limited care taken over the construction of the message. This in turn is making the communications even more arbitrary and yet the tyrannical fashion message is conveyed through the bloggers broadcasted opinion.

Blog example 1:

> Sometimes nothing is more perfect than a o ne piece. Sonja is wearing a jumpsuit by S'NOB. What really caught my eye was the gathered neckline and overall drapeyness of the suit without teetering into the realm of bulky, making it both flattering and comfortabe. - Jennine of The Coveted.[9]

The jumpsuit is referred to as perfect. 'Perfect' is not explained it is included in a very subjective statement yet it can so easily be misunderstood as fact. The creation of a new word 'drapeyness' and the misspelling of 'comfortable' are evidence of the lack of reflection on the construction of the communication and the evidence of the lack of respect for the conventions of grammar. This does however carry the power to naturalise the tyrannical statement of '*Sometimes nothing is more perfect than a one piece.*'

It maybe argued that the internet is only another platform for communicating and that the fashion communication is now embracing just another channel. The internet and more specifically web 2.0 has reduced the individuals 'entry barrier' to communicate widely. This may free communications but it does however strip away any management and control system in terms of the total editorial edict. It is

this lack of governance that is revolutionizing communication. Fiske explains Barthes two orders of signification; the first order includes the reality; denotation, and signs.[10] The second order of signification is where the sign is inserted into the value system of the culture by means of connotation and myth. Fiske described a myth as a story by which a culture explains or understands some aspect of reality or nature.[11] It is at this point the sign becomes ambiguous and the ambiguity of the meaning can increase as insertion into the intended culture is not guaranteed. The method of multi directional communication and the reduced control of the process from interpreter of the sign to the interpretant notably the culture of the interpretant means it is easy to read connotative values as denotative facts and this in turn can be distributed further thus having the potential to change the meaning altogether.

The advances in communication technology mean that communication of a message can be almost instant with little or no reflection on the meaning. This coupled with the phenomenon of 'continuous partial attention' which Linda Stone[12] explains is the desire of an individual to be attentive to the continuous stream of information acting as a 'live node' in networks, connecting, engaging with and transmitting information, means that the distribution of an idea can be quite arbitrary with little or no thought again given to the cultural dimension of the receiver. Fiske states that connotation is the human part of the signification process, the emotional values.[13] Myth also belongs to the second order of signification, Barthes explains how myth naturalises history thus obscuring the political and social dimensions. 'Myth is not defined by the object of its message, but by the way in which it utters this message'.[14] Barthes believes everything can be a myth and that 'every object in the world can pass from a c losed, silent existence to an oral state open to appropriation by society, for there is no law, whether natural or not, which forbids talking about things'.[15] The internet is the mechanism that is facilitating the appropriation of myths and therefore has the potential to challenge the tyrannical nature of fashion.

The bloggers are advancing on the territory previously the domain of the fashion journalist. Liz Hoggard points out in her article about Catherine Kallon's blog www.redcarpet-fashionawards.com for the London Evening Standard '*...she can be more candid about the clothes than print journalists, who are often fearful of alienating future interviewee*'.[16] The journalist has gone through a rigorous apprenticeship and steadily built up their reputation. The development of the internet has resulted in the lowering of the entry barriers to publishing an opinion on any subject to potentially hundreds and thousands of people. This does not spell the end for the fashion journalist, but we are witnessing the upheaval of the roles people are engaged in. The technological advances of the internet has created the opportunity for the development of another writing genre, web logs (blogs) blogging. Blogging connects with people on a very personal and emotional level. The internet now allows for a more democratic declaration of an expert, Susie

Lau's blog 'Stylebubble' is one of the most enthusiastically read fashion blogs read by 10,000 people a day.[17] Susie is now been Dazed Digital's Commissioning Editor and the big names in fashion invite her to their product launches. Catherine Kallon's blog www.redcarpet-fashionawards.com is also enthusiastically read by more than 12,000.[18] The blogger still undergoes an induction period where the blog is monitored to ascertain its authenticity, popularity and sustainability. The blog does have to have a sense of an informed view that is validated by the content of the blog itself.

The personal nature of the blog discourse gives the reader the feeling of a personal conversation not one which is being broadcast widely. It could be argued that a blog goes further and gives the sense of tapping into another's consciousness, even tapping into others dreams. Joe Sinclair who writes the blog www.whatkatiewore.com explained that *the point of the blog for us was a love letter because he loved the way his partner styled herself each day*.[19] Blogs therefore can be considered important for their ability to capture streams of conscious thought pushing the boundaries of the known and culturally accepted imagining alternatives to today's realities. Blogs connect with their readership in two ways firstly by the conversational communication style of the blog content which includes both written discourse and visual communication. Secondly, the reader views this on a device that is closely viewed often as a solitary activity and a device owned by them. Small hand held devices such as the iPhone help to make this connection even more personal, like having your best friend with you. For a blog to gain interest it must have an engaging content that is updated with a degree of regularity. The blog must also communicate a sense of informed knowledge if not 'insider' knowledge.

Blog example 2: Style bubble – 16th July 2009, *When You're A Boy*

> In theory I should have left this post to Steve seeing as menswear isn't my forte but alas, the boy is somewhere in Dorset.[20]

This humble narrative is powerful in its connection with the audience as it sets a very personal tone even suggesting that what follows may not be worthy of note.

> ...and I popped to the private view of the new 'When You're a Boy: Styled by Simon Foxton' exhibition at The Photographer's Gallery tonight, the first exhibition I've ever been to that's solely dedicated to a stylist.[21]

Here by stating attendance at a private view the 'insider' knowledge is conveyed. '*I popped to the private view*' delivers the information that qualifies the insider knowledge in a way that your best friend may tell you they are off to get a

pint of milk. The conversational style makes the communication seem very personal, the receiver is connecting with this communication in the personal space of their own screen device. The combination of these two elements makes this 'broadcast' voice connect on an emotional level. Connecting on this level allows the authority to be readily accepted as the author is understood to be your friend because they are reaching you at a personal and emotional level. You can also add your own comment to the blog article read. This now transforms the communication into an active relationship.

My exploratory study indicates that fashion blogs are beginning to be used for fashion ideas by the 18 to 23 year olds and notably not accessed by the younger age groups. However of the named blogs they did not list Style Bubble which is conspicuous by its absence as it is considered by many as the Fashion blog to read. Blogs maybe based on an individuals opinion but they are presenting an oppositional view to the fashion consumer who is conditioned to consume a more tyrannical discourse. The content analysis of fashion magazines of the two separate studies by Fiske and Barnard have found that they did not contain an oppositional view of the audience but were very self-assured in their discourse.[22] The exploratory study also identified the importance all age groups placed on retailer and brand own websites to inform them of fashion ideas this was way above the response for any other online resource. Retailer websites are using a magazine style discourse to connect with their consumers some are even using blogs to really personalise the communication and connect on an emotional level. Consumers are already conditioned to accept a very self assured discourse that lacks any oppositional view. Retailers are tapping into the social networking phenomenon and using this very person centred approach to convert online contacts into sales.

Technologically facilitated relationships are now part of an individuals own social network. Human beings are social animals by nature, it is therefore natural that they use computer networks to facilitate their social connections and even widen the range of relationships. Over recent years we have seen the growth and popularisation of social network interface sites with Facebook being one of today's most popular. This socialising practice is the means by which people can negotiate their place in an ever changing world. User generated sites such as YouTube and Flickr are popular for the sharing of content with others, they facilitate the distribution and consumption of original ideas and content along with appropriated content. Social network sites such as MySpace, Bebo and Facebook are an interface that facilitates the networks of connected people on the basis of mutual interests. My study found that the vast majority of young fashion interested people shared their fashion interest through Facebook.

Wellman's research of computerized social networks considers that the increase in the number of network members increases the heterogeneous nature of the network.[23] Wellman also notes that people belong to multiple social networks and

that no one network has exclusivity over an individual. Hodkinson considers the changing nature of online communications of the UK Goth subculture from discussion forums to individual journals. The discussion forums brought together a homogeneous collective to share their mutual interest in the Goth scene, this consolidates the individuals attachment to the community. This network also increases the amount of time spent interacting with one another. Hodkinson found that the use of journals allowed for a more varied exploration of the individual's own identity, interests and lifestyles as this was individually centred not collectively governed. Hodkinson also found that those using the linking facilities of blogs tended to reproduce relatively insular subcultural networks. The issue with insular networks is that the oppositional view is not considered and is even actively avoided.[24]

It can be argued that the Internet has not revolutionalised the way we communicate; the advances in communication technology have facilitated the evolution of our communication practice. The adoption of technology is diffused as not all of the population have necessarily the willingness or readiness to adopt and integrate the technology into their communication practice.[25] Fiske states that the '*change in myths is evolutionary not revolutionary*'.[26] Revolution can signify change in social order and therefore signify the demise of one dominant myth and the rise of another to a point of dominance. This is part of the natural evolutionary process and the two myths are likely to operate simultaneously for a period of time one as counter myth to the other. It is at this point that cultural conflict is at its most virulent and therefore could be considered revolutionary. Web 2.0 is the technological facilitator of change, blogs are at the cutting edge of a cultural revolution in communications. '*It is all about the reader not the writer*' Amanda Carr of the blog thewomensroom.co.uk It is the honesty and integrity of blogs that is giving an oppositional view to fashion communications. It is this that is revolutionising the communications.

The revolution is coming from the people blogging, they are embracing Barthes belief that '*there is no law, whether natural or not, which forbids talking about things*'.[27] The Internet has freed communications to allow this embrace and the celebration of the subjective nature of fashion. My research has found that fashion interested young people are only just tapping into blogs they do not understand the power of social network communities yet they know no other world. The tyrannical nature of fashion, communicated through the fashion magazine is now facing the challenge of the oppositional view being put forward by blogs. The rules of engagement have changed and we are witnessing the democratizing of communications facilitated by the internet, the power comes from the very fact that it is not regulated. The parameters of fashion style can really be pushed, the Internet has facilitated the removal of the tangible boundaries however the intangible cultural boundaries do exist where they are, is still open to question. The

internet and social networking has the potential to push the cultural boundaries but it is imperative that we really encourage the generation who do not know a world without the Internet to use that powerful communication tool to question, challenge, explore and take risks to be creative and innovative and to be promoters of creativity and innovation.

Notes

[1] R. Barthes, *The Fashion System*, University of California Press, 1983.

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[4] M. Bernard, *Fashion as Communication*, 2nd ed., Routledge, 2002, p. 96.

[5] Barthes, op. cit., p. 263.

[6] J Fiske, *Introduction to Communication Studies*, Routledge, 1990, p. 87.

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[13] Fiske, loc. cit.

[14] R Barthes, *Mythologies*, Vintage (first published by Vintage 1993). 1972, p. 109 -159

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Claire Allen, Senior Lecturer and Course Leader at University of Huddersfield. Lecturing in fashion marketing, communication and promotion. Research interest is devoted to understanding contemporary fashion communications with current focus on engagement with social networks and blogs.

Chinese Clothes for Chinese Women: Fashioning the *qipao* in 1930s China

Wessie Ling

Abstract

From a background of political chaos, the *qipao*, a sleek sheath with a stand-up collar, rose in an effort to survive and negotiate with uneven power and desire. Following its emergence in mid-1920s China, the *qipao* gained immediate currency as standard wear for Chinese women until the early 1940s. Despite numerous regulations on dress and women's bodily appearance in the Republican Era (1911–1949), the *qipao* has been constantly revamped through new styles and cuts. Despite its national status in late 1920s in China, its most feminine form in the 1930s was as a fashionable dress favoured by Chinese women of the emerging middle class in modernising and booming cities. At a time when nationalism conflicted with the influx of imported goods and Western-style garments, wearing Chinese clothes like the *qipao* was often seen as cultural resistance to Westernisation. However, the widespread adaptation of the *qipao* in the 1930s cannot be reduced to a result of nationalism. Rather, its adaptation suggests Chinese women's resistance to the Nationalist agenda for their bodies and appearance. Fashioning the *qipao* became a silent tool for Chinese women to struggle against state regulation of their bodies. Through changes in style and responses to Western fashion trends, Chinese women tactically intervened, using the *qipao* to rebel against the nation's authority, challenging the dominant Western aesthetic standards. The social practice involved in wearing and developing the *qipao* manifested a set of aesthetic judgments that was unique to Chinese clothes at that time. This chapter examines how the *qipao* was worn in negotiation with institutional repression through the study of *Linglong*, a popular women's magazine in 1930s China. Chinese women's attitudes towards Western-style fashion and aesthetic judgment, mediated through resistance and negotiation, will be analysed alongside the creation of new aesthetic standards of Chinese clothes for Chinese women of that time.

Key Words: *Qipao*, fashion, *Linglong*, China, women, body, identity, nationalism.

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1. *Linglong*

A weekly women's magazine, *Linglong* was published in Shanghai from 1931–1937. It was primarily concerned with women's matters and represented women's voice in the nation. The study of *Linglong* in this discussion of the *qipao* is twofold. Firstly, *Linglong* is fairly representative of Chinese women of the time, and offers a realistic account of the *qipao* in the 1930s. Women's voices were

prevalent in *Linglong*, largely because of its female editor and interactivity with its readers. Not only are its views and published photos fairly representative of literate young women in China's cities, but it also presents a realistic representation of the clothes worn by Chinese women in 1930s China.

Secondly, the short life span of *Linglong* coincided with the widespread adaptation of the *qipao*. During the 1930s, the *qipao* was developing, with Western-style fashion blossoming into many different styles, all influenced by the modernity and nationalism of the time. Through studying its fashion illustrations, readers' photos, and readers' views on Chinese women's body and clothes, *Linglong* helps us to understand Chinese women's attitudes towards the *qipao* and their relationship with Western-style fashion.

In the vain hope of overturning authority, certain social behaviour by ordinary people can reclaim autonomy from pervasive forces, and at times challenge the legitimate power.[1] Through changes in style and responses to Western fashion trends, Chinese women tactically intervened using the *qipao* to rebel against the nation's authority, challenging the dominant Western aesthetic standards. The social practice involved in wearing and developing the *qipao* manifested a set of aesthetic judgments that was unique to Chinese clothes at that time. I begin by the background of the *qipao* alongside Chinese women's fight for gender equality and nationalism. This is followed by discussion of the various restrictions upon women's bodily behaviour and the *qipao*. How Chinese women intervened with their *qipao* under institutional repression will also be discussed with the aid of *Linglong*. Through the materials in the magazine, I will demonstrate how a set of aesthetic judgments about Chinese clothes gradually emerged to equate the *qipao* with Western-style clothing.

2. Gender Equality and Nationalism

The origin of the *qipao* is closely associated with the Chinese menswear of the time.[2] The early-1920s *qipao* had a wide, 'angular and puritanical' cut, resembling the men's *changpao* and worn by women advocating gender equality. At the peak of women's emancipation in the early 1920s, women's cross-dressing reflected their desire for equal rights and respect for their individuality. Chinese women began to wear the *changpao* 'because they wanted to look like men'.[3] Dressing in men's clothes gave the impression that they could perform male duties in society, including saving the nation, which had much to do with nation building at that time.[4] However, China's reformist intellectuals in the modern metropolis were engaged in a discourse on gender issues that was almost entirely dominated by men, with the majority more concerned with advancing their political power than advocating women's role in politics.[5] In the fight for equality, Chinese women were increasingly repressed and politically marginalized. Their disillusionment turned to cross-dressing in order to obscure their womanhood. However, those that wore the 1920s angular *qipao* were not limited to women activists and students[6]

who had returned from studies aboard, but also trendy women who followed new ideas.[7] Despite many suggested names to differentiate the dress from Manchu ladies' wear of the Qing dynasty – for instance, *changsan, changyi, changpao, zhonghua pao* – none were adopted. The name *qipao* was eventually accepted, but its style bore little resemblance to the indigenous Manchurian costume.

At a time when Chinese women were the subjects of social progress, their bodies became symbols of the nation. The angular and puritanical *qipao* led the transition towards the adoption of women's national dress. As part of the New Women discourse, external manifestations of modernity such as clothing, hairstyles, and footwear were frequently discussed in women's magazine columns and forums in newspapers. Male writers dominated the press during that time, and their criticism of women's appearance in many publications resulted in more confusion than useful advice for Chinese women. Some men complained about women wearing men's clothing, while some preferred the *qipao* for Chinese women. The turning point for the *qipao* came with the May Thirtieth Movement in 1925 when anti-Western demonstrations raged across the nation.[8] Nationalism was fuelled all over the country, and Chinese clothes were called for to replace Western garments. Given that the *qipao* was already worn by some women who were seen as open-minded reformers and advocates of strengthening the nation, its adoption seemed to answer the Nationalist cry.

Nationalism hastened the *qipao*'s popularity, but not as a distinct factor in its widespread adaptation. Chinese women who refused to totally submit to Western culture saw the *qipao* as an alternative to the country's intensified nationalism. Those who were attracted to Western-style garments but found the sizing and styling a poor fit chose the *qipao* as a comparable fashionable dress. The *qipao* accompanied Chinese women under political and social hardship, and its early adaptation filled the yawning gap between the genders. It marked an end to 'hair in three tufts, clothes in two pieces',[9] by which traditional Chinese women had been identified for dynasties. Its acceptance signalled a farewell to the past.

3. National Dress vs. Everyday Dress

An official declaration in the Clothing Regulations of 1929 finally announced the *qipao* as the accepted formal dress for women. The Nationalist government declaration was not an attempt to force its adoption, but partly to address the chaos of women's cross-dressing, and partly to encourage the *qipao* in order to strengthen the nation's integrity. Despite the inclusion of regulations on length, the use of materials and matching accessories for the *qipao*, none of these regulations were followed. Not only did Chinese women not wear pants beneath their *qipao,* which was one of the requirements in the regulations, but silk stockings were worn or bare legs were revealed under the slits, and high heels replaced flat-sole cotton shoes. Chinese women made no distinction between the *qipao* as a national and an everyday dress. The dress as a national symbol clashed with its everyday usage.

