DARK GLAMOUR AND DESIRE: AN EXPLORATORY LOOK AT
PSYCHOANALYSIS AND THE WORK OF ALEXANDER MCQUEEN

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2010

A Master's Research Project

presented to Ryerson University

In partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in the Program of

Fashion

Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 2014

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Abstract

Dark Glamour and Desire: An Exploratory Look at Psychoanalysis and the Work of

Alexander McQueen

The relationship between psychoanalysis and fashion is relatively new; therefore, this

study aimed to identify how psychoanalytic theory, specifically Freud's *The Uncanny* and

Lacan's theories of desire relate to McQueen's collections as well as themes of Goth and

Fetish. This case study used a qualitative approach as its methodology and both content

and semiotic analyses of visuals to examine study-related topics. Lacan's theories of

desire were applied to analyze the role of fetish, sexuality, femininity, *jouissance*, and

women as *objet a* in the collection Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious and portions of Horn

of Plenty. Freud's *The Uncanny* and Goth speak to feelings of fear and horror were

therefore ideal for an analysis of Elizabeth Howe 1692 and Horn of Plenty. A deeper

understanding of psychoanalysis and fashion was found by connecting the theories to the

work of Alexander McQueen.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This study analyzes three fashion collections of designer Alexander McQueen from a psychoanalytic lens, based specifically on Sigmund Freud's theories surrounding "The Uncanny" and Jacques Lacan's theories surrounding desire. The collections were chosen due to their thematic representations of dark glamour and desire, particularly Goth and Fetish. Psychoanalysis has been influential in developing several creative fields including art theory and literature, however little text surrounds fashion from a psychoanalytic lens. It is for this reason this study explores one of fashion's most admired and controversial designers who exemplified avant-garde clothing signifying the Goth and Fetish themes.

Chapter 2 provides a critical analysis and review of the relevant literature found on the subjects considered pertinent to the study. Exploring several subjects and establishing a general understanding of each was deemed important in order to effectively link the designer's collections to psychoanalytic theories. The origin of psychoanalysis, the work of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan including theories used in this study, as well as the relatively new relationship of Psychoanalysis and Fashion were considered important subject matter. Furthermore, Alexander McQueen, his work as fashion designer, and his views on women and sexuality were also considered vital topics to be reviewed. Lastly, literature concerned with Goth and Fetish themes as well as material culture and the symbolic value people place on fashion were also analyzed.

Chapter 3 presents the methodology and procedures utilized for this study. A qualitative approach was utilized to explore the relationship between psychoanalysis and the work of Alexander McQueen. As this study is based on a relatively new phenomenon

and actual fashion collections, case study was regarded as an ideal methodology for this project. The research incorporated several data-gathering procedures, including content and visual analysis. Conducting an analysis of images was important to this study as visual interpretations of runway presentations and photographs were relied on. Photographs of the collections were examined and semiotic analysis of the visuals was used to interpret symbols and code into themes. Images were decoded and the meanings of particular items in the image were treated as signs. Relational analysis was then used to further understand the meaning behind many of the thematic symbols, ultimately helping link psychoanalytic theories to the designs.

Chapter 4 of this case study provides a detailed analysis of the three collections that were chosen for this study. McQueen's Fall 2002 collection, Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious, exemplified themes relating to Fetish and is therefore well suited to be analyzed from the psychoanalytic lens provided by Jacques Lacan and his theories surrounding desire. The second collection from Fall 2007, In Memory of Elizabeth Howe 1692, exhibited Gothic symbols throughout the presentation and was well suited to be analyzed using Freud's theories surrounding "The Uncanny," as both have the ability to provoke feelings of fear. The third and final collection analyzed in this study from Fall 2009, titled Horn of Plenty, presented both Goth and Fetish themes, and justified being analyzed by theories provided by both Freud and Lacan.

Chapter 5 concludes the research that aims to provide a deeper understanding of the relationship between fashion and psychoanalysis. The final chapter also includes recommendations for future study including material culture. When interpreting fashion from a psychoanalytic perspective, we realize that fashion has the capacity to represent

societies' most profound dilemmas, fears, anxieties, and desires. One of the many roles of designers is to capture the zeitgeist of the moment, or rather the spirit in which we live. Fashion offers insight into our culture, and in this research, provides an understanding into psychoanalytic concepts surrounding femininity, sexuality, desire, repressed memories, and fear. Dress is a fundamental part of society and as this research aims to address, it can be used as a visual text symbolizing the world in which we live.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This study aims to explore the relationship between psychoanalytic theories as they pertain to Freud and Lacan and three Alexander McQueen collections, specifically through the analysis of Goth and Fetish themes. High fashion collections that will be researched of Alexander McQueen include Fall 2002's Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious, Fall 2007's In Memory of Elizabeth Howe Salem 1692, and Fall 2009's Horn of Plenty. These collections were chosen due to their thematic representations of dark glamour and desire, particularly Goth and Fetish. This literature review aims to outline and provide a critical evaluation of the significant texts published on the relevant material that will be utilized to explore this topic. By exploring subject matter surrounding psychoanalysis, including theories proposed by Freud and Lacan in relation to the work of Alexander McQueen as well as themes of Goth and Fetish, an understanding based on material culture as well as a psychoanalytic perspective of the collections will be established.

Psychoanalysis

As this study is based upon theoretical perspectives surrounding psychoanalysis, an understanding of its origin is important to the research. The perspective of Fromm (1992) begins at its very foundation. Psychoanalysis is a treatment-based approach as well as a set of psychological theories that aim to help understand the human psyche. Originally made popular by Sigmund Freud, psychoanalysis has been revisited by numerous theorists in order to develop their own ideas surrounding the concept. It is believed under psychoanalysis the development of an individual is based upon experiences that occurred during early childhood. Irrational drives which include attitude and thoughts is what motivates someone's behaviour, and although someone may think

these drives can be rationalized they are in fact influenced by the unconscious (irrational drives). When individuals attempt to bring awareness to the presence of these irrational drives, they are met with resistance, which can take shape in many different ways. Our unconscious mind's way of dealing with this is primarily through defense mechanisms. However, if the discord between the conscious and the unconscious ensues, the individual may experience mental or emotional anguish in the form of depression, anxiety, or neurosis. Freud believed that through psychological therapeutic sessions, the unconscious forces of the individual could become conscious, in turn freeing the person from her/his mental distress (Fromm, 1992). "The free man is the one who knows himself, but knows himself in a new way—by penetrating the deceptive cover of mere consciousness, and by grasping the hidden reality within himself" (Fromm, 1992, p. 15).

Freud believed that dreams, memories, and fantasies could all be used to gain an understanding of past childhood events. As his theory was based largely on the power of imagery and their symbolic meaning, Freud's psychoanalytic theory has been considered influential to numerous subjects. It is believed that psychoanalysis has influenced art and art theory, as artistic creation has been considered an area where the mind's impulses and defenses meet. In turn, psychoanalysis can attempt to expose the unconscious ideas behind the artwork (Fromm, 1992)—much like how this research aims to explore the unconscious ideas behind three fashion collections of Alexander McQueen, based upon theories provided by Lacan and Freud.

According to Bancroft (2012), although psychoanalysis has been apart of the health practicum, where it has been used to aid individuals enduring mental anguish, more recently it has entered into a discourse with the end goal of examining and

understanding the meaning behind not only the human psyche but also artistic creations. Although it is believed psychoanalysis has overwhelmingly influenced the arts and has proven to be instrumental to the development of film studies, art theory, and literary criticism, fashion has yet to experience the same sort of investigation within a psychoanalytic framework. Fashion is in a place now where there has been an increasing importance put on creativity, and is considered an important aesthetic form and not just as a product to be sold. Scholars and critics are now treating fashion as a scholarly consideration much like art and literature has been treated.

Sigmund Freud

Sigmund Freud, the Austrian-born neurologist and psychotherapist, is known according to Lear (2005) as the man who developed the idea of psychoanalysis and used it to redefine theories on feminism, philosophy, religion, culture, and the human psyche including his own theories surrounding the id, ego, and super ego, as well as the unconscious. Freud's theories play a critical role in developing a wide range of interpretations as to how we view these topics today. Freud redefined the theory of sexuality to include the Oedipus complex, which views the sexual topic from a person's most infantile stage.

In dealing with the unconscious, Freud (1919) introduces his theory of *The Uncanny*. Freud (1919/2003) tell us it "belongs to the realm of the frightening, of what evokes fear and dread . . . representing everything that was intended to remain secret, hidden away, and has come out into the open" (p. 123). Lydenberg (1997) primarily focuses on the relationship between literature and Freud's theory of *The Uncanny* and not fashion. Her in-depth analysis of *The Uncanny* promotes not only its origin but also its

general link to psychoanalysis. Her belief is that Freud's essay titled *The Uncanny* has been the most influential in the field of psychoanalysis. She defines it as the identification of something that is familiar or closely known, but then separated by a threatening feeling; Lydenberg believes that such characteristics give way to an "uncanny" fear of thoughts pertaining to "death, involuntary repetition and the castration complex" (p. 1073). Primarily this feeling occurs when fear is provoked, when a repressed infantile panic comes back, because of a feeling that this fleeting belief is actually reality. It is ultimately the confusion between what is imagination and what is reality, that in turn creates this uncanny feeling.

Lydenberg (1997) explains her beliefs of Freud's essay *The Uncanny* and how he as a writer manipulated his audience: "Freud exercises in *The Uncanny* the 'privileges' of story writers: he manipulates his audience by giving expression to the uncanny in a series of personal anecdotes. Brought to life in narrative form" (p. 1074). Despite the fact that Lydenberg's analysis pertains to literature as many psychoanalytic readings do, it lacks the interpretation of *The Uncanny* in relation to the topic at hand. Consequently it could be said that the fashion designers manipulate their audience, by giving expression to *The Uncanny* in a series of looks within a collection, much the same way Lydenberg believes Freud does. Evans (2003) supports the theoretical underpinnings of Freud's theory of *The Uncanny* in fashion by writing about involuntary repetition and return of the repressed:

> The haunting of contemporary fashion design by images from the past can thus be understood as a kind of return of the repressed, in which shards of history work their way to the surface in new formations and are put to work as contemporary emblems. (pp. 38-39)

Selzter (1998) describes how the compulsive repetitive nature of the similar-looking models on a runway is linked to the structure of trauma in *The Uncanny*:

> The stylized model body on display, a beauty so generic it might have a bar code on it; bodies in motion without emotion, at once entrancing and self-entranced, self-absorbed and vacant, or self-evacuated: the superstars of a chameleon-like celebrity in anonymity. (As cited in Evans, 2003, p. 175)

As Evans (2003) describes, Freud argued that children at a young age believed their dolls might come alive, thus in the contemporary world of fashion the model is the uncanny double, as she is a living being but with resemblance to an inanimate "dead" object. Although research by Evans (2003) surrounding psychoanalytic theories—particularly those of Freud and high fashion—is extensive, it lacks depth and detailed meaning behind particular collections of designers. Consequently, a generalized analysis is made about the relationship between Freud and high fashion, with some references to designers including McQueen being made, but Evans never articulates a detailed examination of a particular designer's collections.