Chinese women did not respect the 1929 Clothing Regulations, nor did they accept a unifying style for the *qipao*. The *qipao* of *Linglong*'s readers was not uniform, and variations in style, length, and material flourished. The style of the *qipao* changed based on the season and function.

When the *qipao* became women's standard wear, it began branching out into a diverse range of styles. Most of Ye's illustrations in *Linglong* featured dresses, seldom tops and bottoms. Almost every new style in the illustrations revolved around the *qipao*. No matter whether the dress was flared, slit-less, or waist-joint, it was still considered a *qipao*. The 'collarless *qipao*',[10] 'symmetric-yoke *qipao*',[11] and 'puff-sleeve *qipao*'[12] all included non-standard features. Although the dresses were not restricted to the *qipao*'s 'usual' features, their form and silhouette had a resemblance, allowing comprehension of how the new style of dress could be made. The drawings included instructive details such as 'adding one-inch of black fur along the hem and slits',[13] and 'the dress to be three-inches below the knee with trumpet-style sleeves'.[14] Apart from the use of Western-inspired clothing features, none of the drawings proposed distinctive Western-style garments. The dress illustrations in *Linglong* included the *qipao* with matching coats and accessories. Far from uniformity, the *qipao* illustrations in *Linglong* varied greatly, with timely styles. Adjacent to one drawing, the instructions read:

> For the sake of convenience in dancing, why not apply pleats on the bottom part of the *qipao* making it flare like in Western-style, that would make it easier to walk. This year's trend includes light coloured satin. Moon white, light blue, pale yellow satin can be used for the *qipao*.[15]

Such instructions gave Chinese women immediate access to dressmaking knowledge. Following the abolition of foot- (1911) and breast-binding (1928), Chinese women's bodies experienced a t ransformation that required a new wardrobe. Besides these changes, variations in the size and form of Chinese women across the country were another issue. The sizing and fitting of most ready-made and Western-style garments remained a problem for many Chinese women. The *qipao* emerged at the right time in order to address the problem of bodily change and size variations, and the dilemma that many fashion-trend followers were unable to fit into ready-made or Western-style garments. The *qipao* was a custom-made dress, which required fitting to an individual body. Chinese women played an active role in fashioning their *qipao*. At a time of political and social upheaval, where visiting the tailor remained an occasional treat for many, it was not uncommon for Chinese women to hand-sew their *qipao*.

The *qipao* in its most basic form comprised two pieces (front and back) of fabric, with no darts or complicated fastenings, which made it economical to make and easy to sew. Choices of cut, fit, materials, colors, and trimmings were often

based on the wearer's personal preferences. Chinese women made their *qipao* according to the taste of the time, their needs, and 'their own judgment on color matching'.[16] An illustration on an 'early summer new style' in *Linglong* reads:

> It would be rather dull to wear the same style of *qipao* for four seasons; heavy coat was the past when only long *qipao* filled the streets, came and went. Some ladies may want to have a change, now please pay attention to this style: Upper top to be made looser, the rest of the dress remained tight. Small white Pokka dots as pattern would be nice. The complete look would appear dynamic.[17]

The illustration, together with the instructive details, generated imagination among Chinese women, who were both consumers and producers of their own *qipao*. The *qipao* became the foundation for both a new style of dress and for Chinese women to implement stylistic changes in their clothing. Irrespective of its national status, Chinese women embraced its stylistic changes that made it part and parcel of the fashion cycle, in tune with Western trends and influences. The adaptability and versatility of the *qipao* made it ideal for style changes. Authenticity was never called into question thanks to the dress's hybrid origins[18] and the failure for it to be used in its intended national symbolic role. The dynamic of the *qipao* saw it in tune with Western fashion. The 1930s *qipao* was a fashionable dress that had already experienced 'numerous stylistic changes, from loose to tight, tight to short, short to long'.

4. Modernity and Consumer Culture

After the 1930s, the *qipao* became tighter fitting year after year, emphasizing Chinese women's demure curves and gradually becoming a dress symbolizing Chinese femininity. Its silhouette was in line with the trendy H-line Western-style clothes of the time. The materials (fabric, colour, pattern), key to the stylistic character of the dress, were in the hands of the wearers, who were then able to determine their choice of Chinese or Western style. Yet, the *qipao* had an indissoluble link with the capitalist drive for Western modernity and commercialization. Its Chinese sartorial tradition can hardly be considered distinct. Reformers in the Republic period sought to combine the strengths of both Chinese and Western cultures, promoting the co-existence of both worlds. Modernity became one of the nation's goals, along with the desire to pursue the new and progressive in building a stronger nation. At the same time, Western powers had long imposed modernity on China via an ever-widening and interactive network of communication and exchange with the capitalist West.

Western and Chinese merchants co-operated in the move towards capitalism, promoting a leisure and consumer culture in Shanghai. The movement towards

modernization fostered acknowledgement of the significance of Western cultures and ideas, underscoring the hybridity of Chinese modernity.[19] Both the *qipao* and its wearers were stitched into the rubric of such modernity. The 1930s *qipao* expressed a newness in response to the Republican search for the New Woman, the growing industrial complex, and consumer culture. The *qipao*'s perceived Chinese sartorial tradition, materiality, and wild partnership with Western-style accessories prevailed. Its wearers in the 1920s and 1930s represented an emerging middle class with some education, financial independence, and social and cultural awareness: they are the signifiers of the hegemony of the modern. Those women wearing their *qipaos* were significant in the creation of a progressive China and were co-opted by the state as Republican icons.

The Republican endorsement of the *qipao* underlined the dress's iconic status. Although the growing consumer culture slowed down the consumption of Western imports, Western influence upon Chinese women's dress continued. Opinions about women's consumption of imports and the pursuit of Western fashion reflected nothing more than the anxiety to open up the nation's economy. Fearful for the nation's wealth and of competition from Western goods, Chinese merchants accelerated the rapid growth of nationalism by promoting national products. However, Chinese manufactured goods were encouraged, not Chinese-styled products.[20] Imports from the West had already spread like wildfire as Shanghai opened up more and more trade routes after the 1920s. Cosmopolitan Shanghai was marked by the influx of Western cultures, where people appropriated Western ideas and lifestyles. While Western goods were not foreign to Chinese women, they were customized to suit their lifestyle.

5. *Qipao* with Western-Inspired Features to Progress and Improve

At a time when Paris fashion arrived in Shanghai 3–5 months after its release, getting rid of Western garments and accessories was a hard task for Nationalism. For those in major cities, the visibility of Western products spread from consumer magazines to department stores. When discarding Western imports was a target for the nationalist, wearing the *qipao* became a desirable choice. The influx of Western fashion soon saw the incorporation of Western-style clothing features into the *qipao*. The use of Western elements (such as fabrics and accessories) in the *qipao* became a prevailing trend in 1930s China. Chinese women embraced their new found democracy in the *qipao*, making it a tool for a fashionable look; tailors merely followed the masses leading the trend. The *qipao* provided Chinese women with an autonomous territory from which to silently rebel against the nation's betrayal of their body. Hence, Western puffed sleeves, slits split higher to the thigh, the collar modified or removed, matching scarves, long fur coats, and leather heels – the *qipao* held hands with Western fashion. Those keeping up with the fashion trends – movie stars, students, and prostitutes – determined new styles for the *qipao*, which were quickly circulated among, and adopted by, the masses. It is

debatable how far the dress departed from Chinese sartorial tradition; the whole point was to be desirable in the new-style *qipao*.

The practice through which Chinese women incorporated Western-inspired clothing features into their *qipao* was paralleled by the nation's desire for modernization. To *Linglong* readers, including Western influences in the dress was born out of the nation's drive for progression and improvement rather than a submission to Western cultures and ideas. The pursuit of the new was the result of the nation's drive to modernity. Western-style garments were new to Chinese women, so were adapted through the *qipao*. One article in *Linglong* reminded readers that 'not everything from Europe and the States is new…[and] everything Chinese is old', as 'new' and 'old' were based on Chinese people's 'thoughts, action and speech'.[21] In its puritanical form, the *qipao* could hardly be considered new vis-à-vis Western-style garments in 1930s China. However, its style-changing nature was the manifestation of newness to Chinese women's wardrobes. Overwhelmed by the visibility of Western imports, Chinese women took inspiration from features of Western-style clothing. The trend of ankle-length H-line dresses in the West coincided with the popularity of the *qipao*, which further facilitated the adoption of Western-inspired elements in *qipao*-making. The *qipao* shortened with the trend for short skirts in Europe,[22] then in later years the length dropped to the ankle, corresponding with the trend in European fashion. Many photographs of *Linglong* readers in their *qipao* reveal a great deal of innovation and creativity.

However, not all fashionable *qipao* received praise. Those worn by the 'Modern Girl' were criticized by *Linglong* readers. One *Linglong* writer considered the inconvenient 'maxi-length *qipao*' with 'high and stiff collar' in 'high heels' to be a decent look for the 'Modern Girl'.[23] The widespread adaptation and versatility of the *qipao* flourished in numerous styles for a diverse range of women in society, ranging from prostitutes to teachers, students to housewives. The question was not about wearing or not wearing the *qipao*, but about what made it acceptable yet pretty, stylish, and trendy.

6. Harmony and Concealment Amid Style Change

What were the criteria for a decent *qipao*? These criteria constituted many commentaries in *Linglong*. Functionality and appropriateness were the starting point for the dress. Functionality referred to its practicality for different occasions such as work, parties, dancing, and shopping. Its appropriateness pointed to women of different ages, occupations, roles in society, and bodily features.[24] Individuality was taken into account so much that the dress had no standard style. One article in *Linglong* categorized Chinese women into nine different styles: posh, sporty, cute, motherly, comical, household, boyish, elegant, and mysterious.[25] Under each was a proposed appropriate style of clothing and accessories. Harmony was key to embrace women's new-found individuality. According to *Linglong* writers, what

constituted a desirable women's dress was the use of harmonic colours, materials, patterns, and accessories, all based on the style, figure, and role of the wearer.[26]

It appears that Western-inspiration did not feature so prominently in the new-style *qipao*, neither did Western-style garment for Chinese women, but rather emphasized Chinese quality. Wang[27] observed that the harmony embedded in Chinese clothing had an intrinsic link to Chinese people's relationship with the nature. The Chinese, explained Wang, believed that wo/men and nature were inseparable, they were a single entity; same interpretation went to clothes and wo/men. To translate the oneness of clothes and wo/men is the use of patterns and colours that are inspired by the nature, such as colors of different seasons, birds, flowers, moon, mountain and so on. So much as wo/men and the nature are one, so do the patterns, colours and materials of clothes. Materiality and the dress are expected to live in harmony that made harmony a deliberate character for Chinese clothes.

The commentaries on women's dress style in *Linglong* were based on the assumption that women's clothing was custom-made. Thus, materials, colours, and patterns were the ingredients for harmony when designing their *qipao*. Chinese women exercised their full capacity to adjust these elements to their own standard, which ready-made and imported Western-style garments could not reach. The fact that many Western-style garments did not comply with Chinese's standard of harmony meant that they became unappealing in terms of Chinese women's taste and aesthetics.

Another function of clothing for Chinese women, according to *Linglong*'s commentary, was concealment. One article pointed out that clothes were used to hide bodily weaknesses such as a flat or full chest, or a disproportionate figure, and to avoid the exaggeration of nice bodily features, adopting a posture of modesty instead.[28] The characteristics of Chinese clothing outlined in *Linglong* echoed those proposed by Chinese scholar Lin Yutang (1895–1976). Lin[29] encouraged Chinese people to wear Chinese clothes, and stressed the dichotomous aesthetic of Chinese and Western clothing – the former served to conceal, the latter to reveal the body. Accordingly, Western clothes suited only the young and beautiful; it would be cruel to those old and fat. In contrast, Chinese clothes offered equality to wearers: beauty could be revealed and ugliness could be concealed. Lin's point about the concealing nature of Chinese clothes is their ability to accommodate varied bodily features, whether desirable or undesirable. While Western-style garments present the body only in a flattering light, Chinese clothing remains neutral to all bodily shapes and forms. The concealing nature of Chinese clothes encompasses a duality that implies hiding defects and revealing appealing features. The beauty of Chinese clothes lies in its adaptability and inclusiveness.

Although Lin's article was published in the heat of nationalism, these features of Chinese clothing were picked up by *Linglong* writers, not as a resistance to Western culture and ideas, but as a point of departure in perceptions of clothing

and beauty. The question of whether Western-style garments could be worn by Chinese women was asked repeatedly in *Linglong*. The differences in bodily features and aesthetic standard between Western and Chinese women discriminated against Chinese women wearing Western-style garments.[30] The common notion that the 'chest-exposed style of clothes was not suitable for Chinese women due to their bodily development'[31] acutely pointed to the inadaptability and exclusiveness of imported Western-style garments.

7. Body Liberation in the New-Style *qipao*

The discussion of women's wardrobes in *Linglong* further emphasized the presence of harmony and concealment in Chinese clothes. They became prime considerations when a new *qipao* was made. When style change became the norm for the *qipao*, any new style was meant to 'enhance natural beauty',[32] hence the 'collarless *qipao*' was proposed as a result of the popularity of physical exercise that led to *jianmei* (healthy beauty). Chinese women could finally show off their chest in this new style of *qipao*, as suggested alongside one *Linglong* dress illustration.[33] Sports and swimming were enthusiastically promoted under the State's New Life Movement in 1932, which aimed to replace Chinese women's weak and fragile image with one of strong and healthy beauty. *Linglong*'s women readers welcomed this image of healthy beauty as a move towards personal achievement. Tanned skin, a strong and robust body, and a tall and sporty figure were all considered healthy and beautiful.[34] Special sports issues and photos of women's nudity were seen from *Linglong*. Chinese women felt increasingly confident with their strong and healthy figure. *Linglong* readers were not ashamed to publish their photos in swimsuits, T-shirts, and shorts, and many bare legs were displayed in sporty outfits. Shapely figures were eventually shown through the tighter-fitting *qipao*, with a longer slit to reveal bare legs.

Given the result of the abolition of foot- and breast-binding and the goal to acquire healthy beauty, Chinese women found a new form of femininity. The *qipao* provided a means for them to celebrate their bodies. It was a natural progression for the 'revealing of the legs' to be the focus of the *qipao*.[35] The figure-hugging *qipao* underwent an inevitable evolution from Chinese modernity and the immersion of Western cultures, overshadowed by political movement.

A ban on *qizhuang yifu* 'strange and outlandish clothes' in 1934 including restrictions on *qipao*'s length and measurement only highlighted social oppression of women and the double standard of male authority on women's bodily appearance and behaviour: on one hand, Chinese women were encouraged to wear the *qipao*; on the other hand, unreasonable impositions kept placing on their *qipao* and appearance. No discussion on the regulations of the *qipao* was found in *Linglong* though resistance to the ban on other items such as hairstyle and accessories was widely recorded.[36] 1934's regulation on the *qipao* was unlikely to

be in full force as *Linglong* reader's photos only demonstrated its varied and unaffected styles.

Notes

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[2] A. Finnane, 'What Should Chinese Women Wear? A National Problem', *Modern China*, Vol. 22, No. 2, 1996, pp. 99-131; H. Ng, *Duhui yunshang: Xishuo zhongguo funü fushi yu shenti geming*, Joint Publishing Co. Ltd, Hong Kong, 2006, pp. 100-101.

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[4] E. Croll, *Changing Identities of Chinese Women: Rhetoric, Experience, and Self-Perception in Twentieth-Century China*, Hong Kong University Press, Hong Kong, 1995, p. 40.

[5] L. Edwards, 'Policing the Modern Women in Republic China', *Modern China*, Vol. 26, No. 2, 2000, pp. 115-147; C.K. Gilmartin, 'Gender in the Formation of a Communist Body Politic', *Modern China*, Vol. 19, No. 3, 1993, pp. 299-329; Z. Wang, *Women in the Chinese Enlightenment, Oral and Textual Histories*, University of California Press, Berkeley and LA, 1999.

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[9] Chang, op. cit., pp. 435.

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[11] *Linglong* 60, Shanghai, 1934, p. 355.

[12] *Linglong* 04, Shanghai, 1934, p. 228.

[13] *Linglong* 45, Shanghai, 1932, p. 1816.

[14] *Linglong* 57, Shanghai, 1932, p. 310.

[15] *Linglong*, 06, Shanghai, 1934, p. 355.

[16] *Linglong* 43, Shanghai, 1932, p. 1710.

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[19] P. Carroll, 'Refashioning Suzhou: Dress, Commodification, and Modernity', *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique*, Vol. 11, No. 2, 2003, p. 445.

[20] E.J. Laing, 'Visualising Evidence for the Evolution of Politically Correct Dress for Women in Early Twentieth Century Shanghai', *Nan Nü*, No. 5.1, 2003, pp. 69-114; Ng, op. cit.

[21] *Linglong* 43, Shanghai, 1936, p. 3329.

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[24] *Linglong* 25, Shanghai, 1935, pp. 1621-1622.

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[29] Y. Lin, 'Lun xizhuang', *Lin Yutang zuanza*, *Shangjuan*. Haixia wenyi chubanshe, Fuzhou, 1988, pp. 351-354.

[30] *Linglong* 03, Shanghai, 1936, p. 169

[31] *Linglong* 54, Shanghai, 1932, p. 167.

[32] *Linglong* 09, Shanghai, 1937, p. 683.

[33] *Linglong* 54, Shanghai, 1932, p. 167.

[34] *Linglong* 71, Shanghai, 1932, p. 1006.

[35] Scott, op. cit., p. 84.

[36] J. Spence, *The Search for Modern China*. W.W. Norton & Co., 2000, p. 357; H.P. Yen, *Body Politics, Modernity and National Salvation: The Modern Girl and the New Life Movement*, Asian Studies Review, No. 29, 2005, pp.173-174.