Jacques Lacan

Lacan is arguably one of the most influential, original, and sometimes controversial thinkers since Freud. His unique thought process as well as the role of language within his work has been said to influence many analysts to the reality of words having a double meaning (Evans, 1996). Bowie (1991) believed that though Lacan's concepts created a new way thinking, his ideas surrounding the critical assessment of the work of Freud in his "return to Freud" phase saw much controversy. Lacan's ideas surrounding desire are central to his psychoanalytic theories.

According to Evans (1996), the "Mirror stage" theory seen as Lacan's first real contribution to psychoanalysis saw a realization of a potential turning point in a young child's life in terms of ego and the process of identification. The fascination of children seeing their reflection in a mirror corresponds to a specific time of development in a child's life. Children at 6 months were at the point of recognition when looking at their reflections, whereas children at 18 months were permanently captivated by their own images. Lacan posits that this fascination with oneself represents an involuntary desirous relationship with one's body image. As humans we are helpless and unable to control the power of desire (Lacan, 1977).

Lacan (1977) critically distinguishes between demand and desire. He believes that while need is related to a biological requirement, demand on the other hand communicates the biological need as well as love. Once the biological need is satisfied, it is the demand for love that is still unsatisfied, which in turn creates desire. As Lacan stated, "desire is neither the appetite for satisfaction, nor the demand for love, but the difference that results from the subtraction of the first from the second" (p. 318).

Bancroft (2012) explains in her text that couture fashion represents the avant-garde understanding of sexuality as Lacanian. Haute couture intersects with two of his theories regarding sexual ideas including "feminine *jouissance* and the interjection of the real on one hand, and woman as *objet a* on the other" (p. 70). *Objet a* is defined as the unattainable object of desire, whereas Evans (1996) explains Lacan's concepts of desire, the feminine, and *jouissance* as meaning, "enjoyment" with sexual inference (i.e., "orgasm")" (p. 93). Bancroft states, "In terms of consideration of sexuality and the erotic,

the avant-garde seems to default to and reflect on the model of sexuality set out by Lacan" (p. 70).

Moreover, Lacan believes that desire is motivated by an absence of something, particularly a sense of power. "In the case of the female subject, it is the being or not being phallus. For the male subject, it is the having or not-having the phallus" (Bancroft, 2012, p. 63). Bancroft's analysis infers that fashion can be an attempt to fulfill that feeling of lacking something. Though it is possible to desire a garment, many believe the term "fetish" suggests the erotic relationship between people and items of clothing. From a Lacanian perspective the subject actually desires what the garment represents. For a male viewer of a woman dressed in fetish fashion, the woman becomes *objet a* (the unattainable object of desire). It is for this reason, the woman is likely being reduced to an object, or in this case *objet a* (Bancroft, 2012).

What Bancroft's text fails to do is go into detail about the fact that although McQueen exploited fetish in his collections he was very different than other couturiers. McQueen provided a resistance in reducing women to *objet a*, as he used couture to challenge notions of feminine *jouissance*, power and normative beauty (Bancroft, 2012).

Psychoanalysis of Fashion

As there are numerous ways to define "fashion," Entwistle (2000) offers numerous accounts by several authors, theorists, and thinkers on what their perspective is of the definition and its origin. There is however a consensus among a number of theorists; as Wilson posits, "fashion is dress in which the key feature is rapid and continual changing of styles: fashion in a sense is change" (as cited in Entwistle, 2000, p. 45). Moreover, Skov and Melchio (2008) continue on that point to describe the term as

having two distinct meanings: clothing and something that is popular. "When in the 20th century consumption of fashionable clothing became a mass phenomenon in the most developed countries, fashion became an institution for launching novelty, an ally of the avant-garde" (Skov & Melchior, 2008, p. 4).

Fashion as a general term can in fact be used to refer to any change within society, whether that is architecture or in this particular case, clothing (Entwistle, 2000). Bancroft's (2012) ideas of fashion and dress offer a modern perspective as she expresses the fact that fashion isn't just about trends, business, consumption, or someone displaying their identity; "fashion is, perhaps, primarily concerned with innovation on the surface decoration of the body, and the wider social and cultural responses to this innovation" (p. 2).

Few researchers offer book-length analysis discussing fashion from a psychoanalytic framework. Cavallaro and Warwick (1998) speak of the relationship between psychoanalysis and the body and make reference to how a clothed body alters and challenges boundaries in terms of identity. Though Cavallaro and Warwick address the clothed body from a Lacanian psychoanalytic framework to discuss topics such as the role of gender, disguise, and liberation, they fail to discuss fashion itself. It is for this reason the literature is also ineffective in discussing thematic fashions and their role in high fashion and haute couture.

A very different approach is provided by Bancroft (2012) who offers both a modern perspective and a robust analysis of high fashion and psychoanalysis in her exploration of the relatively new phenomenon. She reports that psychoanalytic theory has been incredibly important to theorists and artists over time, as it has the capability to give meaning and append layers of significance to objects and creative pieces which otherwise

would remain pointless and at times absurd. Over time, fashion has been treated as a means of expressing or identifying oneself, as a consideration of today's capitalist society, and recently a means of scholarly consideration focused on concepts of aesthetics, gender, and art theory. However, little discussion surrounds the relatively new relationship between fashion and psychoanalysis. Nevertheless Bancroft points out that by placing fashion into a framework of psychoanalysis, we will be able to challenge and discover new things about the subject. Bancroft explores fashion photography and haute couture through the lens of psychoanalytic theory in an attempt to formulate new ideas on the subject. She believes it is the psychoanalytic perspective and the identification of the meaning behind the image that remain important. Her analysis of haute couture and the avant-garde specifically looking at designers Alexander McQueen, John Galliano, and Hussein Chalayan in terms of desire, the body, surrealism, hysteria, femininity, image, identity, and narcissism from both a Lacanian and Freudian point of view is strong and in depth.

Alexander McQueen

Putting a psychoanalytic lens on any fashion is possible. However according to Bancroft (2012) it is most clear when dealing with fashion that is considered a showpiece of creativity. For this reason, three collections from designer Alexander McQueen were chosen for this study as they exemplified not only creative output but also displayed Goth and Fetish themes in almost an exploitive manner.

Alexander McQueen was arguably the most influential and provocative designer of our generation (Bolton, Blanks, & Frankel, 2011). McQueen was the king of extravagant thematic fantasies and avant-garde runway performances. Jonathan Akeroyd,

CEO of Alexander McQueen has explained, "Alexander McQueen has always emphasized the importance of imagination and free expression" (as cited in Bolton et al., 2011, p. 6). This was manifested in both his collections and runway presentations. McQueen once stated, "In fashion...the show...should make you think, there is no point in doing it if it's not going to create some sort of emotion" (as cited in Bolton et al., 2011, p. 12). He wanted audiences to have a visceral reaction to his runway presentations. The designer explained, "I don't want to do a cocktail party, I'd rather people left my shows and vomited. I prefer extreme reactions" (as cited in Bolton et al., 2011, p. 12). The dramatic narratives he used often tapped into the cultural fears and societal anxieties. He intended to take the audience out of their own lives and bring them into how he was feeling about his own. Stylist and friend Isabella Blow believed that McQueen was "the only designer [to make] his audiences react emotionally to a show, be it happy, sad, repelled, or disgusted" (as cited in Bolton et al., 2011, p. 12).

McQueen validated his designs by associating aesthetics with emotion. By doing so, he was able to revisit and advance a movement that occurred from the late 18th century through to the Romantic Movement. McQueen had a special relationship with the Romantic Movement as it placed importance on, "awe and wonder, fear and terror, emotions closely aligned with the concept of the Sublime" (Bolton et al., 2011, p. 12). The Sublime, in terms of artistic aesthetic, means greatness beyond imitation that according to many critics McQueen was able to achieve. Furthermore, the Sublime can also be defined as an opposition to what was classically idealized as perfect and in the case of the designer combines opposing themes such as grotesque and beautiful to create the sublime (Beardsley, 1973).

According to Bolton et al. (2011), McQueen's designs often showed a dark disposition. Historical references in many of his collections were inspired by the 19th century, particularly Victorian Gothic. Combining paradoxical elements in his collections were very much the norm, but Victorian Gothic combined elements of horror and romance, life and death, and lightness and darkness. Many of the accessories he produced in collaboration with numerous accessory designers were seen as sadomasochistic and fetishistic. Fashion provided McQueen a way to create an expression of love, often seen as a dichotomy between ecstasy and agony, or pleasure and pain, which seemed to repeatedly show up in his collections. Though Bolton et al. do not offer much more than reasoning behind why the themes were employed, there is no reference to a psychoanalytic understanding of his work. The narrative Bolton et al. and other contributors make to this text, discussing themes most prevalent in the designer's work, aims to communicate the designer's intentions in terms of feeling, theme, and narrative surrounding a collection.

McQueen's first collections were Victorian Goth inspired much from the ominous or dark side of the 19th century, rather than its picturesque representations (Evans, 2013). Inspiration for these collections came from images of Jack the Ripper and Victorian prostitutes. Editors, stylists, and the public often deemed his collections and runway performances cruel, aggressive, and misogynistic. McQueen was often misunderstood, and the image of misogyny that many people thought was being represented in his collections was almost never a reality. Evans (2013) explains that McQueen's representations of women were never cruel; rather, they depicted the wider vision of the world he saw around him. Indeed, McQueen's collections spoke to a woman who he saw

as sexually aggressive, which sometimes came to resemble a "femme fatale, the woman whose sexuality was dangerous, even deathly, and for whom, therefore, man's desire would always be tinged with dread" (Evans, 2013, p. 42). Dark glamour, sexuality, and macabre images play an important role in fashion today, specifically high fashion and haute couture. What many researchers fail to include in their texts is a psychoanalytic perspective of these topics. Therefore, although it's important to evaluate the theme, the tone, and the inspiration behind the collection or image, psychoanalysis allows for a particular depth of knowledge to form around the subjects that many have not tried to access.

Gothic Theme

The term Goth had been used to describe Germanic people seen as barbarous and nomadic by the Romans since the 3rd century AD. However, it wasn't until the European Middle Ages from around the 13th through 15th century that saw the creation of gothic dress. By the 1980s an outgrowth of the subculture found its way into everything from music to film to fashion. Though the gothic style began during the Middle Ages, gothic fashion as we know it today began as a subculture style cloaked in rebellion during the 1970s. Today, the gothic look has been a recurring theme and an integral part of many high fashion designers' collections including Rick Owens, Gareth Pugh, John Galliano, and Yohgi Yamamoto (Steele & Park, 2008).