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Wessie Ling's (Ph.D) research deals with Chinese fashion, identities, transnationalism and modernities. She has researched the political and socio-cultural dimensions of the Chinese dress. Author of Fusionable Cheongsam (2007), her articles appear in Visual Anthropology, Journal of the Study of British Cultures and numerous book volumes. She is currently preparing a monograph on East Asian visual cultures. Alongside writing, she is a London-based visual artist whose practice uses installations to create work that addresses the immaterial properties of fashion. She has exhibited nationally and internationally including the Victoria & Albert Museum, Plymouth City Museum and Gallery, Hong Kong Arts Centre, Austrian National Museum of Applied Arts / Contemporary Art among others. She is preparing a show at the Brunei Gallery, SOAS (2012). More projects can be viewed at http://www.WESSIELING.com. She is also a S enior Lecturer at the London College of Fashion, University of the Arts London.

Part 7:

Depiction Media

First Lady Fashion: How the U.S. Embraced Michelle Obama

Alisa K. Braithwaite

Abstract
The inauguration of the first African American president of the United States also introduced the nation to its first African American first lady, Michelle Obama. The acceptance of a black woman into a role that has symbolized the somewhat antiquated gentility of a nation that still struggles mightily with its acceptance of racial and cultural difference has been no small feat. There was much concern about how the public would receive Michelle Obama because of these stereotypes, and her introduction to the campaign was somewhat rocky because of her intellectual credentials and her willingness to express her discontent with the country. But the resistance to this new black female figure began to melt away when the attention turned to her fashion sense. Suddenly the somewhat threatening black woman became instantly relatable because she not only wore the clothes that American women wanted to wear, but she also wore the clothes that they were already wearing. Her fashion sense became the panacea for dealing with the stereotypes that surrounded her race and gender. This chapter, however, questions whether focusing on Michelle Obama's fashion has become a way for this nation to evade the very real concerns about how black women are perceived, or if it could be a way in which these negative perceptions may be overcome. Through the lens of black feminist theory and Barthes' foundational work on fashion theory I will explore what impact the media coverage of Michelle Obama's fashion may have on American cultural perceptions of black women.

Key Words: American, fashion, Michelle Obama, narrative, race representation.

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I would like to begin by examining three images of the current first lady of the United States, Michelle Obama. The first is the July 21, 2008 cover of The New Yorker magazine.[1]

It features a parody of the Obamas based on the Republican party's efforts to discredit them. Right wingers accused Barack Obama of terrorist leanings because of his name and cultural background, and painted his wife as a frightening black revolutionary who was not proud of her country and liberally used the racial slur 'Whitey.' The second is the March 16, 2009 cover of The New Yorker.[2] This image appeared after the election and the inauguration of President Obama and depicts the first lady as a fashion model working the runway in some of her more famous ensembles. The turquoise dress, for example, appeared at the 2008 Democratic convention where she made a speech that highlighted her family values and effectively reversed her negative reputation in the media. The third image is the official White House portrait of Michelle Obama released in February

of 2009. She wears a black, sleeveless, Michael Kors dress that reveals her much-discussed arms, and a string of pearls, the jewellery that has become one of her signature accessories. Unlike the other two images, it is an actual photograph of Michelle in an outfit that she chose.

I juxtapose these images to consider what narrative they tell of how the media perceives, or requires us to perceive Michelle Obama. The covers of The New Yorker clearly represent the ebbs and flows of the media tide in relation to Michelle, while the White House portrait gives us a perfectly coiffed and controlled image to define how the administration would like us to see Michelle as first lady. Neither of the magazine covers, I would argue, is necessarily a positive image, but they both point to the real issue of the ability to control one's image in the media. The complete turnaround that these covers display shows how fickle these representations can be, but in spite of their caprice, they are quite powerful when they are in vogue.

When I witnessed the shift from fear of Michelle to love of Michelle that these covers portrayed, I could not help but wonder what effect these images might have for black women as a whole. Would this country begin to see Michelle as the norm for black women, or would the protagonist of the recent film 'American Violet'-a poor young mother who lives in public housing with her children by different fathers-continue to prevail? Would this country refrain from seeing educated black women as politically threatening or would they still consider us a wild species in need of domestication?

As a literary scholar, I felt the need to think about these questions in terms of narrative. These images are telling a story and, of course, the bounty of articles and blogs about Michelle create a narrative, as well. But there is also the narrative that Michelle conveys about who she is and what we can expect of her as first lady. I wondered if it would be possible for a new narrative to emerge about black women in America as a result of the stories we were hearing and reading about Michelle Obama. To explore this question in more depth I would like to look at two aspects in particular that have framed the narrative of Michelle Obama. The first is race and the second is fashion.

When Michelle Obama entered the scene during the Obama campaign, the fact of Obama's race became more concrete. By marrying a black woman, the biracial Obama, whose upbringing was in a predominantly white community whose nexus was a white mother and white grandparents, made a clear choice to live his life within the black community with a black wife, black children, and a black extended network of family and friends. His life and his campaign would have

been markedly different if his wife were white. Kim McLarin's article on theRoot.com speaks to the importance of Obama's choice for black women. She writes: 'Barack chose Michelle. He chose one of us, and I am thrilled'.[3] 'One of us' refers to dark-skinned women, women with no visible signs of whiteness in their genetic make-up. Their skin is dark brown, their hair is naturally coily, their lips are full and sometimes so are their thighs. They do not fit into the whiteness = beauty paradigm that dominates American culture. McLarin celebrates Obama's choice, not only because of its affirmation of the acceptability of black women as wives, but also because of its acknowledgement of Michelle as beautiful and prized. Michelle's blackness added legitimacy to Obama's campaign for the black community because it symbolized a clear acceptance of blackness as a part of both his personal and professional life.

Michelle Obama made Obama's blackness real for the white community in the US, as well, and we see the fear of that blackness in the parody on The New Yorker cover. Michelle was most infamously criticized by conservatives for saying at campaign stump speeches in Madison and Milwaukee, Wisconsin that she was 'proud of [her] country' for the 'first time in [her] adult life' because the people finally seemed ready for hope and change in their support of Barack Obama as a candidate.[4] The conservatives questioned why an American would not be proud, particularly after all the strides that the country had made in the last twenty-six years, the span of Michelle's adult lifetime. It quickly became clear that Michelle's feelings were related to the experience of race in America. Race continued to be the elephant in the room that no one was directly addressing, yet her comment, and the fact that she was a black woman saying it, made white Americans keenly aware of the difference between them and the hopeful candidate. Black people continued to feel neglected, disrespected, and abused in the US in spite of all the strides the country had made. Obama's candidacy, then, was not an opportunity for the country to pat itself on the back for its progress, but instead a challenge to show that it was capable of taking the next progressive step.

The narrative that the conservatives were creating about Michelle threatened to hinder that progressive step. Her small acknowledgement of resistance to the status quo-formerly an empowering position for blacks in the US-has, post 9/11, become equivalent to terrorist discontent. Paired with extreme right-wing efforts to pigeon-hole the Obamas into black stereotypes (they referred to Michelle as Obama's 'baby mama') the Obamas were faced with an image of themselves that was not in their control.

How, then, would such narratives change? In her book *Black Looks: Race and Representation*, Bell Hooks examines the images of black people produced in the US and considers how the negative images might be shifted. Her most pressing concern is how black people have internalized many of those negative images. She writes: 'It is only as we collectively change the way we look at ourselves and the world that we can change how we are seen.[5] Hooks underscores the importance of

self-fashioning in the recreation of an image. With many black people accepting the negative images of themselves as valid, so much so that they often fashion themselves in that image or against that image, it is nearly impossible for something new to emerge. To successfully shift away from these negative images, black people themselves must create alternative images that are independent from the one that predominates.

The Obamas have been actively remaking the image of the black American family, but in a cautious way. While Obama has begun to make yearly speeches on the importance of fatherhood in the black community, Michelle Obama is still careful about being perceived as the ultimate role model for the black family. As she said in *Essence* magazine: 'This is one model of what a Black family can look like, but there are hundreds of others that work just as well …'[6]

Part of the Obamas self-fashioning is making the clear and consistent point that their family is neither new nor special in the black community. While the president's speeches speak to an unfortunately real issue within the black community, Michelle's disavowals of her position as role model suggest that the crisis of black fatherhood should not become the definition of the black family. Neither should their two-parent, two-child with extended family member model. Rather, the black family may take many different successful forms, just as the white family does. The presence of multiple stepparents (a stereotype for white families) also does not subscribe to the healthy norms for a family, but it is still a common family structure that Michelle avoids discounting when she rejects her family model as an ideal. At the same time, however, she emphasizes the fact that the Obamas and the Robinsons are not the only black families that function in this way:

> For me [our image] is a reminder of what is already the reality. The women in videos and the stereotypes are just not the truth of who we are as a community … So [maybe our family] can be a reminder that all you need to do i s look around your own community and you will see this same family in churches and in schools.[7]

By defining her family as a reminder rather than a model, she suggests that the Obamas are not aspirational but representative of a narrative of blackness that was always there, but ignored by mainstream media. Now that her family is mainstream, her choice of words acts to make the black middle-class that they represent mainstream, as well.

In focusing more specifically on Michelle's image as opposed to her family's however, we need to turn to the subject of fashion. Roland Barthes' *The Fashion System* argues that in order for fashion to circulate, the garment must experience a transformation into the iconic and the verbal.[8] The garment itself is the mother

tongue that must be translated into the image and the word. It is the translation of the garment into discourse that allows us as reader to understand the importance of a belt, a hemline, or a collar. Fashion, then, exists through narrative.

The turquoise Maria Pinto dress worn at the Democratic convention became the fulcrum for the change in the narrative about Michelle. Her speech at the convention was her official debut, her opportunity to craft a new image that countered the stereotypes that were applied to her. She was not a baby's mama, or a black revolutionary, but an American mother who was raised in a family that believed in the American dream, 'hard work leads to success'. This more palatable narrative was accompanied by a slim-fitting dress in a bold colour that complimented Michelle's shape and skin colour perfectly. Michelle as fashion icon was born. Suddenly all the media could talk about was what she wore. A new narrative was built that told the story of Michelle as the ultimate American middle-class dream: a young girl, who worked hard, went to the best schools, got a great job, met an excellent man, had two beautiful children, and still has time to shop for beautiful clothes and get her hair and nails done regularly. She is the woman in the fashion magazines come to life and we don't even hate her for it.

We don't hate her because, once again, she is very cautious about how she presents herself as a fashion role model, as well. She acknowledges her physical flaws and plays to her strengths. It is not by accident that she favours belts, sleeveless tops and full and straight skirts to the knee. All of these choices accentuate the positives of her body type and not in a necessarily high fashion way, but more in a 'What Not to Wear' way. In other words, these are fashion decisions that any woman can make because they are about a woman's body as opposed to about the fashionable clothes. She is not a fashion model, like Carla Bruni, but a woman who is fashionable. In this era of personal makeover, she is a figure who makes fashion accessible by mixing high (Narciso Rodriguez) with low (J. Crew and the Gap), up and coming designers (Jason Wu) with quiet veterans (Isabel Toledo, Maria Pinto) and by using these choices as evidence that she is 'comfortable' in her 'own skin' and is having 'fun with fashion.'[9] André Leon Tally, of Vogue, describes her style in contrast to the more glamorous Jackie Kennedy as pragmatic.[10] It is this pragmatism that makes her so popular today while the American economy is in crisis and the country is still trying to get used to a black president. Her practice of re-wearing clothes is also a testimony to that pragmatism. The Michelle Obama Fashion and Style blog regularly reports the first lady's reuse of accessories and dresses; a practice frowned upon by stars on the red carpet, but embraced by an administration that wants to let the country know that it in some way understands the nation's financial burden. For the fashionistas who follow Michelle, however, her repetition of clothing gives them a true intimacy with her closet. It becomes a real space in which her clothes, unlike the celebrity closet that continually produces new clothes in a perpetual stream.

In spite of all its positive attributes, this closet has had one key criticism that, of course, returns us to the question of race. In an article on theRoot.com, Leslie Morgan Steiner, a white American writer, criticizes Michelle Obama's closet for being too 'white.' Although she admits that all women of the class that Michelle represents often wear the same outfits that we see on the first lady, she argues that these clothes still symbolize a white culture that is more acceptable to the white voters who supported Obama.[11] Her decision to leave her job and become the 'Mom-in-Chief' furthers whitens her because it, just like her cardigan twin sets, represents the supposed white ideal of the stay-at-home mother as the basis for a stable family. Steiner's critique amounts to a simplistic reversal of the previous accusations that Michelle was 'too black'; now her clothes make her too white.

By coding Michelle's clothes as white, Steiner misses the many complex layers involved in the image that Michelle portrays. Although race is a clear factor in Michelle's self-fashioning, it is far from the only or even the most important factor. What is at issue here is the first lady's Americanness and her choice in clothing reinforces that. The blackness of her skin, however, also suggests that what is American in style is not necessarily white in colour. To say it simply, she is not dressing like a white woman, she is dressing like an American woman, and it is about time for American as a term to stop being used as a synonym for white.

Michelle Obama's fashion has become a key part of the new image created for her because of its relation to the American dream narrative that has now become her story. It is important to return to this narrative to understand why her clothes work so well. In her essay 'Revolutionary Black Women,' Hooks lamented the attachment to a narrative of victimization that she found among her black female colleagues:

> I came away wondering why it was these black women could only feel bonded to each other if our narratives echoed, only if we were telling the same story of shared pain and victimization. Why was it impossible to speak an identity emerging from a different location?[12]

Hooks questions why narratives about strength from resistance, or narratives about healthy black families continue to be rejected. It is this diversity of narratives that she believes will help alter the image of blacks in the United States. When Michelle was first noticed during her husband's campaign, it seemed that she, too, was caught in a similar narrative of victimization. Somehow the country had failed her and that was where her lack of pride came from. This failure meant that she was in opposition to the country and therefore un-American. But there was space to consider her un-American because of her blackness.

One of the key issues about race in this country is the fact that to be American is coded as being white. Those who live in the United States and are not white have

their Americanness qualified - they are African American, Asian American, Latino American - but whites in this country are just American. In order to regain her Americanness, she needed to alter her narrative. She was no longer a woman angry at a country that still considered people of her race to be outsiders. Instead, she was a woman who used the advantages that this country ostensibly offers to all Americans to excel. Her ability to excel, her ability to fashion herself into an example of what constitutes the American dream is represented in her clothes. Her clothes, designed by individuals both young and old, both high fashion and commercial, both natural born and immigrant, and from a variety of ethnic groups represent the dream of America that our country holds to so dearly for its stability. We need to believe that on some level we are this open and accepting or are constantly approaching this level of openness in order for the centre to hold. Yet, at the same time that Michelle makes this dream real through her narrative of her clothes, she constantly reminds us that the protagonist of this story is black. She reminds us, also, that she is not an exception, but a norm for the middle-class black communities that she represents. In this way she subtly resists the presumption that her life, her clothes, her husband's position, equals whiteness. What it equals is American and American comes in many colours.

In spite of this celebratory narrative, I must end with one caveat. Although I greatly appreciate the image of Michelle Obama and her efforts to convince us of how she is multiplied throughout this country (as in the end of Spike Lee's Malcolm X I wish to declare that I, too, am Michelle Obama), I am still made uneasy by the fact that when she seemed most resistant, admitting a lack of pride in a country that truly had betrayed many of her people, she also appeared to be the least beautiful. Why could we not notice her striking figure, her well-chosen outfits, her flare for accessories, when she was saying something we didn't want to hear? Does this mean, then, that for black women to be beautiful, to be stylish, to be fashionable, they must also be accommodating? Hopefully we can still consider Michelle's accommodation as merely one way of being. If we take the advice that she herself offers, we can begin to focus on the diversity of representations for black women in the United States. Although we may all have begun to wear cardigans, there are so many different kinds from which to choose.

Notes

[1] Image can be viewed at this web address: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2008/07/13/yikes-controversial-emnew_n_112429.html.

[2] Image can be viewed at this web address: http://mrs-o.com/newdata/2009/3/9/at-the-center-of-the-fashion-universe.html.

[3] K. McLarin, 'The Real Prize: Why Obama's Wife Makes Me Love Him More', *theRoot.com* (2008).

[4] 'Michelle Obama Takes Heat for Saying She's 'Proud of My Country' for the First Time', *FOXNews.com,* Viewed in 2008.
[5] B. Hooks, *Black Looks: Race and R epresentation*, South End Press, Boston, 1992, p. 6.
[6] A. Burt-Murray, 'A Mother's Love,' *Essence*, May 2009, p. 113.
[7] Ibid.
[8] R. Barthes, *The Fashion System*, trans. M. Ward and R. Howard, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1983, pp. 5-6.
[9] A.L. Tally, 'Leading Lady,' *Vogue*, March 2009, p. 431.
[10] Ibid.
[11] L. Morgan-Steiner, 'How Michelle Obama Passed for White,' *theRoot.com*, http://www.theroot.com/views/how-michelle-obama-passed-white, Viewed in 2008.
[12] B. Hooks, p. 45.

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Alisa K. Braithwaite is currently an assistant professor of literature at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. She researches and writes about contemporary Caribbean writers and is currently writing a book on Caribbean science fiction. She is also an ardent follower of fashion and style and teaches a class on the subject.

Corpse Chic: Dead Models and Living Corpses in Fashion Photography

Jacque Lynn Foltyn

Abstract
Modelling 'death' to sell fashion is an increasingly common motif. In the editorial and advertising pages of *Vogue*, *W*, and even *The New Yorker*, *s*upermodels, actors, and those famous for being famous are styled and photographed to look freshly or long dead as they pose for pantomimes of literature (*Romeo & Julie);* music *(Death and t he Maiden*); and film, TV, and popular fiction genres (*film noir,* vampire, CSI). The TV programs *Make Me a Supermodel* and *Top Model* style their contestants as blood drenched, glassy eyed 'cadavers.' While some of these 'corpses' are presented as having 'died' peacefully, often they are styled as sexy suicides or victims of rapists, murderers, sadists, and paedophiles. Granted, gorgeous corpse simulations are nothing new in western art/pop culture; artists, filmmakers, and video gamers have used their imaginative minds to create dead sexy looks. L inked to primal desire, erotic death imagery can be alluring and evoke a perplexing mix of fear, disgust, and desire.[1] Indeed, some of the attributes of beauty - stillness, calm, repose - are also attributes of death.[2] While feminist scholars observe that fashion models often appear emaciated, frail, and cadaver-like, using simulated 'corpses' to sell fashion is something new. If we probe the depths of corpse chic, a culture immersed in the problem of death emerges. Realistic death imagery has moved into mainstream visual culture, as coverage of the corpses of war, terrorism, natural disasters, heinous murders, and cemetery and body parts scandals, and a global entertainment industry that exploits death for profit, position the dead body centre stage.[3] I will illustrate my chapter with fashion photographs, use an interdisciplinary methodology, and utilize social, psychoanalytic, post-modern, and feminist theories, and Gorer's classic (1955) pornography of death in my analysis.

Key Words: Beauty, fashion magazine, fashion photography, stylist, supermodel, dead body, death, *memento mori,* corpse chic, corpse porn.

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Death is the mother of beauty. – Wallace Stevens, *Sunday Morning*[4]

Death should dazzle when you stare at it. – Giovanni Pascoli[5]

1. Corpse Chic

In the editorial and advertising pages of mainstream fashion and life style magazines, an unusual aesthetic has appeared, the modelling of death to sell clothing, accessories, and makeup. In *Vogue, W*, and *Vanity Fair,* supermodels and film stars pose ghoulishly in macabre storylines inspired by fairy tales, mythology, literature, and popular fiction, music, film, and television genres. These death infused pantomimes appear regularly and are staged by fashion's most in-demand stylists and photographers. In some of these *tableau vivant,* the clothing appears beside the point, as the lines in fashion are blurred between design and style, and the clothes no longer speak definitively for themselves.[6] The phenomenon is so trendy that it has descended to the trenches of reality television programming like *Make Me a Supermodel* and *Top Model*, where the contestants strike blood drenched cadaver poses.

Giving new meaning to the concept of 'fashion victim,' some of these beautiful simulated corpse realities are presented as dead from causes unknown, but more often they are fashioned to appear as suicides, drug overdose cases, or victims of sex crimes, i.e., of rapists, serial killers, sadists, paedophiles, and even savage animals. While feminist scholars have long observed that female fashion models often appear emaciated, frail, dissolute, and drugged, posing them to appear dead is different. Making the dead beautiful underlies embalming procedures that make the deceased socially presentable sights, but making the beautiful look dead for aesthetic enjoyment and to sell fashion in mainstream venues has other cultural meanings. The visual references to decadence, ecstasy, and decomposition, and the transformation of alluring, living, young bodies into images of death are designed to disturb. Fashion is about the new and increasingly about death, whether it is referenced in cross-bone jewellery or skull embroidered handbags, or making beautiful people look like cadavers. I call the mainstreaming of this trend, 'corpse chic.'

Depending upon your perspective corpse chic is depraved, disturbing, decadent, *or* edgy, conceptual, and artistic; *or* some combination thereof. It is only because we know that the model is alive, not dead, that we can comfortably view these representations aesthetically, and while they may send a chill up your spine and make you avert your eyes, they are compelling enough to make many viewers take a closer look. And that is the point of corpse chic, taking a closer look at the work of those who created the images and at the fashions the images are designed to sell.

However one responds to the trend, it offers some arresting if unsettling portrayals of the dead body that drive consumers to spend, while plying the depth of their psyches with seductively disturbing images. *Vogue* Editor-in-Chief Anna Wintour describes the shadowy figures, aura of menace, and implied violence conveyed in an ambiguous retelling of the fairy tale Little Red Riding Hood, 'Into the Woods' (Sept 2009), photographed by Mert & Marcus and styled by Grace Coddington, as 'visionary and bold,' 'keeping fashion in the world of dreams and

impossibilities,' while bucking current trends of the 'pragmatic and the accessible.'[7] Set in a forest in which there is a large bed, a model dressed as a wolf sneaks up on Little Red, role played by the supermodel Natalia Vodianova, who models the latest red capes, coats, dresses, and suits. In one image, Little Red is sprawled on the forest floor, dishevelled, mouth gaping and eyes open and staring, corpse like. Did the Big Bad wolf rape, kill, and, perhaps, eat Little Red Riding Hood, or not?

Fashion-wise, the precursors of corpse chic are the photographers Guy Bourdin and Richard Avedon. Bourdin's sensual, shocking images and strange, often sinister photo narratives began to appear in French *Vogue* in the late 1960s, and were influenced by surrealist painters like Magritte and filmmakers like Luis Bunuel. Bourdin's themes were sex, violence, and death and his singular images explored his personal obsessions in exhibitions, small publishing venues, and advertisements for clients such as Charles Jourdan, known for their challenging aesthetics.[8] In the USA, Richard Avedon's audacious fable, 'In memory of the late Mr. and Mrs. Comfort,' appeared in the Nov 6, 1995 issue of *The New Yorker*, and featured a skeleton modelling clothing alongside the supermodel Nadja Auermann.

Time doesn't allow for me to show you many pictures, but let's take a look at some recent ones that have moved corpse chic from the periphery to the centre of fashion. I'll briefly highlight details of the photographs, stylists, and the fashions, themselves.

In 'Pin-up,' a deathly still model is sprawled on her back on the scarlet bed of a seedy hotel or bordello, legs and arms spread, right hand pointing up, glassy eyes open and staring vacantly at the ceiling in a kitsch crime scene *sexmord*. The model wears a ruffled white Chloe pinafore, and was styled by Alex White and photographed by Mert & Marcus to look like a 'pretty baby' for the March 2008 W.

In another evocative *tableau vivant* models pose as the 'dead' Romeo and Juliet, intertwined in each other's arms, while modelling an Alexander McQueen silk dress and a nude body stocking. The narrative, called 'Love of a Lifetime,' was photographed by Annie Leibovitz and styled be *Vogue* Creative Director Grace Coddington, and appeared in the December 2008 *Vogue*.

In a mysterious image in the April 2009 *Vogue*, Raymond Meier pays homage to Bourdin in the series 'Laid Bare.' To photograph Akris, Yurman, Crangi, and Lanvin clothing and accessories, Meier's model is partially visible, her 'corpse' stiff lower legs and one hand peaking out from a golf cart back. A common motif of corpse chic is to stage the models in such unnatural or partial positions, evoking newly found dead bodies.

And then there is the nude, redheaded supermodel Lily Cole, posed as a 21st century Ophelia, floating 'dead' on water. Appearing newly surfaced from a watery grave, Cole poses for photographer Terry Richardson for the 2010 Pirelli calendar.

In an earlier Mert & Marcus piece, also called 'Into the Woods,' published in the Aug 2007 *W* and styled by Alex White, the Dutch supermodel Doutzen Kroes has been staged as a cadaver-white thumb sucking child, posing with toy bears, some of which cradle her. Kroes' character appears to have been ravished by these toys or by some unseen animal or human predator, and then left for dead. The staging of this striking visual scene evokes a sexual subculture referred to as 'furries,' in which people don outlandish fur costumes to have sex. The goal of this furry shoot? To sell the pelts of dead animals.

As a social theorist and cultural commentator focused on the human body, I am intrigued by this emergent facet of fashion's dark side into the mainstream of advertising and editorial work because it combines three of my scholarly interests, fashion/beauty, celebrity, and images of human death in art and popular culture. I am interested in the continuity of corpse chic with other cultural representations of death, past and present; and in answering questions such as these: What is the connection of this aesthetic with eros, sexuality, and gender? How does it challenge traditional ideals of the beautiful body, and why is this imagery in fashion magazines? How do fashion magazine readers and bloggers respond to such imagery? What is the intersection of corpse chic with ambivalence accorded human beauty and celebrity in pop culture? Since fashion reflects contemporary cultural aspects, how does the emergence of corpse chic as a convention echo the cultural preoccupations of 21st century?

2. Dead Beauty, Dead Sexy

Though the association of death with beauty is a common one, it is an uneasy one, at least in Western civilisation where death is thought the body's most fouled form, something to hide and to disguise. Death is about putrefaction, the shattering of aesthetic harmony, and ultimately about human failure, while beauty is about human vitality, wholeness, and power.[9] Beauty contradicts death. Or does it?

While an increasing motif in fashion magazines, rather than a singular vision of an unusual mind like that of Bourdin, alluring representations of gorgeous people have been a persistent motif in western art and pop culture. Sculptors and painters, and then later photographers, filmmakers, video gamers, and webmasters with Photoshop programs have used their imaginative minds to create dead sexy looks to instruct, entertain, and horrify.

'My first nude was the erotic body of the dead Christ,' remarked a philosopher friend of mine. And then there are images of dead lovelies such as Adonis, the Catholic saints, Millais' *Ophelia*, Wallis' *Chatterton,* Pabst's *Lulu,* Minghella's lover of *The English Patient*, and Burton's *Corpse Bride.* Those who model death in corpse chic pictorials are in along tradition of performers in ballet, opera, cinema, and television who role play dead.

Since the cycle of sex, death, and rebirth is the most widespread of all ritual associations,[10] it is no surprise that sexual beauty and death would mix in our

imaginative minds and surface in art and popular culture forums such as fashion magazines, where beauty continues to be the dominant aesthetic.[11] After all, some attributes of beauty - stillness, calm, repose - are also attributes of death.[12] Fashion echoes the cycles of birth, death and resurrection, with its nostalgia, trends, and what is in and what is out. By its very logic, fashion is associated with death.

So it is that *W* magazine has hired stylists with a point of view that has pushed corpse chic to the forefront; their aesthetic is conceptual, transgressive, debauched, and fed by art and pop culture, with homage to trailblazers such as Bourdin and Avedon. Alex White*, Fashion Director of *W*, speaks of cinematic storylines inspired by film noir and detective fiction, and provocative and decadent filmmakers like Visconti,[13] and her urge to draw on 'rebellious female figures, including lawbreakers and social outcasts,' as well as her own English boarding room experience.[14] White and Camilla Nickerson, Senior Contributing Fashion Editor at *W*, and the photographers Mert & Marcus and Steven Klein, with whom they both regularly work, frequently use sado-masochistic themes to style their shoots, which play with beauty, sexual violence, sexual paraphilia, the promise of pleasure and pain, and that flirt around the edges of death.

Let's consider some corpse chic images that appeared in *W* from the past year.

In a March 2008 image from the garden lush 'Dominica,' photographer Juergen Teller and stylist Camilla Nickerson focus on a hot pink silk chiffon Dior bustier dress by having a model role play a corpse, that has been 'tossed' onto a surrealist tree trunk.

In Sept 2008, a 'dead' Kate Hudson modelled Balmain and Chanel, was photographed by Mert & Marcus, and was styled by Alexandra White, in a sterile commercial kitchen that looks strangely like an autopsy room. She lies in contorted positions on various tables and carts.

In a photo from the kitsch 'Love/Hate,' which appeared in October 2008, styled by Camilla Nickerson and photographed by Steven Klein, the supermodel Linda Evangelista hovers over her 'dead' male lover in a garden scene, while modeling Michael Kors, Balenciaga, and Chloe.

In the July 2009 'Honeymoon Hotel,' the nude and semi-nude actor Bruce Willis and his wife are photographed by Steven Klein and styled by Camilla Nickerson, in a stark postmodern set of interiors and exteriors. They model Keiko and Michael Kors in a sado-masochistic pantomime, complete with masks, whips, an emergency vehicle, and overtures of violence that have left them in 'dead.'

In the fantasy 'Sanctuary' of August 2009, photographed by Mario Sorrenti and styled by Camilla Nickerson, the model Guinevere van Seenus poses as a bird of paradise, flying about a primordial forest until she meets a violent end in a tree. With broken wings and a chalk-white cadaver-like face, van Seenus models Valentino, Givenchy, and Ralph Lauren in this ethereally beautiful narrative which references Rima, the jungle dwelling 'bird-girl' of the novel *Green Mansions,* who is burned alive in a tree.

Linked to primal desire and to fear, erotic death imagery can evoke a perplexing mix of disgust, dread and desire that attracts and revolts us.[15] These reactions are apparent in reader and blog reactions to the more provocative corpse chic shoots that have appeared in *W*.

From the website *Glossover*, comments about the fur themed 'Into the Woods' condemned the misogyny, child porn, depravity, and killing themes. One reader noted that she was 'incredibly conflicted about this spread. I love the contrast of the saturated colours and neutral tones but no amount of styling can really make up for such a disturbing theme. It's just creepy and trying too hard.'[16] Another wrote, 'This is the most retarded thing I have ever seen. Violence against women is not sexy. I thought women's rights were created for a reason? Apparently not, women should still be submissive and act beautiful even when probably gang raped and left for dead.'[17] For several months, readers wrote letters to the editors of *W,* complaining about 'blatantly misogynist' photographers and stylists,[18] and images that resemble crime scenes, pander to 'sadistic cravings,' and are 'fodder for paedophiles.'[19] Wrote one *W* reader: 'It's creepy to think that anyone would find them pleasing or attractive. Images like those shouldn't be readily available to the public.'[20]

In March 2008, another reader wrote *W* and summed up the overall reaction of readers who view the trend negatively. Complaining that the magazine's models are increasingly photographed to look like corpses and that a recent photo spread of Gwyneth Paltrow had staged the actress to appear 'nicely arranged by the mortician,' he noted that he 'would prefer if *W* gave me sunbeams and light instead of chills and corpses.' 'I see dead people—every time I look at *W*!'[21]

While some *W* readers have cancelled their subscriptions because of its recurrent fetishism of death as beauty, others view the trend positively. Representative is a letter published in the July 2009 about a May 2009 *W* spread called, 'Performance,' whose author claimed to be 'ecstatic' and 'over the moon,' about the 'indecent postures,' 'tarted up models,' and 'audacious choices displaying glamorous debauchery.'[22]

What are we to make of the psychological motivations lurking behind the creative processes underlying corpse chic? Freud proposed that a repetition compulsion exists in psychic life that propels human beings to an earlier condition of non-existence (entropy). This 'death instinct,' he argued, figures in sado-masochism practice and fantasy, and death imagery. For Freud, the 'the goal of all life is death.' Freud speculated that death and eros, and hence beauty, share a 'hidden identity and that images of beauty can articulate a desire for death and be an aesthetic substitution for it.[23] Following Freud, Lacan claimed that beauty guides us to our own deaths by presenting death as a 'dazzling' sight.[24] In 1757, Edmund Burke wrote of a special category of aesthetic experience called the 'sublime,' that exceeds our perceptual and imaginative grasp, strikes fear in our hearts and turmoil in our minds, engulfs us with dark emotions, and beguiles us

with its beauty.[25] 'For beauty is nothing but the beginning of terror we can just barely endure, and we admire it so because it calmly disdains to destroy us,' wrote the poet Rainer Maria Rilke.[26] A now popular marketing lure and artistic expression, corpse chic dazzles with its dead sexy models, dramatic sets, and exotic, sometimes malevolent themes. With good reason, Karl Lagerfeld observed that fashion is not only ephemeral and unfair, it is dangerous.[27] Capturing the link between eros and death, the French use the expression la petit mort, the little death, to describe orgasm.[28]

Corpse chic imagery and storylines break western taboos about both death and sex, which the anthropologist Geoffrey Gorer claims are similar phenomena that periodically exchange positions as forbidden subjects.[29] For decades, conventional fashion magazines have been infused with overt sexuality, nudes, and erotic poses, but as images of sex have lost their capacity to shock, so too have they lost their ability to hold our attention. In societies oversaturated with sex, death is the new sex, the new body we voyeuristically explore.[30]

In corpse chic we have the conflation of sex and death, which amplifies the opportunities to violate cultural norms, challenge interdictions, titillate and outrage readers, raise the ire of women's groups, and garner loads of publicity for magazines, models, photographers, stylists, and designers.

3. Fashion Crimes

Laden with CSI forensic imagery, as well as that of S & M, corpse chic reflects the current cultural content of entertainment and news culture, in which real and fictive images of beautiful dead bodies are major infotainment consumer and export products, rather than 'special' tastes. Dead beauties haunt the news headlines and television programming, proving that any story about the mysterious death or murder of a young, pretty, white female can make an instant celebrity of a previously unknown person.[31] In the USA, the beautiful female murder victim has long been a popular cultural subject,[32] and forensic science provides new ways to explore her demise.[33] In detective fiction and television programming such as *Law &Order* she is the victim of choice for sexually motivated crimes.[34] In *Killing Women*, Burfoot and Lord note that there is no glut of stories in contemporary culture about dead women.[35]

Some of the corpse chic depictions I have shown move in a direction I term 'corpse porn,' which combines the sexualized body with the dead body, in exploitative, pornographic, not merely erotic ways. As taboos about sex and about death have relaxed in contemporary liberal culture, and pornography has been increasingly destigmatized, there's been a growing conflation of these two once forbidden bodies in the realm of popular culture as an entertainment commodity. Hence the regular appearance in television programming, films, video games, and now fashion magazines of gorgeous simulated decomposing corpses, who are the unmourned victims of brutal sexual-sadists. Corpse porn is 'designed to highlight

the body's sexuality as well as its decomposition,' 'to transform images of beautiful simulated dead bodies in theatrical ways,' and to titillate viewers with sexual perversities, fetishes, and inside glimpses of sexual subcultures such as S & M and the aforementioned 'furries.'[36]

While corpse chic, just as corpse porn, does not rely exclusively on female death imagery, images of beautiful women do dominate the modelling of death in fashion media. There are long cultural traditions for this association. In his study of misogynist art in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Dijkstra[37] connects images of dead beautiful females with the passive states of sleep, sickness, the anesthetized body, death, and decay. De Beauvoir[38] and Douglas[39] both argue that distinct biological and existential conditions have caused humans to place woman closer to the erotic, birth, dirt, and death. Woman has frequently been depicted as a harbinger of death, and the fashion models who model death in fashion media can be viewed as contemporary *memento mori*.