In high fashion and haute couture industries—including design, photography and runway performance—themes are held to an incredibly high standard in order to enforce a narrative that for the most part reflects aspects of societies' concerns and fears. Steele and Park (2008) explore gothic fashion, as it is a recurring theme in present-day high

fashion and haute couture. Though gothic themes evoke images of death and decay, Steele and Park point out that "its negative connotations have made it, in some respects, ideal as a symbol of rebellion" (p. 3) and reiterate what has been previously mentioned: "Although there have been innumerable studies of gothic literature, cinema, art, and architecture, surprisingly little has been written about the gothic influence on fashion" (p. 3). Steele and Park examine symbols associated with gothic style, themes of terror and the supernatural, to explore the psychoanalytic reasoning as to dark glamour's spellbinding effect on fashion today. In their study of Freud, Steele and Park believe that his philosophy in fact helps explain "why the past hangs heavily over gothic narratives. It also underlines the psychological significance of supernatural phenomena" (p. 12).

There is a certain kind of darkness, mystery, and disturbing nature associated with the gothic theme with specific identifiable visual elements. Spooner (2004) states "costumes and disguises, veils and masks are ubiquitous features of Gothic fiction... clothing has always played a vital role in the construction of Gothic narratives" (p. 1). Similar to Steele and Park's research, Spooner speaks about high fashion through a psychoanalytic lens specifically surrounding the theme of Goth in order to uncover new meaning behind the topic. Spooner (2004) argues that although McQueen seemed to exploit the theme of Goth in many of his collections, he would appear to make decisions based on intellectual considerations, rather than other designers who were also inspired by Goth and gothic subcultures. Though she acknowledges the important role psychoanalysis can have on fashion, the text speaks to many other contemporary parts of our culture that take inspiration from Goth and gothic subcultures, and does not provide an in-depth discussion surrounding fashion or the particular theorists included in the

study. Despite the research lacking an in depth theoretical analysis of high fashion, Spooner (2004) does provide a contemporary view of Goth, explaining her ideas on contemporary art and gothic bodies.

Evans (2003) explores the lamenting of the Romantic Movement as a source of inspiration for many of these dark fantasies. Beginning in the 1700s and lasting into the mid 19th century, the Romantic Movement saw a shift in how people thought about art, writing, and artistic creation. Evans speaks about fashion as a "voice" and the social process of constructing identities in relation to themes popular in fashion and to the psychoanalytic model, specifically to that of the unconscious—relating clothing and fashion imagery as a way to act out repressed desires and fears, addressing why they are created, and why we react to them the way we do as viewers. Evans's (2003) analysis of fashion from a psychoanalytic perspective uncovers connections to fashion and death, femininity, and what disturbing themes are able to tell us about society and our anxieties:

> Themes were on the edge too, at the borders of beauty and horror, where sex and death intersected with commerce. Conceptually as well as stylistically experimental, this strand of fashion design addresses contemporary anxieties and speculations about the body and identity. (p. 5)

Fetish Theme

Although the topic of fetish has recently become a popular subject amongst critical thinkers, Steele (1996) argues that the corset and hobble skirt of the 18th century saw the arrival of the style. It has been theorized that fashion more specifically the corset, sexually and socially repressed women of this time. However, Kunzle (as cited in

Entwistle, 2000) believes that the tight lacing and corsetry was actually a sign of a sexual and socially assertive woman.

The first fetish fashion to popularize and receive acceptance among the masses was the kinky boot. Previously associated with prostitutes and dominatrix's, the knee- or thigh-high, high-heel boot became popular during the 1960s. Fetish fashion during this time became popular in much part to the television show *The Avengers*. Actress Diana Rigg played a powerful, sexy woman who wore a leather cat suit, and who at one time even brought on criticism by the show's own producers as they thought her outfit was overly fetishistic, at which point the idea of her having a full face mask and hood were quickly rebuffed (Steele, 1996).

As Steele (1996) states, "For the past thirty years, the 'playful' use of fetishistic themes has increasingly assimilated into fashion" (p. 33). In film, art, theatre, performance, and photography the viewer will associate kinky boots, corsets, and leather with fetish fashion. It is believed that often our desires and erotic encounters occur because of certain articles of clothing. Entwistle (2000) explains that clothing adds to the sexual appeal of the body, as she argues that many nudists will in fact wear articles of clothing to social events in order to lead up to the sexual experience. Moreover, Steele explains that "by concealing the body, clothes excite sexual curiosity and create in the viewer the desire to remove them" (as cited in Entwistle, 2000, p. 182). The object, in this case the article of clothing, accessory, or shoe is transformed by the imagination of the viewer into the symbolic representation of ones desires.

Tseëlon points out that masquerading provides a close up on the paradox between a constructed norm and a deconstructed fantasy, and observes that disguising and fetishist

fashion is similar (as cited in Entwistle & Wilson, 2001). In addition, fetish in fashion has the ability to alter and often destroy traditional gender norms as well as cultural and "normal" hierarchy of gender power. Entwistle and Wilson (2001) provide a discussion surrounding Lacan's theories of desire, fetish fashion, and topics that include the role of gender, femininity, power, and sexuality.

Material Culture

Though many theorists have developed important ideas surrounding fashion, Crane and Bovone (2006) offer an in-depth insight into the material culture, the process of creating, and the attribution of symbolic value people place on fashion. Drawing on theory based in social sciences, material culture offers an understanding of the relationship between people and their goods. Crane and Bovone articulate the fact that while the material goods express values, the consumption of the material goods allows consumers to express or communicate a message of the values they hold. Their article discusses numerous ways to approach and study the phenomenon of fashion and clothing as material culture, as they argue that there are numerous perspectives and theoretical methods within the field of cultural sociology. Crane and Bovone's belief is that clothing as material culture is ideal when discussing the relationship between personal values and the values placed upon material goods "because of its close association with perceptions of the self" (p. 321). Values are intimately tied to clothing because of its location on our bodies. It has the unique ability to form someone's identity, by both affecting and expressing our perceptions of ourselves on to others.

Though it is inferred, what Crane and Bovone's (2006) text doesn't offer is a perspective surrounding the values associated with subcultures that get diluted, altered,

and brought to high fashion runways and then ultimately back to the mainstream. The styles' original symbolic value is altered in order to have some resemblance to what that culture original stood for, in order to be on trend and demonstrate a status of being "hip," "cool," or "rebellious": "As a result...mediated styles and forms of culture in contemporary society, "post-subcultures" are...less concerned with making political statements or expressions of resistance than their predecessors" (Crane & Bovone, 2006, p. 323).

As we have seen on numerous runways, particular elements of a subculture have made their way to the mainstream, for example Alexander McQueen's "skull scarf" which offered the consumer a gothic themed product without having to make a commitment to participate in the subculture. In turn this scarf was able to infer things about the wearers, whether they know it or not. For one, the skull represents a symbol from Goth and gothic subculture, attributing that person to rebellion or many of the associated values previously discussed about the subculture (Spooner, 2006). This very point can be made about an individual wearing leather over the knee, high-heeled boots, or a corset. Though these looks are associated to fetish fashion, the value associated can say many things the wearer is unaware of.

Crane and Bovone (2006) articulate a poignant point that the fashion system, specifically that which produces fashion, represents a unique place within the culture, as it must design, alter, and change the symbolic values attached to certain styles of clothing. New collections must be made several times a year that are expected to incorporate elements of previous styles from past years with innovative and contemporary ideas. The success of a collection in large part is dependant on not only

recognizing symbolic values that are changing but also identifying new and emerging values.

The data being analyzed will explore the semiotics and symbols, which constitute the themes being taken into account. Semiotics or the study of signs was a theory first derived from the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) whose approach to the topic was extended by French literary theorist Roland Barthes. Barthes believed that any item of culture, whether it be clothing or fashion, could transform into signs and communicate meaning. Saussure believed that within a sign, there were two concepts. The signifier is referred to as the more stable of the two and can be a word, an image, a sound, or an object. The signified on the other hand is the meaning of the "thing" indicated by the signifier. The signified cannot exist without the signifier and the signifier would exist without meaning (Kawamura, 2011). "Semiotics is used in fashion/dress studies as an analytical tool in treating fashion/dress as a text and in decoding the meaning of every clothing item. It does not have to be tangible clothes but written texts" (Kawamura, 2011, p. 81).

Conclusion

What the literature fails to do is offer a detailed analysis of the work of Alexander McQueen, specifically the collections being examined in this study from the psychoanalytic perspective of Freud and Lacan. Although the literature surrounding the designer provides a great deal of knowledge and analysis in regards to the collections, informed inferences will have to be made when comparing elements of the collection to elements of Freud's theory of *The Uncanny* and Lacan's theories surrounding desire.

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The study aims to explore the relationships of psychoanalytic theories as it pertains to Freud and Lacan, and three Alexander McQueen collections specifically through analysis of Goth and Fetish themes. The relationship between psychoanalysis and fashion is a relatively new one in terms of their association being examined critically. Though psychoanalysis has been thought to influence many creative areas including film, art, and literature, fashion has yet to experience the same attention. That being said, the literature discussed in this chapter addresses all of the topics pertaining to this study and suggests that both Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalytic perspectives provide a wealth of information when associating to fashion. The literature will not only help guide the study, but data collection from these sources also will be vital to the research in order to aid in the development of a well-rounded topic.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

Psychoanalysis has been influential in developing the fields of art theory, film, and literature, as a way to append layers and meaning to things that without would seem insignificant. However, very little analysis surrounds fashion from a psychoanalytic framework (Bancroft, 2012). Given the lack of research in this area, this study explores the relationship between psychoanalytic theories as it pertains to Freud and Lacan and three Alexander McQueen collections. This chapter details the methodology and procedures used to conduct the study. A qualitative approach was utilized, and how, what, and why questions were asked in order to gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between psychoanalytic theory and fashion (Yin, 2003). A case study methodological approach was also utilized, incorporating several data-gathering procedures, including content and visual analysis with four primary data sources. Semiotic analysis of the visuals was used to code themes and interpret the symbols. Relational analysis was used to further the understanding of Goth and Fetish, helping link psychoanalytic theories to fashion designs by Alexander McQueen. The methodology, reasoning behind purposeful sampling, methodological assumptions and limitations, the method for establishing credibility, as well as the composition of the findings in chapter 4 are also included.

Methodological Approach

A qualitative approach was used to explore the relationship between the psychoanalysis of fashion, specifically dark glamour and desire, and the work of Alexander McQueen. Three collections are examined: Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious,

(Fall 2002), In Memory of Elizabeth Howe Salem 1692 (Fall 2007), and Horn of Plenty

(Fall 2009). According to Creswell (1998), qualitative research can be defined as

> A process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry
>
> that explore a social or human problem where the researcher builds a complex,
>
> holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and
>
> conducts the study in a natural setting. (p. 15)

Theoretical frameworks and related research questions are essential to qualitative

methods of inquiry (Kawamura, 2011). This study tests two primary theories, Freud's

(1919) theory of *The Uncanny* and Lacan's (1977) theory of desire by examining fashion

within three McQueen collections. Within a qualitative study, theory may be generated

during the research and placed at the end of the study or, in this particular case, may

come at the beginning providing a lens to examine the research questions (Yin, 2003). An

understanding of the McQueen collections and their relationship to psychoanalytic theory

becomes the anticipated goal for this study.

According to Flick (1998), the use of inductive and deductive research methods

depends on where theory is placed within the study. Deductive research aims to find data

that matches the theories being used, whereas findings from inductive methodology

formulate a theory that explains the data. "Deductive research begins when a theoretical

system develops operational definitions to the propositions and concepts of the theory and

matches them empirically to some data" (Kawamura, 2011, p. 21). This study uses a

deductive research process as the study begins with theories from Freud and Lacan, and

expects to find data surrounding themes of Goth and Fetish found in Alexander McQueen's

collections. Qualitative research is the ideal method of research as it deals with the "how"

and "what" questions being asked, much the same way a case study does (Yin, 2003).

Case Study

The type of information gathered in a case study is rich in data, detailed, in-depth, and utilized for its ability to explore a complex topic while adding strength to what is already known through previous research (Soy, 1997). "Case studies are the preferred strategy when the investigator has little control over the events and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real life context" (Yin, 2003, p. 1). As this study is based on a relatively new phenomenon and actual fashion collections, case study is regarded as a perfect methodology for this project. The following explains important information pertaining to the case study.

Research Question

How does psychoanalytic theory, specifically surrounding Freud's theory of *The Uncanny* and Lacan's theories of desire relate to Alexander McQueen's collections?

Unit of Analysis

The primary unit of analysis (Yin, 2003) is Alexander McQueen, as his thematic designs are those being related to the theories that set the foundation of the study (Yin, 2003).

Linking Data to Propositions

Through the technique of pattern matching (Yin, 2003), data surrounding the themes and fashion collections being researched are expected to create patterns, in order to link to the study's theoretical propositions to the researcher's intended goals.

Analyzing and Interpreting a Study's Findings

In order to produce a high-quality case study, close attention was paid to all

evidence with an intention to strive for a general analytic strategy. One strategy, according to Flynn and Foster (2009), is to rely on the theoretical propositions, which set the foundation of the study. As theory is what created the study framework, by setting the priority on the theoretical propositions, this in turn will shape the data collection process, help organize the evidence, and highlight what data is relevant and useful and what data to ignore.

Constructing Validity

Constructing validity within a case study has been seen as problematic, because it is often believed that researchers develop their study through biased and personal judgments of their own (Yin, 2003). As suggested by Yin (2003), multiple and diverse sources of evidence were employed during the data collection phase in order to show proof that an assortment of sources was utilized.

This case is described as a single case study design, and is justified by the variant provided by Yin (2003), that the research is based upon an existing theory that is to be tested. Furthermore, the three McQueen collections span 7 years, providing a single case at different points of time, which according to Yin is described as a longitudinal case study and supports the rationale for a single-case study.

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Analyzed Theorists

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It is important to give pertinent information surrounding the theorists being analyzed, and to explain their relevance to this study.

Sigmund Freud

Sigmund Freud is known for his significant contributions to psychoanalysis and in turn has redefined theories on such topics as feminism, culture, and the unconscious. The

framework of this study is based upon psychoanalysis, in terms of the unconscious, and Freud's theory of *The Uncanny* will be used within this study (Beystehner, 1998). The Goth theme relates well to Freud's theory as the theme and theory have the ability to evoke feelings of fear. Freud maintains that his concept creates inconsistent thoughts due to the illogical nature of being attracted to, yet repulsed at the same time, resulting in an unsettling feeling (Freud, 1919). According to Cavallaro (2002), "Psychoanalytically, the experiences of terror and horror are comparable to the phenomenon of the uncanny as theorized by Sigmund Freud" (p. 4).

Jacques Lacan

Jacques Lacan's ideas surrounding desire are central to his psychoanalytic theories. According to Bancroft (2012), Lacan believes that desire is motivated by lacking something, particularly a sense of power: "In the case of the female subject, it is the being or not being phallus. For the male subject, it is the having or not-having the phallus" (p. 63). Bancroft (2012) suggests that fashion can be an attempt to fulfill that feeling of lacking someone may experience. McQueen not only used fetish as a source of inspiration in his collections but also produced images of women that were powerful, clad in PVC and sometimes elements of bondage. Lacan's views on desire including the phallus and power will be utilized in this study to analyze those very images and collections of Alexander McQueen.

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Themes Analyzed

</div>

It is important to implement parameters surrounding the themes being analyzed, in order to depict a truthful representation and explain pertinent information about the theme.

Gothic Theme Parameters and Relevance

As a genre, Goth is profoundly concerned with the past and is conveyed through historical references from the Middle Ages, specifically from the 13th to the 15th century, as well as medieval and religious iconography, evoking images of destruction and decay. The word Goth implies that something is dark, ominous, and macabre in nature. Long cloaks and dresses, veils, velvets, and lace are all associated with Gothic fashion. Gothic garments articulate the body in terms of theme rather than colour or fabric. Black does not necessarily mean it is Goth (Spooner, 2006); however, black has been the colour of mourning someone's death and has subsequently remained pivotal to the genre (Steele & Park, 2008). Although the fashions have reinvented themselves over the years, "costumes and disguises, veils and masks are ubiquitous features of Gothic fiction" (Spooner, 2004, p. 1). "Like Victorian Gothic, which combines elements of horror and romance, McQueen's collections often reflected paradoxical relationships such as life and death, lightness and darkness" (Bolton et al., 2011, p. 13), thus making McQueen's collections well suited to this study.

Fetish Theme Parameters and Relevance

Fetish fashion is a provocative way of dressing, sexual and erotic in nature, and has been linked to themes including sexuality, power, fashion, identity, gender, and desire. The term Fetish can be defined several different ways: "a strong and unusual need or desire for something"; "a need or desire for an object, body part, or activity for sexual excitement"; or "an object that is seen to have magical powers" ("Fetish," 2014, para. 1). These definitions provide the parameters to analyze the term in relation to this study as the theme lends itself to all three. From a high heel, to a look that can be associated to Bondage and Discipline

(BD), Dominance and Submission (DS), Sadism and Masochism, or its abbreviated form of BDSM, there is a range of how Fetish can be worn. Many staple elements of the theme include tight leather fabric, PVC, corsets, fishnets, eyewear, masks, spandex, straps, buckles, collars, high heels, and metal. McQueen had a fascination with sadomasochism and fetishistic paraphernalia. As Bolton et al. (2011) point out, it is specifically "the relationship as between victim and aggressor" (p. 12), which was not only prevalent in many of his collections, but also his accessories.

Content/Visual Analysis

Content analysis will be utilized to analyze the data that is collected. This method is believed to be one of the most principal techniques of researching, as it appears to require very little theoretical analysis, and allows for general statements to be made (Bell, 2004). Relevant data will emerge by analyzing the written, spoken, and visual materials expressing the themes being studied. By employing content analysis as part of the methodology, informed inferences based on authenticity and authorship will be made, for the purpose of gaining true expert opinions and facts.

Qualitative data analysis is coded or broken down into defined categories in order to determine the meaning of the phenomenon central to the study. These categories are further examined by a basic method of content analysis, called relational analysis. Relational analysis takes the process one step further by examining the meaning behind the theme. In order to achieve a high level of reliability and to ensure the content analysis can be replicated, symbols were defined to ensure that an understanding of the variables among coders remain the same (Bell, 2004). Rubin and Rubin (1995) explain that content analysis identifies recurring similarities and themes in the data found within the research of a

qualitative study. This method is used to find similarities in words or subjects in order to define topic themes. Conducting an analysis of images is important to this study as visual interpretations of runway presentations and photographs are relied on. Photographs of the collections were examined, found specifically on the website Style.com. Images were decoded and the meaning of each item in the image was treated as a sign.

Quantifying qualitative data in the form of text as well as in photo images was used to count how frequently a particular symbol is communicated (cloaks, face masks, etc.) in order to categorize data into themes. As Bell (2004) suggests, measuring the reliability of the identifiable symbols within the collection, documents must be analyzed for symbols and then a week later the procedure should be repeated without looking at the results from the previous week. By comparing the two sets of symbols, the coder will be able to achieve high levels of reliability and convey a truthful depiction of what the principle themes being represented are within the project. Comparing the themes to linguistic and text signs in order to make generalizations and draw conclusions surrounding the theme, and ultimately to their corresponding theory will then be achievable (Kawamura, 2011). Table 1 provides the list of symbols documented.

The analysis includes Bolton et al.'s (2011) *Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty*, followed by data sourced from the book *Fashion and Psychoanalysis*, by Alison Bancroft (2012). Visuals were predominantly found on the website Style.com and videos were sourced from the YouTube channel Yukikoandthe (2012). The expert opinions, perspectives, unique images, and videos provide rich data to be incorporated into the study.

Table 1

Goth and Fetish Symbols

Goth text/images	Fetish text/images
Gothic body	Fetish body
Pale complexion	Cinched waists
Black hair	Restriction of movement
Black lips	Hourglass body shape
Elongated body	Fetish apparel
Blunt bangs	Tight garments
Gothic apparel	Sexual apparel
Long dresses/sleeves	Black fabric
Witchcraft apparel	Perverse apparel
Lace	Leather
Medieval apparel	Misogynistic apparel
Capes	Latex
Victorian goth	Rubber
Opulence	Plastic
Occult iconography	Nylon
Headdresses	PVC
Ruffled sleeved cuffs	Spandex
Ruffled collars	Lace
High collars	Metal
Chain mail	Stockings
Hoods	Full body cat suit
Velvet	Sheer fabric
Black fabrics	Sex doll lips
Pentagrams/inverted	Silk
Skulls	Bustier
Brocade	Mini skirt/dress
Velvet	Dominatrix
Gothic themes:	Stiletto heels
Death	Thigh-high boots
Decay	Corsets
Disturbing	BDSM
Grotesque	Collars (BDSM)
Haunting	Masks
Disturbing	Straps
Madness	Buckles
Macabre	Locks
Religion	Zippers
Crosses	
Religious iconography	
Edgar Allan Poe	
Raven imagery (birds)	

Principal Data Sources

The following explains *how* the primary data sources will aid in answering the research question, as well as an explanation of *why* they are being used in order to justify their intended purpose.

Principal Literary Documents

The primary literary source surrounding the designer and his work is *Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty*, a publication that focuses on the collections that were featured at the 2010 exhibit at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, under the same name. *Savage Beauty* is unique because it categorizes McQueen's collections by theme and includes high-quality photographs as well as quotes from the designer himself and commentary by experts within the field of fashion. This data source serves the research as a method of viewing pictures of the artifacts and gathering first-hand knowledge from the designer and experts in the field in regards to themes and inspiration and impact on the industry.

The second literary source considered fundamental to the research is *Fashion and Psychoanalysis*, which discusses the relatively new phenomenon of fashion and psychoanalysis and provides detailed descriptions of Freud's *The Uncanny* and Lacan's theories of desire. As the research question is based on the psychoanalysis of fashion, this data source provides the foundation to compare and relate the themes of Goth and Fetish found in images and explanations of McQueen's collection, to Bancroft's (2012) analysis of Freud's theory of *The Uncanny* and Lacan's theories surrounding desire.