The current fetishism of death as beauty that is apparent in fashion magazines has a ghoulish logic. Fashion models are sometimes referred to as paper dolls; a paper doll is static but can be posed, just as a dead body is static but can be posed. As noted earlier, death and beauty share this common quality of stillness. On a mythic level, living and non-living beauty are sometimes interchangeable. In the Pygmalion story the statue of Galatea is a substitute for a live woman and then becomes a living one. Some of the gorgeous people I interviewed for a study of human beauty complained that they are treated as if they are dolls, unreal, or not alive.[40] A 24 year old model named Errol said that when he is gawked at, 'it feels like necrophilia.'

When I interviewed Robert Ressler,[41] the founder of a division of the FBI focused on the profiling of serial killers, I learned that a desire to control the beauty object fixates murderers who prey on beauty types such a blue-eyed blondes or brunettes with long centre-parted hair. Transformed into something lifeless, the beauty can be posed, controlled, and possessed. 'He was so beautiful that I wanted to slap him.' 'Her beauty makes me want to do violence to it.' After hearing such responses from the mouths of seemingly normal people, I more fully understand why beautiful people are not only victims of sociopaths but are staged in macabre theatres of violence and death by filmmakers, novelists, fashion stylists, and photographers.[42]

Beauty inspires cultural awe, but also ambivalence, anger, and anxiety. Psychoanalysts, anthropologists, and historians of human sacrifice have remarked upon the human endeavour to equalize those with superior gifts. The Aztecs feted a gorgeous young man as a god before ripping out his heart and eating it, symbolically incorporating the power of his beauty into their culture. The public call for such sacrifice is reflected in the tabloid press pattern of adulation and then attack on beautiful celebrities.[43] Those deeply conflicted by the provocative power of

beauty may wish to transform it into something impotent, pitiable, worthless, that is, 'dead.'

Because the made-up face of a co rpse can make an individual appear more beautiful in death than in life, it, too, may be viewed as erotic.[44] In corpse chic, beautiful people are cosmetized to appear dead, which might amplify their beauty, with transgression. On the other hand, when celebrities like Gwyneth Paltrow and Kate Hudson simulate death, we sneak a peak at what they might look dead.

In corpse chic, the transformation is all play. The degradation, desecration, killing and the equalization of supermodels and superstars, people with an otherworldly otherness, who have not only fabulous looks, but fame and fortune, are merely acted out for viewers to enjoy.

4. 21st Century Culture and Corpse Chic

On another level, corpse chic can be said to have accomplished something positive: it is part of a social trend that is bringing death, however macabre, exotic, violent, perverse, or exploitative out of the closet, a general trend in pop culture[45] that is reversing historical changes that have made death embarrassing, forbidden, or the 'failure of a cure.' The illusion that we have eternal life has become a social obligation in many western cultures, a spin-off of capitalist optimism and the medicalization of death.[46] Corpse chic challenges that obligation, throwing death beautifully in our face. If we probe the depths of corpse chic, a culture immersed in the problem of death emerges. Realistic death imagery has moved into mainstream visual culture, as coverage of the corpses of war, terrorism, natural disasters, heinous murders, and cemetery and body parts scandals, and a global entertainment industry that exploits death for profit, now position the dead body centre stage.[47]

On the other hand, corpse chic reveals the underbelly of a progressively more death preoccupied culture in which people are so fascinated with images of death that they create fictive ones, as substitutes for real ones. Lest we forget, the ultimate money shot in our infotainment society is that of the freshly dead corpse of a once living, beautiful celebrity, individuals like Marilyn Monroe, Anna Nicole Smith, Princess Diana, Elvis Presley, and Michael Jackson, all of whom haunted fashion and lifestyle magazines while alive, and increasingly, after they have died. Death is the mother of beauty, but it is also its offspring.[48]

Notes

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[2] E. Bronfen, *Over Her Dead Body, Death, Femininity and the Aesthetic*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1992.

[3] J. Foltyn, 'Dead Sexy: The Corpse is the New 'Porn Star' of Popular Culture', Centre for Death and Society, podcast, Univ of Bath, 8 F ebruary 2006, http://www.bath.ac.uk/cdas/lectures/deadsexy08feb06.htmlm; J.L. Foltyn, 'The Corpse in Contemporary Culture: Identifying, Transacting, and Recoding the Dead Body in The Twenty-First Century', *Mortality*, Vol. 13, No. 2, 2008, pp. 99-104.

[4] W. Stevens, 'Sunday Morning', *The Palm at the End of the Mind*, Vintage Books, New York, 1915, p. 5.

[5] L. Pascoli, 'Something Rich and Strange', *FMR*, Vol. 28, 1987, p. 91.

[6] Designs no longer speak: C.R.C. White, 'The Rise of the Stylist: A Double-Edged Sword', *The New York Times*.com, 1 September 1998, Viewed 6 July 2009, http://www.nytimes.com/1998/09/01/style/the-rise-of-the-stylist-a-double-edged-sword.html.

[7] A. Wintour, 'Purpose-Driven', *Vogue*, September 2009, p. 214.

[8] G. Bourdin, *The Beautiful Fall: Lagerfeld, Saint Laurent, and the Glorious Excess in 1970s Paris*, Little Brown, New York, 2006. A. Drake, Personal Communication, Café Rostand, Paris, Sept 18, 2009.

[9] J.L. Foltyn, 'Dead Beauty: The Preservation, Memorialisation, and Destruction of Beauty in Death', *Contemporary Issues in the Sociology of Death, Dying, and Disposal*, G. Howarth & P. Jupp (eds), St. Martin's Press, New York, 1996, p. 72-83.

[10] D.L. Napier, *Masks, Transformation, and Paradox*, University of California, Berkeley, 1986.

[11] Foltyn, op. cit., 1996; J.L. Foltyn, 'Dead Famous and Dead Sexy: Popular Culture, Forensics and the Rise of the Corpse', *Mortality*, Vol. 13, 2008, pp. 153-173.

[12] Bronfen, 1992.

[13] A. White, 'Contributors', *W*, September 2009, p. 154.

[14] A. White, 'Contributors', *W,* March 2009, p. 158.

[15] Foltyn, 1996.

[16] Monica, '*W* Redefines Fashion Victim in Furry Photo Spread', *Glossover*, July 25, 2007, Viewed on 2 September 2009, http://www.glossedover.com/glossed_over/2007/07w-redefines-fas.html.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Letter: D. Alaniz, 'Readers React', *W*, October 2007, p. 122.

[19] Letter: D.A.R. Guyton, 'Readers React', *W*, October 2007, p. 122

[20] Letter: C.H. Dietz-Eichhorn, 'Readers React', *W*, October 2007, p. 122.

[21] Letter: J. Bruenger, 'Readers React', *W*, March 2008, p. 248.

[22] Letter: M.A. Phillips, 'Readers React', *W*, July 2009, p. 18.

[23] Freud, 1952.

[24] Lacan, 1992, p. 62.

[25] E. Burke, *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1998.

[26] R.M. Rilke, *Duino Elegies, Elegy 1*, W. W. Norton & Company, New York, 1992.

[27] K. Lagerfeld, *Lagerfeld Confidential*, Documentary, R. Marconi (dir), Koche Lorber Films, 2006.

[28] There is a website devoted to this imagery: http://www.beautifulagony.com.

[29] G. Gorer, 'The Pornography of Death', *Encounter*, Vol. 5, 1955, pp. 49-52.

[30] Foltyn, 'Dead Sexy,' 2008.

[31] Foltyn, 'Dead Sexy', 2008; Foltyn, 2006.

[32] D.A. Cohen, 'The Beautiful Female Murder Victim: Literary Genres and Courtship Practices in the Origins of a Cultural Motif, 1590–1850', *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 31, 1997, pp. 277-306.

[33] Foltyn, 'Dead Sexy', 2008.

[34] S. Britto, T. Hughes, K. Saltzman & C. Stroh, 'Does Special mean Young, White and Female? Deconstructing the Meaning of Special in Law & Order: Special Victims Unit', *Journal of Criminal Justice and Popular Culture*, Vol. 14, 1997, pp. 39-57.

[35] A. Burfoot & S. Lord (eds), *Killing Women: The Visual Culture Of Gender And Violence*, Wilfred Laurier University, Waterloo, Canada, 2006.

[36] Foltyn, 2006; Foltyn, 'Dead Sexy,' 2008, p. 166.

[37] B. Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siecle Culture*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1983.

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[39] M. Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1966.

[40] J.L. Foltyn, *The Importance of Being Beautiful: The Social Construction of the Beautiful Self*, Abstract and Dissertation, *ProQuest*, 1990, Publication No. AAT 8926072, 1990, .http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=743986011&sid=1&Fmt=2 &clientId=1506&RQT=309&VName=PQD. ProQuest Document ID: 743986011. Full text is also available. UMI, Ann Arbor. 1989.

[41] R. Ressler , 1992 interview by Foltyn.

[42] Usually, but not always photographed by men, both straight and gay, today's corpse chic models are styled by women and appear in fashion magazines whose audiences are overwhelmingly women, often very well off women. *W*, for example, has an annual circulation of 5,400,000; 80 percent of its readers are women, with an average age of 48, and an average household income of $135,840, the highest income of any fashion-lifestyle magazine. *W* is described by Echo Media print media experts, as delivering rich text and intriguing photography, mixing high and low culture in its pages, and 'striving to challenge standard views

of popular culture,' as it covers the worlds of fashion, beauty, the arts and celebrity, including 'rappers, royals and renegades of every persuasion.' *W Magazine*, EchoMedia, 21 July 2009, Viewed on Aug 1, 2009 at .http://www.echo-media.com/MediaDetail.asp?IDNumber=7148. The above information leads to a question, are *W* readers decadent well-off housewives or women with high profile careers, whose so-called sophisticated eye indulges in violent, death-deluged sexual fantasies and fables that do harm to gorgeous women and, occasionally, gorgeous men?

[43] Foltyn, 1996.

[44] Foltyn, 1996.

[45] C.D. McIlwaine, *When Death Goes Pop: Death, Media & The Remaking Of Community*, Peter Lang, New York, 2005.

[46] P. Aries, *Western Attitudes toward Death: From the Middle Ages to the Present*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, Maryland, 1974.

[47] Foltyn, 2006; Foltyn, 'The Corpse in Contemporary Culture', 2008.

[48] Foltyn, 1996.

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Jacque Lynn Foltyn, Ph.D., Associate Professor Sociology, is Chair of the Department of Social Sciences, National University, La Jolla, California, USA. Her studies focus on human beauty, fashions in beauty, and representations of death, and her cultural critiques have appeared in a variety of forums, including fashion and lifestyle magazines and *The New York Times.* As a scholarly expert, she has appeared on CBS National News and the BBC.

Towards an Exploration of Earl 'Biggy' Turner and the New Reggae/Dancehall Fashion Aesthetic

Shelley-Ann McFarlane

Abstract

Reggae/dancehall fashion was once dominated by the red, green and gold colours of Rastafari and the militant dress of the Rude Boys. But the extent of the Jamaican fashion aesthetic goes beyond these and can be found in the depths of Jamaica's impoverished inner-city dancehall spaces. More recently, Earl 'Biggy' Turner has gained local and international significance as the Jamaican designer who has paved the way for Reggae fashion. 'Biggy' uses inspiration from the reggae/dancehall subculture to create fashions that have distinguished the Jamaican fashion industry. Jamaican dance sessions such as 'Passa Passa' and 'Weddy Weddy' are among the fashion capital spaces of the nation. Reggae musicians such as Beenie Man, Shabba Ranks, Elephant Man and Ninja Man are fashion icons who have contributed to this fashion aesthetic. Patrons of the dancehall take their fashion cue from these icons as well as create their own interpretation of the reggae fashion aesthetic. This reggae fashion aesthetic is unique to the international fashion industry. Reggae has created not only a distinct sound but also a culture of fashion that, like its Hip Hop neighbour, has the potential to have a multi-billion dollar impact on the fashion industry. The Jamaican fashion has largely been influenced by the fashion aesthetic of the dancehall. Reggae music and its fashion have influenced the work of Jamaican fashion designers in unique ways that have not yet been documented. This chapter will examine the Reggae dancehall fashion aesthetic and its 'post rasta colour' era. Using as a case study Jamaican designer Earl 'Biggy' Turner and his use of the dancehall fashion aesthetic, I will also begin the discussion of the new Jamaican fashion aesthetic and its international appeal.

Key Words: Reggae, aesthetic, Earl 'Biggy' Turner, dancehall, bricolage.

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1. Introduction

Bob Marley is arguably one of Jamaica's greatest exports. Marley's music and its message are enjoyed by millions around the world and have inspired artists across the globe. Though under-documented, his fashion aesthetic cannot be ignored. His dreadlocks, his Rastafarian colours - red, green and gold - his close fitting jeans as well as his 'rastaman' style, have helped to define the Jamaican reggae fashion aesthetic. Rastafarian fashion is a material representation of the anti-hegemonic philosophies held by the group as well as their militant opposition to the ruling class. Jamaican militancy in dress existed in the early 1920s with Marcus Mosiah Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association

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(U.N.I.A.) members wearing their outstanding military uniforms, feather plumes, white gloves and dress swords.[1]

Garvey earnestly believed that certain types of dress were powerful enough to restore pride in blackness and command respect from the white world. Though criticized not only by whites but also by other blacks such as W. E. B Du Bois, Philip Randolph and others, Garvey nonetheless stood firm on his policy of dress. Du Bois like the rest of Garvey's opposers failed to comprehend the spirit of upliftment that the U.N.I.A. attire invoked in the masses. Through their dress, Garvey and his followers were able to identify with each other as well as distinguish themselves from the rest of society.

Garvey's love of ceremonial dress and parade was evident in the dress worn by the leaders of the U.N.I.A. Its auxiliary groups like the Black Cross Nurses and the African Legion were also well dressed. Garvey's U.N.I.A dress code although aesthetically appealing was more than a show of art. It was a return to the African idea exemplified by the Ashanti Empire royal ceremonies. These events facilitated space in which royalty and their court could display prestige, wealth and power. It is uncertain whether Garvey mirrored the Ashanti in particular, but it is known that he was well read and kept current on African political and cultural affairs.

Both the Marcus Garvey-led U.N.I.A. and Bob Marley can be considered Jamaica's first fashion ambassadors. Jamaicans' black pride through dress representation has always been a part of the 'struggle' of the working class in the Jamaican society. The Rastafarian colours, dreadlocks, symbols of marijuana and military fashion have become a style for those who felt rejected by society as well as a mark of their heightened affiliation with their motherland, Africa.

2. Fashion in the Dancehall

Jamaican fashion made its second international début with the rude boys of the 1960s and 1970s. Tulloch describes this as 'the nattier side of black fashion'.[2] The Rude Boys were thugs that were feared by both civilians as well as the police.[3]

> Unlike the Rasta reggae performers, who preferred to be elsewhere – Africa - the rude boys stuck to the strict reality of Kingston urban ghetto life. Life was raw, loud, unforgiving and brutal. That was the place to be. That's where the action was. And that was their music.[4]

The rude boys were allegedly the leaders of the gun and marijuana trade in the volatile 1970s in the inner city of Kingston, Jamaica. They were thought to be murderers, robbers as well as looters who plagued the society. Their aliases included 'Dillinger' and 'Clint Eastwood' and their gangs were called 'Zulu', 'Phantom' and 'Vikings'.[5] Their fashion was the trademark of their nihilistic view of life. The rude boys would parade the streets of Kingston in their 'arrow shirts,

narrow ties, their short trousers, leather jackets, ballet shoes, bum-freezer jackets, wraparound sunglasses, with a towel thrown on one shoulder, ratchet knife ever present either on their waist or in their hands, hair worn short and well groomed'.[6] The rude boys were well dressed and took great pride in their appearance.

Though unable to change their immediate surroundings the rude boys took charge of their dress as a symbol of their defiance of the law as well as the creation of their own identity. The rude boys' fashion had musical connections. Rudie fashion was closely associated with the ska[7] era of reggae music.[8] Their political awareness was as developed as the rastas. However, their philosophies diverged in that the rude boys sought to engage the realities of their inner city lifestyle and not look to Africa as their 'home'. The rude boys' focus was on America and they were 'absorbing commodity from the fringes of the global marketplace, responding to it positively'.[9] Their fashion was also symbolic of the black unity they tried to foster amongst themselves as they sought to resist the political and cultural oppressors.

Fast forward the music to present day dancehall. The birth of dancehall music created a shift in not only the philosophy of the patrons but also their dress. Foehr (2000) describes the dancehall culture and its people as being,

> M[m]ore concerned with First-World materialism and music created by First-World technology. They didn't even share hatred of the tried-and-true boogieman Babylon. The dancehall crowd relished the spoils of materialism, just as United States rap stars flaunted diamonds and Mercedes Limos.[10]

There is no mistaking that there is a heightened fashion consciousness of the participants in the dancehalls of Jamaica. Dancehall fashion is the 'collective psyche' of the reggae dancehall patrons who in many cases share similar social and economic backgrounds.[11] Within the dancehall there exists 'a dynamic social process by which new styles are created, introduced to a consuming public, and popularly accepted by that public'.[12] The creators of these dancehall fashions are the dancers, deejays, as well as patrons in the dancehall. Dancehall fashion is the personal style of the working class dancehall participants. The dancehall culture dictates that their personal styles create the aesthetic that differentiates them from anyone else that might be wearing their threads. They mix high end fashion with low end fashion to create an aesthetic that is unique to the dancehall space. This process can be called dancehall fashion bricolage.[13]

3. Dancehall Bricolage

Dancehall bricolage involves the use of contradictory stylistic features of the out-of-context use of past and present styles.[14] This mixture of high and low fashion, current style with historical reference, intermingled with a Jamaican

aesthetic is used to create the unique Jamaican dancehall fashion aesthetic. Fashion in the dancehall is a cycle of continuous innovation that gives tangible form to change, and that includes changes in fashion trends, reggae music, dance moves, and other cultural and non-cultural factors. Dancehall fashion calls upon the creativity of the wearer. The wearers are able to create unique fashions from items that may or may not be classified as dress material, as well as re-invent fashions whose cycle had long since gone.