Principal High Fashion Online Website

Style.com is critical to the research because it offers high-quality photos of every look that was part of McQueen's runway collections. A photographer situated at the end

of the runway shoots each image being analyzed in this study. Photographs within the Style.com archive may be examined in a detail view, enabling meticulous observation of the garments and accessories. This website offers a comprehensive assortment of the collections being examined.

Principal Video Source

Yukikoandthe is a unique YouTube channel that provides full-length videos of the collections being examined. This is a unique and valuable resource. While still images offer a wealth of knowledge about the collection and specific artifacts being examined, video offers unique contextual information. Video allows the viewer to observe several elements besides the articles of clothing, including tone or mood of the fashion show, movement of the apparel, and runway setup, which often still images are unable to do.

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Comparison of Data Sources

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The data gathered from the sources listed above were analyzed, evaluated, and compared to each other in order to strengthen the information and further develop the psychoanalytic perspective behind three of Alexander McQueen's collections. In order to evaluate and verify information, the data gathered by industry professionals in media sources was compared to that of the information gathered in scholarly sources written by experts and theorists (Yin, 2003). If there are consistent concurrences in the sources including opinions of the media sources, scholarly journals, and books pertaining to the themes as well as the designer, the data and sources are considered valuable to the study.

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Purposeful Sampling

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Expert sampling was used to advance the knowledge of this topic. Through the analysis of fashion researchers, journalists, and well-known theorists, those with

knowledgeable perspectives of the work of McQueen, the history of the themes being studied, as well as theories at hand were considered experts for this study (Palys, 2008).

Methodological Assumptions

Methodological assumptions based on this qualitative study can be summarized to include a link that formed between the research objectives and the findings resulting from the data (Yin, 2003). Critical elements providing the framework of the themes were studied, information gathered from the data sources was examined to strengthen existing knowledge of the topic, and to potentially uncover new and important information on the themes being studied within the McQueen collections.

Methodological Limitations

This study involves two disparate domains: psychoanalysis and fashion. The researcher's background includes a degree in Fashion Merchandising, Retail Communications, and extensive experience in fashion, including fashion training in Paris, France but little academic training or clinical experience in psychology and psychoanalysis. The researcher acknowledges that due to these limitations this may in turn create debate in regards to the study's findings and results. This research examines a relatively new phenomenon, which is analyzed from a cultural and theoretical perspective enabling future researchers with backgrounds in psychoanalysis or psychoanalytic theory to further develop study findings.

Establishing Credibility

This study includes rich descriptions of the themes and collections being examined. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), credibility is established when the data speaks to the findings. The data from one source was compared to that of the others

being considered in order to establish a firm foundation of integrity and transferability. Yin (2003) believes that if the researcher is using a previously established theory as the foundation of the study than the mode of generalization is "analytic generalization" and can be used to compare the empirical results of the case study. As the results may be generalized they could apply to numerous other topics outside of the original study.

Composition of Findings

The findings are categorized by collection. The three sections provide a description of each of the collections including key looks and symbols that exemplify the theme to which it relates, as well as a discussion of how elements of the collections are related to the theories at hand in order to gain a psychoanalytic perspective of the designer's work.

Chapter Summary

The methodology in this study uses a qualitative approach. A case study included three of McQueen's collections, which were examined from a Freudian and Lacanian perspective, specifically surrounding their theories of *The Uncanny* and desire to establish the relationship between psychoanalysis and fashion. Content analysis including visual analysis was implemented. Visual analysis was vital to the study as the research included semiotics and coding. In order to strengthen this topic, data included information by relevant theorists, credible media sources, scholarly journals, and research from industry leaders. By exploring themes relevant to this study, a psychoanalytic perspective of McQueen's collections was established.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Psychoanalytic theories, specifically those of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan, are used to explore collections designed by Alexander McQueen. By using content analysis, it was found that the Goth theme is comparable to Freud's theory of *The Uncanny*, whereas the theme of Fetish is relatable to Lacan's theories surrounding desire, sexuality, and femininity. An uncanny feeling occurs when familiar situations unexpectedly obtain unfamiliar nuances, that we are unable to establish reasoning for. Feelings associated with Goth, including fear and horror, are relatable to *The Uncanny* and therefore well suited to analyze the 2007 Autumn/Winter collection Elizabeth Howe 1692, and portions of the 2009 Autumn/Winter collection Horn of Plenty.

Lacan's theories surrounding desire serve as a method for analyzing Fetish symbols, sexuality and femininity specifically, feminine *jouissance* and women as *objet a* in the Autumn/Winter 2002 collection Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious, and portions of Horn of Plenty. McQueen often produced fashion that questioned ideas of femininity; therefore Lacan's theories serve as a psychoanalytic perspective that resonates with the designer's collections. The following three sections provide a description of each of the collections, including key looks that exemplify the respective theme, as well as a discussion of how elements of the collections are related to these theories in order to gain a psychoanalytic perspective of the designers work.

Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious—Fall, 2002

A former palace prison in Paris, the Conciergerie, set the venue for Alexander McQueen's Fall 2002 collection titled Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious. The shadowy, medieval hall, with vaulted archways and barred windows, is where Marie Antoinette spent

her final nights prior to execution by guillotine. Though the setting was dark and ominous, the title of the show Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious references the 1964 classic children's book and film *Mary Poppins* (Gleason, 2012). The dichotomy of having a fashion presentation in a former prison juxtaposed against a children's story is unmistakable but characteristic of McQueen, a designer who was often inspired by contrasting forces.

Invitations to the runway show were presented in the form of a school notebook and designed by famed film director and producer Tim Burton.[1] The last page of the invitation read "and the show begins howling!!!" an ultimate reality when the first model walked onto the runway with two wolves by her side. The music that played throughout the fashion show was from Tim Burton's film *Sleepy Hollow* (1999), a story about a headless horseman. McQueen stated once that, "Life to me is a bit of a Grimm fairy tale" (as cited in Bolton et al., 2011, p. 85). This is evident as 57 looks in the collection made reference to numerous ideas including Brother Grimm's fairy tales,[2] schoolgirls gone bad, strict schoolmistresses, and S&M (Mower, 2002). The historic location set the backdrop for a sexualized version of a fairy tale, allowing McQueen's dark, twisted fantasy to come to life (Gleason, 2012). The collection tends to shift power from elements that would be deemed submissive, such as tight pencil skirts restricting the ability to walk at a normal pace, to a collection of clothing that portrays strong and dominant images of women. McQueen frequently resisted the structural logic of sexuality, desire, and femininity. He simultaneously exhibits two opposing concepts of femininity in the collection by including the desirous, submissive woman as *objet a*, and

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[1] Tim Burton is an American film producer, director and writer and the creator of many dark, gothic, unconventional horror films such as *Edward Scissorhands* (1990) and *The Nightmare Before Christmas* (1993) (Jackson & McDermott, 2010).

[2] Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm are German brothers who published adaptations of fairy tales (Ashliman, 2013).

a feminine *jouissance* that is predatory and dangerous (Bancroft, 2012). The fashion show, much like a fetish performance,

> Animates and enlivens the fashion concept and articulates the "style" of the fashion
> through the dramatic narrative it uses as a context for the collection. Oddly, the
> fetish performance and the runway show of the couturier are merging in terms of
> style and narrative in the early twenty first century. (Lunning, 2013, p. 11)

The fetish theme that drives Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious begins with tight, tailored tweed suiting and skirts. The restriction of movement, due to the extraordinarily narrow pencil skirts, dresses, and tight-laced boots leave the models unable to walk at a normal stride and pace, as is evident in Figure 1.

Figure 1   Figure 2

Feminine velvet tops with thick boning, reminiscent of corsetry and leather bustiers, push up the necklines, accentuate the models' breasts and curve to frame their already tiny waists. This classic hourglass silhouette emphasized the models' bodies, the fetish motif and the idea of women as the desirous object, as may be observed in Figure 2. Denim

trousers and feminine dresses are all strapped with variations of brown and black leather harnesses, cinching waists and cupping breasts, as shown in Figure 3. The next grouping showcased form-fitted leather burgundy skirts and dresses that resembled latex and constricting fetish skin suits, as evident in Figure 4. This form of fetish fashion gives power to the wearer, in that it creates pressure on the skin, joints, and muscles. Within the fetish community, garments that constrict the body, resulting in a feeling of pressure are considered haptic. Garments that are haptic hold the body into itself in order to intensify sexual feeling and enhance orgasm (Lunning, 2013).

Figure 3   Figure 4

Primitive gender stereotypes are distinctive to fetish themes. Historically, the male is typically characterized as aggressive and the female as passive, however these stereotypes have been challenged, especially in fashion. In this collection, the image of the passive female has been transformed into the dominant personality. High-heeled shoes may be interpreted as a symbol of aggression, power, and domination providing a potential weapon to further threaten the submissive male. A man who worships high

heels is not only believed to be in awe of the woman he sees as untouchable, much the same way Lacan describes *objet a*, the unattainable object of desire, but also a man who humbles himself to the superior sex (Steele, 1996). Sarah Burton, current designer for Alexander McQueen, has stated "Lee loved strong women" (as cited in Bolton et al., 2011, p. 230). This theme is shown in the majority of the collection as 31 of the 57 looks are paired with high heeled, tight-laced knee and high-heeled, thigh-high boots as exhibited in Figure 5, making the tweed suiting and milkmaid necklines seem far from innocent, and explicitly presenting a dominant female presented in Figure 6.

Figure 5   Figure 6

The collection displays models dressed in leather gloves and leather-menswear inspired trench coats with strong shoulders, conjuring up ideas of masculinity, discipline, and authority as observed in Figures 7, 8, 9. During the 1970s, trench coats worn by women were characterized as having strong undertones of sex and violence, exhibiting the sinister and brutalism of fetish clothes, even being called "Terrorist Chic" (Steele, 1996, p. 38). The trench coat exemplifies women who are "femmes conquerantes" which translates into English as dominant, conquering women (Steele, 1996, p. 40).

Figure 7   Figure 8   Figure 9

The stiff leather bondage straps around the waists, breasts, and shoulders of the models, influenced by fetish wear of the dominatrix, are juxtaposed against delicate white and pink lace garments under the straps. This presents an image of the unattainable object of desire against a feminine *jouissance* that is predatory much like the dominatrix. Though elements such as the thigh-high boot are definite elements of the dominatrix, many clients prefer "a balance of leather and lace" (Steele, 1996, p. 169). The costume of the dominatrix has not only been the most important to fetish wear, but has also greatly influenced contemporary fashion (Steele, 1996).

> I think there has to be an underlying sexuality. There has to be perverseness to the clothes. There is a hidden agenda in the fragility of romance...I'm not big on women looking naïve. There has to be a sinister aspect, whether it's melancholy or sadomasochistic. I think everyone has a deep sexuality, and sometimes it's good to use a little of it—and sometimes a lot of it—like a masquerade.
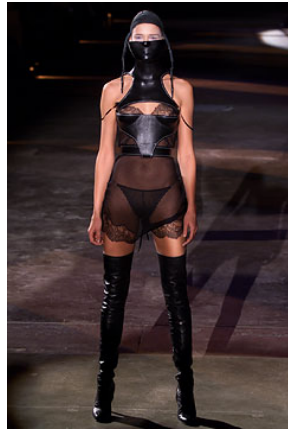> (McQueen, as cited in Bolton et al., 2011, p. 81)

Figure 10   Figure 11

The collection then presents a model dressed in elements indicative to BDSM, as shown

in Figures 10 and 11. A model is dressed in a short sheer lingerie inspired dress, black

panty, a leather harness and bustier, black leather thigh-high, high-heeled boots, and a

mask that covers all of her facial features except for her eyes. The mask is a symbol

inspired by BDSM scenarios. Fetish masks that obscure the face are used to eradicate the

human identity of the wearer, and allows for the engagement of character play to occur.

"The mask swivels in power, from the submissive to the dominant and back again: the

master and the slave, the criminal and the superhero" (Lunning, 2013, p. 117). McQueen

is clearly citing fetish wear of a dominatrix, as the eyes are what are visible therefore

enabling the wearer to control her surroundings. A submissive character on the other

hand would have the penetrable openings in a mask, and the eyes covered (Lunning,

2013). The mask seen in this look expresses her anonymity and she appears threatening.

In fetish and pornographic literature, masks are ubiquitous with executioners and

torturers, which seems appropriate as the venue is set in the Conciergerie, a former prison

(Steele, 1996).

In relation to Lacan's theories of sexuality and what it means to be feminine, a woman is not necessarily always the demure or desirous object of the male gaze. She may exhibit a dominant role, and fashion allows the wearer to portray that persona with certain articles of clothing. Garments displaying elements of authority and control are a way of having what the phallus signifies: power. Although people use the words penis and phallus interchangeably, the terms are actually not the same. The penis is part of the male body, whereas Lacan believes that neither men or women have the phallus, they are actually attracted to the signifying aspect of it (Steele, 1996). The phallic symbol is meant to represent the male generative power of producing life. Therefore, it would be Lacanian in thought that by having the models wear elements of fetish fashion that exhibit dominance, including leather gloves, high-heeled leather knee and thigh-high boots, as well as menswear inspired attire these models are exhibiting an opposing concept of femininity, as well as what the phallus signifies—power. McQueen's ability to display contradictory concepts of femininity in his work in turn shows the contradictions in couture and also in the foundation of human desire (Bancroft, 2012).

The woman presented in McQueen's collection shows her body in a variation of ways. The dominatrix may show her thighs above her boots, or part of her breasts, but it is far more common for her to be covered almost entirely. From a mask that covers portions of her face, all the way down to her thigh-high boots, she becomes not only the symbol of power, but also a phallic symbol. The heeled boots, thick leather harnesses, leather or tweed pants, and gloves aid the model in becoming an "armored phallus" (Steele, 1996, p. 169). Furthermore, the majority of the models are wearing variations of the corset which is a garment typically worn by a dominatrix. While the corset molds the

shape a woman's body, it also becomes a phallic symbol given that its boning makes the body hard and firm (Steele, 1996).

Many designers create fashion to be worn by women in order to be desired by men, but McQueen is not one of them. His designs are meant to provoke fear in onlookers: "I want to empower women. I want people to be afraid of the women I dress" (McQueen, as cited in Bolton et al., 2011, p. 60).

In Memory of Elizabeth Howe 1692—Fall, 2007

Collections based on elaborate narratives were characteristic of McQueen, but more than any other fashion designer, his work was extremely autobiographical. He had the ability to take elements of his own life and make them resonate with a wide audience of people. McQueen was one of six children, his mother Joyce stayed at home with the children until McQueen was 16, at which point she began teaching genealogy and social history classes. Joyce uncovered her own family's genealogy 250 years back and found her ancestors were French Huguenots who escaped religious prosecution. Eventually her ancestors settled in the district of Whitechapel, England and Spitalfields, a former parish in the East End of London. McQueen's interest in his own ancestry at times seemed to border on obsession (Bolton et al., 2011). In Memory of Elizabeth Howe 1692 is an example of that. Upon discovering that his mother's lineage dated back to the 17th century Salem witch trials, where an ancestor had been persecuted and hanged during the Puritan hysteria of 1692, the collection became a way to pay homage and explore themes related to Goth and dark conceptions of paganism including religion, witchcraft, and hell (Mower, 2007).

The fashion collection presentation of 49 looks begins with a film directed by McQueen. Semiotic analysis was used to code themes and interpret symbols in the film, the runway setup, as well as the clothing in the collection. The Gothic theme was displayed throughout the film, as dark, macabre images of naked women, decaying faces, skulls, blood, a kaleidoscope of locusts, and fire were shown. The runway included a giant red crystal pentagram within a black sand circle, while an inverted pentagram was suspended over the stage, as shown in Figure 12 (Knox, 2010).

Figure 12

The pentagram (point up) was symbolically indicative to Gothic culture and found in many Gothic cathedrals. Pagan people at one time believed the inverted pentagram (point down) symbolized Satan, Satanism, witchcraft, and the dark side (Steele & Park, 2008). McQueen's exploration of the Gothic theme in this collection would allow one to believe that he was trying to envision who Elizabeth Howe was. McQueen once stated, "I oscillate between life and death, happiness and sadness, good and evil" (as cited in Bolton et al., 2011, p. 70). In this collection McQueen investigates notions of Goth and the dark side, taking inspiration from Europe as well as Ancient Egypt. This study specifically looks at the European influences found in the collection.

As the models appear on the runway, their look is stoic and somber, exemplified by a pale complexion, long hair, and blunt bangs symbolic of the Gothic theme. The collection commences with a model appearing in all black from head to toe, as shown in Figure 13.

Figure 13

Throughout history the colour black has been associated with darkness and night, therefore linked to evil and death. During the middle ages, a time when Gothic art and architecture was being developed in Northern Europe, black clothing became associated to mourning a person's death. As many people continued to mourn for years or even the rest of their lives, shades of violet and grey could slowly be introduced into their wardrobe during the second year of mourning (Steele & Park, 2008). McQueen distinctively exhibits these colours within the first few looks of the show, with black as the predominant shade illustrated throughout the entire collection and observed in Figures 14 and 15.

Figure 14   Figure 15

The Gothic style as it is understood today recounts northern medieval dress approximately from the 13th to the 15th centuries. "Gothic fashion was form fitting yet exaggerated, with long trailing sleeves and extraordinary headdresses" (Steele & Park, 2008, p. 5). This collection references all of these Gothic fashion symbols. The models are pale, their frame elongated, dresses are opulent and overstated, long leather, silk, and velvet sleeves are principal to the collection and the 41st look of the collection exhibits an exaggerated black headdress exhibited in Figure 16. "Gothic garments articulate the body in terms of a range of characteristic Gothic themes: sensibility, imprisonment, spectrality, haunting, madness, monstrosity, and the grotesque" (Spooner, 2004, p. 4).

Figure 16

The myth and haunting of the vampire is intrinsic to the Gothic genre and dates back to the 14th and 15th centuries, when this fear was intensified by the "historical reality of bloodthirsty mass murderers such as Vlad Dracul, known as Vlad the Impaler...of Transylvania" (Steele & Park, 2008, p. 18). However, it was Lord Byron's (1819) Gothic novel *The Vampyre* as well as Bram Stoker's (1897) *Dracula* that popularized vampires in society (Steele & Park, 2008). Stoker's version of Dracula, a monster and rapist, was disturbing. In contrast, Tod Browning's 1931 version of *Dracula* was regarded as elegant. He had a romantic aesthetic, and although he was dangerous he wore a tuxedo and cape, something today that is considered a stereotype of Gothic fashion (Cavallaro, 2002). The romantic styling of a component worn by such a destructive figure is displayed several times in McQueen's collection and observed in Figures 16, 17, and 18.

Figure 17   Figure 18

The capes are long, dark in colour, with high collars drawing on historical and literary references. The cape promotes images of "masculinity, as well as the symbolism of magic and authority" (Steele & Park, 2008, p. 23). Religious iconography, analyzed and treated as a symbol of Goth, is exploited towards the end of the presentation, as a model is dressed in an extravagant black floor-length gown with a green cross, embroidered on the front, as shown in Figure 19.

Figure 19

The Uncanny lends itself very well to this collection as the Gothic theme and Freud's theory both have the ability to evoke feelings of fear. Freud maintains that his concept of the uncanny creates inconsistent thoughts due to the illogical nature of being attracted to, yet repulsed at the same time, resulting in an unsettling feeling (Freud, 1919). McQueen often taunted his audiences to achieve this reaction: "I'm about what goes through people's minds, the stuff that people don't want to admit or face up to. The shows are about what's buried in people's psyches" (as cited in Bolton et al., 2011, p. 70). The collection at hand references numerous things that spectators are taught to fear—the supernatural, black magic, witchcraft, Satanic worship, death, and symbols that make one think of death including skulls, blood, and decaying of living matter, all of which are evident in this collection. Paradoxically, the collection itself is beautifully designed and evokes feelings of attraction towards it. Thus, the collection in its entirety shows the identification of Freud's theory of *The Uncanny* at its most fundamental level.

The very recognition that something is familiar then separated by feelings of fear is believed by Lydenberg (1997) to be the emotion connected with "death, involuntary repetition, and the castration complex" (p. 1073). When any of these fears are provoked, the confusion that ensues between what is reality and what is imagination can lead to trauma. Freud believed that trauma or hysteria could affect an individual based on the repetition of recollections of the past, however as Evans (2003) points out,

> Much of the most interesting experimental fashion design seems to suffer mainly from reminiscences. Its ruminations on the past, and its fragmented and episodic imagery, like a hysterical symptom...images of the past can thus be understood as a kind of return of the repressed. (pp. 38-39)

Furthermore, the Gothic genre is overwhelmingly concerned with the past (Spooner, 2006). The thematic narrative of the collection at hand, the inspiration behind the collection, the symbolism, and imagery are all based on remnants of history, repressed memories, reworked to offer a contemporary appearance, which illuminate the involuntary repetition that is symbolic to the Uncanny.

Providing further investigation of the connection between Freud's theory and the Gothic theme, a model wears what looks to be a cast of her body, from her neck down to her genital region, thereby suggesting a perception to the viewer that the portion of her covered body is void and nonexistent—much like a dismembered body, as shown in Figure 20.