Polhemus (1994) refers to the origins of this talent of the Jamaican dancehall fashion trendsetter as:

> Since the days of slavery, a large proportion of people throughout the Caribbean had been obliged to develop skills in dressmaking and tailoring which allowed them to create unique, personalized garments for themselves and their families. In addition, an extensive network of backstreet tailors in practically every neighbourhood offered an affordable alternative to buying standardized, off-the-peg clothes from retail outlets. Both these factors contributed to the tendency towards variety and individual creativity – producing unique originals rather than carbon copies. [15]

For the working class dancehall patrons, their dress is therefore 'an expression of social activities deeply embedded in the cultural pattern of an era'.[16] Fashion in the dancehalls is an outlet for the self-acceptance, self-respect and self-esteem of the dancehall patrons, dancers and musicians.[17] Dancehall fashion is best understood and appreciated by participants in this subculture.

Dancehall fashion distinguishes the wearers' 'taste, lifestyle and identity'[18] from the rest of the society, thereby creating a fashion subculture that is unique to the dancehall space. This dancehall fashion represents a 'liberty of appearance, liberty of creativeness, liberty and ease of the chosen model of getting pleasure'.[19]

The fashions of the dancehall subculture are often absorbed into the mainstream fashion culture, or 'bubble up' from the subculture.[20] Many of the dancehall fashion designers are not trained by traditional standards and are usually tailors and dressmakers or seamstresses. They operate from home and have a clientele that live in the low income communities as they do. Many of these designers have however dressed some of the popular names in Jamaican dancehall.

4. Earl 'Biggy' Turner

It was a chance encounter with a Dancehall DJ that would propel Earl 'Biggy' Turner into dancehall fashion history. Earl 'Biggy' Turner is the king of dancehall fashion. Biggy has gained local and international recognition as the designer who

has taken dancehall fashion from the innercities of downtown Kingston onto the international runways.

'Biggy' uses inspiration from the reggae/dancehall subculture to create fashions that have distinguished the Jamaican fashion industry from the rest of the fashion world. Biggy's ascent in the fashion world is one for the fashion chronicles. A typical rags to riches story, Biggy started his fashion career in one of Kingston's violent innercities under circumstances that have led other young man to engage in criminal acitivities.

The Biggy dancehall brand started in the early eighties. Biggy got his machine experience from his mother who was herself a seamstress. Though he always wanted to be a lawyer, Biggy settled on learning a trade. As an electrician, with a young family, Biggy was unable to support his family. He started out sewing for himself and his young family primarily because they could not afford to purchase clothes from the stores. His family became his first marketing agents. His creations created a buzz in his community and dancehall patrons as well as non-dancehall patrons began ordering custom made designs from him. His neighbourhood became his first market and the dancehall patrons were his steady clients. His edgy fashion creations along with his obsession with a perfect finish are his trade mark.

Having never attended formal fashion design school, Biggy's creativity was the unbiased reflection of the inner spaces of the Jamaican dancehall and society. He was able to capture the 'energy of the dancehall'. His journey into Jamaican fashion icon history began through a chance encounter with a budding deejay, Delroy 'Pinchers' Thompson. Pinchers was a very fashionable deejay who was known for his flamboyant outfits and adored by his many female fans. Pinchers commissioned Biggy to create a shirt for him and the rest, as they say is dancehall fashion history.

Dancehall artists including Freddy McGregor, Maxi Priest, Buju Banton, Shabba Ranks, Beenie Man, Elephant Man, and Carlene the dancehall queen have been dressed by Biggy. International artists have also gotten in on the Biggy designs. These include Kris Kross, Naughty by Nature and Queen Latifah who have worn Biggy Designs on stage.

Dancehall artists play an integral role in the marketing of Biggy's fashion and those of other designers inspired by dancehall. Artists who wear the new designs thereby create new fashion trends in the dancehalls. As the fashion leader in the dancehall, the artist is the best marketing tool any designer could have representing him/her. An endorsement from a reggae artist can result in instant fame and increase in income for the designer. Biggy's association with the reggae artists fraternity has ensured his longevity in the dancehall.

Keeping ahead of the competition is key to maintaining his status as the number one dancehall designer. The competition in the dancehall fashion arena is very intense and the expectations of the consumers are very high. With new acts such as Les Campbell, Dexter Pottinger and Tony Crash, Biggy's designs have to be ahead

of the pack. Jamaican fashion consumers are always hoping to be different and stand out from the crowd. They expect a dancehall designer to create clothes that will keep them under the video light of the dancehall. This keeps designers like Biggy up at night creating for their demanding customers. Biggy's design motto is 'Style over Fashion'.[21] His designs are a reflection of the dancehall space and its demands for dress that are not only fashionable but stylish. The increasing demands from the dancehall patrons are what keep Biggy constantly creating new designs as there is no room for repetition.

Dancehall fashion is about pageantry, showing off and being seen. Biggy's strongest point is creativity and such as he has been able to satisfy the demands of his clientele. These fashion conscious dancehall patrons want their clothes to represent their unique style. The dancehall is the place where you are made a celebrity for a few seconds. This is thanks to the video light phenomenon, with a cameraman taking detailed shots of the patrons in the dancehall which are then projected onto a large screen. Each individual's fashion is made available in real time for all the participants in the dancehall to praise or criticise. With this much pressure to dress well dancehall fashion aesthetic is about looking unique and looking stylish.

When asked why his dancehall inspired designs have earned both local and international recognition Biggy explains that the dancehall fashion has an aesthetic that is unique among international trends. It is not only fashion that is of interest to dancehall patrons but style is also important. Individual style and creativity in their dress are the elements that keep both the artists and the dancehall patrons fashionable in the dancehall. Dress worn in the dancehall must tell the story of its wearer. The dancehall space can be viewed as a runway show, where each patron is given full access to strut their 'stuff'. The video light adds the expected drama to the dancehall kings and queens in their royal garb. Dress therefore is vital when attending the dancehall as one never knows where the video will be shown and in what newspapers your picture will be seen.

Biggy describes dancehall fashion as a mixture of West African aesthetic, Jamaican aesthetic, hip hop and a bit of all cultures and fashions that have a certain vibration or high energy. According to Biggy (2009), dancehall fashion is 'raw' 'sexy' 'energy' and 'provocative'. Biggy goes further to say that '[i]f you cover it up [dancehall body] dancehall dead, you have to show a lot of skin, this is what it started off with and you cannot dilute it'.[22] The black female body is often times a source of inspiration for Biggy. His designs are suited for a woman who is confident and sexy, and who is willing to turn heads when she steps into a room. His designs are often described as 'ghetto fabulous, hardcore and trendy'.[23]

One of the major challenges to the Jamaican designers is taking the aesthetic of the dancehall fashion and making it appealing to the masses. Biggy is considered the pioneer in transforming raw dancehall fashion into edgy catwalk trends. He maintains that although dancehall fashion can be toned down, its energy can still be

experienced. Biggy warns that the designers have to be careful as to how they creatively package dancehall as fashion. Dancehall fashion packaged the right way can be made pleasing to all fashion tastes, both local and international.

Dancehall fashion like its music is often times shunned by mainstream Jamaican society but its economic value as well as its local and international appeal cannot be denied. Dancehall fashion has been criticized by upper class Jamaicans as being too vulgar and has become more of a 'baring of flesh, instead of fashion'.[24] At the same time, it is the acceptable practice for corporate business marketing executives to use dancehall music, fashion and celebrities in their advertisements to garner public support for their products' profitability. Dancehall therefore has the power to make or break a commodity as it will garner public interest and support which translates into profitability for the company and Jamaica at large. Reggae musicians such as Beenie Man, Shabba Ranks, Elephant Man and Carlene the dancehall Queen are fashionable dancehall icons who have been employed by corporate Jamaica.

The tourism industry, one of Jamaica's main foreign income earner, has as one of its main attractions the dancehalls. Not wanting to only enjoy the island's sand, sun and sea but to enjoy also its indigenous sounds, tourists are often attracted to the dancehall. Dancehall sessions such as 'Passa Passa and 'Weddy Weddy' are among the dancehall fashion capital spaces of the nation. American, Asians as well as Europeans have all flocked the dancehalls to get more of Jamaica and to experience the authentic dancehall music and its culture. One of the more popular dancehall sessions is 'Boasie Tuesday', and the venue has a 'runway' where patrons upon entering the dancehall will walk the runway in full view of the other partygoers. This particular dance session is known for its elaborate fashion statements and as such attracts some of the more unique fashion of the dancehall.

5. Towards a Conclusion

This dancehall fashion aesthetic is unique to the international fashion industry. Dancehall has created not only a distinct sound but also a culture of fashion that, like its hip hop neighbour, has the potential to have a multi-billion dollar impact on the fashion industry. The success of hip hop fashion is primarily due to the fashion aesthetic of the artists and its patrons. Similar to the American hip hop artists, Jamaican artists and patrons have created a dancehall fashion aesthetic that is unique to the dancehall space.

There are industry measures that need to be taken to ensure the success of the Jamaican dancehall fashion becoming an international fashion product. Associations such as the Jamaican Fashion Cluster, Caribbean Fashion Industry Forum and the Kingston Declaration have been formed to implement measures, initiatives and technical support to ensure that the Jamaican fashion industry overcomes it challenges and reach its full potential. These challenges include, insufficient funding, inadequate access to fabric and accessories, inadequate

manufacturing capacity, inadequate marketing and distribution capabilities, lack of accreditation for the designers, absence of standard sizes for Jamaica and the Caribbean, lack of skilled labour and lack of quantitative as well as qualitative data. There are however local institutions such as Pulse Investment Limited, Saints International, Jamaica Trade and Invest and Jamaica Business Development that continue to provide support to the growing Jamaican Fashion Industry.

While outlining his own solution to the challenges of the Jamaican fashion industry, former Prime Minister of Jamaica and current Research Fellow at the University of the West Indies, The Right Hon. Edward Seaga called for the Jamaican designers to look towards the dancehall for inspiration and to create a dancehall fashion brand that could take Jamaican fashion to the world. According to Seaga (2005), this 'new brand product', Jamaican fashion, is intricately linked to reggae music. Seaga (2005) advises the Jamaican fashion industry that:

> It would be wise to check out the design ideas on the street which flow from the most creative fountain of all, the bubbling juices of Jamaican youth as they compete to outdo each other in dress to attract recognition and respect. This is the source of the design trends which will create the unique Jamaican fashion brands.[25]

Biggy is the leader of the mission to take Jamaican dancehall fashion to the international fashion industries. Biggy has shown collections at Jamaica's Caribbean Fashion Week, Trinidad Fashion Week, and Barbados Fashion Week. He has also represented the Jamaican brand internationally. Biggy was the lead Jamaican designer for the Jamaican Market Extravaganza held in Brussels, Belgium April 4th 2009. The show was sponsored by the European Union Private Sector Development Project, with strong backing from the European Commission as well as Jamaica Trade and Invest. His collection was well received and business contacts made with international manufacturers and retailers for his fashion line

Biggy's mission is to take dancehall fashion international. He is now begun establishing a branch of his fashion company in England. He has begun also the creative work for his dancehall collection for London Fashion Week 2010. This will be an Exclusive Dancehall Collection which will create a heightened buzz for the press as well as buyers. London fashionistas will come face to face with the world's first Jamaican dancehall fashion designer. London Fashion Week will be transformed the glitz and glamour, unpredictability, colours, sounds and smells of dancehall fashion. Dancehall fashion aesthetic will be introduced to the world of high fashion with London Fashion Week its first stop.

Notes

[1] V.D. Lewis, 'Dilemmas in African Diaspora Fashion', *Fashion Theory*, Vol. 7, 2003, p. 174.

[2] C. Tulloch, 'Rebel without a Pause: Black Street Style & Black Designers', *Chic Thrills: A Fashion Reader*, J. Ash & E. Wilson (eds), Pandora Press, Hammersmith & London, 1992, p. 84.

[3] H. Campbell, *Rasta and Resistance: From Marcus Garvey to Walter Rodney*, Hansib Publications, London & Hertfordshire, 2007, p. 111.

[4] S. Foehr, *Jamaican Warrior: Reggae, Roots & Culture*, Sanctuary Publishers Limited, London, 2000, p. 185.

[5] Campbell, p. 111.

[6] Lewis, op. cit., p. 170; J. Cooks, 'The Ska Above, the Beat Below', *Reggae, Rasta, Revolution: Jamaican Music from Ska to Dub*, Schirmer Books, New York, 1997, p. 132.

[7] Within the ska era there was the 'Rudie' songs which glorified the illegal and ruthless lives of the rude boys. With titles such as 'Rude Boy,' 'Rudie O Rudie,' 'Rudie in Court,' 'Rudie Get Offa Circuit Charge,' 'See Dem a Come,' 'Rude Boy Train,' '007,' 'Trying to Conquer Me,' rudie songs created a cool and deadly rude boy aesthetic that resembled the lives of the Kingston rude boys. Reggae artist such as Bob Marley and the Wailers, Desmond Dekker, Roy Shirley, Derrick Morgan, Delroy Wilson, Hopeton Lewis were the stars of the Rudie music of the 1970s.

[8] D. Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, Routledge, London & New York, 1979, p. 37.

[9] L. Chude-Sokei, 'Postnationalist Geographies: Rasta, Ragga, and Reinvesting Africa', *Reggae, Rasta, Revolution: Jamaican Music from Ska to Dub*, Schirmer Books, New York, 1997, pp. 219-220.

[10] Foehr, op. cit., p. 186.

[11] J. Lever, *Women's Dress in the Jazz Age*, Hanish Hamilton, Great Britain, 1964, p. 14.

[12] S.B. Kaiser, *The Social Psychology of Clothing: Symbolic Appearance in Context*, Fairchild Publication, New York, 1997, p. 4.

[13] During the period of slavery in Jamaica, the clothing of the enslaved dress was brilliant, flamboyant and, according to the European aesthetic, 'clashed violently'. Their attire consisted of different pieces of cloth as well as different items of clothing combined in very unconventional ways. This fashion bricolage created an aesthetic which was unique to the enslaved. This fashion bricolage aesthetic has been passed from generation to generation in the Jamaican society

[14] M. Morgado, 'Coming to Terms with Postmodern: Theories and Concepts of Contemporary and Their Implications for Apparel Scholars', *Clothing and Textile Research Journal*, Vol. 14, 1996, p. 46.

[15] T. Polhemus, *Streetstyle: From Sidewalk to Catwalk*, Thames & Hudson, New York, 1994, p. 22.

[16] M.J. Horn & L.M. Gurel*, The Second Skin: An Interdisciplinary Study of Clothing*, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston and Dallas, 1981, p. 3.

[17] Horn & Gurel, p. 150.

[18] J. Entwistle, *The Fashioned Body: Fashion, Dress and Modern Social Theory*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford and Massachusetts, 2000, p. 115.

[19] L. Stoykov, Fashion and Subculture, Retrieved 12 February 2009, http://www.bgfashion.net/news/fashion_and_subculture.php.

[20] V. Steel, *Fifty Years of Fashion: New Look to Now*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2000, p. 89.

[21] Earl 'Biggy' Turner, Personal Conversation, June 21 2009.

[22] Ibid.

[23] T. Reid, *Girls Go to Biggy*, National Star, July 2002.

[24] N. Soars, *More Flesh than Fashion*, The Sunday Gleaner, February 6, 1994.

[25] E. Seaga, 'Fashioning the Next Jamaican Brand', *The Sunday Gleaner*, June 26, 2005, p. 5.

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Shelley-Ann McFarlane is a Cultural Studies Ph.D. student at the Univeristy of the West Indies, Jamaica. Her academic as well as life passion is Jamaican and Caribbean fashion. Shelley-Ann's thesis examines the *Dancehall Fashion Aesthetic* as displayed by the patrons, musicians and designers within the dancehall space.

Part 8:

Fashion Performance

Fashion as Performance: Influencing Future Trends and Building New Audiences

Nicole D. Shivers

Abstract
This chapter will explore the innovative approach of creating a fashion experience through combining the interpretive vehicle of performing arts and the process of interactive education. Based upon original programming presented at the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art (NMAfA), this approach takes exhibit-oriented art, interpreting it through dance, music, and video, and supporting it through the use of off-site and conveniently accessible media. The author of this chapter, the Education Specialist for performing arts developed this methodology through her programs 'From Nothing,' '70', 'Fashion in the Round' and 'Choose Ur Style' (an e-game) based on two museum exhibits - 'GAWU' featuring the bottled capped fabric-like sculptures by artist El Anatsui and 'TxtStyles/Fashioning Identity' - focused on African textiles, garments and accessories. The fashions created for performance reflected the rock star themed runway shows of designer John Galliano, the space age clothing of Rhythm and Blues group Labelle, pop artist David Bowie's Ziggy Stardust and the colorful yet purposeful garments of iconic Nigerian bandleader Fela Kuti. The fashion experience produced by this method can be viewed as a future trend. Reworking art through fashion as performance holds the potential to forge the way for a cultural and educational movement. The result of this movement will enable artistic expressions and voices from one time and place to be translated and transformed into another time and place, crossing linguistic, ideological and generational boundaries. This creative symbiosis develops new audiences, who are exposed to different possibilities of understanding art, and renews and reshapes the interpretations of seasoned audiences.

Key Words: African Art, performing arts.

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Fashion designers and performers have always been inspired by one another. Their creative symbiosis has been reflected in runway shows and musical-dance productions. To showcase their work fashion designers use the runway as *their stage* to present their voices through clothing. Like the actor or dancer on stage, the fashion on the runway has to consider the best timing to convey its trend. Just as dancers use costumes that illuminate and express their dialogue through body movements so too do fashion designers. An audience member interviewed after watching a classical Chinese dance by the *Divine Performing Arts* at the Kennedy Center gave words that communicate the above, 'The movements, you really don't

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have to speak. But the movements they did told [sic] a story and I felt the colors and the movement. It inspired me.' The observer's sentiment is important when thinking about the influence of the performance on the audience. Fashion designers throughout history have been inspired by performances. French couturier Paul Poiret's affection for *Ballet Russe* colorful designs were reflected in 'oriental' motifs in his designs. Up and coming Turkish designer Mihrican Damaba also expressed her acute understanding of performance and fashion in her show titled *Escapism*, 'Fashion design is such a perfect art which allows us to use the most brilliant creation on earth which is the human being. This creation, is a unique reference of performing arts through to garments that never changes. As fashion designers, we put a non-visual imagination into practice and change it into a visual form by wrapping the human body in it, making the garments come alive.'