Figure 20

The uncanny feeling one may experience upon seeing dismembered bodies has a close "proximity to the castration complex" (Lydenberg, 1997, p. 1077) theorized by Freud. The repressed fear of castration experienced during the infantile stage of one's life comes back as panic and confusion relating to what is real and what is imagination. The cast the model wears reconstructs that portion of her frame to show artificial outlines of

her body, furthering the confusion and therefore the uncanny feeling. As Spooner (2006) points out, contemporary Gothic bodies are frequently modified, reconstructed, occasionally artificial, and presented as replacements of the real body. As McQueen once stated, "It's almost like putting armor on a woman. It's a very psychological way of dressing" (as cited in Bolton et al., 2011, p. 60). Gothic garments are distinguished in part by "artificiality and ornament rather than naturalism. Their exaggerated features 'mislead the eye, so that the body is subordinated to the outward effect" (Spooner, 2004, p. 4).

McQueen often found inspiration from the romantic side of the Gothic genre. As this collection combines illogical elements of romance and horror, this further identifies that *The Uncanny* is closely tied to McQueen's work. The identification of romance and aesthetically appealing garments are the familiar, however when separated by a threatening feeling such as horror, a fear is provoked and gives way to an uncanny fear of death. McQueen was incredibly comfortable working with the element of death, stating

> It is important to look at death because it is a part of life. It is a sad thing, melancholic but romantic at the same time. It is the end of a cycle—everything has to end. The cycle of life is positive because it gives room for new things. (As cited in Bolton et al., 2011, p. 73)

Horn of Plenty—Fall 2009

The 2008-2009 seasons in Paris were a time when luxury retailers were questioning their future and worried about sales. Few designers were willing to take risks, with the exception of Alexander McQueen. The recession did not stop McQueen from producing his over-the-top theatrical show Horn of Plenty, which he dedicated to his mother and held at Palais Omnisport. The collection poignantly explores themes relating

to Goth and Fetish, while finding inspiration in romance, hysteria, spectacle, and death, garnering both praise and distain from critics. Reviews of the collection included, "an unadulterated piece of hard and ballsy showmanship...to ugly and misogynistic" (Mower, 2009), some seemed to find it inspiring and others distasteful.

As the models walked to the music of Marilyn Manson's song *Beautiful People*, and Madonna's song *Vogue*, McQueen took fundamental elements from landmark 20th-century designs such as Christian Dior's New Look, Chanel tweed suiting, and Givenchy's little black dress and produced spoofs. "McQueen reworked these fashion milestones in a grotesque parody" (Knox, 2010, p. 101). Elements were taken from the past, reinvented in a sartorial manner in order to suit McQueen's macabre aesthetic and tongue in cheek attitude about the fashion industry. The runway was made of broken mirrors, surrounded by what at first glance looked like a giant mound of garbage. Upon closer inspection, the mound of garbage was in fact televisions, tires, and sinks, all props from his previous collections. This group of artifacts was meant to manifest the crash of the luxury marketplace. During a season that seemed to be inspired mostly by the 1980s, it's ironic that designers say "that fashion is constantly being reinvented, yet they continue to show the same shapes and trends of decades past" (Wilson, 2009, para.1). This collection revealed this exact narrative. Typical of his presentations, McQueen often offered a commentary on his collections. He viewed his collections as journalistic, explaining, "I'm making points about my time, about the times we live in. My work is a social document about the world today" (as cited in Bolton et al., 2011, p. 12). Commenting on what some viewed as distasteful images, Suzy Menkes explained, "Distasteful images? But a reflection of our nasty world. And a powerful fashion designer

always ingests the ether of modern times" (as cited in Bolton et al., 2011, p.12). Forty-

five looks were a part of the collection beginning with tweed suiting that reflected a 1940s

ladylike silhouette, reminiscent of Christian Dior's New Look, as shown in Figure 21.

Figure 21

McQueen took fundamental elements of this iconic look and exaggerated them. He added

a huge houndstooth bow to match the skirt, jacket, and high-heeled, knee-high boots. A

shaggy black wig covered the model's head, leather gloves were worn over the hands.

Only a small portion of the model's face was exposed, displaying enormous red lips that

look like plastic, bearing resemblance to those found on a sex doll. It should be noted that

all of the looks in the collection featured the exaggerated lips, either in black or red, a

symbol indicative of the Fetish theme and a reason many spectators found elements of the

show to be misogynistic. The attention brought to the models' lips due to their

exaggerated proportions, colour and plastic texture represent one of the body's erogenous

zones. From a Lacanian perspective, "They draw attention to one of the body's margins

or borders; they indicate in clear visual terms the cut, the *coupure* (in this case the mouth) that provokes desire by making the body erotic" (Bancroft, 2012, p. 96).

       The Fetish theme is featured in the collection as all of the models wear high heels, and the majority of the looks feature constrictive waists, skirts, and dresses. The beginning of the show also includes the return of trench coats. Symbolic elements of the Fetish theme are exhibited as the models are shown wearing straps, buckle, and harnesses shown in Figures 22 and 23. The collection also presents an element of fetish that is identifiable with the Japanese culture. McQueen has altered the shape of a Geta shoe with extremely unrealistic proportions, incorporating a version of the shoe 22 times in the collection exhibited in Figure 24.

Figure 22   Figure 23   Figure 24

       The original Geta shoe, much like the Venetian Chopine, has a striking platform, and though platform shoes have been identified in many cultures, eroticism is only one of their many implications. In some cultures the platform, which elevates the wearer off the ground, has been linked to high status, while the Geta is worn to keep one's kimono from

dragging on the ground. Furthermore, a Maiko, who is a Geisha in training, would wear the Getas with an extreme platform called an Okobo, shown in Figure 25, similar to the Chopine (Downer, 2002).

Figure 25

Regardless of the platform's cultural purpose, "There is no question, however that very high shoes inhibit the wearer's movements, a form of 'bondage' that some people find erotic" (Steele, 1996, p. 98). Furthermore, fetishists have promoted and encouraged an extreme version of the high heel as McQueen did in this collection, ignoring the status quo of what we culturally know as a high heel (Steele, 1996).

Figure 23 shows the model wearing an extremely narrow and tight leather dress, resembling fetishistic second skin garments, which restrict both her gait and movement. Though reminiscent of Lacan's views on women as *objet a* and desired object of men due to the restriction of movement, the hard materials she is wearing, specifically the leather and metal, are thought to encapsulate McQueen's vision for dressing women to be strong and to provoke fear. Historically, leather and metal have been seen as masculine materials, whereas fur, featured on this garment's sleeves, show softness. In the 19th and 20th centuries fur had been associated as a feminine material (Steele, 2006). By the late

20th century, women began wearing hard materials more frequently, juxtaposed against what had been known as feminine materials, to signify strength and "erotic sensations and sexual image of the self" (Steele, 2006, p. 143). Bancroft suggests that provoking fear in fashion suggests "the castration threat, the slipping of the veil of femininity that is couture to reveal the terrifying maw of castration" (Bancroft, 2012, p. 96). By facilitating an image of women that is strong and powerful, McQueen provides a resistance as to how femininity is exhibited by so many other designers.

McQueen could be seen as sabotaging history by spoofing and eroticizing iconic designs reminiscent of Dior's New Look. The fashion created by McQueen in this collection in fact follows traditional couture set out by designers like Christian Dior, by enforcing itself on the female form. The vast majority of Horn of Plenty literally shapes itself around the female body, and is therefore symbolic of the visual representation of her femininity and shows the imposing factors couture can have on a woman's body (Bancroft, 2012).

> The woman herself does not exist. She is revealed only through the garment that shapes her—and by shaping and articulating her in a simulated approximation of a naturalness that is actually artificial, the garment intercedes in her subjectivity. By interceding in her subjectivity it presupposes a subjective limitation or failure of some sort. She is lacking, incomplete, according to this garment, which instead represents her as a gap to be filled, or more accurately, covered. She then becomes, in Lacanian terms, *objet a*, the cause of desire. (Bancroft, 2012, p. 91)

As the presentation features many Fetish elements, Gothic elements are intertwined throughout the collection, and predominantly shown when models are presented wearing

elaborate headdresses resembling the Medusa, seen in Figures 26 and 27. Although referenced in Greek mythology as a gruesome and deadly snake, in Western culture Medusa is symbolic of the sexuality and power women possess over men (Evans, 2003). Harvard professor Marjorie Garber has argued that in her exploration of the uncanny, Medusa becomes a symbol of gender ambiguity, and therefore initiates the fear of castration due to the anxiety of not being simply man or simply woman: "With its gaping mouth, its snaky locks and its association with femininity, castration and erection, Medusa's head ends up being the displacement upwards of neither the female nor the male genitals but of gender undecidability as such" (as cited in Evans, 2003, p. 122). The very idea that the symbolic phallus is associated to female seduction that drives the gender uncertainty is ultimately what creates the feeling of discomfort and the association to the uncanny.

Figure 26   Figure 27

After a myriad of black leather, elaborate headdresses, and spectacle costuming, McQueen begins to make reference to American writer Edgar Allan Poe, specifically his

poem *The Raven* (1845). The poem is about a man who loses the love of a woman and is visited by a talking raven every night. The man believes the raven will leave him as he feels everyone else has done in his life, and by the end of the poem the man becomes psychotic (Fisher, 2008). The story deals with themes of desire and loss and from the 29th look in the collection until the last piece, almost every garment references this influence. "There's something...kind of Edgar Allan Poe, kind of deep and kind of melancholic about [my] collections" (McQueen, as cited in Bolton et al., 2011, p. 13). With dresses of black ravens printed on red fabric, shown in Figure 28, to a dress made out of duck feathers dyed black in order to give the impression the model is a raven, shown in Figure 29, McQueen is clearly trying to elicit beauty from something that is symbolically a dark and ominous animal. "A raven was a Romantic symbol of death. It's an item that's very melancholic but also very romantic at the same time" (Bolton et al., 2011, p.14).

Figure 28   Figure 29

The raven corresponds well to the uncanny, as we feel something illogical about being attracted to its beauty but repelled by it at the same time. As McQueen once stated, "I try and transpose the beauty of a bird to women" (as cited in Bolton et al., 2011, p. 172).

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Summary of Findings

The exploration of psychoanalytic theory and the work of Alexander McQueen expressing Goth and Fetish themes showed that Lacan's theories surrounding desire specifically converging on ideas of femininity sexuality and women as *objet a*, were ideal when analyzing Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious and portions of Horn of Plenty. It was also established that Freud's theory of *The Uncanny* could easily be associated with the Goth theme, as both include feelings attributed to fear and horror, and is thus well suited when analyzing In Memory of Elizabeth Howe 1692 and portions of Horn of Plenty.

Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious was a sexualized image of a fairy tale, exhibiting the theme of Fetish and two opposing concepts of femininity, one as *objet a* and one as a predatory feminine *jouissance*. McQueen abolished any notion of primitive gender stereotypes as it was found the majority of the garments, including high heels, corsets, and masks presented an image of a strong yet sinister woman, which according to Lacan displays authoritative attributes associated with the phallus and what it symbolizes, power.