These terms 'coming alive,' 'moving,' 'colorful,' and 'style' will be the focus of this chapter, to demonstrate the concept 'Fashion as Performance,' as an education tool, a trend and audience builder.

1. Introduction: African Art in Motion, Living Not Static

> Tropical Africa has elaborated a different art history, a history of danced art, art danced by multimetric sound and a multipart motion. Danced art completes things, returns them to themselves by immersion in stylized motion.[1]

2. What is African Art in Motion?

It is the visual experience of realizing that traditional art of Africa was not intended to be seen in a one-dimensional view, nor for just aesthetic reasons, but with purpose. Colour, structural material and cloth were used to live through a stylized or ritual performance and or motion.[2] By Thompson's explanation, a new understanding and interpretation of African art and art itself was being influenced, defined and moving outside of small villages into Western ideologies.

One cannot discuss Africa without referencing its political, social, cultural and economic states of being. Knowledge of Africa has gone through many changes over a period of time. A Euro-centric based approach to the study of Africa provoked the emergence of an Afro-centric based study. Both viewpoints have influenced today's approach from a range of artists presenting interpretations of *their* Africa.

Africa is an ever-changing kaleidoscope, in which the vibrant colours and movement of textures, patterns and shapes are constantly being studied and interpreted by artists creating performances, art and fashion globally. For the purpose of this chapter we will look at the moving interaction between African art, fashion, and performance. This chapter will also describe how the results can

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culminate into an exciting educational experience for first museum visitors and lifelong art enthusiasts.

3. A Glance at African Masquerades

> In African Aesthetics, musical and visual idioms shape each
> other and permeate routine and ritualized performance.[3]

In keeping with the movement of the African aesthetic we must take a look at the African Mask Theatre or African Masquerade and how its impact has moved from the traditional to the contemporary while making its mark on fashion designers and performers globally.

As a starting point let's look at the working definition of mask or masquerade as noted by art historian Sidney Littlefield's Kasfir's, 'Elephant Women, Furious and Majestic-Women's Masquerade's in Africa and the Diaspora.' Kasfir uses the terms 'masking' and 'masquerading' interchangeably to describe a performance and a practice (described in Nigerian pidgin as 'plays' and 'playing') in which illusion is created through these key elements:

- The use of some combination of facial disguise
- Costume
- Body decoration
- Props
- Movement
- Vocalization
- Drumming, or other means

But equally important, masquerade in Africa also presumes a structure of belief, which typically associates this illusion with the embodiment of a spirit, or in certain places the appearance of reincarnated ancestors. Because of this belief (which is acted upon through the dialectic of structure and practice), most African masquerades signify something besides the basic visual and performative fact of a person in a costume playing before an audience.

Another key component of the masquerade as described by anthropologist Henry John Drewal in African Masked Theatre, is the concept of a 'stage' which is unknown in traditional Africa. The usual performance setting is 'in the round'- most frequently in a town or other communal space. Places of honour along the inner edge of the performance area are reserved for royalty, priests and priestesses, and adults. Children must scramble to fill the small spaces left by the others. As tension and excitement build during the course of the performance, spectators swell forward, breaking the imaginary boundary and shrinking the space, oblivious to the shouts and exertions of the crowd-controllers.

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Thompson, Kasfir and Drewal see Africa, its art, culture, dance, and dress as live intertwined components. They suggest a scenario akin to global fashion- (*Fashion as Performance*) presented by this author.

4. On Time- Contemporary Africa Seen Through Its Visual Artists

> Fela Kuti's band is the best band I've ever seen. When Fela and his band eventually began to play, after a long crazy build up, I just couldn't stop weeping with joy. It was a moving experience.[4]
> Paul McCartney- Singer and Musicia

I can relate to Sir McCartney but not with seeing an actual live performance of Fela Kuti, for my unexpected goose bumps, cheers, and amazement came as I witnessed the musical production of FELA! by renowned director and choreographer Bill T. Jones. I sat back in my audience chair and took it all in. The incredible non-stopping pulsating music of Fela filled the air. The reenacted portrayal of Fela, his band, his 'queens,' (what Fela called his dancers) and their costumes ranging from colorful body paint, beaded short skirts to Fela's vibrant leisure pant suits, took me to another place. The pioneer of Afro-beat was coming to life before my eyes. The standing ovation and tears from audience members were overwhelming. Just think, this was only a glimpse of Fela through a musical production. So yes, I can see why Sir McCartney was 'weeping with joy.' It's an experience I will never forget.

Fela was born Olufela Olusegun Oludotun Ransome-Kuti in Abeokuta, Ogun State, Nigeria, to a middle-class family. His mother, Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, the first Nigerian female to drive a car, was a feminist activist in the anti-colonial movement and his father, Reverend Israel Oludotun Ransome-Kuti, a Protestant minister and school principal, was the first president of the Nigerian Union of Teachers.[5]

Africa's comtemporary artistic voice was captured in time through the choreography and performances of Germaine Acogny. Born in Benin, West Africa, Acogny is known as the 'the mother of African dance.' Acogny's background in traditional dance can be traced to her grandmother, a Yoruba priestess, but what makes her work significant is the way it combines contemporary dance with traditional African dance to create a style that is very much her own. She established her first dance studio in Senegal's capital, Dakar, in 1968 and has since become a major figure in African dance, blending contemporary dance with traditional African styles. She has been choreographer and artistic director of many dance companies and studios, including Mudra Afrique in Senegal, and Studio-Ecole-Ballet-Théatre du 3è Monde in Toulouse, France. In 1997 she established the International Centre for Traditional and Contemporary African Dances,

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L'Ecole des Sables in Toubab Dialaw, Senegal; she is also the founder of the Jant-Bi Company.[6] In May 2009 in New York City Ms. Acogny's most recent work was seen in the historic production 'Fly: Five First Ladies of Dance,' which also included contemporary choreographers and performers Bebe Miller, Dianne McIntyre, Jawole Willa Jo Zollar, and Carmen de Lavallade.

Acogny and Kuti are trendsetters and educators in their respective mediums. Both trandscended the confines of traditional Africa and embraced the works of their contemporary counterparts by fusing the old and new, which influenced future generations of artist, dancers, musicians and more.

As Contemporary African art and performance was pioneered in the 1950s and 1960s so too was the African contemporary artistic movement of fashion. Designers such as Senagalese born Oumou Sy, Malian designer Lamine Kouyaté (Xuly Bët) and Malian born french designer Adalphi paved the way for African fashion in its fusion of traditional african wear and haute couture set the stage for international recogition, commercial success and undeniable influence on today's fashion world. To paraphrase Ethiopian model Anna Getaneh, Africa has much to offer in the way of fashion, as Parisian, American, Italian and Japanese designers know too well. At one time or another, they have all borrowed elements from this universal heritage and paid tribute to African aesthetics through their collections. Such designers have been Paco Rabanne, Yves Saint Laurent, Kenzo, Romeo Gigli, Ralph Lauren, Donna Karan, Jean-Louis Scherrer, Thierry Mugler and most recently Oscar de la Renta and John Galliano…the list could continue.[7]

5. Tailoring Art

> Fashion is treated too much as news rather than what it is, what it does and how it performs. Geoffrey Beene - American Fashion Designer[8]

Through this author's original performance commission series Africa in Motion, artists interpret their experience of exhibits through multi-media, dance, song and theatrical performances. The fashion created for these live performances suggests a new visual and educational experience for visitors in and away from the museum (used as an e-tool, performances are posted on the museum's website and the social media site YouTube thereby fabricating a virtual performance for the viewer outside of the brick and mortar walls.) The imaginative intent of this series Africa in Motion is to take the art off the wall and bring to life a further exploration of the art and how it reaches people.

The programs that reflect this educational tool are 'From Nothing,' '70' and 'Fashion in the Round' based on two museum exhibits - 'GAWU' featuring the bottled capped fabric like sculptures by artist El Anatsui and 'TxtStyles/Fashioning Identity' - focused on African textiles, garments and accessories.

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Importantly, these *Fashion as Performance* programs integrate the themes of Mask Theater and the Masquerade. The performances seek to interact with the audience. Performances are held in the gallery spaces and public open spaces to invoke a communal, call and response ambiance (indicative to African culture.) Like the masquerade, costume body decorating, drumming, props, vocalization, and music were all used to present a new interpretation of the exhibit. These performances integrated traditional African textiles and factory printed cloth with discarded materials, thus, developing an innovative look and feel of fashion.

These productions utilized an African cultural tradition of 'making something out of nothing' or recreating from the discarded. As noted by a critic of Lamine Kouyaté's designs,

> In Mr. Kouyaté's hands, 'couture' is a patchwork of rough-hewn, castoff and factory surplus clothing - rent, dismembered and then sutured together like field wounds with coarse thread.' Kouyaté further commenting on this concept recalls, 'At home, all the products come from foreign places.' 'They're imported from everywhere, made for a different world, with another culture in mind. A sweater arrives in one of the hottest moments of the year. So you cut the sleeves off it to make it cooler. Or a woman will get a magazine with a photo of a Chanel suit in it, and she'll ask a tailor to make it out of African fabric. It completely redirects the look. Much of what you see in Mali and Senegal is like that: it's not the same culture, but it comes from the same cultural base.'[9]

Nigerian born El Anatsui's started using discarded materials by a local distillery, which held thousands of aluminum screw-tops from bottles of whiskey, rum and gin, bearing names like Flying Horse, Castello, Bakassi, Liquor Headmaster, Ecomog and Dark Sailor. For a few months, the bag sat untouched in Anatsui's studio. At his own unhurried pace, Anatsui began experimenting with the bottle tops - cutting and folding their pliable metal into flat swatches, and then stitching these together with copper wire. The result, as it grew, began to resemble fabric, a coarse, jangly metal cloth. A rich tradition was honoured in poor materials, and those materials - the flattened bottle caps, with their legible brand names - suggested other connections as well: to global consumerism and, more obliquely, to slavery's economics, of which liquor was a key part.[10]

From Nothing was a site specific multi-media performance inspired by El Anatsui's GAWU and the African practice of 'making something out of nothing.' This performance featured women performers as live sculpture coming to life in painted gold shimmering bodies covered in 'drag' made from recycled tarps, left over jeans, conversing through movement about over consumption and waste and

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the redemption found in artistic practice that creates new from old, beauty from trash and life where it is least expected. The performers fashion came to life through multilayered tattered dresses and pants dusted in gold and bronze paint, full body and straight shapes. One performer's ensemble of pants, a loose long fitting top, and short hair appeared to have a more androgynous look. Flashbacks of the past Ziggy Stardust and the shiny space clothing of the Rhythmn and Blues women's group Labelle can be seen in the fashion performance. The live DJ spinning and manipulating sounds and music in time with the movement of the performers transformed the space into a new and touchable space, bringing the art to the audience. In so doing, the aspect of El Anatsui's view of consumerism was also addressed in the video's projection of discarded computer hard drives, screens and accessories all dumped in an undisclosed space in Africa.

Inspired by movement, video, music and textile arts, *70* explored Fela Kuti's impact on contemporary visual aesthetics. The performance included 10 'queens,' (women dancers) 3 drummers, video projections of Fela in action and a rolling 7-foot cage-like prop painted in white paint with oval mirrors with tri-colored beads strewn across. The application of the queens' body paint in white, gold, purples and blues was part of the performance with them sitting and looking into hand held mirrors on the exhibit floor. Slowly rising in unison from the floor the queens began moving and dancing. Their short colored beaded skirts shimmied as Fela's music came through the surround sound of the exhibit speakers. While dancing the queens weaved through the audience stopping in front of surprised faces, moving onto the top of the moving prop, leaving themselves to posing and interacting with Fela on the video screen above. All of this action took place inside the exhibit space bringing together the performers and the audience for a cohesive performance and audience experience. Did the performance bring that essence of Fela's performances at his infamous Shrine (Fela's nightclub in Lagos, Nigeria) to a museum gallery? I think we came close as I heard the whistles, the thundering applause and shouts of the museum audience's enthusiasm.

Fashion in the Round was presented by St. Timothy's School, a girls college preparatory boarding and day school in Stevenson, Maryland. Students from the school art club designed innovative fashions inspired by the ideas of recycling and the art of making something out of nothing. Fashions representing Africa, Asia Europe, the Middle East, New Zealand, North America and a fantasy component were represented. The girls strutted their innovative creations down the runway to the sounds of African drums and the vivacious words of emcees (I think John Galliano would be proud!) reminiscing the catwalks of Paris and Milan. Fashions of dresses and skirts were made out of Starbuck coffee holders, paint colour samples, water bottles, coffee filters, and hotel room keys. Umbrellas, headbands, shoes and hats emerged from paper, soda cans, soccer balls and plastic tubing. One such piece created for this event resembled the Jonkonnu Masquerade of

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Jamaica featuring the 'tattered, strips of cloth' masquerader Pitchy-Patchy whose influence came from the Egungun Masquerade of the Yoruba peoples in Nigeria.

These fashion performances are proof of Africa's far-reaching ingenious force represented consciously and not. The results are educating audiences of all ages and backgrounds in an informal yet powerful setting.

6. Educating Audiences

In the hands of artists who care for the work more than their own renown, performances can create an environment for audiences in which they become more educated consumers, creators of an experience that takes them out of themselves. Here in, perhaps lies the challenge. There will always be, among the public, those who count the number of fouettes (whipping turns) the ballerina does in the Black Swan pas de deux, or argue if a garment designed by anyone is fashion, and those who come to performances desiring to be transported, if not transformed. There will also be those who do not necessarily realize these details but who are open to experiencing something new, something they recognize but cannot explain.[11] The bottom line is what will the audience understand? Or what will the audience remember? The performer has no control of the audience's knowledge of fashion, performance or art. The performance can to its best capacity tell a story or interpret a piece of artwork. I think Marcel Marceau said it with compassion when asked about the audience understanding his mime-drama *Fight with an Angel*. Asked if he thought the audience would understand it, to paraphrase, he responded that he has great faith in the ability of audiences to understand what are fundamental human emotions.

Through these performances in a museum gallery setting, artist collaboration through art, fashion design, and mixed media performances, all have provided some education about African culture and art to new audiences. Experienced museum visitors have been reintroduced to art, shifting the existing paradigm of viewing art in a stagnant model to one that is interactive, dynamic, and reinterpreted. As the economy fluctuates and the world becomes more globally connected this new paradigm or methodology will attract new, diverse audiences to museums and will impart a beginning education of Africa and her visual culture.

7. Stagnation Gone, Interaction Enters

According to research by the Institute for Museum and Library Sciences, 43% of museum visits in 2006 were remote, predominately via museum websites. This percentage is likely to rise, and the content of remote visits to museums will continue to shift from basic information gathering to more complicated forms of engagement.[12]

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As technologies evolve and social media networks and platforms such as Facebook and YouTube become stronger and more effective in reaching and connecting larger and varied audiences, so shall the need of museums to partake in this phenomenon in order to serve its changing community as well as to survive in a rapidly changing world. With that being said, the author of this chapter along with a computer programmer produced an interactive electronic game inspired by the museum's exhibit *TxtStyles/Fashioning Identity* titled *Choose Ur Style*. *Choose Ur Style* was designed for children 8 to 12 years old. The concept was to create a paper doll in an electronic format where the participant could choose the type of fashion they wanted to cloth the animated girl or boy figure. Through the game, young viewers are able to choose among clothing styles of traditional Zulu and Ndebele peoples of South Africa, traditional attire such as kente cloth from Ghana, African factory print textiles, urban Hip Hop style clothing, slogan and patterned t-shirts, jeans, head wraps, gold hoop earrings, baseball caps and tennis shoes. Each piece of clothing selected was accompanied with a brief description explaining traditional garments and Hip Hop clothing. The final look of the figure could solely be traditional attire of a Zulu Warrior or, for example, an integration of a traditional head wrap and skirt with a trendy slogan t-shirt and hoop earrings (looks inspired by musical artists such as Erykah Badu and Queen Latifah.) Among others, the game's primary goal was to teach young people about traditional Africa textiles and garments and their affect on today's styles and culture by using a modern tool.

8. Conclusion: An Eye Towards the Future

> A museum should strive to achieve complete symbiosis with the community it serves.[13]

By serving local artists and schools, *Fashion as Performance* has begun to fill in the gap between traditional museum enthusiasts and racially and economically diverse groups. Utilizing the talents of local artists gives voice to surrounding communities. Outreach to local schools provides an opportunity to educate students in engaging and meaningful curriculums. Community interests and contemporary artistic expressions are used in engaging all audiences through *Fashion as Performance* programming. In addition, the interlocking literacy of the visual, media and written content of this programming assists in educating audiences in a global context by exposing them to the many cultures and civilizations of Africa.

Educating the museum visitor has become the role of the entire museum staff. The best way to achieve an overall productive and returnable stake in the museum community is to open up the pathways of communication both internally and externally. By embracing social media networks like Facebook, YouTube, and

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Flickr museums are opening themselves up to new and relevant ideas of exchange that will help to sustain their important role. As one of the most trusted sources of information, museums help people navigate the vast new world of information by filtering and validating credible content.[14]

By embracing and supporting new ideas and programmatic content like *Fashion as Performance*, the National Museum of African Art as well as other museums who adopt this model will be seen as active actors in today's history and not viewed as simply depositors of the past.

Notes

[1] As read in P. McCulsky, *Art from Africa: Long Steps Never Broke a Back*, Seattle Art Museum, 2002.