In Memory of Elizabeth Howe 1692 was an autobiographical narrative based on an ancestor of his who had been persecuted and hanged during the Salem witch trials of 1692. This collection exhibited the Goth theme by presenting symbols including the colour black, capes, religious iconography, body casts, as well as macabre images of skulls, blood, and decaying living matter. The recognition that the collection is beautiful while displaying images we are taught to reject displays Freud's theory of *The Uncanny* at its most fundamental level. As many of the garments are meant to provoke feelings of

fear, the uncanny feeling one has by simultaneously being attracted to them are indications of emotions connected to involuntary repetition, death, and the castration complex (Lydenberg, 1997).

The collection Horn of Plenty exhibited both Goth and Fetish themes, and therefore justified an analysis by theories provided by both Lacan and Freud. Iconic elements from 20th century designs including Dior's New Look were reworked in a grotesque and sartorial manner. Elements of Fetish were found in the sex doll lips, high heels, as well as straps and buckles. As many high-fashion garments articulate the woman's figure in an unnatural way, much like Dior's New Look, she is "revealed only through the garments that shape her," (Bancroft, 2012, p. 78) becoming *objet a* and cause of desire. The elaborate headdresses resembling Medusa and references inspired by Edgar Allan Poe, specifically his poem *The Raven*, display gothic elements found in this collection. Though the raven is thought to be a symbol of death, the illogical nature of being attracted to it yet repelled at the same is indicative of *The Uncanny*. Furthermore, as many of these garments are inspired by looks from the past, it is believed that "images of the past can be understood as a kind of return of the repressed" (Evans, 2003, pp. 38-39). Form a Freudian perspective, images of the past and their involuntary repetition in the present can cause confusion between what is reality and what is imagination, often causing hysteria or trauma associated to *The Uncanny*.

Implications and Recommendations for Future Research

The fashion industry is a system that brings together numerous things, including artistic vision, human capital, and material resources. Fashion has the ability to express individual identity and in large part is about consumer culture. Many people understand

fashion to be a hobby based on shopping and aesthetics, but when interpreting fashion from a psychoanalytic perspective, we realize that fashion also has the capacity to represent societies' most profound dilemmas. Fashion offers insight into our culture, and in this research, provides an understanding into psychoanalytic concepts surrounding femininity, sexuality, desire, repressed memories, and fear. Indeed fashion is an aesthetic form, but it's also an aesthetic rendering of those dilemmas we face today. Fashion, primarily haute couture, illuminates ideas about women described in this study, men, queer theory, and simply put the consequences of what it means to be human. It would be important for future research to address these other topics and their relationship to clothing, particularly haute couture from a psychoanalytic perspective.

The role of designer is just as complex. A designer's role includes introducing trends to the public, purveyor of beautiful garments, and most importantly to capture and reflect the zeitgeist of the moment, or rather the spirit of the time in which we live. McQueen once stated, "I'm making points about my time, about the times we live in. My work is a social document about the world today" (as cited in Bolton et al., 2011, p. 12). Whether it be images of heroic women, brutality, war, or romance these ideas present reflections of the world in which we live. Alexander McQueen was arguably the most effective in doing so. His depth of emotion challenged conventional ideas of beauty, nature, and gender. It was about finding beauty in everything around him, to challenge people's perceptions of traditional gender roles and what is aesthetically beautiful. "It's the ugly things I notice more, because other people tend to ignore the ugly things" (McQueen, as cited in Bolton et al., 2011, p. 196). His role and the role of many avant-garde designers are to push boundaries and to make the audience consider the world

around them from an unconventional perspective. "I find beauty in the grotesque, like most artists I have to force people to look at things" (McQueen, as cited in Bolton et al., 2011, p. 240). He liked to shock people in order for them to feel something, which is the role of many designers who make a name of themselves, not just as clothing designers but as artists.

Many of the themes from which he sought inspiration were brought from his past. He would often say that his work was autobiographical, possibly alluding to a connection between the undertones of torture found in many of his collections, and to him as a man. McQueen once stated,

> My collections have always been autobiographical, a lot to do with my own sexuality and coming to terms with the person I am—it was like exorcising my ghosts in the collections. They were to do with my childhood, the way I think about life and the way I was brought up to think about life. (As cited in Bolton et al., 2011, p. 16)

By evoking emotional reactions from his audience, often tapping into societies' fears and anxieties, he was provoking interest and making them think about the world. Sending shudders and feelings of horror down the spines of the fashion elite excited him. However in 1996, journalist Alix Sharkey commented,

> Despite all the mouth and swagger, you can tell McQueen wants to be liked but his insecurity leads him to adopt this spiky, provocative attitude. It's a classic emotional defense mechanism: rather than waiting for someone to disappoint, he provokes them into a hostile reaction, which confirms his worst suspicions and justifies his own behavior. (As cited in Bolton et al., 2011, p. 19)

So much was expected of him, to create the big show, to have a provocative point of view, and often those views were argued. McQueen believed he was overly romantic, but it was his romantic aesthetic that pushed his creativity and was able to shift fashion in new directions. How McQueen thought about women has been debated for years. Some people believed he had a disturbing view of women, and others believed he wanted to empower them. Having models walk the catwalk wearing ripped, blood-soaked garments resembling victims of violence and rape, allowed people to believe he had a rather sinister view of women. Aligning glamour with fear in fashion gave McQueen a way to create an army of women who looked "so fabulous you wouldn't dare lay a hand on her" (Evans, 2003, p. 65). This thought stemmed from the fact that one of his sisters had experienced domestic abuse (Evans, 2003). He wanted to show the power within women. A power that could never be taken away by any man, violence or even death.

> McQueen's runway suggested a world without men, not because men were absent from it (for they were not), but because it was a world in which gender was unsettled by women who were both hyper feminine and yet, in some respects, terrifyingly male. (Entwistle & Wilson, 2001, p. 207)

McQueen's extremely close relationship to his mother, as well as best friend and muse, Isabella Blow reflected his love for women. The love he felt for women was expressed in rather a protective way: "I don't like women to be taken advantage of. I disagree with that most of all. I don't like men whistling at women in the street, I think they deserve more respect" (McQueen, as cited in, Evans, 2003, p. 78). He often had to defend many of his collections to critics. His 1995 collection Highland Rape saw much controversy and he had been accused of misogyny. He reacted furiously saying, "I've seen a woman

get nearly beaten to death by her husband. I know what misogyny is…I want people to be afraid of the women I dress" (as cited in, Moore, 2010, p. 32). The collection in fact was a representation of the Jacobite Risings of the 18th century and the Highland clearances of the 19th century. A narrative about his Scottish heritage was being labeled cruel and malicious towards women (Bolton et al., 2011). Future research should examine the many roles clothing plays within a fashion presentation, whether it is to express power, political statements, or history. Although nature and the world in which we live was his greatest influence, making reference to political statements, famine, and even genocide, many other fashion designers explored these themes as well, and contrasting their work warrants further research. The world itself can be an extremely harsh place, and that was reflected in McQueen's work. Unfortunately, he was faced with having to look at the problems of the world during his design process, and the anger he felt at seeing such disturbing things was often revealed in his garments. Andrew Bolton once commented on In Memory of Elizabeth Howe 1692, saying,

> The way he talks about it, it wasn't just about his relatives but that at any particular moment, it was about any minorities who had been persecuted, be it gays, Muslims or blacks. So it became this continuation of his thoughts from his autobiography into history and into contemporary culture. (As cited in Woo, 2012, para. 3)

The other two collections analyzed in this study can be considered just as impactful. McQueen was unashamed of poking fun at the fashion industry and its elite, and designed Horn of Plenty. It was noted that, "It was as much a slap in the face to this industry, then, as it was brave statement about the absurdity of the race to build empires in fashion"

(Wilson, 2009, para. 2). Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious exemplified McQueen's love for strong women. Even while being referenced against children's fairy tales, women can still exemplify strength in their sexuality. As themes of Fetish and Goth were examined in this study, future research in the area of fairy tales is warranted to potentially uncover the relationship between psychoanalysis, fashion, and unconscious feelings such as desires and fears from childhood.

Much as society impacts fashion, fashion has the ability to impact society. The relationship people have with their clothing and the symbolic value people place on fashion is based on material culture and the message we ultimately want to communicate to others. Though clothing has been a way to show class or social distinctions, more recently, class cultures have for the majority disappeared within the Western consumer market, and what we have now is niches. Consumers who have the same socio-economic background but different tastes have a variety of lifestyle choices that enable them to make choices of their self-identity everyday. Consumers have the ability to shape the perception of themselves, dependant on circumstances such as where they are going, whom they are with, and what mood they are in.

> Dress is a fundamental element in...the moment of interaction when the actor
> defines which person she wishes to be, freely opts for one of her "multiple self
> identifications," or rather, decides which self- identification to favor in that
> particular situation. (Goffman, as cited in Crane & Bovone, 2006, p. 323)

The symbolic values placed on fashion either by the wearer, society, or producers of the goods are a fundamental part of clothing as material culture. By understanding fashionable clothing from a sociological and cultural background Crane and Bovone

(2006) point out that an in depth understanding of dissemination, cultural goods, and artifacts in contemporary societies is possible.

Values and perceptions of ourselves are so closely tied to clothing because it's our most intimate environment, and it has the ability to say a lot about us. Clothing has the capability of acting like a filter between the wearers and the social world around them. From what we believe in, our religion, our occupation, and messages we communicate of how we want to be perceived are all related to clothing and fashions relationship to society. "Dress can function as a tool of political statement and opposition. This is particularly the case in the showpieces of haute couture that operate as works of art as much as they do items of clothing" (Bancroft, 2012, p. 193). Clothing can be viewed as a type of visual text that expresses symbols, which we ultimately interpret to understand the values associated with specific social identities of groups such as youth subcultures, counter cultures, and gay cultures. Though this method can be controversial, it allows for an understanding of how the social identities of groups change over time (Crane & Bovone, 2006).

The research at hand dealt with themes that have closely tied identifying symbols that in turn have the capability to speak to the values associated with those who wear them. For example, those who wear capes, silver jewelry displaying religious iconography, skull patterns, and pentagrams could be associated with wearing symbols associated to Goth. Inferences could then be made that they are individuals who are dark and somber, and who worship death, witchcraft, or even the devil (Steele & Park, 2008). Those who wear thigh-high stiletto boots, corsets, straps, and choke collars would be identified as wearing symbols associated with fetish; inferences could then be made that

they are sexually liberated, erotic, kinky and perhaps even perverse (Steele, 1996). As Spooner (1996) points out, these symbols can speak to women as victimized objects, "a symptom both of capitalism and patriarchy, in its double aspect of glorifying objects and objectifying women" (p. 44).

As fashion is so closely tied to the human body, it has been blamed for many of societies' problems relating to women as well as the body itself. Fashion and the images put forth by the industry have been blamed for such things as eating disorders and even violence against women. However, as there is no proof of their direct associations, blaming the fashion industry, including designers, fails to address these very real problems. Future research is recommended to uncover why fashion and the fashion industry is continually blamed for societies' many issues. Haute couture although held responsible for many things, also has the ability to reflect the very problems we see in our culture. Therefore, the unanswerable question could be asked, is art imitating life or life imitating art?

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