[2] As explained by R.F. Thompson, *African Art in Motion*, his beginning to understand the movement of African Art, 'It was in the village of Oshielle, not far from the Egba metropolis of Akeobuta in southwestern Nigeria, in the winter of 1962, that I began to notice how African statuary, not only masks, could be involved in motion, how icons called for corresponding actions. For as the women gathered their twin images, they cradled them in their arms and danced them, singing to a special mat and placed them there to be photographed. And then they danced there way back to their shrine, tenderly nestled them in special cloths, and closed the door.'

[3] H.N. Mustafa, 'Art, Ethnography, and Anne Eisner's Images of Congo', *Ghana at 50, Transition: An International Review*, 2008.

[4] P. Culshaw, 'The Big Fella', *The Observer*, August, 2004.

[5] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fela_Kuti.

[6] C. Routledge, *Black Biography: Contemporary Black Biography*, The Gale Group, Inc., 2006.

[7] The Art of African Fashion, 'Fashion in Africa,' *A Personal View by Ethiopian top model Anna Getaneh*, Prince Clause Fund/Africa World Press, 1998.

[8] Xplore Inc. for Brainy Media.com, 2009.

[9] A.M. Spindler, 'Prince of Pieces', *New York Times*, May 2, 1993.

[10] A. Worth, 'A Thousand Bottles- Meet El Anatsui, The African Artist Who Uses 'Empties' to Reinvent Sculpture', *New York Times Magazine*, Spring, 2009.

[11] A.P. Royce, *Anthropology of the Performing Arts: Artistry, Virtuosity, and Interpretation in a Cross-Cultural Perspective*, Alta Mira Press, 2004.

[12] 'Museums and Society 2034: Trends and Potential Futures', *Center for the Future of Museums: An Initiative of the American Association of Museums,* December, 2008.

[13] http://.www.yourdictionary.com.

[14] Museums and Society 2034, loc. cit.

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Nicole D. Shivers, Smithsonian National Museum of African Art, United States.

Street Corner Angels and Internet Demons: Spectacular Visibility and the Transnational Gothic

Michelle Liu Carriger

Abstract

This chapter focuses on the spectacular subculture, Gothic Lolita, examining how adherents, although originating in Japan, now span the globe with their cupcakes, coffins, bonnets, and crinolines, by means of the internet, magazines, and sartorial performance, creating not just a community but a culture and a history through spectacles of visibility. Gothic Lolita and the Gothic in general have been lauded by literary theorists as prime sites for the postmodern play of surfaces, while subcultural adherents themselves frequently cling to the notion of a kernel of inherent authenticity. In examining the stakes of Gothic Lolitas' performances of self-fashioning, their gambles on the fraught relation between recoded symbols and claims to authenticity, I hope to elucidate some of the ways in which fashionable discourses travel and transmute, losing and gaining in translation. I suggest that viewing spectacular sartorial performance through the rhetoric of the pose enables us to better grasp the complex vectors of pleasure and power involved in the fashioned encounter.

Key Words: Fashion, gaze, Gothic Lolita, pose, spectacular visibility, subculture.

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> *Gothic and Lolita clothes are a maiden's armor, which even a knight's armor cannot compare to. A maiden's lace is her steel. Her ribbons are chains. Her dress hat is her helmet, and she surreptitiously changes the blood that flows from her wounds into true red rose petals. Thus, the maiden fights. After all, to live is to fight, and to become beautiful is to become stronger.* – Takarano Arika, 'Oh Maiden, Advance with a Sword and a Rose.'

Gothic and Lolita 'maidens' are most prevalent on Sundays in the district of Tokyo called Harajuku, dressed in bell-shaped knee-length crinoline skirts, bonnets or miniature hats, strolling the wide boulevard, Omotesandö, in their platform maryjanes, browsing the shops that have sprung up to cater to their unique tastes. Adherents of any number of Japan's youthful fashion subcultures share the area, but the Gothic and Lolita groups stand out in their ensembles of pink, baby blue, or black; ribbons, lace, or tatters; handbags in the shape of coffins or cupcakes. The overarching Gothic Lolita style includes myriad permutations like Elegant Gothic Lolitas (EGLs), Sweet Lolitas (*amarori*), Dark Lolitas (*kurorori*), *Hime*

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(princesses), punk Lolitas, Japanese-style Lolitas (*warori*), sexy Lolitas (*erorori*), medical Lolitas (*iryoukei*), Twin Lolitas (*futagorori*), and others.[1] They are, to be succinct, spectacularly visible, even on the streets of Tokyo, famously crowded with fashionable flaneurs. What I want to do by coining the somewhat redundant phrase of 'spectacular visibility' is point to the Gothic-Lolita (GL) fashion phenomenon as a set of strategies employed by young girls (and some boys) to carve out a space for themselves, as individuals and as groups, in public spaces both physical and digital (ie, the Internet), using primarily visual, one might say superficial, means. To be visible is in many senses a passive state, but a spectacle connotes a degree of agency - a calculated riposte to the gaze that would have found the subject anyway. By using the commonly dismissive modifier 'superficial,' I mean that surfaces - the look - is the point, which is not to say that there are no interior motives or deeply felt meanings attached to the Gothic Lolita movement. Rather, surface and depth are recombined in various ways, with varying amounts of importance laid on each by different people; surface appearances offer no guarantee of an agreed-upon meaning. The Gothic Lolitas' focus on aesthetics involves the emptying and repurposing of familiar signs made strange not only by their reappearance as part of a youth subculture but also by the symbols' transnational migration. I contend that Gothic Lolitas stymie standard modes of subcultural explanation that labouriously tie symbol to content (i.e. Goths have a dark outlook, so they wear dark clothes and punks destroy their clothing because they want to destroy the status quo). Through their fluid, mercurial fashions, Gothic Lolita identity projects effectively circumvent the binary between modern and postmodern. Further, it is precisely through spectacle that GLs forge communities. A GL's appearance triggers her getting photographed, and included on the pages of magazines with little or no commentary, where readers encounter and respond to the images in various venues, physical and virtual. Put simply, it's about the clothes. Moreover, the primary importance of looks has enabled the transnational travel of the style beyond Japan to other Asian nations, Europe, Australia, and the Americas. The internet has enabled GLs of every nationality to come into ever closer contact with each other, even without the benefit of shared languages.

Gothic Lolita style is not just gaining popularity around the world, it is intrinsically based on the transnational/transcultural borrowing of imagery without necessarily importing the meaning considered inherent to such images. The result is a heady mix of eclectic elements that evoke but don't particularly resemble their European historical inspirations. Obviously, for many people the first reference that comes to mind upon hearing the phrase 'Gothic Lolita' is Vladimir Nabokov's 1955 novel *Lolita*. While little girlishness is obviously a key part of GL style, most adherents adamantly reject the notion of their appearance being sexualized. The sex issue in fact is a major front of contention. Many critics and GLs contend that the 'childlike' look is a rejection of the sexualized gaze, a refusal to take an

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assigned place in the reproductive economy. GLs, Faith Shinri writes, 'use the clothes to fulfill their own sense of princess-like aesthetic beauty, a concept which puzzles Japanese men to no end. Don't these girls understand we don't find this attractive? What do you mean they're not dressing for us?!?' I suggest that the intended audience of sartorial performance is [perhaps always] a very complex question.

A better question then might be when and where is a Gothic Lolita dressing? Gothic Lolitas very consciously present themselves as out of place or out of time, enacting a sort of nostalgia through deliberate anachronism, but it is unclear what exactly GLs might be nostalgic *for*: childhood, a more romantic past era, or perhaps simply an escape from reality. Momoko, the Lolita heroine of the 2004 film *Kamikaze Girls* (*Shimotsuma Monogatari*),[2] declares, 'I wish I was born in the rococo period… Life then was like candy. Their world, so sweet and dreamy… A frilly dress and walks in the country: that's how I wanted to live'. However, Momoko tends to look more like a pastel Victorian doll than a Rococo aristocrat. Takarano Arika, the singer in a Gothic Lolita band, suggests that the GL look signifies specialness and independence of spirit:

> You are a chosen maiden, a born aristocratic maiden. I understand you well. You're a daydreamer and a visionary who is here in body, but not in spirit. You're shy, willful, and don't want to be like others. You like reading by yourself rather than partying with friends. You love pretty things and want to live surrounded by only the things you like. Isn't that right? 'I am a special maiden.' It's okay for you to think that, you know. Even if there are strangers who look away and snicker at you because your skirt is too poufy, or because the ribbon adorning your hair is too big, you don't have to let it bother you.[3]

Other commentators suggest that the GLs are refusing to grow up and take their assigned place in the Japanese status quo.[4] Still others, like David Graham, writing in *Gothic E-Zine*, suggest that Gothic Lolita does not mean anything at all:

> The Gothic Lolita is another example of how Japan's popular culture has appropriated imagery without the content. Witness the past interest in Elvis and '50s American culture, for example. It was a superficial and accurate take on a cultural phenomenon, and the motivation was completely devoid of irony. Likewise, the Victorian costumes are huge signifiers in Western culture. We interpret the wearing of such clothing as infantalizing (sic) women, but the criticism is lost on the Tokyo Gothic Lolitas

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much the same as we would not understand the subtle meanings
associated with various styles of kimonos.

Graham betrays a discomfort with the apparent ingenuousness of the GLs' use
of repurposed (or depurposed) signs that is also a discomfort with the overarching
postmodern notion that all signifiers are already unstably attached to meaning.
These Japanese fashion phenomena, it seems, would have been alright if the
imagery had meant something new, but there is a definite problem if the look
means *nothing at all*. Graham's statement reveals the divide between subcultural
Goth discourse and postmodern literary theories of the Gothic, to which I now turn.

In my abstract for this conference, I planned to 'trace GL's links with other
Gothic discourses,' but I have become increasingly uncomfortable with such a
project that threatens to flatten the polysemy of Gothic, Goth, and Gothic Lolita
into a teleology of the macabre. Rather than labouriously connect these adjacent,
overlapping, yet distinct stylistic discourses by means of similarities of intention,
appearance, or symbology, I want to examine of the strategies these discourses
share: bricolage, nostalgia, and spectacle. All of these Gothic discourses share a
sense of conscious anachronism, indeed an overthrow of the notion of the present
as autonomous by staging eclectic survivals (or resurrections) of other times - be
they parts of the cycle of life (childhood, the 'return of the repressed') or previous
historical eras - but in conspicuously wrong, repurposed, ways.[5] Literary critics
tend to celebrate an overflowing profusion of unmoored signs that they detect in
the Gothic, an anti-modern (either post- or pre-) protest to the relentless
encroachment of Enlightenment rationality. This attitude is exemplified by Allan
Lloyd Smith's description of both the postmodern and the Gothic as

> [A] rising tide of this Sargasso sea of the new, with its flotsam of
> junk culture and its eddies of modernism or even, in the willful
> eclecticism of the supposed postmodern order, currents of
> romanticism, fragmentary spars of classicism; the coexisting
> wreckage of all cultures, universally available but equally
> emptied of meaning; traversed and exploited by the cruise ships
> of bloated consumers of the image, for the profit of a
> transnational 'late' capitalism.[6]

In contradistinction to this heady embrace of the play of surfaces, subcultural
critics and sociologists chronicle self-identified subcultural Goths' carefully
maintained claim to an authenticity that would be precluded by the postmodernists'
version of the Gothic. Although self-identified Goths do partake of the style's
parody and camp aspects, most also adamantly endorse the notion that their style is
no costume, rather the clothing semiotically expresses an interior truth.[7]
Sociologist Amy Wilkins writes of her informants' views: 'Goth style becomes

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such an effective means of drawing distinctions because it is assumed to speak for the real self: if the Goth aesthetic is distinctive, then the Goth self must be as well'.[8] A sizable portion of the scholarship on Goth is written by self-nominated Goths themselves, like Paul Hodkinson, Derek R. Sweet, and Trevor M. Holmes, using auto-ethnographic methods to describe the way they build communities through the communicative power of style and 'empower themselves by refusing to assimilate,' simultaneously performing both that refusal and community by means of a symbolically laden exterior appearance.[9]

I situate GL between the postmodern Gothic landscape and the cult of authenticity that still remains a key part of many Euro-American Goth self-conceptions. On the one hand, many GLs do make claims like Takarano's: that GL fashion signifies a 'special maiden,' but on the other hand, the GL's fashionable profusion of appropriated symbols detached from their historical, cultural moorings indicates a preoccupation with the superficial. In response to the well-worn aphorism 'I guess I shouldn't judge by appearances,' *Kamikaze Girls'* Momoko replies sounding nonplussed: 'Appearance says everything'.

Further, GL culture is firmly rooted in the dominant structures of capitalist commodification although not reducible to it.[10] Gothic Lolitas tend to be heavily invested in brands, and outfits' price tags generally run into the hundreds of dollars. Nevertheless, personal creativity is simultaneously prized in the form of outfit 'combinations' (which are ranked in popularity by voters each month in issues of *Kera*) and in the making of unique items by hand. *Gothic & Lolita Bible* consistently features patterns for making things at home while Momoko in *Kamikaze Girls* is invited to become an assistant designer at her favorite Lolita label, Baby the Stars Shine Bright, on the strength of her embroidered alteration of a brand name bonnet. Further, the magazines and other print publications of the GL phenomenon involve an unprecedented amount of reader input, altering the balance of power between editors and adherents significantly. A large proportion of the copy in *Kera*, the leading monthly magazine for GL girls, and the mooks (magazine-books) like *Gothic & Lolita Bible* and *Gosu-Rori* is dedicated to 'street snap': photographs of GLs on the streets, mostly on Omotesando in Harajuku, Tokyo, but often additional portfolios taken near GL boutiques in Tokyo and in other cities as well as occasional overseas features. Street snap photos generally also include short notes from the subjects to the readers while additional multi-page sections feature artwork and letters from readers. These features allow girls to communicate directly with each other, although these exchanges are of course mediated by the editors of the magazine, who foster what Miyako Inoue calls 'a sense - a well-calculated effect sought by the producers of the magazines - that the community [is] autonomous and self-governed by the girls'.[11] Despite this caveat, I find it significant that such a substantial amount of the publications are dedicated to the distribution of non-editorial content in the form of the images of girls and boys on the street. This image-mediated relation between fashion-adherents is

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furthered on the internet, where GLs critique and reproduce images and information about their chosen subculture. Non-Japanese GLs in particular, in the absence of the established boutiques, locales, and publications the Japanese GL has at her fingertips, have long relied on each other for assistance accessing information in the form of scanned copies of the Japanese publications, amateur translations of popular GL literature (such as Takemoto Novala), and groups where they can share information and photos of themselves amongst each other. With recently launched English versions of the Japanese mook (magazine-book) *Gothic & Lolita Bible*, the translation of the writings of Novala Takemoto, 'the Lolita's bard,' into English, the burgeoning websites and online groups in all languages, and the fabulous clothes, the GL phenomenon continues to gain notice and adherents worldwide.

   What I find so compelling about the GL look is that it constantly floats free of the proffered explanations: that the style is about clinging to childhood and refusing the status quo, that it's about refusing a sexual gaze, or inviting it, that it is a true expression of an interior aristocratic spirit, that it means nothing at all. I see in GL's recombinations of surface and depth models new possibilities for how to think identity and belonging in an [arguably] postmodern world—possibilities brought to the fore by the transnational circulation of fashions that seem to suggest both appearances and 'authentic identities' are available to be remixed and rerepurposed - put on and off like a fabulous frilly frock.

   Gothic Lolita involves an overt mimetic posedness that flouts the idea of an original by naming sources while manifestly *failing* to resemble them, something we might say fashion always does.[12] It is a pose that protects, allowing the subject of the gaze - surveilling, disciplining, incidental - to take some control (and some pleasure) within the visual economy. The pose offers a counterpoint to Laura Mulvey's classic conception of the gaze. The pose is a blind, a smokescreen, it is a permutation, one iteration in a realm of repetitive available symbols. It is a surface without depth which is emphatically not to say that it is untrue or inconsequential. Dick Hebdige writes that 'to strike a pose is to pose a threat'.[13] Employing the notion of the pose perhaps better enables us to make sense of the loaded vectors of power and pleasure at work in fashion, especially a highly spectacular and recirculated one like Gothic Lolita.

Notes

[1] I will follow general usage by discussing these sub-subcultures under the umbrella term 'Gothic-Lolita' (*gosu-rori* for short), although some Lolitas, like *amarori* and *hime* might not accept the label 'gothic' at all. The participants, although they share the Gothic-Lolita publications, and other general spaces, tend to self-nominate in more nuanced ways.

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Charlotte (no surname), *Avant Gauche*, Viewed on 17 September 2009. http://www.avantgauche.co.uk/.

[2] The English title of the movie (and the novel on which it was based) is itself a rather painful instance of importation of imagery without content. The Japanese title is simply 'Shimotsuma (the name of the two protagonists' hometown) Story,' whereas the English title invokes the *kamikaze* (Divine Wind) of World War Two and Japanese mythological history for no apparent reason.

[3] Winterberg, (ed), *Gothic and Lolita Bible*, p. 10.

[4] Parker, op. cit.

[5] C. Spooner, *Contemporary Gothic*, Reaktion, London, 2006, p. 32.

[6] A. Smith, 'Postmodernism/Gothicism', *Modern Gothic: A Reader*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1996, p. 6.

[7] E.g. Gagné, p. 141.

[8] A. Wilkins, *Wannabes, Goths, and Christians: The Boundaries of Sex, Style, and Status*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2008, p. 40.

[9] L. Goodlad, and M. Bibby, 'Introduction', *Goth: Undead Subculture*, Duke University Press, Durham, NC, 2007, p. 28.

[10] Subcultural theorists have traced this point very thoroughly; see Hebdige, op. cit., pp. 94-95 and also Goodlad and Bibby, op. cit., p. 7.

[11] qtd in Gagné, p. 134.

[12] See for example L. Svendsen's hysterical (in both senses of the word) account in *Fashion: A Philosophy*.

[12] Quoted in C. Owens, 'Posing', p. 202.

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Michelle Liu Carriger is a PhD student in Theatre and Performance Studies at Brown University, USA. She is completing a dissertation on the performance of Victorian femininity in Britain and Japan, of which the concluding chapter will focus on the uses of Victorian fashion today.